

REMEDICATIONS OF NON-FICTION

Animation, Interactivity and Documentary from Africa

ABSTRACT

This article explores re-mediations of non-fiction through an examination of so-called animated documentary and interactive documentary. By focusing upon case studies from Africa, the article proposes that whilst these processes and methods are not conventionally aligned with documentary practice in a customary sense, they offer aesthetic strategies that allow artists and filmmakers to consider their position reflexively as authors, curators and participants in the narratives that they seek out to explore. Their films exist on the periphery of typical classifications of this genre and this peripheral status allows them degrees of freedom that would otherwise not be possible with conventional methods. In animation, for example, they are able to draw upon specific aesthetic motifs or culturally located iconography that resonates with local audiences. Through interactivity they are able to tap into the participatory cultures and user-generated content to encourage polyvocality as a means to examine “truth” and in turn to question the authority of the author.

Africa, animation, interactive documentary, remediation, reflexivity

Until recently, documentary filmmaking was often framed and discussed with reference to the practices that stemmed from early European observational cinema, its legacies of the referent and index (Barthes, 1981; Peirce, 1958) and the appeals of direct cinema. However as Jean Marie Teno points out even within fiction the presence of documentary value is found, as is often discussed in the context of those early African films such as *Borom Sarret* (1963) where characters played “real-life” roles in stories “rooted in the social and political context of the time” (Teno, 2016 p.108). This article will focus upon the “documentary value” of a range of formats such as the interactive and/or animated moving image in new media contexts across Africa that could be perceived to challenge these long-established conventions and simultaneously offer innovative aesthetic resources.

Whether we consider, for example, the children's drawings that make up, Jean Michel Kibushi's *Kinshasa Septembre Noir* (1992), Ng'endo Mukii's collage of illustrations, cut-outs, performances and projections in *Yellow Fever* (2012), the multiple voices and styles in *Beyond Freedom* (2005) or the web-based interactive living documentary *18 Days* (2011), the *Everyday: Africa* (2012) project, or Ghanaian Jonathan Dotse's VR *Pandora* (2015) these cases all offer new modes and re-mediations of documentary. At one end, the discussion will describe the animated image seen as a reflexive form, where the complicity of the author is overt and visible on the surface of the fabricated image. On the other end, and in contrast, it considers the interactive documentary as a form that decentralizes the author. In the latter case, the form relies primarily upon the interaction by the user/viewer where the artist/filmmaker may become a curator of multiple views and representations (Favero, 2013). By drawing upon examples of non-fiction moving images made by African artists and viewers as participants this article proposes that these remediations offer new strategies through which one might reconsider reflexivity and the documentary form.

DOCUMENTARY ANIMATION - MEDIATIONS OF NON-FICTION AND FABRICATION

“a medium of truths and deceits, recording and manipulation, biases and balance, art and mechanical technique, rhetoric and straightforward information. Nonfiction films are complex representations with an infinite diversity of possible uses.” (Plantinga, 1997, p.222)

The term “documentary animation” is not without its own semantic and ontological difficulties. One could be forgiven for thinking the term a paradox, as it is forced to contend with contradictions between the index¹ and the symbol that can appear to be simultaneously present in this genre. Furthermore the truth claims typically associated with referent and photography (Barthes, 1981), in the context of overtly fabricated images appear to be contradictory. It is the impression of an “absence of an existential link with empirical reality”² (Casetti, 2011, p.96) in animation that raises concern when discussed as a non-fictional form. However more recently this emphasis in documentary has become less important, with the recognition of the hybridization of fiction and documentary as offering new aesthetic resource (Stam, 2013) and films such as Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing* (2012) challenging generic convention. Fabrication of the image (and sound) exposes the limits of conceptions of documentary bound by the photographic and filmic recording device, its perceived

neutrality, and its representations of “truth”, reality and knowledge. Animation, on the other hand, is a form that readily straddles an assortment of different artistic practices and appears in a range of media contexts. As it borrows and assembles from film, painting, drawing, sculpture, print, illustration, theatre, choreography, to name a few, it is able to remediate these elements³ (Bolter and Grusin, 2000). This remediation can also occur as non-fictional elements (whether in the form of personal accounts in sound, archival images from museums, drawings of memories, even filmed interviews) are appropriated and combined with other parts resulting in the so-called “animated documentary”. The fabricated image is, in a sense, an index of the artist’s “hand”. It serves as a constant reminder to the viewer of the presence of a subjective voice and the involvement of the author embedded within the text. If one accepts, as Bruzzi (2006) proposes that documentary in fact cannot truly capture life as it unravels in front of the camera, then the interjection of the animation artist upon the image in non-fiction is more honest in its exposition of events. Or as Eisenstein put it, “It is in the transformation of beings that poetry gives the most precise idea of them; it is because poetry is the freest inventor, that it is the most faithful imitator” (Eisenstein, 1986 p.49).

Nevertheless, these types of so-called “animated documentaries” must work against the dominant connotations of naïve and childlike content found in the entertainment format. By classifying non-fiction content in animation as “documentary animation”, scholars and practitioners set about a *veridiction* that legitimises the form (Foucault, 2008). The African artists outlined here transform documentary through the interplay between the fabricated image and sound and use this as an effective means of socio-political or personal commentary and/or historical documentation. Their films exist on the periphery of typical classifications of this genre and this peripheral status allows them degrees of freedom that would otherwise not be possible with conventional recording devices.

