ANIMATING TRAUMA: "WALTZ WITH BASHIR" AND THE ANIMATED DOCUMENTARY

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by

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *Animating Trauma:* Waltz with Bashir *and the Animated Documentary* by Selena Ann Dickey, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree: Master of Arts in Cinema Studies at San Francisco State University.

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This thesis will examine and evaluate Ari Folman's *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) as an example of a postmodern trauma document. The film, which charts the filmmaker's excavation of his repressed memories of the 1982 Lebanon War, grapples with the question: how to capture the fractured and unknowable nature of trauma? Answering this has become ever more difficult to do in our postmodern world, where constant advances in technology make onscreen images harder to discern as indexically "real," and conventions of objectivity belie the truth they seek to make known. The psychology of trauma itself presents a unique challenge: it is an overwhelming experience, illogical, incoherent, and uncontrollable, almost always inciting hallucinations, flashbacks, and nightmares. To represent it with traditional/verité documentary practices and to sequence them logically and coherently dangerously fixes traumatic events into superficial narrative arcs, i.e., narrative fetishization, and denies trauma's illogical and incoherent nature. By using more subjective approaches such as animated documentary, representations are able to give equal credence to flashbacks, dreams, and recollections, configuring them as visual shards, as relative and contingent truths. Little has been written on the possibilities animated documentary holds, and this paper, culling evidence from various writings on cinema, animation, and trauma studies, hopes to spur and expand such discussions.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.

Chair, Thesis Committee

05/09/10
Date

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The Psychological Detective

Rain spatters against the windows, the night outside inky black. Two men lean over their drinks, swallows of beer and liquor punctuated by pulls off of cigarettes. The bar is hazy with the smoke. They try to make sense of a nightmare that recurrently haunts one of them.

"Have you tried anything?" asks one man.

"No, nothing," the other replies, "I called you."

"But I'm just a filmmaker."

"Films can be therapeutic, right?"

The mise-en-scène is familiar: the dominance of shadows and cigarette haze; someone beseeching the protagonist to "take the case"; a mysterious past that haunts the present. Director Ari Folman, in the opening sequence of *Waltz with Bashir* (2008), sets up the narrative trajectory of his film to subtly mimic the *film noir* private eye plot. After the above conversation with his friend Boaz, Folman drives his car through the rainy night, looking inward for any haunting memories of his own. At first, he finds none, but then is overwhelmed by a flashback—the first "clue" in the "case." "That night, for the first time in 20 years, I had a flashback of the war in Lebanon," his voiceover tells the audience. The rest of the film charts his investigation into the meaning of this flashback, its allegiance to truth, and the implications it bears upon Folman's participation in the 1982 Lebanon War. In this "case" though, the viewer isn't bracing for a typical revelation

of "whodunit" or how the femme fatale double-crosses the P.I.; instead, the filmmaker is an allegorical detective: he "attempts to makes sense out of the fragmented, fractured, and decontextualized remains of the past by creating forms through which they might come to have meaning."[1] This fragmentation is the result of trauma, specifically for Folman, the trauma resulting from his role in the war as an Israeli soldier during the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camp massacre. In attempting to piece together his fragmented past, he—like many historiographers and filmmakers—runs into the problem of what to do with these shards, what form should they take to speak the truth of repressed memories?

To complicate matters more, representing his past through traditional documentary methods would fail to fully express Folman's traumatic experiences. Linda Williams, in her "Mirrors without Memories: Truth, History, and the New Documentary," argues that traditional/verité documentary's persistence in being a simple mirror reflecting "truth" and "reality" has become discordant with our postmodern world. As she points out, a contradiction in visual culture makes such an easy reflection impossible. With the influx of manipulated images—a result of increasingly sophisticated and pervasive technology—faith in the referent becomes lost. Visual consumers slip further and further into a *hyperreality* as their tie to the referent becomes ever more tenuous. Her words echo Jean Baudrillard:

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[1] Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005) xviii.

> The great event of this period, the great *trauma*, is this decline of strong referentials, these death pangs of the real and of the rational that open onto an age of simulation. Whereas so many generations…lived in the march of history, in the euphoric or catastrophic expectation of a revolution—today one has the impression that history has retreated, leaving behind it an indifferent nebula, traversed by currents, but emptied of references [my emphasis].[2]

This loss of the referent becomes a postmodern trauma: no longer can "truth" and "reality" be known "euphorically," only obliquely—if at all. Williams says, "…because so much faith was once placed in the ability of the camera to reflect objective truths of some fundamental social referent…the loss of faith in the objectivity of the image seems to point, nihilistically…to the brute and cynical disregard of ultimate truths."[3] With nothing to visually trust, society has fewer ways to access the real and fewer reasons to believe it can. And yet, paradoxically, Williams observes people's residual and insatiable hunger for this dwindling "real." Recall the fervent uproar surrounding the footage of the Rodney King beating (interestingly still not proof enough to convict), the never-ending replay of the planes crashing into the Twin Towers, and, for a more recent example, the shooting death of Iranian bystander, Neda Agha-Soltan, caught by camera phones and "Youtube'd" around the world. This, coupled with the immediacy of popular

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[2] Jean Baudrillard, "History: A retro scenario," *History on film Reader*, ed. Marnie Hughes-Warrington (London: Routledge, 2009) 190.

[3] Linda Williams, "Mirrors Without Memories: Truth, History, and the New Documentary," *Film Quarterly* 46.3 (1993): 10.

technology—hand-held, fully wired computers called iPhones, 'Tweets giving updates in 140 characters or less, GPS feeds putting users on virtual street corners—only highlights this craving for the *now*, the *real*.

Not so coincidentally, as the Agha-Soltan example shows, the paradox becomes most obvious when spectators are confronted with violence and trauma. As Cathy Caruth points out, in her *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*: "…it is here, in the equally widespread and bewildering encounter with trauma—both in its occurrence and in the attempt to understand it—that we can begin to recognize the possibility of a history that is no longer straightforwardly referential…"[4] In other words, trauma becomes the point of collision between the known and the unknown, where the "death pang" of the real is poignantly felt. It is where history can no longer be reflected in single mirror and where the postmodern contradiction is most evident. Carrying the mirror metaphor further, Williams believes traumatic/violent history must instead be reflected through a shattered and fractured mirror because each shard can reveal "a newer, more contingent, relative, postmodern truth…"[5] She analyzes a set of "new" documentaries that operate as such cracked mirrors, and Folman's *Waltz with Bashir* fits into her categorization. As mentioned before, the filmmaker functions as a psychical detective, collecting shards of his lost memory and attempting to put them back together. *Waltz* documents this construction and, in turn, questions the ability of traditional modes of representation to

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[4] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) 11.

