

Moving (and Living) Pictures:
Exploring The Dual Definitions of Animation.

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Instilling Motion: The Backbone of Illusionary Life

Animation can explain whatever the mind of man can conceive. This facility makes it the most versatile and explicit means of communication yet devised for quick mass appreciation.
Walt Disney

Animation as a form of filmmaking is an enigma. It is simple to comprehend but complicated to explain as there are a variety of definitions ascribed to it, each with their own function in determining what exactly this mode of filmmaking is. Within common discourse, however there are two definitions that are on opposing sides. One definition engaging a pragmatic and production-based view towards the mode with the idea that animation is defined as instilling movement, and the other dealing heavily in theory with the idea that animation is defined as instilling life. This dichotomy, proposed by film theorists William Schaffer in *Animation I: The Control Image*, and Alan Cholodenko in *Speculations on the Animatic Automaton*, can be seen within every single form of animation. Despite the seemingly innate differences between the two, both meanings are intertwined in order to bolster each other more often than they are separated. Therefore, in defining the true nature of animation the dual definitions of animation proposed by Schaffer and Cholodenko need to be used in together rather than individually in order to fully explain what distinguishes animation from other forms of filmmaking. This essay will be split into three sections, all detailing the individual aspects of these definitions and how they relate to each other. The first section will deal with animation as movement and the various identities which it places upon that particular nebulous definition through the theory of absolute film and the short *The Dot and The Line* (1965). The second section will deal with animation as defined by its “life” force and how that is utilized as a way to further distinguish animation from non-animation in both *Pinocchio* (1940) and *The Painting* (2011). The third and final section will relate both of these definitions and tie them into one

homogenous form by explaining the animatic struggle of the animistic versus the mechanistic functions of animation by closely analyzing the short *The Street of Crocodiles* (1986).

Before addressing any animation with regards to the dual definitions it's important to understand what these definitions are explicitly and what they mean. These definitions are, as stated by Alan Cholodenko in his essay *Speculations on the Animatic Automaton*, "to endow with life and to endow with motion (Cholodenko 500)." Endowing with motion is perhaps the simpler of the two as it deals mainly with the physical process of animation and engendering movement into inanimate objects. As William Shaffer explains in his essay *Animation I: The Control Image*, "animation in the most general sense is this unique art of direct interaction with every interval of any instant whatever generated by film (Shaffer 461)." This pragmatic definition relies heavily on how animation is created but also on how it is exhibited and viewed. When an audience witnesses an animation they are viewing a highly controlled version of the cinematic illusion in that unmoving pictures are placed and shown in such a sequence of 24 fps that they give the apparition of independent movement, this is what separates film from other artistic mediums like photography or painting.

Cinema as a whole shows movement as a visual art form, but that doesn't necessarily distinguish animation. What mainly separates animation from a standard live action film is the overt power that an animator has over every single item within the frame as well as the frame itself. As William Schaffer explains; "the animator must physically encounter the fact of each frame and deliberately provide its graphic content, manually controlling the relationship between successive frames conceived as any-instants-whatever in the movement of a whole (461)." This manual control allows for the animator to not only show movement to an audience like in a live action piece, but to instill movement themselves through the physical process of animating. The

animator acts as a figure of great power, one who can give movement to otherwise inanimate colors, lines, or objects. Whether it is through stop motion or through sketches is irrelevant because every animator has this overt power over the mise-en-scene, which is why this particular definition has value in the conversation of defining what animation is. However, instilling movement is an open ended phrase and it would be best to examine some animation in order to fully explain the various methods of movement to how movement is utilized within this form.

On a visual level the focus on movement within animation is apparent in a majority of animated films and shorts. This is especially true when looking at the abstract animators of the 1920's such as Viking Eggeling or Hans Richter. The films of these directors can be classified as what theorist Mary Ellen Bute describes in her article *Light Form Movement Sound* as absolute film, a form of filmmaking that addresses the eyes and ears directly rather than the intellect. It does this by stimulating the senses of the spectator through "color, form, rhythm, and sound," ignoring narrative or anything that could evoke human reasoning (Bute 186). By doing so these animated shorts lack any character or representation that could be viewed as alive, therefore privileging movement as its focus above all else. Nothing within these shorts is living or appears to be living within the context of the diegesis, consequently what is being shown on screen is movement without life, and this movement is utilized in a particular way when it is separated from the illusion of life.

The concept of absolute film deals primarily with evoking the two spectator senses, visual and aural, on a more primal level and as explained previously it does this through movement. This motion separated from life invokes the spectator's enjoyment through "the effect it produces," the enjoyment mainly being that of viewing a film emotionally rather than intellectually, allowing for the spectator to consume the film without needing to analyze it on a

deeper narrative level (186). In essence, movement within animation provokes reverie within the audience that can not be represented when life or the illusion of life is present. This is interesting because animation as a medium is often referred to as being similar to a state of dreaming, especially with regards to the use of movement for things like transformation, which happens to be a fundamental aspects of animation as a medium. However, the implementation of narrative has the ability to change the focus of the spectator on which definition, movement or life, they establish animation to be.

