



**“They stand there, barking. Twenty-six dogs”:
Dreams and Memories in *Waltz with Bashir***

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Abstract

The paper analyses the aesthetic modes through which the animated documentary ventures beyond the indexical bind of photographic resemblance and is able to capture on its radarevasive, liminal, and marginalized psychological subjectivities associated with ‘lived experience,’ like dissociative memory and trauma. The fractured, and often unrepresentable, underbelly of history is made evident through dreams, visions, hallucinations, amnesia, and denial, which demand unorthodox modes of representation to conjure a non-Euclidean space. This space is evoked by Ari Folman’s *Waltz with Bashir* (2008), an animated documentary that describes the psychological impact of the 1982 Lebanon war on the Israelite soldiers through a plasmatic and surrealistic visualization of the unconscious backyard of events lodged in their minds, recollected in a pluralist anecdotal format. The analysis of the film’s performative aesthetics also reinforces the evocative function and responsibility of documentary filmmaking and postmodernist historiography by bringing attention to the psychological impact of warfare.

Keywords: Trauma, Memory, Surrealistic, War

The opening sequence of Ari Folman’s *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) depicts a gasping and hypersalivating swarm of twenty-six rabid animated dogs running with full speed towards the screen. The framing follows the dogs as they pass by intimidated people evoking a striking juxtaposition between the wilderness of the dogs and the urban setting. The exaggerated color tones of the scene further enhance the incongruity of space within the animated sequence. These dogs have come to kill a man named Boaz Rein. The scene shifts to a bar where Rein is narrating the dream to Ari Folman, the filmmaker himself. Both the characters depicted in conversation are animated figures. Rein

tells Folman how he wakes up at that point in the dream and has been having the same recurring dream for two and a half years. He foreshadows the excavating nature of the film narrative by confessing: “This dream is coming from somewhere...I haven’t told you everything” (Folman *Waltz with Bashir*). He situates the origin of the dream to the beginning of the Lebanon War (1982) when the army went to Lebanese villages to search for wanted Palestinians. Rein, as one of the Israeli soldiers, was assigned the duty to liquidate the village dogs that warned off the fugitives by barking. He states: “Twenty-six dogs, I remember every single one. Every face, every wound, the look in their eyes. Twenty-six dogs” (Folman *Waltz with Bashir*).



Fig. 1 The nightmare as an opening sequence in *Waltz with Bashir* (01:10, 03:10).

The exact horror and the disturbing moral and ethical extent of each killing, especially of animals that are relegated to the bottom in the hierarchy of war casualties, stored in Rein’s memories and the gap of twenty years before the dogs started appearing in his dreams, reveal the inherent trauma that stays deposited in the deep unconscious of the soldiers who have to continuously witness atrocities and participate in them. A question that emerges at this point is, are the twenty-six rabid dogs running in a frenzy across a space that is both an animated

space and a dream space, real and in what capacity? The answer to this question is very significant in relation to debates surrounding the animated documentary.

I

As the title of Sybil DelGaudio's article poses the question, 'If truth be told, can 'toons tell it?' It seems at the outset that animation, with its fabricated nature which inevitably "conjures up thoughts of comedy, children's entertainment and folkloric fantasies," holds no parlance with the serious reporting of 'truth' through modes like the documentary which already have a well-established tradition involving assertoric "seriousness, rhetoric and evidence" expressed through the recorded image (Roe 1). In the tradition of the Cinéma Vérité or the Direct (observational) Cinema, the non-interventionist eye of the camera becomes the 'fly on the wall' and is assumed to unobtrusively record actuality with its mechanical ability to lock in objective truth. Furthermore, Bill Nichols states that documentaries "address *the* world in which we live rather than *a* world imagined by the filmmaker" (emphasis in the original), thereby restressing the indexical relationship between image and reality (Nichols xi). This reaffirms the presumption that "documentaries should be observational, unobtrusive, truthful, bear witness to actual events, contain interviews, and even, be objective" (Roe 3). Hence, photographs and live-action footages are offered the status of being 'evidence' under the assumption that there is a direct connection between the photographic index and the social referent for a truthful and precise recording of the socio-historical reality. Looking at a photograph of an event comes closest to actually being there. In 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', Bazin explains that the camera can "create the illusion of three-dimensional space within which things appeared to exist as our eyes in reality see them" (Bazin 6). The direct point of contact between the recorded image and the subject becomes the foundational principle ascertaining documentary's claim to the reporting of truth.