[5] Williams 11.

ever fully reconstruct the truth of traumatic experience. A closer look at how traditional documentaries dangerously narrativize and simulate psychological closure, how the mechanisms of trauma are at odds with realist approaches, and how Folman's unique, "new documentary" approach captures the *contingent* and *relative* truths of postmodern history will reveal how "the truth figured by documentary cannot be a simple unmasking or reflection. It is a careful construction, an intervention in the politics and semiotics of representation."[6]

Breaking the Mirror

To understand why the "simple mirror" of traditional/realist documentary is unable to fully capture the traumatic experience, one must first examine its underlying formal principles. As Bill Nichols defines them, traditional documentaries, made up largely of the expository and observational/verité modes, rely on such conventions as voice-of-God narration, seamless and linear narrative flow and editing style, a seeming lack of interference by the filmmakers, etc. to connote realism. Through these mechanisms, such films oftentimes contribute to the myth of an objective historical account. They present the world as accessible in an unmediated way with the viewer in the position of an ideal observer.[7] Says Nichols in regards to the verité mode, "As in classical narrative fiction, our tendency to establish a repertoire of imaginary

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[6] Williams 20.
[7] Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991) 43.

relationships with characters and situations prospers on condition of the filmmaker's presence as absence."[8] Unknowingly guided by the subtle manipulations of an invisible filmmaker, viewers believe they are seeing an unadulterated historical moment, one that, peculiarly, tidies itself up by the conclusion and wraps up its argument succinctly. They believe themselves to be objective voyeurs, as knowing the social actors and events as they "really are." Such a viewing position presupposes the historical event is *knowable*, that easy conclusions and objectivity exist—but this objectivity is an illusion crafted by filmmakers. Observational and expository documentary conventions are plotting devices, ways to tell a story. Hayden White points out how these emplotment choices "can justify ignoring certain kinds of events, agents, actions, agencies, and patients that may inhabit a given historical scene or its context."[9] If persons, events, etc., are effaced so that a historical document conforms to conventional standards of "factuality," and are done so invisibly, not only is viewers' access to the event highly mediated, their awareness of its "untidy," incomprehensible aspects are nullified as well. Furthermore, because violent and traumatic events cannot be straightforwardly referential—i.e., factually configured—objective, historical master narratives, especially of trauma, are impossible. Trauma requires a representational form that embraces its fractured nature, its resistance to clear-

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[8] Nichols, *RR* 43-44.

[9] Hayden White, "Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth," *Probing the Limits of Representations: Nazism and the 'Final Solution'* ed. Saul Friedlander (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992) 43.

cut definitions and monolithic emplotments; the single mirror of traditional documentaries cannot fully reflect its complexities.

Secondly, the complicated psychological nature of trauma presents a challenge to traditional documentary modes of representation. Its illogical, incoherent, uncontrolled, and incomprehensible properties are at odds with the tidy linearity and logic of expository and observational documentary. Says Caruth, "In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena."[10] As her definition highlights, the subject is unable to control the remembering or the forgetting. Memories invade a subject's thoughts unbidden; the intrusion of flashbacks is sparked by ambiguously related stimuli. White recognizes this uncontrollable quality of trauma as well, relating his definition on a larger scale. He discusses "holocaustal" events, or "…events which not only could not possibly have occurred before the twentieth century but the nature, scope, and implications of which no prior age could even have imagined,"[11] and sees them "function[ing] in the consciousness of certain social groups exactly as infantile traumas are conceived to function in the psyche of neurotic individuals."[12] White continues:

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[10] Caruth 11.
[11] Hayden White "The Modernist Event," *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event*, ed. Vivian Sobchack (London: Routledge, 1996) 20.
[12] White, *Modernist* 20.

> This means that they cannot be simply forgotten and put out of mind, but neither can they be adequately remembered; which is to say, clearly and unambiguously identified as to their meaning and contextualized in the group memory in such a way as to reduce the shadow they cast over the group's capacities to go into its present and envision a future free of their debilitating effects.[13]

"Holocaustal" events, then, not only *uncontrollably* return to the traumatized, they also *evade comprehension.* That is, they cannot be understood through simple cause and effect relationships, and their impact over time is not subject to commonsensical rules.[14] Because of this incomprehensibility, a crisis in representation arises: if trauma cannot be directly understood, how can it ever be spoken of, how can it be represented? Aaron Kerner points out, "The catastrophic, or the catastrophe, is an event, or an experience so overwhelmingly horrific that it typically exceeds our linguistic capacity… There is a tendency when confronted with the catastrophic to disavow it, or to place it *beyond all representation* [my emphasis]."[15] In attempting to "attribute form to 'unimaginable' suffering, 'unspeakable' horror, 'incomprehensible' violence,"[16] the subject inevitably encounters the paradox of "giv[ing] the semblance of form to the 'non-object'…"[17] Kerner gets to the heart of the problem of comprehending and articulating the

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[13] White, *Modernist* 20.
[14] White, *Modernist* 21-22.
[15] Aaron Kerner, *Representing the Catastrophic: Coming to Terms with "Unimaginable" Suffering and "Incomprehensible" Horror in Visual Culture* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007) 1.
[16] Kerner 2.
[17] Kerner 2.

catastrophic/traumatic by aligning it with the abject: "Often constituted as a monstrous enigma, [the abject] has no proper place, no proper category, and perhaps worst of all, no words to definitively describe it…it is not something that we can grasp cognitively *per se*, but rather it is an experience."[18] Trauma/catastrophe/the abject exists in the liminal space "…between what sustains life and the destruction of life, the boundary between life and death itself…"[19] Paradoxically, to comprehend trauma, one must embrace the abject, the incomprehensibility: "For history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence."[20]

Furthermore, when documentarists/historians exert narrative control over a traumatic event through realist tactics, the result can be dangerous. In wielding this narrative mastery, they erroneously believe trauma can be controlled, comprehended, and neatly concluded. Says White, in reference to the classic, realist narrative:

> Telling a story, however truthful, about such traumatic events might very well provide a kind of 'intellectual mastery' of the anxiety which memory of their occurrence may incite in an individual or a community. But precisely insofar as

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[18] Kerner 26.
[19] Kerner 25.
[20] Caruth 18.