A major determining factor when looking at which definition is given more importance within an animated film is whether or not there is a definite story that is shown throughout the movie. Animations that privilege instilling motion tend to veer towards the abstract and experimental while ones that benefit the instillation of life tend to value more standard forms of storytelling and character creation. Chuck Jone's *The Dot and the Line: A Romance in Lower Mathematics* (1965) through this indicator is a part of the latter category. This short is about the plight of a single line as he pines for the love of a dot, who seems much more interested in a squiggle than in him. The line eventually learns how to change his shape and this causes the dot to gain a newfound interest in him, leaving the squiggle and romantically joining the newly reformed line. From first glance it would seem as if this short might be more about movement than actual life as all of the characters are objects. But despite the characters being geometric shapes there is a sense of living within this short due to the perceived personification of each of these figures.

This personification is handled completely by the narration as he gives every single character within this short its own voice while also providing context to what is happening through a voice over. The voice over narration provide the basis for what is "alive" within this

short, which if it were the only thing to do so would break the limitation of just the animator instilling life, providing power to the spoken word. However, since there is notable movement of these figures within this piece, the instillation of life isn't tied to a singular point. The question that comes up with this duality of "liveness" is are the narration and movement of these characters intrinsically tied together or can they be separated as their own forms of instilling life? The answer is a combination of the two questions depending on what is being looked at. The narration as a form of instilling life through the personification of the shapely characters can be separated from the movement and still cause the illusion of life by giving the individual shapes their own personalities. Movement alone however, cannot be separated into its own form of instilling life without the narration because, movement alone does not inherently establish any form of consciousness within the figures or characters that are granted it. In relation to absolute film, movement exists for movements sake and life is only present if it is added later. If you remove the components of life from this short (the voice over) it just becomes shapes moving around a screen to a soundtrack. This is even further shown through the fact that the characters within *The Dot and the Line* are geometric shapes rather than any already established living being. So movement within animation by itself doesn't instill life, but it can help increase the illusion of what instilled life is already there.

The utilization of movement within animation has multiple purposes depending on whether or not life is instilled into the film. In more abstract animated pieces that have no perceived notions of instilled life movement serves its own purpose in an absolute manner, moving for movements sake as a method of representing something that has no inherent life force in order to cause a sense of reverie within the spectator. In animated pieces where life is instilled movement is used as a way to further the illusion of life being projected. For the case of

something like *Neighbors*, where life is already in existence, movement is used as a way to distinguish the animatic life from real life. What this provides is yet another duality within the first definition of animation in that movements own use varies dramatically throughout all forms of animation depending on context. The importance of these multiple uses of movement is that they help to further solidify the distinction of animation versus that of live action as both of them utilize the idea of the control image, facilitating the “instilling movement” definition by establishing why it has value. However as explained before “instilling movement” is not the only definition for which animation is looked at. “Instilling life” the other part of the dual definitions is also just as important but in different ways.

Instilling Life: The Hand of the Animator and the Illusion of Life

While instilling motion is a fairly easy concept to comprehend using Cholodenko’s definition, instilling life takes a step beyond just simple movement explaining the idea that the objects that are moving within an animated piece are given life or the illusion of life by their creators (Cholodenko 486). As explained before movement is typically used within animation in order to further the illusion of life within a piece, however once this illusion is reached it then brings up a number of other questions about the definitions of animation and how they relate to the perception of life when none actually exists. Therefore, the importance of the “instilling of life” definition is to provide a further distinction between animation and live action film.

The instillation of life within animated pieces tends to be the commonly used practice in animation as most narrative (and even some experimental) forms of animation tend to house a character which can be seen as living within the piece or at least seen as a fully conscious character, which is a main factor of what can be viewed as living. “Living” animated characters

can be anything from rotoscoped humans, such as Wiley Wiggins in *Waking Life* (2001) to inanimate objects made animate, such as Pixar's figurehead lamp from *Luxo Jr.* (1986). Because "life" is such a wide spread and nebulous idea within animation this section will focus on two films relating to the instilling of life, Disney's *Pinocchio* (1940) and Jean-François Laguioni's *The Painting* (2011). Both films, I believe, have value when looking at this definition of animation due to the narrative concepts regarding life that each story explores within their runtimes reflecting animations goal of illusion and separation from reality.