Yet, such an understanding of the photographic image is too simplistic. In "The Ontology of the Photographic Image,"

Bazin unites the objective-subjective and perception-imagination dichotomies by pointing towards a fused coexisting surreality within the photographic image itself. This already puts under scrutiny the normative understanding of the nature of photographic realism which has always presumed that the impassive lens has the ability to capture the absolute objective truth. Since, the presence of the camera and its inevitably subjective and selective positioning is not made apparent and the objectivity of the photographic image is presumed, this mode of filmmaking becomes manipulative and rather disrupts the recording of actuality. Moreover, in the digital age, with the control gained over the pixel, the image can now be digitally manipulated. Hence, indexical resemblance is no longer the central point of reference that ascertains the recording of reality. To conflate the two is to commit a dangerous error that opens itself up to accepting manipulated and biased narratives as objectively 'real'. Instead, the subjectivity, performativity and playful limitlessness of the image must be embraced for a more corrective, accurate and effective description in documentation. As pointed by Roe and Gunning, it is vital to go back to Peircian semiotics that points towards the status of the photograph as an icon and a symbol in addition to being the pure index (Gunning 30).

In a world where the pixel can be manipulated, the digital image opens itself up to the surrealist playfulness. Referring to the surrealist potential inherent in the photographic image, Bazin insists that "photography ranks high in the order of surrealist creativity because it produces an image that is a reality of nature, namely, a hallucination that is also a fact" (9). This lays down the groundwork for the coming of age of the animated documentary which courageously explores the playful domain and truthful possibilities of the fabrication of the image in wielding time and space for a Griersonian 'creative treatment of actuality.'

If the arguments above are conceded, it becomes apparent that the movement in this discussion is not from the realism of live-action representation to the surrealist aesthetics of

animation. Rather, the movement is from the normative understanding of photographic image and its indexical relationship with reality to an understanding of the surrealistic potential inherent in the image itself which is announced further by the coming of age of the animated documentary. In other words, if there can be such a thing as the 'animated documentary', we surely need to revisit our understanding of the traditional modes of representing and documenting truths. As the documentary film steps outside the limits of indexical resemblance which is no longer considered as the central point of reference, it is able to capture on its radar evasive and liminal psychological subjectivities associated with subjects like memory and trauma, often expressed through dreams, visions, hallucinations, amnesia, and denial. This is the unrecorded side of history, often non-linear and complex, made up of presence and absence, remembering and disremembering that demands unorthodox modes of representation. Hence, the animated documentary film reaches a serious pinnacle as a category when it eschews "a direct relationship or commentary on reality preferring instead a more surreal, symbolic or metaphoric approach" (Roe 21). In this way, it is able to do justice "to reality quite as faithfully and much more effectively than any putatively literalist idiom or mode of discourse might do" (White 1999: vii).

II

The 'psychical reality' which was hidden from the outside world, was scientifically explored by psychology and given aesthetic representation by the surrealists through photography and cinema (Freud 607). Adam Lowenstein in his introduction to *Dreaming of Cinema: Spectatorship, Surrealism and the Age of Digital Media* states "the surrealists found in the cinema a dream machine, a vital collaborator for their explorations of the irrational, the hallucinatory, the unconscious" (Lowenstein 3). As we shift our gaze from photography and live-action cinema to the expansive domain of animated film, we find that surrealism found an even more organic home in the medium of animation. The uninhibited freedom of expression beyond the

point of indexical reference, morphing of bodies, plasmatic transformation, and a state of constant metamorphosis demanded by the surrealist movement to express the inner psychological reality found a natural dwelling in the plasmatic fluidity of animation. For instance, Bill Nichols points to the fact that subjectivity evades indexicality (Nichols 153). Moreover, even though the index may have a point of contact with the subjective reality 'temporally' and 'physically', it cannot always or fully be a viable mode of understanding its past. Even if visual indexicality is made available, the subjective state of mind cannot be deduced merely on the basis of visual indexicality because the state of mind is often unrepresentable. As stated by J. Elkins in *On Pictures and the Words That Fail Them*, "dreams, evanescent entoptical displays, hallucinations, and the half-forgotten notions of pictures" cannot be easily described mimetically and fall under the realm of the unrepresentable (Elkins 252). Hence, the "abstract concepts and previously unimaginable states can be visualized through animation in ways that are difficult to achieve or which remain unpersuasive in the live-action context" (Wells 122). Animation flourishes in a state of lack of indexicality to express subjective states of mind for the only modes of articulating the unrepresentable inner space are a non-mimetic style and an obliquely metaphorical manner of expression which come natural to the animated medium. John Halas and Joy Batchelor provide the term 'penetration' which is cited by Wells, pointing to the power of animation to "evoke the internal space and portray the invisible" (Wells 122).