> the story is identifiable *as a story*, it can provide no lasting 'psychic mastery' of such events.[21]

Narrativizing the event or applying realist conventions are superficial processes and achieves no lasting catharsis. Organizing the trauma as a story with a beginning, middle, and end, and using visuals in the verité vein short-circuits the healing process by assuming there *is* such orderliness and objectivity. Kerner reinforces this: "Realism—or more colloquially, realistic representation—is largely premised on a verifiable link between the representation and the catastrophe (e.g., eyewitness testimony). The paradox however is that the catastrophe is characterized as beyond representational form."[22] In supposedly capturing things as they "really were," realistic representations can lead viewers to assume that what is presented on screen is the verification of the event, an "unbroken nexus from the event itself, to its articulation…"[23] They believe the indexicality of the image has provided unmediated access to irrefutable facts and the narrative has delineated clear causes and effects; they believe they now know the "real," and that the victims of trauma have healed and moved on; they believe they understand the magnitude of this grave injustice (whatever it may be) and can sigh with relief with its narrative conclusion.

Eric Santner, in his "History Beyond the Pleasure Principle," terms this counterfeited comprehension "Narrative Fetishism," or "the construction and deployment

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[21] White, *Modernist* 32.
[22] Kerner 2.
[23] Kerner 5.

of a narrative consciously or unconsciously designed to expunge the traces of trauma or loss that called that narrative into being in the first place…it is a strategy of undoing, in fantasy, the need for mourning by simulating a condition of *intactness*…" [my emphasis].[24] By simulating wholeness, an unbroken nexus, the trauma is never processed, mourned, and integrated into the victim's psyche. "[It] releases one from the burden of having to reconstitute one's self-identity under 'posttraumatic' conditions."[25] The anxiety still lies latent, unincorporated, and the loss remains, "continu[ing] to represent a past that refuses to go away."[26] Without mourning—the psychological process of substituting signifiers that allows for the controlled symbolic dosing of absences and renunciation helping one to survive and be empowered after trauma[27]—a subject remains locked in "repetition compulsion"[28]: flashbacks and nightmares, the residual effects of repressing the trauma, continue to haunt. By the same token, spectators of these fetishized narratives, undergoing a far-removed but similar psychological process through viewer-identificatory practices, also never recuperate and mourn the trauma represented, and are left falsely comforted, believing there was no need for anxiety in the first place.[29] As E. Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang, in their introduction to *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations*, point out, spectators of trauma cinema (of the "melodramatic" or

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[24] Eric Santner, "History Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Some Thoughts on the Representation of Trauma," *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution,"* ed. Saul Friedlander (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992) 144.
[25] Santner 144.
[26] Santner 147.
[27] Santner 146.
[28] Santner 147.
[29] Santner 147.

narratively mastered sort) oftentimes are "introduced to trauma through a film's themes and techniques, but where the film ends with a comforting "cure"…such works posit the trauma (against reality) as a discrete past event, locatable, representable and curable…"[30] Narrative fetishism adversely effects not only victims of trauma but spectators of trauma cinema as well.

Therefore, to break this nexus so that trauma may be processed and catharsis achieved for both, Kerner proposes a representational approach focused on form "because the abject is articulated in the *form* of its representation, not its *content per se*; the abject finds its 'voice' in artistic practices—in color, musicality, rhythm, light, harmony, and metaphor—mediating the presence of abjection."[31] By channeling it thusly, "…a representation of abjection can act as a thoroughfare to the sublime,"[32] and this encounter with the sublime "might be associated with the liberating and explosive release of psychic tension."[33] Rather than represent trauma with a "single mirror" and narratively fetishize the catastrophic event, unorthodox formal approaches embrace the shattered, fragmented mirror and channel the abject into the sublime, ultimately achieving catharsis. As Kerner stresses, what is needed to do this "is the fostering of rhetorical strategies that

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[30] E. Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang, "Introduction: From Traumatic Paralysis to the Force Field of Modernity," *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004) 9.
[31] Kerner 21.
[32] Kerner 23.
[33] Kerner 23.

allow for the nuances of individual experiences, which are inherently fragmentary, filled with discrepancies, or forgetfulness."[34]

Folman's highly unorthodox approach—animated documentary—is just such a strategy. It recognizes the unique and complex nature of the catastrophic experience and the psychological repercussions found within the traumatized subject, and filters in the abject in amounts the psyche is capable of handling. The formal device of animation disrupts the nexus, the easily traceable line from the event to utterance; it creates space for the incomprehensible and the unimaginable to trickle through. It makes the film not a work of *narrative fetishism*, but instead, a *work of mourning*: "a process of elaborating and integrating the reality of loss or traumatic shock by remembering and repeating it in symbolically and dialogically mediated doses; it is a process of translating, troping, and figuring loss…"[35] Rather than utilize realist methods to *falsely* convey narrative wholeness—in effect, dissociating oneself from the event by figuring it as complete and finished, and thereby closing off the possibility of catharsis—the use of drawing/animation interrupts this tidy delineation and, once again, destabilizes clear-cut boundaries, aiding in the processing of trauma. The moment the subject integrates the incomprehensible and uncontrollable elements of the event, only then can they figure the loss. By denying the camera, the trap of narrative fetishism, borne from the conventions of realism, is thwarted; Folman's use of animation allows for a fuller understanding and

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[34] Kerner 50.
[35] Santner 144.

figuring of the traumatic and conveys the "multi-faceted receding horizon"[36] of postmodern truth.

Waltz with Bashir and the Animated Documentary

Very little has been written on the possibilities animation holds for articulating and processing traumatic experiences. Perhaps this is because the form straddles such a precarious position within cinema. Deleuze, in theorizing the "movement-image," specifically bans "cartoons" from filmic discourse because they "[do] not give us a figure described in a unique moment, but the continuity of the movement which describes the figure."[37] This refusal of the form is premised on the belief that drawing/animation is unable to break free from being anything more than a pose or a completed figure; it cannot become the "description of a figure which is always in the process of being formed or dissolving through the movement of lines and points taken at any-instant-whatevers of their course."[38] In other words, Deleuze deems cinema "cinematic" by its ability to flow as frames per second: the primacy of time. Because animation prioritizes the figure over the moment—the primacy of the frame—it is disqualified. But others argue that this doesn't fully sum up the ontological nature of animation. As Norman McClaren, forefather of animation, stated: "Animation is not the art of drawings that

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[36] Williams 12.
[37] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Athlone Press, 1986) 5.
[38] Deleuze 5.

move, but rather the art of movements that are drawn. What happens *between* each frame is more important than what happens *on* each frame."[39] The preeminent Chuck Jones echoes this: "One of the odd misunderstandings about animation…is that an individual drawing has the same importance as an illustration. Animation is a chorus of drawings working in tandem, each contributing a part to the whole of a time/space idea."[40] Jones and McClaren's words elucidate an important counterpoint to Deleuze: the spaces *in between* the drawings—where "forming" and "dissolving" occur—are where meaning is conveyed. When looked at this way, animation does indeed qualify as "cinematic" and the cathartic potential of film—"encoded in aesthetic embellishments such as sound, tone, color, space, etc."[41]—is equally, if not more so, applicable to it.