Walt Disney's 1940 film *Pinocchio* is a unique case in instilling life through animation as it manages to accomplish this process on multiple levels, both production wise and within the narrative. The use of animation in order to create moving characters with personalities inherently introduces "life" as that is part of the definition of animation. However, the instilling of life within the narrative and how it relates to the animation itself is far more complicated than just a standard definition, because it is the direct focus of the film's plot. The story is that of a puppet named Pinocchio who after being given autonomy through the act of a fairy, is tasked to learn about humanity with the help of a separate body of conscience in the form of a cricket. In the end, through various trials and tribulations, he is gifted with a human body and it is assumed that he has learned what it means to be human, the guidelines for which being that one must be brave, truthful, and unselfish according to the Blue Fairy. While the overall message of the story happens to be about the cost of humanity, the narrative focus is explicitly on animation, reanimation, and the control over life (implicitly free will), all of which are placed upon the main puppet and tested throughout the story. Perhaps the most interesting of these tests is when Pinocchio is tricked into becoming part of a traveling puppet show led by a tyrannical puppeteer/con man named Stromboli.

Stromboli's segment within *Pinocchio* deals with the protagonist joining a traveling marionette show, where he becomes the main attraction as a puppet "without strings." There are two sections within this arch that are notable, first a performance with Pinocchio and a group of various other puppets, and second, the violent confrontation between Pinocchio and Stromboli afterwards. The former segment holds value because it visually presents the main dichotomy in the film, the distinction between Pinocchio as a "marionette who can dance and sing without the use of strings" versus an actual puppet who is controlled externally by the manipulation of strings, the perceived living versus the inanimate. The way that Pinocchio is described by Stromboli and all of the other characters within the film is intriguing as they never fully admit that Pinocchio is a living being (until the very end when he becomes human) unless the caveat of strings is mentioned. He moves, he dances, and he sings, but these characteristics to the diegetic audience are merely just an illusion, something seen purely as entertainment. Because of this Pinocchio can be seen as an automaton or as Alan Cholodenko puts it, "a machine which has the form of an organized being and contains within itself a mechanism capable of creating movement and simulating life (Cholodenko 501)."

The mechanism of movement for Pinocchio would be the magic from the Blue Fairy that he received in the beginning of the story. While this is the replacement of the strings that control the "non living" marionettes on stage beside him, Pinocchio is still wooden and is thus seen in a mechanistic manner by every character within the story. The mechanism functions the same regardless of whether or not the figure moves on his own. The overall control of this mechanism, while fluid for Pinocchio, is strictly in the hands of his "owner" Stromboli during the segment in a metaphorical sense. Philosopher Tzachi Zamir explains in his essay *Puppets* that, "puppets are objects fictionally and momentarily endowed with life. But they are objects only in the

subversive sense of a term undermining its own usage since it is the very subject-object divide that puppets problematize (Zamir 398).” The subject-object divide in this scene is that of a puppeteer controlling an entire group of puppets despite one having autonomy. Pinocchio, regardless of his lack of strings is still being controlled through the verbal manipulation of Stromboli and thus becomes a member of the chorus, blending the “living” and the non-living into a singular puppet show with no noticeable distinction between the two. This lack of separation between the generic puppet and Pinocchio is where the second part of this plot segment gets its conflict.

Once the show is over Stromboli brings Pinocchio into his caravan and locks the puppet into a birdcage as the con man explains, “to me, you are a belonging.” It is at this moment where Pinocchio goes through a metaphorical regression back into his puppet state. He lacks his conscience as Jiminy Cricket willingly leaves him after the performance, and he lacks mobility as he is locked in a small wooden cage hanging on a string from the ceiling. His only movement occurs when the caravan hits various pot holes in the street, violently shaking the cage without Pinocchio’s consent. In this moment Pinocchio becomes trapped in a puppet like apparatus, to which freedom is given by the reappearance of the Blue Fairy. But the intriguing thing is that through this scene Pinocchio manages to be at his most “alive” as his blatant lying shows that he can experience rational thought. This is a reflection of the first scene in which Pinocchio shows that he can experience consciousness and self awareness when speaking to Geppetto. Zamir makes the case that “Pinocchio is not really a puppet. He is more of a child inhabiting the puppet Geppetto planned to make,” and this scene establishes this ideology through the act of Pinocchio’s ability to learn from the world around him (391). He learns everything in this film and the only thing that he doesn’t truly learn is how to be conscious which, much like with living

creature, is an innate function. Therefore, Pinocchio seems to (through all the parameters set within the film) be alive even before he becomes human. So why is he not viewed as such by the other characters?