Often traumatic events are considered 'unrepresentable.' Janet Walker claims in her book *Trauma Cinema* (2005) that films trying to depict traumatic events benefit more from non-realistic aesthetics. This is so because trauma triggers a "remembering with a difference" associated with "conjuring mental images and sounds related to past events but altered in certain respects" (Walker 14). Walker terms this as 'disremembering'. Animation is able to offer non-realistic unorthodox aesthetics for the process of disremembering (Roe

157). This is similar to the psychological process of displacement that is unconscious's way of repressing certain disturbing or unsettling aspects of dreams. Hence, dreams, fantasies, visions, misinformation, and "seemingly false memories" become important signifiers "for our reconciliation with past trauma" (Roe 161).

Hence, Roe calls for an alternative mode of recording history—a creative take that "does not entail complete knowledge of the causes and effects of past events" (Roe 141). Therefore, changes ushered in the aesthetics of documentary filmmaking by the animated documentary also spell changes in historiography. As White states, "not that history is no longer represented realistically but, rather, that the conceptions of both history and realism have changed" (White 1999: 41). What lies at the heart of historiography is the recording of truth and its implications in terms of distinct aesthetics, 'what truth looks like.' The transition from an ossified and generalized rendition of reality to a subjective experience of reality makes the entire process creative and imaginative.

Placed in this context, it is even more illuminating to note that the very exposition of *Waltz with Bashir* is a nightmare, a dream sequence that sets the tone of the film. Through animation, Folman is able to bring about the visualization of the unconscious backyard of events lodged in the minds of the Israelite soldiers, bringing forth the element of psychological realism that takes the shape of visions, hallucinations and dreams. It is made clear from the very onset that this documentary does not promise to meet the expectations that the term 'documentary' normatively generates. For instance, dreams do not comprise of normatively reliable data that can be documented and yet, by including a dream sequence in the exposition, Folman evokes "the persistent ambiguity and many unresolved anomalies in documentary definitions" (Ehrlich 248). Hence, the exercise of rediscovering the past, becomes a psychoanalytical therapy session involving an interpretation of dreams, repressed memories, and childhood tendencies. This

unconscious is flexibly depicted through the surrealistic aesthetics offered by the animated sequences.

If we study the depiction of the dreams, visions and hallucinations in *Waltz with Bashir* further, we find a dichotomy at work which decides the aesthetics of these scenes. In the film, the ‘factual-belief’ comes in contact with the ‘factual-aleif.’ According to Heidegger, the ‘factual’ is present, objective, and allows for empirical validation. This resonates with the concept of ‘belief’ which is the rational understanding and cognition regarding an empirical reality. On the other hand, the ‘factual’, according to Heidegger, falls under the realm of the existential, the ontological Being, and the postmodernist terrain, refusing to lend itself to an empirical presence. This synchronizes with Tamar Gendler’s concept of ‘alief’ which often manifests as a mental state that comes into conflict with empirical reality. It is in the hybrid space between the immersive sensual experience of social life and the complexly reflective mode of being that the audience ventures from ‘belief’ into ‘alief’ and ‘factual’ to ‘factual’, that is from things as they are to things as they seem, especially in recollection.

The animated documentary ventures out from the realm of the factual-belief to the factual-aleif, and with that, from the terrain of the apodeictic to the assertoric. The point of transition is situated in the aesthetic cues of the film. Ohad Landesman and Roy Bendor discuss this at length in “Animated Recollection and Spectatorial Experience in ‘Waltz with Bashir’.” If the scene is factual, the empirical reality is depicted as it can be seen externally. Mostly, in the interview mode, the factual representation is activated with a realistic color scheme and the depiction of a more indexical setting like a café, a living room, a study, a car, or a bench invoking “iconic authentication” (Nichols 178). On the other hand, whenever the depiction is more factual as in the description of a vision, a hallucination, or a dream, the color scheme becomes unrealistic, surreal, exaggerated, involving the juxtaposition of contrasts in terms of color, size, dimension, shape, and subject. In the film, both time and space are color-coded. For instance, Folman’s postmemory

from the Second World War is colored in tones of blue, while his memories from the Lebanon war are depicted in shades of orange and brown. Moreover, in the film, yellow monochromes, shades of cobalt, and dark gray hues signify a dream space, a space where visions and hallucinations unfold. In a way, animation, with its usage of color and shapes, as the use of exaggerated tones to depict visions in *Waltz with Bashir*, evokes our primal instincts through color-coding that is set through repetition in the film. Hence, once the color is linked to our unconscious, every time it is used, it inevitably evokes similar responses. The movement too becomes smooth and dreamlike. This can be seen in the opening scene as well in the movement of the dogs running towards the screen.