TESTIMONY AND MEMORY

Due to its mediated quality the so-called “animated documentary” appears in different guises and has been discussed within animation studies as pertaining to a range of modes and categories (Honess Roe, 2013; Wells, 1997)⁴. However, in this discussion the commonality across the examples presented is an engagement with testimony⁵ represented through different aesthetic strategies. The animations here use a form of testimony that enables an escape from the focus on the concessions afforded by the index and the photographic mode with regards to “truth” and “authenticity”. The

subjective voices that these moving images engage with offer some protection from a fixation on categorization that refers to type or mode, index and authenticity. Whilst each film engages with its own unique approach to artistic process, aesthetic and structural form, they are all framed by the artist and viewer alike as moving images of the genre of documentary animation. The testimonies that each of these animated films explore are framed by an aesthetic self-reflexivity declared through the fabricated image and reveal a self-conscious approach to the “non-fiction” form. The artist does not attempt to conceal the constructed nature of the moving images, but rather in some cases imposes their presence through the use of sound and voice, as in the case of Congolese Jean Michel Kibushi’s film *Kinshasa Septembre Noir* (1992) or Kenyan Ng’endo Mukii’s *Yellow Fever* (2012), and aesthetic style as in the case of South African Jacquie Trowell’s *Beyond Freedom* (2005).

The purpose of a focus on testimony is not to determine whether or not the testimonial knowledge is truthful but instead to serve as a vehicle to examine why and how the animations are considered believable, and consequentially accepted as documentary animation. These animated representations use subjective disclosure to explore notions of history as “what happens to people (the events that lie beyond or behind historical accounts)” as opposed to “history as what we know about what happened (and for which there is evidence)” (Bernard-Donals, 2001:1303). Unlike the umbilical chord that attaches the trace within the photographic image to history and “the body of the thing photographed” (Barthes, 1981:34), testimony presents autonomy from history as it participates with memory and subjectivity (Bernard-Donals, 2001) and therefore can find a credible place within animation.

ANIMATION CASE STUDIES

The testimonies presented in these three case studies are underpinned by the artists’ own sense of political activism (in the vein of Solanas and Getino’s manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema* of 1967). The artists draw upon memory and testimony to provide an intervention upon narratives of different histories, mediating at times the different accounts that may be circulating. The choices made by each of these artists to represent these accounts through animation points to a self-conscious awareness of the discourses surrounding the history of documentary filmmaking and its claims to truth⁶. At times this is overtly declared as in Mukii’s *Yellow Fever*, where she states “I see the West seeing us” whilst presenting the viewer with a collage/montage (in space and time) of archival images of maps of Africa, illustrations of The Hottentot Venus,

illustrations of vaginas, skulls, ethnographic photographs, newspaper cartoons depicting the colonizers and colonized, illustrations of minstrels, an illustration for a book on eugenics— a thick visual description or assortment dense with political inference. In the case of Kibushi's *Kinshasa, Septembre Noir* (1992) we are presented with a documentary that circumvents the use of a camera (typical of the conventional 'cinema verite' approach) through its use of testimonial drawings. Kibushi's choice to use children's drawings to historicize an event creates a space that encourages the viewer to rethink the codes of the documentary genre. It also allowed him a degree of political maneuverability; able to document the incidents of 1991 whilst avoiding filming these events which would have been difficult to undertake at the time due to the political climate within the DRC. Finally in Trowell's *Beyond Freedom* (2005), we are confronted by an assortment of personal testimonies from different South Africans on their experience of freedom pre-and post-apartheid. Their images and voices are combined and collapsed within the screen space by a range of South African animators that were independently tasked by Trowell to interpret the interview footage. All of these animations create a space to consider and reframe the discourses on "truth" and testimony, and challenge the more dominant modes of representation typically aligned to these themes. They reveal the tensions present within fiction and testimony, fabrication and 'truth', disbelief and credibility; all critical factors that locate these moving images within the *veridiction* of documentary animation. Importantly, for African animators, a space is opened up to consider the role of memory on histories and the possibility of a response through testimony to master narratives within the fabricated moving image. Subjective disclosure within animation exposes the limitations of traditional paradigms of documentary modes, as it oscillates between the impression of personal "truths" and "fiction", and offers the artist an opportunity to subvert from within the interstice that emerges between these two states.

JEAN MICHEL KIBUSHI, DRC: MEMORY IN IMAGE

Jean Michel Kibushi (b. 1957) has been making animated films since 1991, with his first stop-motion film an adaption of a local Tetela narrative, *Le Crapaud Chez Ses Beaux Parents*. His social political intervention is visible on multiple levels, through his personal activism in the form of projects that he has established to promote and encourage local animation in the DRC, and in the production of his own films. His films such as *Muana Mboka* (1999), *Prince Loseno* (2004), and *Ngando* (in production) are informed by his interest in social-commentary and driven by a political impetus to

present content and imagery that resonates with a local audience as a response to the predominance of animation from the West (Callus, 2010). In the context of this discussion, a specific focus on the testimonial account in *Kinshasa Septembre Noir* (1992) will be considered ⁷.

