

Woodland Fidelity:
Bambi as a Poetic Documentary

Jack Tieszen

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From the opening moments of Walt Disney's *Bambi*, the audience is introduced to a mysterious, yet vibrant forest. It's quiet and tranquil with no animals of any kind in sight as the camera pans across the various diegetic wildlife monuments. This introduction goes on for nearly three full minutes uninterrupted by visions of living creatures. Even when a lone owl is seen flying from the background to the foreground the segment continues without dialogue for yet another two minutes. The significance of this opening sequence is that it is used as both a way to establish the mysterious forest but more importantly, through the absence of dialogue, use of orchestral music, and inclusion of dark shadowy colors in the aesthetic, the film begins with an emotional appeal as apposed to a narrative one. This introductory appeal is a good indicator of what category of film *Bambi* fits into, one that is indicated further by the content and structure of the film being a touch more experimental for the time period of its release. Because of these aspects, *Bambi* appears to fit into a documentary style of filmmaking, specifically the style of the poetic documentary, a form accredited by theorist Bill Nichols. This means that *Bambi* has enough of the credentials and characteristics within its 70-minute run-time that it could be considered a poetic documentary as apposed to a more traditional plot focused movie.

When looking at *Bambi* as a narrative it is easy to see its deviations from the traditional three-act structure that was so common in the studio heavy 1940's, especially within other Disney films such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. *Bambi*, narrative wise, is a series of ten distinct vignettes, all of which are of differing lengths and each center on the life of the titular deer from birth to adulthood. Beyond this basic overview there seems to be little depth in terms of story or character that can be seen at first glance.

As writer Julie Bonn Health in her article “Bambi: Analysis of a Realization Story” puts, “to have a plot, a story must have characters with goals that come into conflict. *Bambi* lacks all of these vital ingredients (Health).” The noteworthiness of this lack of “vital ingredients” within the film is that from this it is clear that *Bambi* is not intended to be a standard narrative in the same vein as previous Disney ventures. Rather this structure is indicative of something else entirely, something more organic and less contrived than the traditional three act structure. This deviation of the time-honored storytelling composition is emphasized even more through another lacking element, the dialogue. Throughout the entire 70-minute movie there are about 950 words spoken in total. This count is minimal when compared to the amount of dialogue within a contemporary 90-minute film, which is around 6,000 words. In fact, according to author Joel Gunz, it had been reported that Disney himself felt that the film was “still too gabby,” which is also shown in his production notes that reveal Disney’s insistence for the story to be shown and not told (Gunz). Because of the lack of dialogue, a structured story, well defined characters, and inclusion of any character goals it can be deduced that *Bambi* subscribes less to the established style of storytelling and more to that of the documentary, specifically the nature documentary.

Between the nature documentary and *Bambi* there are a number of similarities that allow for comparison. From a structure standpoint, as explained before, *Bambi* follows the life of one deer through the changing of the seasons constructed entirely through vignettes of different length. The average nature documentary follows this exact structural pattern regardless of the animal or animals that the documentarians focus on. This major similarity is coupled by the staggering amount of homogeneous sequences

shared between *Bambi* and the nature documentary, ranging from an interaction between two animals of different species to showing the harshness of the natural elements. These nearly indistinguishable moments shared by both types of film along with a carbon copied structure showcase the documentary aesthetics of *Bambi*. However, a paramount difference is that in a nature documentary the scenery is “real” while *Bambi* is 100% man made through artist renderings, and this is a pivotal issue when debating whether or not a specific type of film, in this case animated, can be deemed as a documentary. In an article by Sybil DelGaudio titled, “If Truth Be Told, Can 'Toons Tell It? Documentary and Animation,” the idea of animated films such as *Bambi* being considered a documentary appears. DelGaudio explains, “Without any existence in the world of actuality, the animated film must, like the partially dramatized documentary, rely on a kind of artistic re-enactment, depending, in part, on imaginative rendering of one sort or another that may serve as compensation for the cameras non-presence at the event” (DelGaudio 190). This quote explains that despite the fact that all we as an audience see is man made, *Bambi* can still be more like a documentary than a conventional narrative film simply because it would be hypocritical to consider these nature films as “true” documentaries (some of which are almost entirely simulated by man for the production) due to their live action status, while dismissing *Bambi* as not being one specifically for the fact that it is animated. It may be animated but it is an imaginative reenactment of events that happen in real life (deer living in the forest) and as explained in the quote this rendering has the ability to “serve as compensation for the cameras non-presence at the event” in the same way that a nature documentary may use a confined man-made environment to simulate the events that actually occur in the wild (DelGaudio 190). It is even more hypocritical