The fundamental truth of the matter is that Pinocchio is not seen as “living” both through how he is perceived by those around him and through his lack of individual control. This is further proven by the climax of the film in which Pinocchio turns into a real boy because what precedes this moment is the removal of foreign control through the lack of any authoritative figure such as Stromboli. But also the presence of death in the form of Pinocchio’s lifeless body seen floating in a shallow pond, followed with a grieving sequence after this image. These “releases” of control and artificial existence lead to Pinocchio taking on a life of his own as a real boy after this physical and metaphorical rebirth, and this is exactly how the process of animation functions on a theoretical basis. William Schaffer states in his essay that “the puppeteer or animator may initiate this dance of strings and displaced bodies; but once set in motion, it reverberates unpredictably, takes on a life of its own, in which the artist’s entire body becomes but one of many dancing limbs (Schaffer 462).” This passage states that the instillation of life requires the absence of the control (the artist) and the birth (creation) of an animated figure in order for the illusion of life to work upon an audience. But, as Alan Cholodenko explains “the illusion, the simulation, of life is, of course, not life but rather its double and (un)doing, for its mechanical repetition the living being incorporates death within it (Cholodenko 502).” This means that the notion of instilled life in animation cannot be analyzed as “true” or “real” life in the same way that a live action film represents life through living actors. Animation’s representation of life is distinctly unique to animation, along with the presence of death, which is either seen explicitly (like in *Pinocchio*) or implicitly. This separation between live action and

animation is precisely why the “instilling life” definition holds any value whatsoever in the discourse on the definition of animation. However, the separation between the real world and the animated world cannot be completely distinct as individual worlds. Much like puppets, the real artists and animators are tied to their creations through their “gifting” of life and no movie addresses this particular bestowment quite like Jean-François Laguioni’s 2011 film, *The Painting*.

Laguioni’s *The Painting*, similarly to *Pinocchio* is a film about moving art. However, unlike the humanoid puppet of the latter piece, *The Painting* uses drawn and painted figures inside diegetic murals for its characters. The general plot of this film is about a group of “inanimate” bodies within a painting that travel outside of their frame and into the real world (as well as into other paintings) in order to discover the whereabouts of their creator, the painter. Their reason for doing so is that they are “unfinished” and are seen as hierarchically lower than the figures who had been finished (this hierarchy is composed up of Allduns, Halfies, and Sketchies, which are fairly self explanatory as the various hierarchical stages of an artist’s work) and they think that the presence of the artist will allow for their bodies to become finished. The wandering figures eventually discover a self-portrait of the artist who teaches them how to paint, a skill which they use to finish the art in their own mural. The plot of this movie follows the same animatic theory given forth by William Schaffer, that an animated figure once set in motion takes on a life of its own. However, it goes a bit further explaining that not only does the figure take on a life of its own, but it manages to assert itself into the roll of the artist, thus removing his presence entirely. This form of artist removal is a constant within animated films as an illusionary guideline in order for the animated figure to metaphorically (or in the case of *Pinocchio*, literally) cut the binds from the animator as a way of seeming like living figures. This

stems all the way back to the likes of Windsor McCay's *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914) or Max Fleischer's *Out of the Inkwell* (1921) both of which separate their artists from the art in humorous manners. This difference between *The Painting* and the two other shorts is that in both McCay's and Fleischers films the "relations between creators and created veer erratically between easy harmony and murderous distrust (Schaffer 465)." But in Laguioni's film this relationship is essentially nonexistent for the artist beyond the initial creation, which is never witnessed but is spoken about as a borderline religious event for the figures within the narrative. This relationship between creation and artist however, is finally seen at the end of the film.

The ending of *The Painting* sees the main character (a Halfie named Lola) meeting directly with the artist (played by the director Laguioni himself) and having a brief conversation about how he viewed his creations. The artist states to the painting that he never abandoned his work as he "gave them all the basics for living." This provides the films own answer to what it views as instilling life, which corresponds pretty directly to how animation is defined by Alan Cholodenko. The painter or the animator provides the initial spark with the creation of a character or through movement, but once that is set up "life" takes over as the illusion allows for an audience to experience characters that don't exist in the real world as if they were, to experience the moment of the live action artist speaking with an animated figure, to believe "that all objects possess a natural life or vital force or that they are endowed with an indwelling spirit" as film theorist Sergei Eisenstein put it (Leslie 235). This experience fundamentally cannot be replicated in the same manner as a fully live action film as with that mode of filmmaking represents life as it is, and is therefore inherently limiting. But with animation life isn't represented, it is created by both the hands of the animator and the characters themselves through

the illusionary separation of creator and creation, and this is limitless with regards to cinema as a whole.

Alan Cholodenko states in his writings that:

A fascination binds the proto history of cinema, the advent of cinema, and the history of animation. It is the fascination with the mysterious imbrication and reanimation of life and motion by means of an apparatus. It is the fascination with the illusion of life, as the life(-likeness) of (the) illusion. It is the fascination with the way in which an apparatus animates – gives movement and life to – inanimate images of inanimate people and things – as illusions, making them appear to appear to live and move. It is the fascination with the way in which that apparatus may be thought to have reanimated the world in and as simulation. It is the fascination with the automaton (496).