Another instance is a surrealistic vision, as narrated from the subjective point of view of Carmi, another Israeli soldier who fought alongside Folman. Carmi remembers being transported to the war on a love boat along with the rest of the army. Hence, the scene shifts to a boat in which men are shown in silhouettes, partying. On a closer look, they are revealed to be soldiers. Folman seems a bit incredulous at the possibility of them being on a love boat. But Carmi replies, "That's how I imagined it" (Folman *Waltz with Bashir*). This is an assertion of Carmi's factual-alief. He adds afterwards, "I later found out it was just an old commando boat" (Folman *Waltz with Bashir*). This makes the viewer alert to the liminal nature of memory which is descriptive and yet imaginative as it takes into consideration not just the visual 'belief' but also the emotive 'alief.' Yet again, the color scheme shifts back to orange and black. This color change acts as a visual cue associated with an experience of hallucination evoking an emotional-psychological response in the viewers. Moreover, by juxtaposing dissociative components together like the surrealists, the film visually brings forth its psychological subtext. As Pierre Reverdy's 1918 essay (as quoted by Breton) states regarding "a juxtaposition of two more or less distant realities" that the "more the relationship between the juxtaposed realities is distant and true, the stronger the image will be—the greater its emotional power and poetic reality" (qtd.

in Breton 20). This is the surrealist principle in essence. For instance, Carmi is shown in the hallucination, lying collapsed yet awake on the boat, “dreaming a woman would come,” as a naked woman swims towards the boat. The woman and the boat seem disproportionate as the woman towers over the structure of the boat. The frailty felt by Carmi in terms of his lack of masculinity is depicted in the scene through this metaphorical visual disproportion that works as a displacement.



Fig. 2 Carmi’s surrealistic vision in *Waltz with Bashir* employs juxtaposition and disproportion to express his psychological fears (18:15, 18:53, 19:13).

Like a case in the usage of Freudian free association, the film seems to morph individually distinguishable objects and images into a distorted surreality giving birth to the element of the defamiliarized bizarre meant to unsettle the onlooker. Hence begins the narrative of the unaddressed psyche with its layers of denial, using the language of difference and defamiliarization to express the psychological and emotive undertones of the hallucination. The film juxtaposes realistic depictions of objects

by morphing them randomly to uncover the unconscious. As Thomas Pyncheon wrote, “One could combine inside the scene frame, elements not normally found together to produce illogical and startling effects” (Pyncheon 9). Another instance is the sequence in which Carmi talks about the slaughterhouse where Palestinians were taken by the Phalangists, to be interrogated and executed. He calls the experience equivalent to being on an LSD trip, a psychedelic experience. “They carried body parts of murdered Palestinians preserved in jars of formaldehyde. They had fingers, eyeballs, anything you wanted. And always pictures of Bashir” (Folman *Waltz with Bashir*).



Fig. 3 Above: The psychedelic representation of the slaughterhouse (1:02:13, 1:02:21). Below: Bashir represented as a cultural commodity for the fanatics in *Waltz with Bashir* (1:02:30, 1:02:42)

As the camera glides and zooms in, the sequence depicts dried up trees, cloudy suffocating thick skies, garbage, men with guns or axes who are drinking, crosses, a cat, bats, dead bodies, a junkyard, a dismembered hand, old rusted cars, scuttling rats, jars with eyeballs, flies, and remains of a wall with a poster of Bashir on it. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Folman stated: “There was no other way to do it, to show memories, hallucinations, dreams. War is like a really bad acid trip, and this was the only way to show that” (Folman ‘Interview’ *The Guardian* 2008). In another instance, Folman recounts his experience of the flight to Beirut at the airport terminal: “It felt as if I was on a leisure trip- a sort of hallucination, like standing

in a terminal, waiting to choose my destination...” (Folman *Waltz with Bashir*). He remembers walking into the terminal, looking at a list of flights around the world, duty-free shops of jewelry, tobacco, alcohol, et cetera. “While I’m still on this trip, I suddenly realize what’s going on. Through the window, I see that all the TWA and Air France planes are just bombed-out shells. And the shops are empty. They’ve long since been looted. And the schedule board hasn’t changed for months” (Folman *Waltz with Bashir*). Folman experiences a lack of touch with the immediate reality and its details.