to consider these nature films as documentaries while dismissing *Bambi* seeing as both parties share each other structures on a nearly identical scale as explained earlier. Nevertheless, *Bambi* has many more characteristics of a documentary beyond its non-traditional narrative structure.

The documentary aspects of *Bambi* are further expanded upon by the films fervent concentration on realism. In his article “The Trouble With Bambi: Walt Disney's Bambi and the American Vision of Nature,” author Ralph Lutts exposes the lengths that Disney and his animators went in order to make the film look and feel as realistic as possible, “In an effort to ensure accuracy in the film's backgrounds, he had an artist spend six months sketching forest scenes in Maine’s Baxter State Park. A pair of fawns, named Bambi and Faline of course, were shipped from Maine to Disney’s California studios where they became models for his artists, who underwent special training in drawing wildlife (Lutts 163).” The animators even went through the painstaking process of creating a live model of the fathers’ antlers and rotoscoping it in to the film in order for it to look lifelike solely because the cartoonists could not draw them in a way that resembled reality. There are many more cases of the creators trying to implement realism into the film but adding all of them would be redundant to the point being made.

There are exceptions to the verisimilitude within the film in relation to some of the characteristics of the woodland creatures seeing as generally animals do not speak fluent English in real life, (though it could be argued that these creatures are suppose to be speaking in a universal animal language rather than English as they do not directly speak with humans or human related animals such as the hunting dogs). However, these exceptions do not detract from the overall impact of the authenticity that the movie

projects, which historically according to David Whitley in “The Idea of Nature in Disney Animation,” “disturbed a number of early viewers of the film, who felt that this had pushed beyond the aesthetic boundaries appropriate for animation (Whitley 31 – 32).” Because of the focus on realism that is prevalent throughout *Bambi*, the elements of the nature documentary become much more apparent to an audience watching the film with a similar structure or homogenous sequences, thus explicitly bringing these two types of films closer together both in structure and style.

Before addressing the differences between *Bambi* and the nature documentary it might be important to address some of the other animated “documentaries” created specifically by Disney around the same time period. The ones that stand out are the films made as part of the Good Neighbor Policy during the Second World War such as *South of the Border With Disney* (1942), *Saludos Amigos* (1942), and *The Three Caballeros* (1944). The last two bear the most importance here due to the fact that they also use animation (mixed with live action footage) in order to convey information in the same way as a documentary. To summarize the two pieces in that modal context, both of them utilize animated and live action sequences along with a voiceover to show the audience the various cultures of South America. Perhaps the most unique thing about these two films is that there is a major disconnect between the animation and the voiceover being given in a majority of the scenes. To explain in further detail, the narrator of these films (much in the same way as a standard nature documentary) speaks factually about what is being shown on screen. The detachment between visual and audio comes from the animation being cartoony and unrealistic, utilizing anthropomorphic animals (Donald Duck, Jose Carioca, ect...) as a means of representing cultural iconography and rather

than actual realism showing symbols that exist in the real world, but in a cartoon-y aesthetic. *Bambi* while also utilizing animation, does not do this in the same way as these films as there is no disconnect between the audio and visual components. This is due to there being no spoken narrative outside of the diegesis, a practice that is very common within both the nature documentary as well as the Disney Documentary.