This automaton figure (as an example of the whole of animation) is noted through both its illusionary movement as well as its ability to convince the audience of its unnatural existence or its life. The extent of this fascination of the automaton figure is seen through the process of animation and its willingness to separate itself from the live action form of filmmaking.

However, despite the many differences already stated it would be wrong to state that animation and live action cannot be related (especially seeing as they have been mixed through films such as *The Painting*). There is an ideological bridge between these modes in that animation has the ability to comment on the state of live action as well as self-reflexively comment on animation and its definitions through this automaton figure. As Cholodenko explains:

The bridge between ‘pure’ live action and ‘pure’ animation – the animatic apparatus as automaton is the bridge, the hybrid bridge, between animism and mechanism, animation and cinema, human and nonhuman, that third coming between any and every two things, including two opposing poles as well as ‘forming’ the medium in which all ‘come to life’ and ‘come to death’ – which would be the simultaneous bringing of death to life and life to death – lifedeath (509).

The presence of this “lifedeath” in animation was alluded to earlier with regards to how life and death are presented together within the context of animation. But the use of the animatic apparatus as the automaton, combining the animistic and mechanistic characteristics of animation to form a bridge between the two forms of filmmaking is something that must also be

addressed. We must do this in order to fully conceptualize and dig deeper into the two definitions of animation and their relation and distinction to live action. The film that most exemplifies this deeper understanding of the dual definitions of animation, along with utilizing animistic and mechanistic traits in order to comment on the state of animation and live action is the 1987 stop motion short *Street of Crocodiles* by Stephen and Timothy Quay.

The Street of Crocodiles: The Animistic Vs. The Mechanistic

In that city of cheap human material, no instincts can flourish, no dark and unusual passions can be aroused. The Street of Crocodiles was a concession of our city to modernity and metropolitan corruption. The misfortune of that area is that nothing can succeed there, nothing can reach a definite conclusion. Obviously, we were unable to afford anything better than a cardboard imitation, a photo montage cut out from last year's mouldering newspapers. – Bruno Schulz, author of The Street of Crocodiles

Street of Crocodiles (1987) is a short animated film by Stephan and Timothy Quay.

Throughout its nearly 21-minute runtime it showcases a completely new world within the banal live action one, exposing a city of urban decay, the characters that inhabit it, and the non-living mechanical objects that make it work. This short utilizes the dual definitions of animation by instilling movement and life into the various aberrations that the city contains (Cholodenko 486). However, it also challenges them going further than just these definitions of movement and life. The *Street of Crocodiles* uses these definitions to create a metaphorical piece about the futility of both free will and the desire for humanity.

The *Street of Crocodiles* is light on narrative and eventful moments. What occurs in the time span of the short is as follows according to the Brother's Quay:

The anonymous offering of human saliva by an attendant caretaker activates and releases the Schulzian theatre from stasis into permanent flux. Myth stalks the streets of this parasitical zone where the mythological ascension of the everyday is charted by a marginal interloper who threads himself through this one night of the Great Season. No centre can be reached and the futile pursuit concludes in the deepest rear rooms of a slightly dubious tailor's shop (Quay).

The biggest missing detail within this description is a scene that involves the main puppet being surrounded by the inhabitants of the tailor shop only to have his head removed as the four non-gender specific automatons create an outfit for him and then lament at the imagery of human anatomy that is plastered upon their walls. On the surface not a lot of this makes any feasible sense but the piece as stated before is almost entirely metaphorical and according to Bruno Schulz, the writer of the story on which this short film is based off of, “the essence of reality is meaning” and that is most likely what the Brothers Quay attempted when they created this short (Schulz).

Endowing with motion, as explained before, deals mainly with the physical process of animation and engendering movement into inanimate objects. As William Shaffer explains, “animation in the most general sense is this unique art of direct interaction with every interval of any instant whatever generated by film (Shaffer 461).” This explanation on a basic level is exhibited in every moving piece in *Street of Crocodiles*; from the various screws to the automaton puppets, each and every single motion carried by these figures is a movement created painstakingly by an animator, thus adhering to this general definition. Endowing with life however is a bit different for it takes a step beyond just simple movement instilling the idea that the objects that are moving within an animated piece are given life or the illusion of life by their creators (Cholodenko 486). This particular aspect of gifting life is where many of the themes stated above are more prominent within this short.