Kinshasa September Noir (1992), focuses upon the documenting and recording of testimonies through the use of animated techniques and is therefore presented as an example of 'animated documentary'. This film differs from his other films, in that Kibushi underpins the social-commentary with testimony surrounding a specific historical event in Congolese history, the military coup of Kinshasa on the 23rd September in 1991. The descriptive account of these events is presented on screen as seen through the eyes of children from Lemba, one of the affected areas. These children witnessed the events during the coup and, prompted by Kibushi, drew their recollections. Kibushi himself was resident in Lemba at the time, and worked alongside the twelve children to document a visual testimony of their experience. He then collected their drawings of the events on that day, and continued to work on the images whilst writing the narration. The links between memory and shared historical recollection within an image is not unusual in Congolese visual culture. Congolese popular painting has been discussed and understood in relation to its mnemonic function, *Ukumbusho* (Fabian, 1996), eliciting memories in those that view the image and serving as a point of conversation within the community. In this sense, Kibushi's film that recollects the looting and pillaging in Kinshasa in September 1991 serves a similar function.

The film is comprised entirely of the children's drawings presented through the use of limited animation alternating between frames or cycles of short sequences, the movement of still images under the camera (as opposed to animated movement) and other practical techniques. The film begins with drawings of the everyday; a woman pounding yam with her infant on her back, the market place with people at their stalls, a man cooking meat over a fire and eating. Their duration on screen have a measured stillness, preempting the start of the film that is marked by the break in music with the cries of an infant, and the title frame 'Kinshasa Septembre Noir'. This is then followed by brisker sequences, creating a rhythm and pace that mirrors the chaos of events that followed; soldiers in army cars as they move across the screen shooting their rifles, or ambulances speeding across, or men running. The pillaging is depicted with images of crowds destroying buildings, and sequential still images of objects, for instance matches, cigarettes, flour, batteries, vegetables, to represent the objects that

were stolen in the vein of a pictorial list. These pictures illustrate in an efficient and schematic manner the overall impact on the local community. The metamorphic transitions of scribbles smudging across the paper to illustrate explosions and chaos are very effective. This economy is visible throughout the animation with a flickering between two images to give the impression of movement, as in the case of soldiers firing their guns, or simply by moving the actual drawing itself under the camera (in the vein of Manga anime) for moving vehicles⁸.

Critically, the drawings also include specific pictorial elements that derive from local imagery visible in the Congolese popular paintings (Fabian, 1996). The image of the 'man smoking a pipe' has been discussed as a direct reference to the image of the colonizer that is so prolific in the *Colonie Belge* series within Congolese popular painting (Callus, 2012). This image is used during the sequence that recounts the exodus of the first people to flee Kinshasa. In one of the scenes the children's drawings depict men with hats and pipes accompanied by pets on a boat. As the drawings lack any of the pictorial realism that a trained artist would be able to render and convey, they offer limited information. Basic visual cues are required to allow the viewer to decipher whether the individuals in these images portrayed the military, local traders, children, or women, which is why the image of the 'pipe and hat' is semiologically significant.

'For example, the particular image of 'man and pipe with dog or cat' has a long history within post-colonial depictions of the colonizer in the DRC, and has become archetypal (or a stereotype – depending on your position) of the white man or *mundele* in Congolese popular paintings. Therefore, this results in a strong political inference that accompanies a reading of that image as a white man and not of an indigenous local' (Callus, 2012 p.12).

EVIDENCE AND PROVENANCE

The images in this film escape the pitfalls of their fabricated nature, by denoting not only the narrative depicted within but also more importantly denoting the provenance of the drawings. The naïve aesthetic tells the viewer that children drew these images. The children therefore become implicated and intertwined with the narrative of the events. In this case the animation becomes self referential, its aesthetic mirrors and implicates the producer of the images directly in the unfolding of the narrative. Unlike in indexical cinema where the filmmaker can hide behind the camera to give an illusion of objectivity, here the very form of animation declares its subjectivity and

becomes evidence of its testimony. The animated film at its essence is also an artifact that serves as a document in its own right, as a testimony of these children and their memories (Jacquemin, 2003). It is also possible to consider the performative affect (see Jean Rouch in Stoller 1992) that this film has upon those involved, acting upon the makers, as a cathartic exercise in reaction to the trauma of this event.

The interaction that is visible in *Kinshasa Septembre Noir* between the children's testimonial imagery and Kibushi's own personal testimony and critique presented as a poetic voice over creates a film that is at once documentary and political commentary. Whilst the filmmaker could have narrated the events in an informative manner (typical of certain types of documentary), he uses instead the interplay of poetic structures to evoke a sense of the events as they unfold. The narration is underpinned by an expressive mode rather than a realistic one and contrasts the evidential nature of the image whereby the drawing can be seen as the child's visual testimony. Through the poetic narration Kibushi is able to present an interweaving of specific cultural references through analogies, comparisons and veiled political critiques. The result is a synthesis of seemingly disparate parts, straddling between the implied depoliticized perceptions of a child and the voice of the adult, artist and critic intervening to make a historical account of this moment.