Additionally, animation as a documentary hybrid offers an interesting opportunity to represent the traumatic whilst interrogating the efficacies of traditional documentary. Animation, generally understood to be the complete manipulation of visuals—be it through puppets, drawings, clay, etc.—to accomplish comedic, juvenile, or fantastic narrative ends, seems entirely incongruous to the tenets of documentary. This is due to two mistakes in animation and documentary's respective definitions. First, to associate only "cartoonish" qualities to animation is to inaccurately characterize it by its *content*. Animation is, instead, a technical term referring to unique *formal* techniques. Through drawing, stop-motion, puppetry, etc., filmmakers can represent serious, light-hearted, and

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[39] C. Solomon, *The Art of the Animated Image: An Anthology* (Los Angeles: AFI, 1987) 11.
[40] John Cawley and Jim Korkis, *How to Create Animation* (Las Vegas: Pioneer, 1990) 39.
[41] Kerner 24.

even traumatic content. Secondly, colloquial understandings of documentary, the "sober discourse," rely heavily on images' indexicality, or its ability to mimetically reproduce physical reality. This not only ignores the indexical power of sound to ground documentary discourse in the historical world, but also dangerously overvalues the power of the photographic image. As Paul Ward states, "Such a way of thinking is based in naïve and simplistic notions of how documentary functions, and in a misguided belief that documentary is somehow 'capturing' reality rather than offering an *analysis* of it."[42] As mentioned before, "capturing" reality assumes "reality" can be objectively represented, especially through photographic imagery; but one must remember that every representation is subjectively shaped: the camera chose to film here rather than there, the filmmaker decided to cut at that point rather than another. Animation forces the audience into a constant awareness of every cut and composition's constructedness, an awareness imperative to avoiding the "reality effect." In what follows, I will detail animation's particular styles, how they relate to *Waltz with Bashir*, and how Folman's use of them brings about a self-reflexive awareness of trauma's non-realist mise-en-scène; the filmmaker's unique visualization of these "pseudomemories" through animated documentary thus becomes a new approach in dealing with the unknowable nature of trauma: it accesses its truths by acknowledging its inaccessibility, ultimately serving as a passageway to catharsis.

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[42] Paul Ward, "Animated Interactions: Animation Aesthetics and the World of the 'Interactive' Documentary," *Animated "Worlds"* ed. Suzanne Buchan (Eastleigh: J. Libbey Publishing, 2006) 114.

First, to more thoroughly understand animation's formal characteristics, one must understand the stylistic divisions found within the mode and *Waltz*'s relation to them; doing so allows for a deeper understanding of the subjective, emotional capabilities animation holds. To help with this, Paul Wells, in his *Understanding Animation*, sets up two stylistic poles by which to classify animated films. On the extreme right lies *orthodox* animation,[43] exemplified by mainstream, conventional films. He identifies seven characteristics unique to orthodox animation: configuration ("identifiable people or animals who [correspond] to what audiences would understand as an orthodox human being or creature"[44]); specific (logical) continuity; narrative structure; prioritization of content over form; unity of style; absence of the artist; and character defined by dialogue.[45] As an illustrative example, Disney's Academy Award nominated *Beauty and the Beast* (Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, 1991) neatly fits within the orthodox rubric. While a teapot singing and a prince being transformed into a beast lies outside the realm of possibilities in the phenomenal world, such events *do* conform to the logic of the *Beauty and the Beast* world; the aesthetics are insularly logical and unified; and attention is never drawn to the mechanisms of the form, i.e., the animator never appears in the film, the illusion is never disrupted. At the extreme left lies *avant-garde*, experimental animation "which [is] constituted in new forms (computer, Xerox, sand-on-glass, direct

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[43] The terminology may seem somewhat confusing: *orthodox* as used here is done so in relation to animation in general; the use of animation in documentary as a whole remains highly *unorthodox.*

[44] Paul Wells, *Understanding Animation* (London: Routledge, 1998) 36.

[45] Wells 36-39.

on to celluloid, pinscreen, etc.) or resists traditional forms."[46] Wells, again, classifies the style using seven characteristics: abstraction, specific non-continuity (i.e., "the rejection of logical and linear continuity and the prioritisation of illogical, irrational and sometimes multiple continuities"[47]), interpretive form (the liberty of the artist to "concentrate on the vocabulary he/she is using *in itself* without the imperative of giving it a specific function or meaning"[48]), materiality, multiplicity of styles, the presence of the artist, and a strong relationship to music.[49] Len Lye's *A Colour Box* (1935) is a quintessential experimental animated film: the application of paint directly to celluloid allows for an exploration of line, color, and shape's relationship to music; the physicality of the method creates a heightened awareness of celluloid and paint's materiality; the original, abstract vocabulary Lye develops is explored for purely formal reasons; the non-linear flow of images evades any sort of narrative or logic, and instead, allows for a wholly visceral encounter with movement. Lying somewhere in between these categories is *developmental* animation, which shares characteristics of both and "[represents] the aesthetic and philosophic tension between the two apparent extremes."[50]

Applying this classification system to *Waltz*'s animation, one notices how the film is predominantly *orthodox*: the world of *Waltz* corresponds to the "real" world; the laws of physics and rationality (mostly) conform to "reality"; and diegetic sound is

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[46] Wells 43.
[47] Wells 43.
[48] Wells 44.
[49] Wells 43-44.
[50] Wells 35.