Fig. 4 Folman’s hallucinatory experience at the airport in *Waltz with Bashir* (55:05, 55:15, 55:22, 55:28)

By citing these visions and hallucinations which become a part of the subjective truth experienced after trauma, the film evokes the penetrative power of animation which proves to be a “*revelatory* tool, used to reveal conditions or principles which are hidden or beyond the comprehension of the viewer [...] a *mediator* of possibilities, offering as close to a visceral revelation of the condition as a medium of expression can offer” (emphasis in original) (Wells, 122).

III

Harald Weinrich traces the etymological roots of the word 'alethia' which is considered to be the Greek word for 'truth' and brings to the forefront the significance of memory in recording

the truth. Literally, the word 'alethia' does not refer to static truth but rather the 'revelation' or the 'disclosure'. Hence, more than the factual historical narrative, it is the non-linear disclosure or remembering of it as an experiential memory that constitutes truth. This invites a non-linear narrative that the animated documentary strives to follow. For instance, the opening scene of *Waltz with Bashir* uncovers the actual event of the shooting of the dogs as it appears in the memory of Boaz Rein which further manifests as a nightmare, colored with emotive coordinates of guilt and trauma. Also, Folman's own state of forgetfulness regarding his memory of the events of the war is not made neat and fixated into a chronological narrative. Rather, the film narrative goes to and fro, making the film a therapy session involving an effort at rediscovering lost memories of the past, suppressed unconsciously through feelings of collective guilt and denial, forever merging the personal with the political, the real with the surreal. As Roe states: "The television news images may reveal the truth of the event of the massacre, but the truth of the experience is, for Folman, as much about its incomprehensibility and his amnesia as about what actually happened" (Roe 168). *Waltz with Bashir* takes the audience on an exploration that never promises to lead to official historical documentation citing 'what really happened' during the Lebanon war but by focusing on Folman's subjective experience of the war interjected by anecdotes from other participants, narrows down on the localized incident of the Sabra and Shatila massacre, revealing the exercise of uncovering truth as 'pluralist' as well as essentially creative and subjective. Hence, the film tends to break down the singular entity of history into a mosaic of various experiences of the recollection of the past that stays plural. It also becomes a creative device that uncovers the unreliability of the singular historical narrative, making it porous and inviting for other stories to interact with, while expressing the trauma caused by the war, in which case, the documentary film becomes a text with an impact factor and interactive power of its own, rendering the text not simply a document but an animated one.

Questioning the static and passive nature of memory, Folman's friend, Ori Sivan, goes on to state: "Memory is dynamic. It's alive. If some details are missing, memory fills the holes with things that never happened" (Folman *Waltz with Bashir*). Trauma, also, becomes a negative experience in terms of being an 'absence' or an 'aporia.' As Folman states regarding the Lebanese war, "The truth is that's not stored in my system," Rein asks, "No flashbacks or dreams? You never think about it?" (Folman *Waltz with Bashir*). He states, "A human mechanism prevents us from entering dark places. Memory takes us where we need to go" (Folman *Waltz with Bashir*). This amnesia springs out of a denial of responsibility, of owning up the presence of mind and body in relation to the events that took place. Denial is an act of self-defense, of repressing the trauma and hence causes fissures in the recollection of memory. As Roe states, "There are also other internal reasons for gaps in memory, such as responding to traumatic events by forgetting the past or hushing its events into silence" (Roe 155). Every such avoidance translates into "multiple ruptures and radical breaks introduced by trauma and catastrophe" which in turn "inflect intra-, and inter- and trans-generational inheritance" (Hirsch 111). The unequivocal absence of Lebanon, "a dramatic event," from Folman's creative work as pointed by Rein is a reassertion of the untouched unconscious of the collective experience of war. This dissociation is evident in Folman and Dayag who are unable to recognize themselves in old photographs taken during the war. As Folman states, "I've met people, I've heard stories. Stories about myself. I didn't want to believe them" (Folman *Waltz with Bashir*).