The differences between the nature documentary, the Disney documentary, and *Bambi* are just as numerous as the deviations between *Bambi* and the traditional method of storytelling. The biggest distinction is that within the types of documentary that Bill Nichols outlines in his book “Introduction to Documentary”, specifically the chapter titled “What Types of Documentary Are There?” the nature documentary or the Disney documentary generally tends to subscribe to the expository mode with a focus on the information given about the subjects as well as the spoken word, mainly through a voice of God type narration (*Saludos Amigos*, *The Three Caballeros*). There is an absence of this essential expository element in *Bambi* as none of the 950 words in the script are spoken by a disembodied voice and no information about the animal’s biology or natural habits are given to the audience in the movie explicitly through voiceover.

Another dissimilarity between the nature documentary and *Bambi* is that the former genre of film tends to focus almost entirely on the animals that are being documented by using close ups and tracking shots with the animal front and center, in constant focus and filling up a majority of the screen for many of the scenes. *Bambi* on the other hand does use these types of shots on occasion but also implements just as many, if not more, medium to long shots that focus on the environment surrounding the characters. The scene in which Bambi’s mother journeys out into the meadow for the first

time in order to see if it is safe is an example of the film's utilization of extreme long shots because at its furthest length the mother takes up a relatively small portion of the screen when compared to the open space of the meadow and the fog surrounding her. This allows for the environment to become a bigger, more important focus to the audience instead of just the background. Shots like this are used in the exact opposite way as the close ups of the nature documentary because while the close ups are applied to visually complement the information being spoken to the audience, the long shots in *Bambi* are used to enhance the surrounding nature and its colors, without the use of dialogue or spoken narration about the animals. This emphasizes the emotional weight and atmosphere of the scenes by distancing itself from any type of spoken or visual information, and this focus on emotion is an important distinction in why *Bambi* can be considered a poetic documentary.

The poetic documentary is described by Bill Nichols as having a set of vital characteristics that define it, one of these characteristics being the eschewing of a sense of time and space. Nichols explains, "the poetic mode sacrifices the conventions of continuity editing and the sense of a very specific location in time and place that follows from it to explore associations and patterns that involve temporal rhythms and spatial juxtapositions (Nichols 102)." *Bambi* uses this characteristic in two distinct ways. First in a literal sense the setting and time period of this movie are ambiguous to the audience. The mysterious forest where Bambi is born has no name beyond "the forest" and the time period in which this film takes place is never mentioned directly or alluded to by any of the speaking characters (the only real clue is given when the humans show up, but even that is open for interpretation). Also the usage of time skips in relation to the progression

of the story such as when Bambi goes from an adolescent to an adult in between two scenes further eschews the sense of immediate temporal linearity within the timeline of the film, at least when compared to that of another Disney film.

The second way that *Bambi* implements these poetic characteristics is during a select few scenes when the artwork changes significantly from the general “real” nature aesthetic of the picture. The best sequence to explain this is when Bambi is confronted by another deer and is engaged in a fight over Faline, Bambi’s love interest in the film. The scene starts out with the realistic design right up until Bambi charges at the other deer. Once this occurs both of the animals change colors and the background turns from a detailed forest into nothing but a flat backdrop tinted with unnatural colors, while a few select trees and bushes (that also change color to match the background) are outlined, stripped of the detail they once had. This one scene destroys the illusion of space altogether to create an aesthetic that is both expressionistic in design but also one that mirrors the heightened and primal emotions of the fight taking place on screen. The fact that several moments in the movie are aesthetically similar to this one expresses the importance of this one poetic characteristic within the film and how it has the ability to change the scenes on an emotional level.