When looking at both of these definitions it is important to note the exact wording between them, specifically the word endow because that is how the short starts. As explained before the short begins with a shot of an anonymous man in an abandoned lecture hall, establishing the world of this piece. As the man approaches an old kinetoscope the camera shift

to focus on an unlabeled map under a magnified piece of glass. When the man spits into the kinetoscope the focus changes to the inter workings of this mechanical apparatus as the camera follows the single drop of saliva that activates a switch. Once activated this switch causes a chain reaction, forcing other non-descript mechanical pieces to begin moving as well as waking up the supposed main character of the short (it is undetermined whether this is from slumber, death, or from just being inanimate like the other moving pieces). This singular moment does two valuable things. First it re-establishes the main focus as the world within the kinetoscope exposing that there is some type of relationship between what writer Emily Macaux explains as “the animate and the inanimate, the real and the unreal (Macaux).” Secondly it endows this previously dormant stage of mechanical objects with movement, something that only the drop of saliva from a real human can accomplish. A few moments after this occurs, the same man uses a pair of scissors sitting between the real world and the kinetoscope world to cut a string attached to the puppet protagonist, both releasing him and endowing him the ability to move beyond his current location. Metaphorically speaking because this puppet is endowed a type of “free will” in that he is free to explore the world that he is in unencumbered, it is safe to assume that he is thus endowed with life. It is also safe to assume that he is endowed with life due to him being able to move in the first place as well as his appearance being slightly human and therefore lifelike. Once again this endowment of “free will” is only something that a human can accomplish within the short even though this puppet being released from his stringed imprisonment is essentially an example of “the objects triumph [in this case its detachment] over its [in this case human] user (Zamir 403).” After these moments the anonymous human is entirely removed from the short all together and the film begins to capitalize on the differences between movement and life.

Within *Street of Crocodiles* all the characters that are deemed “living” such as the main protagonist, are endowed with movement, however all of the things that move within the short aren’t necessarily endowed with life. For those that are separated from this endowment of life are portrayed strictly as mechanical objects with predetermined jobs or goals. This can of course be related to the amount of moving mechanical pieces that are present within the set because they have no inherent purpose within this world, or at least what they do aren’t shown on screen. Random pulleys have strings on them that go no-where and engines spin with no result to name a few. However, this strictly mechanical use of movement in the “non-living” objects is best represented with the animated screws seen at various points within the short. Unlike a majority of the non-living objects within the film screws are not generally meant to move in real life, however in this piece they happen to be gifted with motion. These screws are seen unscrewing themselves from various areas within this world, rolling around in groups to a new destination, and then screwing themselves back into the ground together. This single motion repeats itself signaling the audience that this is the only thing that these animated screws have the ability to do within the universe. Their movement is as mechanical as the other objects in the scenery and its predetermined path only helps emphasize the difference between movement and life within this short because what is considered living here does not move in a fixed fashion. This difference is only further proved when these moving objects come into contact with the living or at least what this universe considers the living, this occurs only a few times in the span of the short.

The first time is when the main puppet touches a tangled string that then untangles and opens a door, endowing this piece of equipment with movement. Another time is later on in the film when a young male looking doll catches one of the screws before it is entirely screwed into the ground and proceeds to unscrew it. When the doll releases the screw it moves and jumps

around in an uncharacteristically lifelike way for a few seconds, seemingly forgetting how to screw itself back into the ground, and then it becomes inanimate. This reaction is extremely important because once again it shows an endowment of movement from a non-human character like with the protagonist and the string. However, it also shows that after these characters endow these objects with movement, they subsequently become inanimate. These characters can endow movement in objects like humans can do with animation, but they cannot keep it that way. The audience does not see what happens to the string that the protagonist touched earlier, but a later sequence shows him touching another string attached to a mechanical gear of some type and it stopping immediately, making it devoid of the movement that it once had, which can only suggest what happened earlier. These small moments are where the theme of a desire for humanity despite having “free will” comes into play, only to be further emphasized by the climax. But before that is explained let’s get into the endowment of life and the concept of the automaton within this short.

As mentioned before Alan Cholodenko defines the automaton as “a machine which has the form of an organized being and contains within itself a mechanism capable of creating movement and simulating life (Cholodenko 501).” This may be a bit of a misnomer when looking at the physical figures within the production of the piece seeing as they are a combination of non-mechanical puppets and dolls that are moved through the process of animation. However, within the short itself these figures tie themselves to that definition very well and in his writing Cholodenko later explains that “the automaton is both and neither machine and living being at the same time,” which removes the issue of the non-mechanical aspect being problematic for these figures (502). This term places value on the illusion of life and that is exactly what the characters within this piece are endowed with instead of just

movement. Along with this concept the term free will was mentioned earlier and what that means is just the power of acting without the constraint of necessity or fate, which is also displayed prominently within these characters in that their movements aren't seen as predetermined in any way, shape or form. Both life and free will are intertwined within this short and why they exist for these characters is to show a deconstruction of each point, explaining that regardless of how real it may be both life and free will in this story are just an illusion of humanity (the reason why the words "free will" have been placed in quotation marks up until this point).