The term 'postmemory' was coined by Marianne Hirsch to refer to the transferred memory which had been experienced by the family members of the subject at first hand but is transferred to the subject unconsciously. As Sivan goes on to explain to Folman that his "interest in the massacre developed long before it happened" (Folman *Waltz with Bashir*). Folman inherited the postmemory of his parents being at Auschwitz. Michael Renov stated that "the Holocaust offers itself as an aporia for aesthetic

representation just as it does for historiography” (Renov 161). This aporia brings about discontinuities in the historical narrative, be it personal or collective. Folman’s denial and amnesia stem from the intersection of his memory with his postmemory which brings forth a relationship with the past which is not linear. Rather the film deals with a spatial and temporal web that goes to and fro between the past and the present, and the personal and the collective.



Fig. 5 Folman’s recurring vision of the Sabra and Shatila massacre in *Waltz with Bashir* (07:58, 08:26)

Since the experience of traumatic recollection is non-linear, Folman presents in the film his subjective honesty regarding his efforts at piecing together the non-linear and discursive jigsaw puzzle of his memories of the war in addition to the memories of others who were there with him, reasserting the significance of multiple subjectivities. Folman raises a question regarding his subjective vision of the Sabra and Shatila massacre, uncertain of the reliability of his memory: “So my vision of the massacre is like the fake photo? It never happened? I invented it? It’s not real?” (Folman *Waltz with Bashir*). To this Sivan replies that “It’s still real [...] it’s yours” (Folman *Waltz with Bashir*). Furthermore, Sivan’s question “Who was there with you?”, stresses on not a singular history of an event but histories in the form of mnemonic anecdotes that makes the narrative more and more varied and yet more and more reliable. There is a fluidity

of identities of the psychiatrist and the patient, the historian, and the subject, that is almost in sync with the mobile anecdotal network, laying the groundwork of a fluid, pluralist, and flexible historiography. Since our remembrance of the past exists in memory and history (direct and personal, or indirect and collective) which can often be fluid, ephemeral, and shifting, the animated aesthetics in an autobiographical (and hence subjective) animated documentary are able to do justice to our understanding of the liminal and fragmented past.



Fig. 6 The interview and conversation mode still operate within the animated documentary as modes of collecting anecdotes and interpretations. Notice the iconic authentication at work in the stills from *Waltz with Bashir*.

The films are “imbued with history”, “retrospective” and “in which the author, the narrator and the protagonist are identical” (Renov xi). The chain of storytellers grows, anecdote by anecdote, a rhizomatic network of memories is recalled and collected, partially constructed, partially made peace with. The sum total of truths, John Ellis’ ‘realisms in plural’, adds up and the mind rebuilds a comprehensive narrative (Ellis 8).

IV

The animated documentary serves two almost contradictory purposes in relation to the conventional mode of documentary filmmaking. It adds an element of healthy subversion with its postmodernist inclinations that affirm the liminal positioning of the documentary film. Secondly, through its aesthetic abilities, it gives more tools to the documentary film to expand its limits in terms of what a film can capture, which is not just the crude empirical reality of the observed world but also the hidden truths that can often be multiple, evasive, implicit, and ever changing but form a fundamental basis for the way we experience and recollect reality. Nichols does provide scope for the animated documentary as he dwells upon the 'performative' mode of documentary which emphasizes "its subjective and affective dimensions" (Nichols 131). Hence, the animated film is always more than the sum total of its parts and "the world is more than the sum of the visible evidence we derive from it" (Roe 18-19). Through the outer form of non-seriousness and defamiliarized aesthetics, the animated text can smuggle meanings with heavy imports those texts pertain to, that is, the subtext. In the words of Mark Bartlett, "To enter into the will of animated film is a wholly different encounter than to enter into the will of 'realist' film" (Bartlett 199). The answer to the question "are those twenty-six dogs real?" lies in the preservation of the liminal space evoked by the animated documentary. The space that the animated film invites us into is a non-Euclidian space with its independent parameters. Entering into its will we come face to face with other dimensions of reality often otherwise invisible to the naked eye. Those twenty-six dogs may not be visible to the onlookers in the street, like the Palestinian women in the live-action footage towards the end of the film, but they exist in the mind of Boaz Rein, as a piece of stark subjective evidence to the trauma-induced during the violent Lebanon war which was a political- historical reality. As we enter into the will of the animated documentary film, those twenty-six dogs demand to be heard, loud and clear, and assert their presence which is as real as real can be.

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