Another characteristic of the poetic documentary that we can see within *Bambi* comes to the audience in the form of the titular character himself. Nichols states that in a poetic documentary, “social actors seldom take on the full-blooded form of characters with psychological complexity and a fixed view of the world” and when looking at Bambi himself this idea holds true (Nichols 102). Bambi, and to an extent every other character within the film, is not psychologically complex by any stretch of the

imagination throughout the piece. He has no goals for the duration of the movie and speaks almost the least amount of dialogue for a main character in a Disney production (the least being Dumbo who has no dialogue within his respective film). In fact, the first time that Bambi utters a word is when nearly thirteen minutes of the movie have elapsed, and this is only a simple one-word phrase. He only begins to speak in full coherent sentences after nearly twenty minutes pass and even then he barely talks throughout the rest of the motion picture. Because of his goalless stature and quiet nature, Bambi lacks any strong character traits traditionally seen in most storytelling mediums, however as a representation of a character without “a fixed view of the world” he shines because not only does he fit that description, but also because his view on the world surrounding him changing is the journey he takes as a character (Nichols 102). He is the main character but his role exists predominantly as a seer to this forest, a character who instead of influencing the world around him is taught by the pedagog of the natural world. We as the audience see this young deer literally from birth and follow him as his curiosity of the forest surrounding the animal is satisfied both in positive (seeing a butterfly for the first time showcasing happiness) and negative (The Little April Showers montage showcasing fear) ways. This satisfaction of childlike inquiry is one of the consistent repetitions seen in *Bambi*, and the film does not need to make its protagonist psychologically complex in any way to show that. This once again closely follows the design of the poetic documentary.

The eschewing of spatial and temporal continuity and the inclusion of a protagonist without psychological complexity or a fixed view of the world, while vital, are not the only characteristic of a poetic documentary that *Bambi* holds within its run

time. The use of visual patterns is also an element that Nichols speaks on in his writings in great detail (Nichols 102). *Bambi* contains many sections that use this characteristic in the same way as a standard poetic documentary would. The repeated usage of natural materials flowing across the screen such as flowers, leaves, and feathers is a good example of this because while these small moments are insignificant to the overall plot they represent the “temporal rhythms and spatial juxtapositions” that Nichols was talking about. It accomplishes this by being able to depict both the changing of the seasons through the leaves (physically showing the temporal rhythm and spatial juxtaposition), but also in an emotional way through the falling feathers of a dead bird or the wind swept flowers in the “Looking for Romance” montage (102). The inclusion of these patterns beyond being a characteristic of the poetic documentary is noteworthy in that it manages to convey facts about diegetic world and the story in a simplistic manner. As Nichols puts “the poetic mode is particularly adept at opening up the possibility of alternative forms of knowledge to the straightforward transfer of information (103).” The two examples mentioned above are good instances where the visual patterns showcase much more than shallow aesthetic beauty. The falling leaves tell the audience that the weather is changing and the flying feathers shows the death of the pheasant. Both of these sequences communicate the exact happenings of the story but they do so in a non explicit way, poetically transferring information in an alternate manner as opposed to using dialogue, exposition, or similar filmic tropes. There is also another constant within the film that uses this non-explicit way of projecting information to the audience, and that is how movement is utilized within the film.

Movement, and the way it is used within *Bambi*, is just as important as a poetic device as structure or character, as it bridges the realistic elements of the film with the poetic elements. As explained before the efforts that the animators took in order to establish realism within *Bambi* were extensive and the actual animation of the forest creatures is no exception. Each and every single animal moves in a way reminiscent of their real life counterpart, this is particularly noteworthy with Bambi as his movements change throughout the film. He starts off as a newborn, stumbling around and trying to stand on his own. As he gets older he gains balance and walks with caution, and as he reaches his adulthood he moves with certainty and elegance. This is evocative of a real deer's life as the development of motion generally follows this pattern. But the changing movement of Bambi is also indicative of more than just his age. As explained, the poetic mode is adept at opening up the possibility of alternative forms of knowledge within a film and Bambi's actions display a significant amount of unexplicit details.