"realistically" motivated. This close relationship to the photographic reveals an interesting aspect of orthodox animation, especially as it relates to *Waltz with Bashir* and representations of trauma. It raises the question: why not just use a camera? If the animator so closely wishes to mime reality, why undertake the painstaking and time-consuming process of animation? Wells, in response to this, states, "animation immediately extricates itself from these kinds of debates [animation versus filming] by already being a medium which is informed by self-evident principles of construction…it prioritises its capacity to *resist* 'realism' as a mode of representation and uses its various techniques to create numerous styles which are fundamentally *about* 'realism'."[51] In other words, self-reflexivity is inherent to the form: orthodox animation, in seeking to emulate reality so closely, doesn't serve as a one-to-one substitute, but instead serves as a metacommentary on photographic rhetoric. By closely mirroring reality, animation, "a 'completely fake' medium by virtue of the fact that it does not use the camera to 'record' reality but artificially creates and records its own,"[52] forces the viewer into an ever-present awareness of its verisimilitude. Rather than passing off its visual rhetoric unquestioned and leading to the "reality effect" and dangerous narrative fetishism—which traditional, live-action documentaries can so easily and often do—the manipulated imagery of animated documentary, through constant attention drawn to its representational processes, offers up brief encounters with traumatic truth—of a relative,

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[51] Wells 25.
[52] Wells 25.

subjective, and contingent sort. As Wells states, "…the very subjectivity involved in producing animation, as it is played out through the medium's intrinsic capability to resist realism, means…the medium does enable the film-maker to more persuasively show subjective reality."[53] As is the case with *Waltz*, it is the *subjective reality* of the trauma experienced by Folman, the "animator," and of those he animates wherein truth lies, as opposed to an unattainable objective reality.

The filmmaker enunciates this matter further by including scenes directly referencing the process of drawing/animation itself; self-reflexivity, then, pervades not only the form, but the content as well. This first occurs during the scene in which Carmi Cna'an is first introduced. As he and the filmmaker trudge through the Holland snows while Carmi's son plays with a toy gun in the background, Folman slowly leads into the purpose of his visit, peppering their conversation with references to the war, what has occurred since, etc. Carmi, eyeing his son's imaginary trench battle, mentions a question his child has brought up:

CC: He asked me if I killed anyone.

AF: Did you?

CC: I don't know.

[A pause]

AF: I'd like to sketch you and your son.

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[53] Wells 27.

CC: Draw as much as you like. It's fine as long as you draw, but don't film.

The conversation, occurring directly before the narrative dives into Carmi's own traumatized memory of the war (to be discussed later), alludes to the film's very method of representation. Carmi, as if intuiting the danger of counterfeit catharsis bound in the supposedly objective photographic (*narrative fetishism*), denies the camera and asks Folman to sketch/animate instead. Animation/drawing thus serves as a disruption to the "myth of photographic 'naturalness.'"[54] The reflexivity of the scene, which causes the viewer to pause, to be drawn out of the diegesis, and to recognize how the animator overtly manipulates the visuals, complicates viewers' understanding of Carmi and Folman's trauma; they begins to see how these soldiers' experiences evade straightforward indexical reproduction. As Roland Barthes points out: "the operation of the drawing (the coding) immediately necessitates a certain division between what signifies and what does not: the drawing does not reproduce *everything*…"[55] In not reproducing everything, *Waltz*'s animation creates gaps in signification which function as a sort of filter, letting the incomprehensible and unimaginable trickle into and be processed by the psyche in amounts it is capable of handling (*the work of mourning*). Kerner also recognizes the importance of these gaps. He notes in his discussion of Art Spiegelman's *MAUS*, a "comic book" of the Holocaust which shares many representational strategies with *Waltz*, how "the 'lack' of detail in the figures allows the

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[54] Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) 33.

[55] Barthes, *Responsibility of Forms* 32.

reader to more fully identify with them; in their 'lack' of detail, the figures become vessels—archetypal characters…universal figures that allow the reader to project their own identity onto the characters, vitalizing the narrative on their own terms."[56] Similarly, Sergei Eisenstein feared "that the imperative which insists upon exactitude or absoluteness, or in his word, *generalisation*, will finally render the artwork inexpressive."[57] Both he and Kerner have identified an interesting paradox: as the details become more and more fixed, less and less truth can be conveyed. The coding of drawing/animation rebuffs this "generalisation," or, in Barthesian terms, the "reality effect"—wherein the "'real' is never anything but an unformulated signified, sheltered behind the apparent omnipotence of the referent."[58] Because the visual details retain a degree of abstraction, animation allows for the traumatic event to be integrated into one's consciousness in a fragmentary and individualized way. Trauma, the point of collision between the known and the unknown, an experience with no proper category and no words to definitively describe it, requires a mode of representation that similarly evades definition and detail. Animation is exactly such a mode. Because viewers no longer merit the work based on its fidelity to "reality," their focus can shift to questions of visual rhetoric: why *is* the camera dangerous? why does Carmi insist on drawing/Folman insist

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[56] Kerner 223-24.
[57] Wells 32.
[58] Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) 139.

on animation? Once these questions are raised, viewers can begin to access trauma's truths whilst acknowledging its inaccessible nature.

Pseudomemories and the Traumatic Aesthetic

One way in which trauma's truths are realized is in Folman's exploration of pseudomemories and a "non-realist mise-en-scène."[59] In her "The Vicissitudes of Traumatic Memory and the Postmodern History Film," Janet Walker utilizes contemporary psychological literature to theorize cinematic representations of trauma and memory, discussing certain avant-garde documentary films that attempt to represent the traumatic experience. While she sticks to filmed examples that challenge the "reality effect"—*Tak for Alt: Survival of a Human Spirit* (Laura Bialis, Broderick Fox, Sara Levy, 1998) and *Family Gathering* (Lise Yasui, 1988), and opens with a fictional example, *Saving Private Ryan* (Stephen Spielberg, 1998)—the "traumatic aesthetic" she identifies is equally, if not more so, applicable to animated documentary. Walker first establishes her definition of this aesthetic through the diagnostic criteria for Post-traumatic Stress Disorder found in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV), which "indicates that traumatic events are 'persistently re-experienced' as 'recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event' including

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[59] Janet Walker "The Vicissitudes of Traumatic Memory and the Postmodern History Film," *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations*, eds. E. Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004) 130.

dreams, flashback episodes, hallucinations, illusions, and the 'feeling of detachment or estrangement from others.'"[60] Here, Walker, like Caruth, highlights the intrusive nature of trauma, but goes a step further, stressing that "If the traumatized veteran *experiences* in fragmentary form, so too he *remembers* through a mind's eye not subject to the optical limitations of a single reflex lens."[61] Animation, a medium completely freed from such limitations, can closely mimic the traumatized mind's eye: flashbacks of combat can seamlessly intermingle with elements of the everyday; a fellow soldier can be made to "waltz" with enemy fire; the ghost of an ex-lover can suddenly appear while on perimeter patrol.