Fig 1: Photographic Image kindly provided by J.M. Kibushi of his time in Lemba with the children working in the Atelier for *Kinshasa Septembre Noir* (1992)

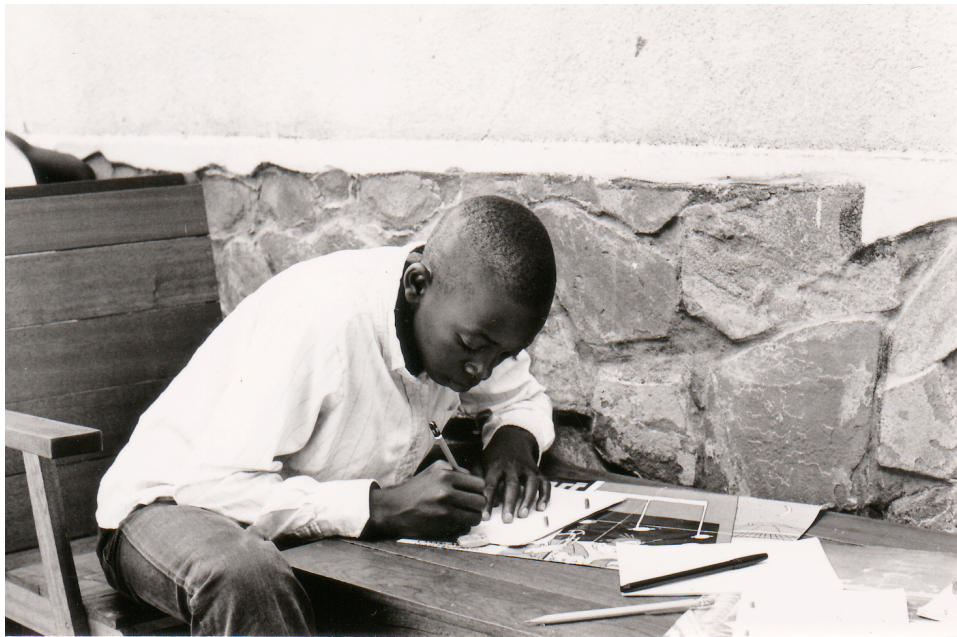


Fig 2: Photographic Image kindly provided by J.M. Kibushi of his time in Lemba with the children working in the Atelier for *Kinshasa Septembre Noir* (1992)



Fig 3: Still frame from *Kinshasa Septembre Noir* (1992) of the Man with Pipe and Dog

NG'ENDO MUKII, KENYA : TESTIMONIO AND DOCUMENTARY FICTION

'I am interested in the concept of skin and race, in the ideas and theories sown into our flesh that change with the arc of time. I believe that skin and the body, are often distorted into a topographical division between reality and illusion...

In my film, I focus on African women's self-image, through memories and interviews; using mixed media to describe this almost schizophrenic self-visualization that I and many others have grown up with.' (Mukii, 2012, <http://www.rca.ac.uk/students/ngendo-mukii/>, Accessed 10/04/2014)

The Kenyan artist Ng'endo Mukii (b.1982) has a range of work that explores experimental process in moving image, however her more recent work is underpinned by an interest in uses of animation as non-fiction format. The film discussed here is *Yellow Fever* (2012) however she continues to adopt the documentary method in other animation films such as; *This Migrant Business* (2016) and *50 Steps: My Normal Kenyan Family* (in production) supported by a grant from DocuBox, an East African documentary film fund backed by the Ford Foundation, Kenya. The film *Yellow Fever* (2012) has been discussed previously with respect to photography and fabrication (Callus, 2015) and some of the points made in that context could be extrapolated to a discourse on documentary studies and animation. For the purpose of this article, this film will be examined through the lens of testimony but will also make references to the assemblage of different aesthetic elements.

The spatial and temporal montage of photographic images, drawings, illustration, projections and performance offer a meta-theme: one that reflexively considers the role of imagery in the construction of identities (in particular in the context of colonial history). Mukii mixes and assembles different voices, personal and shared memories, and her intimate inner thoughts into a poetic treatment of the exploration of identity, skin color and the contemporary practices of skin lightening. She interweaves these components and, like the other examples discussed, deploys the use of the testimonial voice not only as a means to incite solidarity but also to legitimize the film. The testimonial voice is present in different guises, as a personal recollection of a specific experience, the memories of her mother (in conversation), and the thoughts of her niece, interspersed with surreal and haunting personal thoughts and fears. From the beginning, Mukii's voice is present recounting her childhood memory of having her hair braided by an "mkorogo"⁹, a woman who had bleached her hands and her face in order to lighten her skin color. Her voice speaks in the present tense creating a sense of proximity to the event, and one that leaves the viewer with the impression that she is reliving the moment that she is testifying to. As discussed in the context of *testimonio*¹⁰, the use of devices such as the first person voice and interlocutory and

conversational markers, lead the audience to understand and experience the account as “real”, implying “a pledge of honesty on the part of the narrator, which the listener/reader [viewer] is bound to respect” (Beverly, 1989 p.15). Furthermore as this is a memory, the audience readily accepts the illustrative aesthetic of the image depicting this moment on screen.