The motion of the protagonist during the first part of the winter segment is a good example of the subconscious transfer of information commonly seen within the film. How Bambi moves within this scene displays not only his age through the fact that it is much different than the way he moved earlier on in the film, but also displays his emotional state without explicitly narrating it to the audience. In the scene he first exits his cave and walks around cautiously, looking at his surroundings as if attempting to comprehend this natural phenomenon. Once this understanding is reached he jumps around in all directions, moving through the snow with reckless abandonment. What this conveys is that Bambi has the capacity to learn about his surroundings, along with his changing emotional state going from timid and confused to excited and adrenalized in

only a few short moments. All of this is shown to the audience solely with just how the main character moves and this transfer of information as explained before is a method used in poetic documentary filmmaking. However, the poetic characteristics within *Bambi* can also be seen during the montage sequences, which happens to fall in line with the characteristics of the poetic documentary laid out by Nichols.

Nichols explains that the use of montage editing is also valuable in representing a way to “explore associations and patterns that involve temporal rhythms and spatial juxtapositions” within a poetic documentary (102). Much like the previous poetic characteristic outlined, *Bambi* subscribes to this rule by containing multifarious moments that can be considered to be using montage editing. The scene introduced earlier, known as the “Looking for Romance” sequence is a noteworthy instance of a montage from the film. The moment takes place right after the expressionist fight between Bambi and Ronno (the name of the deer that he fights) as the titular character and his mate, Faline, travel slowly on to the meadow while an orchestra and choir are heard in the background. They prance around the meadow as a symbol of their animalistic love while shots of them, flying birds, windswept flowers, and the grassy meadow, accompany their cavorting in synchronization with the music. In this sequence there is no dialogue whatsoever, allowing for the music to be heard as the main point of focus to the audience on an aural level, building on to the atmospheric visuals. This music is particularly valuable because it houses similarities to an earlier song that played during Bambi’s first time going into the meadow with his mother.

What the repetition of this theme shows, is that this particular location is tied to many different moments that were influential in Bambi’s life. Visually the two animals

are seen through the opaque shadows of moonlight, and when they are not on screen there are shots of nature along with flying birds and flower pedals dancing along to the waltz like music. This visual component of the sequence causes it to be dark and moody overall in tone and the darkness allows for the scene to attach multiple interpretable emotions to its presentation, as it can be read in a multitude of ways. One might see the scene as lovely through the romantic acts seen in the montage. But another might read the scene as a cathartic manifestation of sadness due to the emotional ties that the meadow where this scene takes place holds as this was where Bambi spent much time with his mother as well as the same place where his mother was shot, the pivotal moment for the main protagonist as well as for the structure of the film. Both of these interpretations can hold value because the aesthetic keeps any direct information from being given to the audience. The amalgamated elements of this particular sequence emphasize the most crucial component of a poetic documentary and that is the ability to stress the mood and tone of the film.

As Nichols continues “this mode stresses mood, tone, and affect much more than displays of knowledge or acts of persuasion” and through sequences such as the “Looking for Romance” segment we can see as an audience that within *Bambi* the stress is being put exponentially more on the former characteristics than the latter, and the use of music, specifically within the montages, show exactly why (Nichols 103). Walt Disney knew that to make a movie that stresses these emotional elements over the narrative that the music was absolutely vital. “There’s a terrific power to music.” Disney states, “You can run any of these pictures and they’d be dragging and boring but the minute you put music behind them they have life and vitality they don’t get in any other way. We have to

do that with this picture. Put and emphasis on the music.” (Care 83). This quote talking about *Bambi* exemplifies not only music’s importance within the movie but also the significance of the mood and tone that this film is trying to convey.