Formally, *Waltz*'s "traumatic aesthetic" is accomplished through the inclusion of certain experimental animation elements, particularly *specific non-continuity*, and, as mentioned earlier, the *presence of the artist*. While the latter is clearly illustrated through the previously discussed scene, the former, defined as "the rejection of logical and linear continuity and the prioritisation of illogical, irrational and sometimes multiple continuities,"[62] can be found in Carmi's memory of his experience in the war, which directly follows the aforementioned conversation. As Folman begins to sketch/animate Carmi and his son, the "camera" pulls back and begins to rapidly pan through the surrounding countryside, making the tree trunks blur into blotches of color, until the color fade and the blur becomes cloud-like. Suddenly, the clouds part, and the viewer finds

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[60] Walker, *Vicissitudes* 128.
[61] Walker, *Vicissitudes* 130.
[62] Wells 43.

him/herself transported over a night sea, a boat below. Just like that, time has shuffled past and the film's temporality has become unglued. Young, naïve Carmi is seasick on the boat, his dreams of being a dashing military hero desired by women lost in the nauseating roll of the waves. Softly yet suddenly, the light on the horizon turns from an inky blackness into a sickly orange. From the silence comes the rhythmic splashing of somebody swimming nearby, their stroke ebbing onto the soundtrack. Carmi, his eyes bleary and his jaw slack from vomiting, watches a giant naked woman mount the ship and hop over the rail. She picks him up like an innocent babe and carries him away, paddling off into the ocean, her body his life raft. As they float on, a plane flies near the ship and drops a bomb, violently blasting the vessel. The woman of the sea, indeed, the sea itself, serves as a watery womb of safety: from its calm waves, Carmi is only an innocent observer, divorcing himself from the violence and his involvement in it, ultimately suppressing the facts and chronology of the event. Shortly thereafter, Carmi is shown arriving on shore with various other soldiers, the mysterious giant woman gone, and no explanation offered for his survival. Here, animation allows the viewer to enter into Carmi's subjectivity without any obvious signifier; time becomes fluid and so too does interiority and exteriority become porous. The illogicality of the sequence mirrors the illogical, intrusive nature of catastrophic experience, and the use of experimental, avant-garde animation elements effectively navigates and configures trauma's non-realist mise-en-scène.

This formal strategy elucidates another uncontrolled, intrusive phenomena of traumatic memory Walker identifies as "disremembering," or "pseudomemories," in which "those who *were* there do not remember or remember mistakenly *because they were traumatized*, and it invites those who *were not* there to identify viscerally and unproblematically with images that present themselves as genuine memories."[63] Pseudomemory functions as a defense mechanism, causing the traumatized subject to remember the event falsely, which, paradoxically serves as proof of the event's veracity. Here, rather than determining the *factual* truth of the event, the viewer is unearthing the *emotional* truth. Says Walker: "…whereas popular and legal venues tend to reject reports of traumatic experiences that contain mistakes or amnesiac elements, contemporary theories of trauma show that such memory features are a common result of the traumatic experience itself, and stand…as a testament to its genuine nature.[64] Once the fantasy constructions are revealed and the difference between the factually substantiated, historical event and the pseudomemory is determined, a "breaking open of the frame," i.e., a "payoff in historical knowledge,"[65] occurs. In other words,

> …under this organization, the words and experience of any one interview subject or protagonist are qualified and correlated with other evidence and commentary presented in the film. They are 'triangulated'…with written documents and historical interpretation so that their partial truths and

[63] Walker, *Vicissitudes* 133.
[64] Walker, *Vicissitudes* 134.
[65] Walker, *Vicissitudes* 136.

> partial misperceptions may emerge in the place of a reductive true/false regime.[66]

Taking the gray area of pseudomemories and coordinating it with the other evidence of the traumatic event avoids the dangerous oversimplification of narrative fetishism. Indeed, *Waltz*, in giving credence to this psychological effect, exemplifies the rhetorical strategy Kerner lauds, that is, it "allow[s] for the nuances of individual experiences, which are inherently fragmentary, filled with discrepancies, or forgetfulness."[67] While traumatic memories may not be factually accurate, the "mistakes" are valuable evidence in their own right: they testify to the subject's emotional experience; they break open the frame of catastrophe.

Folman's own need to "break open the frame" can be seen as a major motivational drive of the film's narrative. Throughout, the filmmaker is persistently and uncontrollably visited by a flashback. It is repeated three times—shortly after the opening conversation with Boaz, during the first, previously mentioned visit with Carmi, and finally, after a second visit paid to Carmi. Initially sparked by present-day Folman's nighttime visit to a rainy, palm-treed beach, the mise-en-scène of the past melts into that of the present, making the spatiotemporal environment ambiguous, disjointed. Folman as a young man swims nude in the ocean—again, the innocence and safety of the sea—with Carmi and a handful of other soldiers. Eerily and silently, the night sky is set ablaze by

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[66] Janet Walker, *Trauma Cinema: Documenting Incest and the Holocaust* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) 22.

[67] Kerner 50.

yellow-orange flares; the men rise out of the water, their faces filled with ambivalence as they stare upwards, their bodies unabashedly exposed. As if sleepwalking, they move towards the shore, pulling on their clothes against a flare of blinding light, an imitation sunrise. The orange suddenly dissipates into de-saturated grays, and the scene becomes nearly black-and-white. The vantage point shifts to situate the viewer behind the soldiers as they round the corner of an alleyway, seeing an abstracted mass of wailing women, all garbed in black. The "camera" again loops around 180 degrees, repositioning the viewer from the women's perspective, until it "zooms" on Folman's terrified face and into an extreme close-up of his eye. It is as if the zoom symbolizes the moment Folman becomes not just as observer, an innocent floating in the sea, or a passer-by in the alley, but a part of the tragedy; it is the moment the trauma overwhelms his psyche. The ambient sound and the filmmaker's voice-over are then muted, and an earnest, simple violin solo takes over the soundtrack. The vision ends shortly thereafter.