Yellow Fever (2012) arguably presents certain qualities that lend the film to a discussion framed by Beverly’s treatise on *testimonio*, a ‘narrative told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real-life protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts’ (Beverly, 1991 p.2). Whilst Beverly’s adopts this term to refer to particular types of testimonial narratives in literature, the discourse on this form can be used to consider aspects of Mukii’s animation. *Yellow Fever* (2012) shares a similar motivation and qualities to the *testimonio*; the need to change a current situation by raising public awareness; a narrator’s voice that comes from the place of the “Other”, here positioned as black and female; a representation of a problematic shared circumstance that is lived by the narrator and others. Through the temporal and spatial juxtaposition of archival images¹¹, for example, she is able to efficiently allude to the underpinning political discourses that inform the film. Through collage within the frame or as a projection upon other elements in shot (such as the human body) this method consciously connects a visual history tied to the colonial project, to contemporary experiences of African women like her, and their conceptions of beauty and skin colour (Mukii, 2013).

In *Yellow Fever* (2012), we are presented with a convergence of fiction and testimony, whereby Mukii plays the role of both narrator and producer. As compiler, and in the vein of the *testimonio* compilers, she retains conversational elements in the interviews with her mother and niece that suggest less editorial control and allude to if “not the real then certainly a sensation of experiencing the real” (Beverly, 1989 p.22). She also implicates herself within the interview (as narrator and compiler) by retaining her own voice in the dialogue she has with her mother and niece. However as artist, her poetic visual representation is a constant reminder of an aesthetic engagement that is fabricated and fictional. Like the illustrations, for example, even the performances within the film challenge conventions in documentary. Whilst they are aesthetically photographic, the addition of projected photos on to the performer and the quality of captured movement are unmistakably evidence of Mukii’s affect on the image. In contrast to the active subject through movement in performance, the naked body is also treated as a passive and objectified component of the image, serving as a

landscape for projections. For these parts, Mukii elects to frame sections of the body using it as a canvas where images are projected onto it. Here the camera embodies the purveyor's gaze as it pans across the nude figure that lies horizontally. This horizontal compositional framing evokes a sense of landscape. So that when Mukii uses photographs of the Kenyan landscape she creates a superimposition of land and the feminine body that alludes to a history of discourses on Orientalism and the feminization of the African continent (Said, 1993, Mudimbe, 1988). The images are later re-worked and re-presented separately as a photographic collection called *The Travelogues* (2015).

The anti-indexical qualities that animation offers to discourses within the documentary genre may arguably present a particular attraction to artists specifically concerned with representational strategies of subalterns. Some of the more dominant modes of documentary filmmaking (in particular ethnographic films) can be implicated in a wider historical and political discussion on claims to 'truths' embedded within the photographic image and for this reason may appear to be inadequate. Therefore it is worth reflecting upon Mukii's choice to represent her testimony of the feminine experience of race and skin colour, within the fabricated animated form as intentionally self-referential, implicating documentary filmmaking as, in part, responsible for the condition she sets out to critique.





Fig 4: Three still frames (left to right) illustrating framing devices from a sequence of shots in the salon in *Yellow Fever* (2012)



Figure 5: Still frames from the climatic performance (03:41 – 04:21) montage sequence in *Yellow Fever* (2012).

JACQUIE TROWELL ET AL., SOUTH AFRICA

The case of the South African animated documentary, *Beyond Freedom* (2005) provides evidence of a reflexive use of processes that inform the director's investigation of post-apartheid South African identities. Whilst in previous examples there has been a focus upon an individual artist and their own practices within non-fiction animation, this section intends to highlight the collective production process as an implicit part of the theme. *Beyond Freedom* (2005) called upon a range of different groups of South African people to contribute to the making of this film, from providing a narrative and testimony, to filming, and later animating. Unlike previous examples it also made use of recorded images (video) and sound as its primary source material. The combination of indexical images of a pro-filmic event and animation within this documentary-type format serves to suffuse the film with a meta-narrative that carries an impact beyond the immediate recorded accounts and testimonies. The specific production processes that informed the making of this film are intimately linked to the subject matter, and in a sense, act as a catharsis and response to the difficulties surrounding the subject of South African identities. The animation was released in October 2005, and has since been screened at Africa in Motion Festival, Edinburgh (2008), and nominated for the Golden Berlin Bear Award at the Berlinale in 2006. The animation is presented in a documentary style, and follows four principle characters, 'each on their own personal path to freedom' (Personal Communication, Trowell, 27/05/2005).

The director Jacquie Trowell's experience within the commercial sector and her profile as a pioneer in stop-motion animation within the South African context placed her in a favorable position to be able to locate and direct a team of South African animators that would work on this film in a cohesive and yet individual manner. The multi-layered collaborative approach that was undertaken in the production in both the execution of animation and the filming of interviews by eight live action crews. Trowell collected and reviewed the raw material to compile a montage of testimonies, with a focus upon four characters. This was edited to a thirteen-minute narrative, which was given to a team of about 12 animators and artists to work on.

"As the director, I encouraged the team to come up with treatments themselves instead of dictating a "look" to the film. I wanted a diverse mix of styles that reflected a diverse nation and differing perspectives. And so the animated layer of *Beyond Freedom* took on the feel of an intricate quilt."
(Personal Communication, Trowell, 27/05/2005)

The animated process had a interdependency with the interviewed videos, not only for its use of the audio testimony, but also for the information that the filmed image provided as a portrait of the various protagonists that appear throughout the film. The animators drew upon the technique of rotoscoping, or as a literal 'tracing' of the filmed character (so that the animated character and filmed person are in effect representations of the same person.) The animation is applied at a later stage to the footage that was filmed prior to the animation production. In this case the rotoscoping allowed for a secondary visual narrative to be constructed over the initial film footage. Whilst rotoscoping informed the basis of the segments of the animation production and can be said to allude to the video sources that informed the image, each group of artists were able to nonetheless introduce a variety of styles, palettes and aesthetic treatments that are noticeably different in their approach.