All of this is specifically why Walt Disney himself did not want all that much dialogue to be included because he thought that it would interfere with the action on screen, thus encroaching on the silent emotions presented. To quote Disney, “the characters talk too much. In the book it’s different but we’re working with a medium that calls for action, so let’s cut all the unnecessary conversation” (Care 80). All of the poetic elements of *Bambi* including the eschewing of spatial and temporal continuity, the inclusion of a character without psychological complexity or a fixed view of the world, the use of visual patterns, and montage editing are tied together through their lack of dialogue and use of music. Because of this *Bambi*’s similarities to a poetic documentary are not a coincidence but an intentional decision by Walt Disney and the directors of the film which helps strengthen the idea that *Bambi* could be considered a poetic documentary because it fits within each vital characteristic that Bill Nichols outlined in his description. The interesting thing is that Disney had worked in this avant-garde form before with a film that stressed musicality and tone, 1940’s *Fantasia*.

While *Fantasia* is more in line with the fantasy genre than that of a documentary (with the exception of one scene which will be addressed later) it does house multiple similarities to *Bambi* in form and structure. Both films utilize music as a means of projecting emotions without explicitly stating it, both films lack the amount of conventional dialogue normally seen within a Disney piece, and both use a segmented structure in order to weave their narratives through the piece (though *Fantasia*’s

sequences are not connected while *Bambi's* are). All of these characteristics are utilized in the same manner between the two films though they serve different purposes, *Fantasia's* being a filmic method to visually capture music and *Bambi's* being a filmic method of capturing animal life respectively. The exception within *Fantasia*, the Rite of Spring sequence however, is valuable as it bears many resemblances towards *Bambi*.

The Rite of Spring segment is particularly noteworthy as it uses a poetic documentary structure to re-enact the creation of the universe or as the narrator Deems Taylor explains, "a coldly accurate reproduction of what science thinks went on during the first few billion years of this planet's existence." The unique thing about this segment is that it follows almost the same structure as *Bambi* with regards to the birth/ adolescence/ adulthood motif, though in *Fantasia* the audience follows the earth and its early inhabitants as a character rather than a singular being. The value of this connection is that it gives context to the cinematic forms that Disney was experimenting with at the time. This allows for the poetic documentary to be realistically added to the Disney lexicon despite not being fully acknowledged.

But perhaps the best way to fully understand the poetic documentary as its own form of cinema would be to compare and contrast *Bambi* with an actual poetic documentary, in that case Joris Ivens 1929 film *Rain*. As Nichols states in his article "the poetic mode began in tandem with modernism as a way of representing reality in terms of a series of fragments, subjective impressions, incoherent acts, and loose associations," all of which correspond to *Rain* and *Bambi* in synonymous ways (103). *Rain* accomplishes this through its overall fragmented structure and editing, lack of clearly defined or identifiable characters, and a main focus on emotional tone rather than a narrative

(though there is a vague plot within the short film). To a lesser extent *Bambi* does all of these things as well, from utilizing a fragmented narrative through its time skips to focusing on an emotional tone with the expressive patterns.

Both films also align themselves with the poetic mode by “breaking up time and space into multiple perspectives, denying coherence to personalities vulnerable to eruptions from the unconscious, and refusing to provide solutions to the insurmountable problems (103).” They accomplish all three of these aspects in their own individual ways. Regarding the first characteristic, time and space are broken up into multiple perspectives in *Rain* through the lack of a singular character (or any character for that matter) that the audience follows. This allows for an interpretation of the diegetic perspective as one can view the shots of *Rain* as a continuous stream of one vista looking at the weather or as multiple views intercut between each other. *Bambi* is the exact opposite as there is a singular character being followed by the audience throughout the entire film. However, time is heavily fragmented and the different ages of Bambi allow for alternate perspectives on the world as infant Bambi would not view his circumstances similarly to adult Bambi. One could argue that throughout the film Bambi is more or less three separate characters as his age is a main determining factor for how he responds to the world around him and the three ages that Bambi goes through within the film showcase this distinction in perspective.