Throughout the film, Folman chisels away at the details of this flashback, trying to unearth the clues that reveal the *factual* truth of that night: how he ended up on that beach, how Carmi was supposedly with him, and who the wailing women are. When Carmi finally reveals the ludicrousness of the memory—"You're crazy. You're obsessed. Beach? What are you talking about? Who was on the beach that night? What beach?"—the viewer is made privy to the discrepancies between the historical facts of the night and Folman's recurring hallucination. The following "shots" are narrated with the testimony

of Ron Ben-Yishai, one of the first reporters to arrive in the refugee camps, and Dror Harazi, a commanding officer of an Israeli regiment, in one of the most realistically animated sequences (they are both drawn in typical "talking head" fashion, Folman's voice interviewing from behind the "camera"). The newly revealed facts of the massacre cause a breakthrough, or a "breaking open," and the flashback is reconfigured as a reenactment. Young Folman is seen crouching atop a high-rise, loading a flare cannon—far from the sanctuary of the ocean—complicit in the massacre himself. Both the viewer and the filmmaker, with this new understanding of the factual progression of the night's events and an acute familiarity with the pseudomemory, achieve the historical payoff, the catharsis needed, without counterfeit closure. Both the flashback and the historical facts remain equally valid and necessary, without one existing to the exclusion of the other. Says Ori Sivan, Folman's on screen therapist, of the flashback, "It's still real."

"It's a vision," the filmmaker replies.

"But it's yours."

The Photographic Notary

This historical payoff, this breaking open of the frame is complicated by the film's closing shots. In the last minutes of the film, present-day Ben-Yishai, interviewed by Folman, tells of the sights he saw as he entered the refugee camp 20 years ago. A "cut" aligns the viewer with his perspective: a curly haired child's face buried in rubble;

families slaughtered in courtyards; bodies piled as high as a man's chest; the sea of wailing women. The "camera" then enters the flow of this sea, this crowd; it's a déjà vu. Once again, the viewer is situated in the streaming mass of wailing women, their cries now audible. Ahead, the young Folman—the one made familiar by the repetitive flashbacks—stands still, terrified, panting in fear. The animation suddenly disappears and is replaced by news footage, presumably taken by Ben-Yishai's crew. No longer are the women abstractions, the bloated bodies of men drawings, nor the buried face of a child sketched. The indexical image of all of these is violently thrown in front of the viewer. If Folman's project is to integrate and process traumatic memories whilst paying heed to the ambiguous and unempirical nature of memory through the use of animation, then how does the photographic end sequence, filmed in the most verité of modes, fit? If animation, as a formal strategy, fosters catharsis, then what to do when that strategy dissolves into news footage taken at the time of the massacre? Do these closing shots avoid or fall prey to narrative fetishism?

Looking again to Kerner's discussion of *MAUS* may well shed light on this anomaly. Noticing Spiegelman's inclusion of photographs of his father, little brother, and mother, Kerner first sees the photographs as "work[ing] against *MAUS* to one degree or another, because they might impede a reader's identification."[68] If the drawings and their "lack" of detail foster a "vitalization" of the narrative on individual terms, the

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[68] Kerner 223.

photographs and their "reality effect" "fix the narrative in such a way that they deprive the reader of certain narrative liberties, in terms of identification."[69] In other words, the photographs drain the narrative of its poeisis and might be seen as reinstating the nexus of narrative fetishism. Applying this same logic to Folman's film, the closing shots of *Waltz* echo much the same sentiment: the abstracted faces of the women are fixed, the dead bodies made "real" and situated temporally and historically elsewhere. But because the photographs in *MAUS* and, by extension, the closing footage of *Waltz*, comprise such a small fraction of the narrative, Kerner sees them as having less to do with undermining Spiegelman's rhetorical strategy, and having more to do with the author himself.[70] If Spiegelman's comic represents the author's "attempt to try to understand, to grapple, and to get his hands and head around the catastrophic experience of the Holocaust,"[71] then the inclusion of photographs symbolizes aspects of the catastrophic that *cannot* be understood and that never go away. They are images inexplicably piercing the author's—and the spectator's—understanding of the event; they are, to put it in Barthesian terms, *punctums*: "…element[s] which [rise] from the scene, [shoot] out like an arrow, and [pierce] me."[72] Kerner cites Andreas Huyssen's assessment of the photographs, which builds on Barthes' *punctum*: "[they] function not in order to document, but in order to

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[69] Kerner 224.
[70] Kerner 224.
[71] Kerner 227.
[72] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans., Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981) 26.

stress the unassimilability of traumatic memory."[73] Just as the photographs in Spiegelman's narrative stand as testament to components of the trauma the author is unable to integrate and translate, so too does the live-action footage of *Waltz* represent an aspect, a *punctum*, of Folman's experience that withstands translation, comprehension. "To transfigure images…suggests a working through; that Spiegelman has 'come to terms' with the material to one degree or another. Photographs, in the context of *MAUS*, suggest either unwillingness, or an inability to assimilate the traumatic charge associated with these images."[74] Seen this way, their presence in Folman and Spiegelman's works aren't a regression, a dangerous return to narrative fetishism, but rather, they are an embracing of trauma's paradoxical nature: a comprehension of the incomprehensible; yet another shard of the fractured mirror.

And yet, the words of the filmmaker himself draw attention to yet another complication revolving around the photographic sequence: "I just thought, really basically, that I don't want you as the audience to go out of the theater after watching 'Waltz with Bashir' and think, 'Yes, this is a cool animated film, yes, nice drawings, good music…In order to put the whole film in proportion, those 50 seconds were essential to me."[75] In other words, Folman felt the need to include the news footage as

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[73] Kerner 227.
[74] Kerner 227.
[75] Angela Doland, "Cannes: Animated Documentary Recounts War Horrors," *USATODAY.com*, 15 May 2008.

means to authenticate the animation; "the photograph[s] functions as a 'notary.'"[76] The hand-held camera work, grainy film stock, and ambient sound signify to the viewer that this must be "how it really was." Because animation, just like Spiegelman's comic book, lies in a realm conventionally not associated with representations of the catastrophic/traumatic—i.e., it is not a "noble genre"[77]—Folman feels the need to "[reaffirm] the 'necessity' for some form of verifiable evidence."[78] By choosing to close with news footage, the filmmaker undermines the animated evidence he's already offered; if the filmed images are "how it really was," then does that make the animated images only fantasy? To believe this only detracts from the film's strengths. As already mentioned, the "authenticity" of the narrative is exemplified by its ambiguity, its pseudo-memories, its unstable "reality." Its truth is "not in any fixed moment of past or present but rather, as in Freud's description of the palimpsest, as the sum total of its rewritings through time, not in a single event but in the 'reverberations' between."[79] The inclusion of photographic evidence, the primacy with which Folman weights it by placing it at the end, dangerously disrupts the "reverberations" and quite possibly resurrects the single mirror. It is as if the filmmaker is saying: "Just in case you thought this was all made up, here's the proof it was real." The news footage, functioning as "verifiable evidence," leads the viewer to rethink the preceding animation, to perhaps see it as secondary to the

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[76] Kerner 229.
[77] Hayden White, "Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth" 41.
[78] Kerner 230.
[79] Williams 18.

photographic. One wonders how the conventional status of animation might have been altered had Folman animated the news footage instead: would it have served as a radical example of representing the traumatic beyond the "limits of representation"? Would the viewer have more fully comprehended the incomprehensible?