This film implicates not only the voices that provide personal testimony, but also the filmmakers or camera operators that set out to seek these testimonies and record them (whether they were eventually used or not) and later the artists that (re)-worked upon the images and sounds that were collected. Their engagement with these narratives was both individual and cooperative. Each party was responsible for a task that relied upon material provided by an external or previous source and outside of their immediate control. The final visual styles that are visible in the animation are all particular to South Africa because contemporary artists "from the townships, colleges and cafes of South Africa" inspired and informed the animators. The production process was a means to address the content of the narrative on a multiplicity of levels, and as director Trowell argued; "The production process echoed the film – people from all backgrounds coming together to describe personal examinations of freedom" (Personal Communication, Trowell, 27/05/2005). Therefore the implementation of animation was crucial to the entire film as it enabled another visible layer of 'difference' to be explored through style and design. When queried about the decision to use the medium of animation within a documentary style film, she replied,

"We believe this is a new form of documentary filmmaking. Traditionally, the editorial nature of documentaries has been tied to narration and interviews. We have added another element to that editorial control. In addition to the interviews and their editing, we are interpreting that information with a sort of visual poetry." (Personal Communication, Trowell, 27/05/2005)

Whilst identifying the importance of editorial control, Trowell's reply in the plural alluded to the implicit collaborative nature of this film. Furthermore whilst the

methodology was informed by documentary practices it also engaged with processes of overlaid fabrication that explicitly positioned the different artists' engagement within the production.

The themes of memory, identity and remembrance all play their part in *Beyond Freedom* (2005). The catharsis that emerged through the public recognition of memories transcended the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) permeating into different aspects of South African artistic practices (Coombes, 2003; Purryer, 2004). One key aspect to the accounts in *Beyond Freedom* (2005) is that they presented excerpts of memories that are specific to the personal but that are also able to resonate as a shared memory or experience of apartheid. Motivated by a preservation of these memories and an understanding of the tensions between the personal and collective memory, the film attempted to interweave a diverse range glimpses of South African expressions on the social and political conditions.¹² An interweaving of these elements is mirrored visually as parts appear to move or change fluidly from one section to another evoking a sense of the experience of memory, able to leap through time and space, never quite fixed, ephemeral and intangible. Animation offers visual devices such as metamorphosis to allow for the exploration of an interweaving of images, people, and places, without create a sense of disjuncture that would be counter to the overall theme. Paul Wells (1998) described this as the ability to "literally change one image into another different image through the evolution of a line". By manipulating shapes to create a fluid linkage between of images, the animator connects seemingly unrelated images that forge relationships and disrupt the classical notion of story telling. Both metamorphosis and collage are used here to economize on space and time. They allow the animator to create highly informative visual sequences, to condense narrative action and contemporarily embed visual components that imbue the image with new potential meanings.

In this film metamorphic change also provided a visual prompt that positioned the account as memory. For example this technique was used to represent the personal loss of one character, Leslie, as he stood in front of his house. The viewer sees his environment changing before their eyes, in the vein of a time-lapse sequence, from a typical suburban house to a house for sale, to a pile of rubble and eventually a barren landscape. The manipulation of the environment is mirrored in Leslie, as his physical appearance also transitions to a tired and worn version of the former self. This sits well in the context of his testimony, which is in effect a memory of his past experiences and his own personal transformation from wealthy to poor. The

impression of fluidity featured heavily in this animation, moving through different narratives, contexts, and characters. The fluidity of this movement between forms can be said to be a similar experience to the recollection of a memory, which is not fixed in a linear fashion. In addition, the animated techniques not only served to illustrate the narrative, but also acted as visual metaphors to the individual's state of being.



Figure 6: Two frames from two shots illustrating Leslie before and after apartheid



Figure 7: A frame of final sequence of Leslie illustrating the use of coloured line in the context of Leslie's proclamation of his identity as South African, 'one of the people'.

Trowell's decision to use the medium of animation and a network of different practitioners should be considered in light of its ability to support and imbue the narrative with various aesthetic identities. The process of animation becomes embedded within the purpose of this narrative, offering a site for discussion on the South African notion of the "rainbow nation" and the legacies of memory on identity. Furthermore through animation representational devices are deployed as strategies that can layer additional meaning on top of the recorded live-action interviews.