To examine this one needs to look at what is truly alive within the short, which happens to be just three things. The anonymous man seen at the beginning, the flies that are seen in the tailors shop at the climax, and the taraxacum flowers seen at the midpoint. The man bares no importance here because his interactions with the kinetoscope are not directly connecting him with the kinetoscope world beyond starting it with his saliva, but the flies and taraxacums cross that boundary between the real world and the kinetoscope world for much longer periods of time than the drop of saliva. However, the difference between these two are that the flies are not stationary and have the ability to leave the kinetoscope world that they enter (which is shown later), but the taraxacums don't have the same luxury. There are two distinct scenes that focus on these common flowers, one of which involves the protagonist looking into a closed environment as the flower builds itself back up from the ground. The other segment shows the seeds of this flower as they slowly deteriorate into a pile of death. What the latter scene seems to be metaphorically saying is that anything that is actually alive or anything not from the world within the kinetoscope cannot live within that world and therefore life in this place is just an illusion, for it's not "real life." Even when it looks like things can survive, like in the scene mentioned about the taraxacum building itself up, there is a sentiment of it not being real because it is in an

enclosed environment in which the only way to look at it is through a window. This particular detail is interesting because it is coupled along with unintelligible words and a flickering light resembling that of a projector making the whole thing seem like a small movie theatre, almost like the rebuilding of these flowers is an animation that these figures in the kinetoscope world are the audience to. This particular scene is also coupled with a juxtaposed sequence of shots that show ice cubes (not technically alive, but another object that is not from the kinetoscope world) melting, most likely to emphasize this idea that nothing can survive within this decayed place. But also making the lines between the real and unreal hard to distinguish within this dilapidated world.

So if nothing that is truly alive can exist within this world, what does that mean for the various automatons that inhabit the kinetoscope? It means that these automatons are aware of this fact in various degrees of understanding and that is why the themes of futility in relation to the desire for humanity are so omnipresent within this piece. While there are multiple characters that are on the borderline between being mechanical and “living” such as a machine with a light bulb for a head there are three characters (one of which is more of a homogenous group than a singular character) that can definitively be considered to be alive as described by this world, and each of them represent the different levels of understanding their own sense of living. On the lowest level representing the ignorance of their situation is the child doll that seems to have no basic understanding of the world around him. This is why he is portrayed as a young figure who looks the most human out of all of them, relatively speaking. On the exact opposite side of the spectrum is the group of tailors that are far too aware of their own situation and because of that self-awareness showcases the strongest desire to become human. Their self-awareness is reflected with their designs being a mixture of human-like and mechanical elements. They have

empty doll heads and doll abdomens, but their legs are empty boxes with wheels on them, which keeps them from even looking remotely human. The protagonist is a mixture of both the ignorance of the child but also the self-reflexivity of the tailors, and that is what his journey throughout the piece entails. He goes from knowing absolutely nothing about his situation and the world around him in the beginning, to knowing everything when he is beckoned inside of the tailor shop. Once again much like the child and the tailors, his design reflects upon his understanding of the world around him and his sense of living. He is human like in figure, but his skin is pale and his body is gaunt due to him being a puppet. Why the appearance of being human like is so important to each of these characters is that beyond the metaphorical reasoning provided above, it changes the interactions (or interaction because there is only one crossover of the characters) between them, this is one of the many reasons as to why the climax is significant to the themes brought up earlier.

The climax of this short takes place at the tailor's shop and it is the only time when there is direct interaction between any of the characters, and this interaction is what exposes the overall theme of futility with regards to the issue of false humanity. The scene begins when the main tailor beckons the protagonist into the shop through a window. There is a quick glimpse of inside the shop, which houses many scissors hung from the ceiling on display. The protagonist is then seen walking into the shop in the background while the main tailor mirrors its movements exactly in the foreground. The three other tailors then proceed to surround the puppet, remove his head to replace it with one of the empty doll ones that they have, and decorate him with new clothes. While this is occurring the main tailor looks over a map (which is the same as the one seen earlier on the kinetoscope except this one has been stitched together) and manifests a non-descript organ from out of thin air. All of these actions are important because of what they

represent. The mirror imagery of the tailor and the main protagonist shows that these characters are alike, perhaps even alluding to the fact that the tailor has gone through a similar journey of self-reflexive discovery before. The sequence of the group of tailors trying to give the protagonist a new “head” and clothes is supposed to represent this group exposing the reality that they are all too aware of to this puppet, to expose to him to his illusionary state of being by literally filling his empty head with knowledge, or in this case cotton. When it is made clear that the protagonist doesn’t understand what is trying to be taught to him, the tailor beckons him again into another room. This new location proudly displays graphic pictures of human anatomy on the walls (mainly male genitalia), another set of non-descript organs with needles stuck through them, and a human glove with supposedly human hair stashed inside it. Once this is shown to the protagonist puppet he finally understands and along with being gifted a “human like” shoe is instructed to look through a window that displays the child doll playing. The reveal of this room essentially exposes the idea that these tailors have a strong desire for humanity that stretches beyond what the story shows. These tailors take discarded objects from the “real” world such as the scissors and maps and put them on display in efforts to know more about this world, to try and be more human. This desire is strictly one for humanity rather than a simpler desire for life because these characters are already endowed with life even though it’s an illusion within this world. This is explained during the “fitting” sequence when a living fly is seen buzzing around the room, even making contact with the protagonist. The fly, while alive, is not the concern of the inhabitants of this place when it is flying around because these characters know that they are alive therefore another living creature is not interesting to them. However once the fly flies away, most likely out of the kinetoscope, the focus is shifted as all of the characters including the child doll stare up at it leaving. This shows the aspirations to become part of the