Reaching Toward the Receding Horizon

In creating his animated documentary, Folman offers a new answer to the question: What to do with the shards of traumatic memories? What form can speak their unspeakable nature? As this essay touched upon, the old answer found in traditional rhetorical strategies is not up to task. Linda Williams notes how these traditional modes, purporting to be simple mirrors reflecting "truth" and "reality," cannot contend with the postmodern world; the constant influx of manipulated images and a slipping grip on the referent makes verité and traditional documentary only a mirror reflecting another mirror.[80] Despite, or perhaps intensified, by this, society still hungers for that ever disappearing "real." Reality shows abound on network and cable television, "viral videos"—such as the controversial clip of Adolek Kohn dancing to Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive" at Auschwitz—populate the Internet, and sensational images like "Bubble Boy" can take over whole newscasts. Furthermore, when the "real" is electrified with violence, trauma, and catastrophe, the contradiction is only further enunciated. The

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[80] Williams 10.

haunting and terrifying video of the Twin Towers collapsing poignantly exhibits the moment history can no longer be straightforwardly referential: like touching a live wire, the images spark a jolting, traumatic encounter with an uncontextualized event, leaving viewers' nerves raw and disoriented. Their confusion cannot be explained away through mythically comprehensive narratives, but instead, requires their experience to be refracted through a shattered and fractured mirror whose shards are able to reflect the event's many *contingent* and *relative* truths. *Waltz with Bashir* attends to the imperative Bill Nichols poses: "…how to understand that which cannot be understood within the usual rules of discourse or action but which serves the key role of exemplifying where the borders of the illogical, irrational and inhuman begin."[81]

Nichols' words illuminate the paradox of grappling with trauma: it asks one to understand the incomprehensible; to define the abject; to articulate the unspeakable—which leaves one thwarted in his/her attempts to represent it. If a filmmaker utilizes traditional documentary modes, he/she not only ignores the dangers of the simple mirror, thereby contributing to the myth of the objective historical account, but also falsely wields narrative control over something uncontrollable. In other words, to fix trauma as a story with a beginning, middle, and end with mythically objective visuals is to project a tidy organization on a rather untidy phenomenon. This *narrative fetishism* superficially erases the residues of trauma by simulating wholeness; the loss is never mourned nor

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[81] Bill Nichols, "The Terrorist Event," *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 9.1 (2007): 94, Web

recuperated. Therefore, representations of trauma must enact the *work of mourning* instead: they must integrate the loss through symbolically mediated, fragmentary doses—and the formal technique of animation as applied to documentary discourse is just such a "dosing."

Animation, especially the stylistically orthodox sort, mediates the subject's traumatic loss through self-evident principles of construction and abstracted "coding." Being a form inherently self-reflexive, orthodox animation forces the viewer into a constant awareness of its verisimilitude. The completely subjective, visual manipulation by which the animator denies any possibility of a "reality effect" or narrative fetishism, enables the viewer to—paradoxically—encounter relative, contingent truths. The very act of drawing, as opposed to filming, also signifies differently, or rather, it refrains from signifying *everything*. In this lack of detail, drawing/animation serves as a filter through which trauma's incomprehensible elements enter the psyche in mediated doses and it enables viewers to interact with characters in a highly individualized way. Furthermore, the insertion of experimental animation elements within orthodox animation's mise-en-scène (i.e., developmental animation) relays the "traumatic aesthetic," or the fragmentary, nightmarish phenomena experienced in flashbacks and hallucinations, to the viewer. Departing from the linear, narrative continuity of orthodox animation and diving into specific non-continuity of experimental animation allows the animator to explore temporalities and psychical spaces not subject to logical, and straightforwardly indexical

representations. Because trauma produces illogical memories and visions, a representational approach suited to convey that non-realist mise-en-scène is necessary.

Taking all this into account, Folman's animated documentary, *Waltz with Bashir*, is an exemplary approach to representing the catastrophic/traumatic. His use of a non-traditional documentary form allows him to articulate the unspeakable nature of trauma; rather than inaugurate another document proposing an objective, historical master narrative, Folman's animated film is a fragmentary, highly subjective, account. Not only does he do this by simply employing the formal aesthetic of animation, he also directly comments upon the act of drawing/animation itself within the diegesis, leading the viewer to, once again, question this film's—and, for that matter, any documentary's—constructedness. But the final shots, their use of news footage, casts a confusing light on the preceding animation: if they represent components of Folman's trauma he is unable to translate—persisting unassimilated elements—then their inclusion is yet another "shard" of the fractured mirror. Or if they serve as a photographic notary, placed with all narrative importance at the end of the film, the photographic shots then become authentication to the animation: they assure viewers that the animation wasn't *only* subjective interpretation, but stood for something objectively "real." Perhaps due to the film's rather wide release (across major cities and art house theaters) and appeal to the Academy (it was nominated for Best Foreign Film), this reversion to a traditional rhetorical technique may be a concession to mainstream audiences intimidated by

unconventional documentary approaches. Rather than overwhelm or confuse them with visuals that aren't anchored in the visual indexical, Folman offers them a closing consolation of conventional news footage. Of course, if he hadn't made such a concession, *Waltz with Bashir* would have been considered one of the first feature-length, *fully* animated documentaries—a precedent that would have challenged popularly accepted notions of what documentary is "supposed to look like." While examples abound in non-fiction shorts *(His Mother's Voice*, Dennis Tupicoff, 1997; *Snack and Drink*, Bob Sabiston, 2000; *Ryan*, Chris Landreth, 2004; *Going Equipped*, Peter Lord, 1987; *I Met the Walrus*, Josh Raskin, 2007, to name a few), examples of *completely* animated feature-length non-fiction films are rare, if possibly non-existent. Though still maintaining a toehold in the conventions of realism, *Waltz* brings viewers a step closer to realizing how the formal technique of animation reaches toward the "multi-faceted receding horizon" of postmodern truth.

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