ON INTERACTIVITY AND AUTHORSHIP

Whilst Trowell's *Beyond Freedom* (2005) is the result of a collective creative process, the director still led the overall structure, piecing it together to create a short film. However, what of the examples of an engagement with non-fiction that also includes multiple authors but that has a structure that is determined by the viewer's interaction? This article will now turn to examples of non-fictional formats that challenge form and structure through interactivity. They encourage the subject of these narratives to

become in turn the producers of their own stories. The collection of fragments presented online become threads that exist as possible stories which the user constructs through their interactions online. In some of these examples, the content is presented through remediated media: video, still images, sound, text present in the same space and in turn affecting and informing meaning making. This convergence (Jenkins, 2006) is facilitated by the platform of digital technology (whether personal computer or smart phone) and in turn changing the landscape of many creative formats and imaging practices. It sees a shift from the specialist maker to the non-specialist being both viewer/user and “prod-user” (Bruns, 2006), and an engagement with gaming and VR technology that offers multiple perspectives driven by the viewer/users choices and navigation. In these examples, the cultures emerging from Web 2.0 and the principles of participation inform the structure of the interactive documentary (i-doc) as non-linear and multi-modal. As Gaudenzi identifies the contributions of content by users can lead to conceptions of “living documentaries” that have the ability to grow and change as positive collaborative spaces. However these types of documentary require recognition of the tensions between co-creation and co-authorship that do not always align.

Mirroring the discourse in animation studies, discourse on i-docs also identifies a paradox that arises from the combination of documentary and interactivity (Favero, 2013). As Favero identifies “in fact, if a documentary is somehow connected to the ‘objective’ portrayal of facts, how can it then include a process of eventual modification?” (Favero, 2013 p.262) It is often suggested that the nonlinearity of interactive formats enable polyvocality and the destabilisation of dominant narratives. For example, Jighar Mehta one of the founders of *18 Days in Egypt*, describes this interactive documentary project as consisting of media fragments from other users who were creating their own content (see: <http://beta.18daysinegypt.com/#/about>). The project had identified a proliferation of ICT and mobile technologies amongst Egyptians, and the range of uses of these technologies (from non-expert to professional) to document their experiences and participation in the revolution in Egypt, 2011. They created a bespoke platform that allowed people to bring their content to the platform and create short stories using image and text. The range of different stories that these users were able to tell did not always align and therefore offered the user a means to examine diverse ‘truths’ that different users were exploring. Using web-data, interactive documentary also means that people are able to collaboratively tell stories. The project was launched through Kickstarter and six Egyptian fellows who had their own online streams focused upon themes such as

women of the revolution, graffiti, activism and tear gas, motorcycle ambulances. They were commissioned to collect and craft different stories, and their streams could include content from other sources such as photographs from users on flickr, YouTube, and inter-title frames with text that provide narrative context to the collection of images or videos. The project also allowed other users to sign up and create their own streams; some stories were historical accounts of the 1952 Revolution, others personal testimonies of specific events, or accounts of post-traumatic stress. The website presents a scrolling wall of tiles; 'streams' created by users that a visitor to the site can click and view. In turn, whilst viewing the stream the viewer is able to click on images that redirect to the original sources leap-frogging to different content offering the possibility of developing thick description (Geertz, 1973).

AUTHORS AND CREATORS

A related project called *Filming Revolution* (2015), presents the viewer with an online archive of interviews about activists and filmmaking in Egypt and is described as a 'meta-documentary about documentary' (<http://www.filmingrevolution.org/page/about>, Accessed 10/03/2017). This website allows the user to view and interact with a cloud of coloured dots, representative of people, themes, projects and articles and the network of connections between these discrete elements, visible as lines connecting the dots. *Filming Revolution* undoubtedly has a built in reflexivity. In this space it is possible to find interviews with Yasmin Elyat, Jigar Mehta's colleague that coproduced the *18 Days in Egypt* project, and Viola Shafik, a documentary filmmaker herself – talking about the characters in her own film *Arij: Scent of Revolution* (2014), excerpts of which can be viewed on the same site. The project (supported by the Leverhulme Trust) is curated by Dr Alisa Lebow, an American academic who specializes in the documentary studies. As she states, "my role as producer or director becomes one of facilitator, organizing the material in ways that can be accessible, searchable, allowing it to resonate on multiple levels." This is important in the discussion of co-authorship and co-creation, as the archive includes short excerpts from Egyptian filmmakers' own documentaries. Additionally the visible networks that appear to connect different dots are pathways that any user is able to create once they interact with the discrete elements and become an author in their own right.

Similarly *Everyday Africa* (2012) is another online interactive space, part of the *Everyday Projects* that uses photographs and short moving images of everyday life in Africa, where users can use the *Storyfriend* app to create their own connections

between their content that that of other users. Whilst not altogether referred to as an 'interactive documentary', lacking the curatorial intervention that one associates with the author, the site and app offer an aesthetic resource that one can draw upon to reframe conceptions of documentary formats. It also reveals a growing engagement by specialist and non-specialist users with digital technology and online spaces in Africa. Here prod-users such as Ghanaian photographer Nana Kofi Acquah can share his instagram photos, animated gifs, and text as remediated content that becomes repurposed into a story by a viewer or user. This collective generation of content has also been used politically, with examples such as the Kenyan app *Ushahidi* that was developed to enable citizen journalists to record and disseminate information about the Kenyan election violence in 2007. The *Ushahidi* Platform is a 'free and open source data management system that allows anyone to gather distributed data via SMS, email, or web and visualize it on a map or timeline' (See <https://vimeo.com/ushahidi/about> Accessed 10/03/2017). It echoes the participatory culture of Web 2.0 enabling crowdsourcing and serving as a tool to manage information, through visual maps, creating reports and offering a means for communication that in turn can be deployed within documentary practices. For this reason, it is presented as a tool and example of interactive documentary on forums such as the IDFA DocLab online archive (International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam).