real world, and the way to achieve that is by becoming human according to these tailors. But why would these characters even want to become human at all? This is explained with one simple image in the anatomy room.

Within the anatomy room sequence the answer for why these inanimate objects made animate want to become human is made very clear through as explained before a single image. This image is of the main tailor doll in front of the phallic anatomy poster with the organs (most likely testicles) impaled with needles under it. All that is done to it in the entire short is that once it is seen the main tailor goes and rubs it affectionately, helping to slightly remove some of the needles that are stuck in it like a pin cushion. That is the entire sequence and it seems very odd when trying to analyze it based on the narrative. However what it represents on a metaphorical level encapsulates the desire for humanity and the overall theme of futility that this short speaks of. These tailors want to be human because they want to be able to give life to others in the same way that the male genitalia is a major factor in the life giving process within living beings, especially with humans. The needles within the testicles represent both the sterility of these automatons, but also a past resentment by the tailors for not being human for they must have placed the needles in there themselves in anger seeing as their ability to control the movements of these needles was shown in an earlier sequence. When the main tailor finally does come to terms with this resentment he or she (the gender of these tailors is unspecified) and the others begin to desire for it despite the fact that they cannot achieve their wish. This is seen through the needles loosening from the testicles after being rubbed, however they aren't fully removed to display the fact that these tailors still are infertile and can't create life. Because of this unachievable aspiration to be human they begin to fetishize humanity and its ability to be the creators of life. This is perhaps why they are represented as tailors, because that gives them the

ability to create things, even giving the main tailor the ability to manifest organs out of nothing (once again he or she can create anything, except life). Also even though it is not shown, it is implied through the similarities between these characters and the other two living ones that the tailors also have the ability to endow objects with temporary motion in the same way that the child doll did with the screws. That allusion to their ability to create motion also adds on to their fetishization because they also seem aware of the difference between movement and life, and that is perhaps what caused the resentment of humanity in the first place. This fetishization of humanity goes far beyond the objects within their shop, their jobs, or their abilities. A naked female mannequin like figure is displayed near the entrance to the shop as a manifestation of their sexuality, or their desire of sexuality because once again they are not human and do not possess this human trait. The last aspect that shows this desire is in fact the interaction between the tailors and the other two characters. As explained before the appearances of these characters being close to that of a human is significant in representing their understanding of their own livelihood, however the appearances are also important on a face value level for how the characters see each other within this world. The main protagonist looks remotely human and that is entirely why the tailors beckoned him into the shop in the first place. The tailors realize that he is a puppet figure and wants to expose him to the same human aspiration that he or she has, however on a selfish level this puppet is the closest thing to a human to them so they decide to fetishize him as a human by making a pretty outfit for him to wear. After all of that is complete and the puppet understands that he is just “a replica of a human” then he, along with the others gaze upon the last ignorant character in the area, the child as he is the most human out of them all (Zamir 387). This is why the music for that particular scene is depressing to the audience, because it showcases this aspiration to be something that cannot possibly happen. All of this is to

represent the self-reflexive unobtainable desire for humanity in order to create life or the illusion of life, and that is the basis for one of the two definitions of animation.

The dual definitions of animation as to endow with motion and endow with life are easy to represent by themselves but hard to show together in a way to make them seem distinct and separated from each other. The *Street of Crocodiles* by the Brothers Quay not only accomplishes that challenge, but it takes the definitions of animation and creates a metaphorical piece about futility, especially in the regards of both free will and the desire for humanity.

The uses of these dual definitions of animation are as varied as the form of animation itself as a way to describe how animation is different from other modes of filmmaking. From endowing with motion and its importance in shorts like *The Dot and The Line*, to endowing with life and its use in *Pinocchio*, it is clear to see that these definitions fit the overarching spectrum of the animation mode of filmmaking. However, these two definitions should not be separated into distinct categories as shorts like *The Street of Crocodiles* showcase a combination of the two with great narrative and metaphorical success. Therefore, when looking at defining what animation is the dual definitions of animation proposed by William Schaffer and Alan Cholodenko need to be used collectively rather than individually in order to fully explain what distinguishes animation from other forms of filmmaking.

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