“Denying coherence to personalities vulnerable to eruptions from the unconscious” is tied to the characters/ lack of characters within both pieces (103). As explained before *Rain* has no main character so the denial of coherence to the personality is irrelevant, *Bambi* is very difficult to place into this category as he is a character who

may or may not be vulnerable to eruptions from the unconscious depending on the interpretation, and is gifted with narrative coherence. However, his role as a “social actor” within the film is fixed and therefore one must look at the other characters within the film to find the denial of coherence. The best example of a character who is denied this coherence within the narrative would be Friend Owl, who only appears in a few sequences. The denial of coherence comes from the fact that he exists in the story as an archetype mentor to Bambi (specifically in the “twitter-pated” sequence) but is exhibited in the film as a way to introduce the audience to the world of the story as a non-traditional narrator by never fully addressing the audience or breaking the fourth wall in the same way as an expository documentary. This duality of his character as an “unimportant narrator” is never fully realized within the film as he is given only a short amount of time on screen and this is not coherent (and it is not trying to be as he is a minor character with no supplied arch).

Lastly the quote “refusing to provide solutions to the insurmountable problems” relates to both movies as the problems seen in them are not solved or can not be solved. *Rain* does not have a conflict or problem within the film beyond the fact that rain can not be stopped, so once again this is irrelevant, but *Bambi* has very clear disputes that are given no direct solution. The main conflicts within this film are nature versus man and to a lesser extent nature versus nature. The latter is mostly exhibited during the winter sequence in the film when Bambi and his mother are faced with a diminishing source of food, which is what causes the two to venture out into the meadow when it is unsafe, prompting the death of Bambi’s mother by the hands of a hunter. This brings up the

second, and the most important conflict shown in the movie, the struggle between nature and man.

How this conflict is represented in the narrative is that it is split between the first and the second half of the film. The first half of the film uses man as an implied danger, never particularly seen or heard but always an ominous presence in the minds of the various animals. It is not until the mother is shot and killed by a hunter when man becomes a physical figure in the forest, escalating the conflict between the two populations until the end of the film. This climax entails hunters encroaching upon the animals in the forest causing an uproar and a mass migration, which is only further sped up by the forest accidentally being set on fire. In the end this mass destruction is met with the regrowth of the forest as man leaves and nature continues on its cyclical journey of the seasons. There is no resolution to the problems associated with hunting or destroying the environment despite the film being on the side of the animals for the duration of the story. Both of these problems are far too large to figure out within the confines of a seventy-minute movie but it does address them in a way that allows for the audience to figure out the solutions for themselves and the film is highly aware of that issue. This self awareness is the springboard for the film's lack of "strong" rhetoric in that much like a poetic documentary it has issues that are addressed, but they are never issues that are directly confronted or solved in the same way as a standard narrative or even in an expository or observational documentary. In fact, the solving of these issues presented within *Bambi* are not even attempted by the filmmakers, which as stated before allows for the audience to try and do so themselves. This causes the film to not only address these issues in a poetic manner, but it also allows for a more active viewing experience as the

emotions portrayed might cause people to change their opinion on any of the topics brought up within the film such as hunting or deforestation.

Keep in mind that none of the characteristics of the poetic documentary referenced in the comparisons between *Rain* and *Bambi* are necessary in order for a film to be considered as such. But rather they exist more as historical guidelines created by a single person for classifying many of the avant-garde pieces made in the time period of *Rain*. There are a multitude of differences between live action poetic pieces and this film and they should be addressed, however the overall comparisons between the “classified” poetic documentary and the animated fable are valuable in determining *Bambi*’s vague genre category.

Bambi is a film about the life of a deer and nothing more in regards to the story or characters, however these elements should not be perceived as that important to the film overall. From its non-traditional structure that emulates a nature documentary to the usage of visual patterns and montage editing it is understandable that the film stresses the mood, tone, and atmosphere over any displays of knowledge or acts of persuasion. It is comparable in structure to that of documentaries like *Saludos Amigos* or *The Three Caballeros*, in style to that of avante-garde documentaries like *Rain*, and in poetic expression to that of mainstream experimental animations like *Fantasia*. Because of this *Bambi* has enough of the credentials and characteristics within its 70-minute run-time that it could be considered a poetic documentary as apposed to a more traditional plot focused piece of cinema.

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