NEW REALITIES

In conclusion, the convergences that occur within digital technology have undoubtedly accelerated the remediation of non-fictional formats. As shown above the platforms for idocs present, for example, content that is illustrated diagrammatically, alongside live-action film, textual documentation and hyperlinks to other external sources for similarly remediated material. Here the user plays a predominant role, as co-creator of material, or even serving as an author determining potential structures through tagging or mapping connections. With animation, on the other hand, one is able to create an assemblage of different culturally located aesthetic elements within the same audio-visual space that overtly connects the artist to the surface of the image. In the examples provided here an intimate relationship between the author as artist and the content being explored is implicit through testimony. This landscape of documentary modes within Africa indicates that African artists, filmmakers, and non-specialist prod-users are engaging with new modes of documentary. The upcoming release of films such as *Liyana* (2017) by South African filmmakers Amanda and

Aaron Kopp that embeds Nigerian Kenneth Coker's animation as an aesthetic strategy suggests that the position between the fabricated and the photographic image is no longer considered diametric or polar. Furthermore as technologies continue to offer new remediations of the moving image with examples such as VR (Virtual Reality) becoming more accessible to a range of users, exhibitions such as *New Dimensions: Virtual Reality Exhibition* held in Johannesburg in October 2015 are important indicators of an engagement by African artists with these new modes. As Ugandan Jonathan Dotse's experimental film *Pandora* (2015) demonstrates a 360 degree view creates an immersive and participatory experience (allowing the viewer to choose where to look as the camera journeys through Accra) and offers a glimpse of things to come.

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¹ On the Index see: Pierce, C. S. (1958), *The Collected Papers*. Volumes 7 & 8, Arthur Burks (ed.). Cambridge M.A.: Harvard University Press.

² Casetti's (2011) essay on cinema and the digital image positions the absence of an existential link between the thing and its representation as a necessary consequence of digital technologies upon cinema. The implications of this are felt upon discourses of indexicality.

For the purpose of this discussion these ideas are extrapolated to consider animation as lacking a similar link.

³ Bolter discusses remediation with specific reference to new media, digital technology and its impact (remediation) of older types of media such as print, film, and television. This concept is extended here to accommodate the refashioning of other artistic forms in the context of animation.

⁴ Animation scholars tend to make references to Nichols' classifications (2001) and align animation within these different modes. Furthermore within animation studies the engagement with the so-called 'animated documentary' and the role it can play within documentary format is mostly focused on examples from Europe or America (Honesty Roe, 2013; Beckman, 2011; Ward, 2005; Strom, 2003; Wells, 1997, Del Gaudio, 1997).

⁵ Nonetheless it will be possible to identify aspects of the discussion on testimony as resonating with certain modes defined by animation scholars, such as Wells' (1997) subjective mode, or Honess Roe's (2011) discussion on 'evocative functionality' for example.

⁶ This is especially true of early ethnographic films and their misuse and misrepresentation in the colonial project.

⁷ Kibushi's interest in testimony is appears in other aspects of his work such as the work commissioned by the KU Leuven University in Belgium to head the KADOC heritage project, *Congo 2010* (<http://kadoc.kuleuven.be/congo2010/fr/pro.php>). In this project Kibushi gathers a range of Congolese recollections of the experience of colonization and the perceptions of introduction of Christianity and related religious practices. The material collected consisted of photographic imagery, sound recordings of interviews, and filmed interviews, that were used to create a short film exhibited at the KU Leuven exhibition, *Religion, Colonisation and Decolonisation in Congo, (1885-1960)*, between 8-10th November, 2010 (KADOC Annual Report 2011, see: <http://kadoc.kuleuven.be/pdf/jv/jv2011.pdf>, Accessed 11/03/2014).

⁸ The technique of moving a drawing under the camera is common in Japanese Manga Anime as a cost efficient method that involves drawing only one foreground image that moves on the background rather than a sequence of drawings.

⁹ Mkorogo is a Swahili term also used to refer to a popular toxic skin bleaching concoction used in East Africa

¹⁰ Testimonio is the term used to describe a type of non-fiction narrative that emerged in Latin America in the context of the liberations movements of the 1960's where the narrator is considered subaltern 'The word *testimonio* translates literally as testimony, as in the act of testifying or bearing witness in a legal or religious sense. That connotation is important because it distinguishes *testimonio* from simply recorded participant narrative, as in the case of 'oral history'. In oral history it is the intentionality of the recorder – usually a social scientist – that is dominant, and the resulting text is in some sense 'data'. In *testimonio*, it is the intentionality of the narrator that is paramount.' (Beverly, 1989:14)

¹¹ The images included illustrations of minstrels, cartoons of colonizers and colonized, photographs of slave traders hanging African men, drawn illustrations of female genitalia, illustrations of British soldiers gazing at the Hottentot Venus, photographic images from eugenic literature, maps and other imagery of this type.

¹² It is important to note that, at times, the representation and assembly of these testimonies in *Beyond Freedom* (2005), appear to be positioned from a positivist account aligned with the moral-theological underpinnings of the TRC view, one that seeks to enable and promote political transformation. Therefore the film's engagement with testimonies and 'truths' sits in the context of the officiating narratives.