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A Practice Based Inquiry into Materiality, Minimalism, Fantasy and Actuality in Animated Documentary

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy* in Digital Art at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Supervisor: Professor Christo Doherty

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is part of a creative practice PhD that explores the creative possibilities of using animation as a documentary medium through the making of a half-hour animated documentary, titled *Polonia*, that takes as its subject a historical narrative focusing on the emigration of two Polish families from Poland in the early 1980s, set within the context of broader geopolitical events of that time. This written thesis contextualizes the making of the film by outlining a brief history of animated documentary and through a discussion of the key theoretical concepts that inform the discourse around this subgenre of documentary filmmaking. The thesis provides the historical context for the film's narrative, outlines its production processes and unpacks its creative choices and iconography. The final part of the thesis discusses key theoretical insights that have emerged from the creative process and how they point towards a ways in which animation can be conceptualised as a legitimate documentary medium. The concept of *constructedness* as a means of self-reflexivity is identified as the key factor that grants animation this legitimacy. This leads to a discussion of the film as a spatial construct, resulting from the dual process of *reconstruction* and *construction*, and comprising both *archival* and *cinematic* spaces, as well as the liminal space that exists between fantasy and actuality. There is also a discussion of the film's performance *in* and *of* animation, identifying the *avatar* as a distinct category of animated character that is granted documentary legitimacy, substance and interiority through its relationship to a real-world referent. Finally, the role of sound is addressed, as relating to the film's self-reflexive constructedness.

Keywords

animated documentary; constructedness; animated performance; Poland; Cold War

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by creative practice and thesis at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.



Dominik Łukasz Pater
15 March 2022

Research Office

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RETROSPECTIVE APPLICATION FOR ETHICS CLEARANCE
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DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

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I dedicate this project to the memory of my late father, Dr Kazimierz Pater, who’s lifelong fortitude, resilience and hope in the face of overwhelming adversities continue to serve as an inspiration to me.

LINKS TO PRACTICAL WORK

Polonia (practical component of this research)

Link: https://vimeo.com/572222757

Password: secretsauce

Airmail (for reference only, NOT for assessment)

Link: https://vimeo.com/109921718

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Introduction

Animated documentary – a subgenre that was at one time obscure and perhaps even considered a contradiction in terms, has in recent years seen a dramatic increase in popularity and public interest. Seminal works such as Chris Landreth's Oscar-winning *Ryan* (2004), Ari Folman's feature-length *Waltz With Bashir* (2008) and the Netflix docuseries *Losers* (2019) have exposed international audiences to the notion that animation can be used to tell non-fiction narratives in a novel and engaging way while maintaining documentary veracity. The vast number of documentaries that have been produced in recent years, either entirely animated or ones that include substantial animated content – professional feature-length productions, independent shorts, educational content and student films – provide evidence of a growing enthusiasm for animation within the documentary genre from both creators and audiences.

Alongside this increase in commercial production and creative output, there has been a concomitant increase in academic discourse on the genre. This discourse has focused on two areas of inquiry: animation's ontological status: *can animation be considered a legitimate documentary medium;* and its epistemic value: *what new knowledge or ways of seeing and communicating does animation bring to the documentary genre?* The ontological question to which writers keep returning, as the key issue confronted by anyone wishing to make the case for animation as a medium fit for depicting reality, or what Bill Nichols terms 'the historical world', is that animation lacks an indexical link with the physical world that many still consider to be the legitimating element in documentary realism. Even though it is well-established that live action media can be misleading, a fact that holds especially true in our current age of seamless digital manipulation, this has remained the assumption and accepted standard for documentary filmmaking. While a purely theoretical discussion of animation's ontological status is both valuable and necessary, an analysis of the ways in which animation expands how documentaries communicate serves to resolve many of the questions concerning its suitability as a documentary medium.

In undertaking this analysis, a practice-based approach is highly valuable, as it grounds the inquiry in first-hand experience of the processes of animated documentary production, where creative decision-making and problem-solving afford insights into the ways in which animation can interact with real-world narrative content.

This research is practice-led, exploring how animation can function as a documentary medium, using my half-hour animated documentary, *Polonia, a*s a case study. The film is discussed from both a technical standpoint, as well as within a theoretical framework that focuses on the centrality of reflexivity as a key element in legitimating animation as a documentary medium. While much has already been written in this field of inquiry, I argue that a practice-led approach promises several novel insights and contributes meaningfully through an interrogation of various technical aspects of my film and current theoretical discourse. An interrogation of the film's production process, distilled down to *reconstruction* and *construction*, identifies the importance of materiality in animated documentary and helps to shed further light on the question of how a wholly manufactured medium like animation can represent and relay narratives from the historical world. The film-as-artifact embodies aesthetic and structural strategies that can be effectively used to reflexively highlight constructedness.

Chapter 1 will set the context for broader discussion through a brief historical overview of animated documentary. Annabelle Honess Roe defines an animated documentary as a film that:

i) has been recorded frame by frame;
ii) is about *the* world rather than *a* world wholly imagined by its creator; and
iii) has been presented as a documentary by its producers and/or received as a documentary by audiences, festivals or critics. (2013:4)

In addition to these criteria, she considers an animated documentary to be a film which uses animation in such a way that, irrespective of the amount of animated content present, its exclusion would render the film meaningless (Honess Roe, 2013:4). This definition excludes films that contain animated content but are structured in such a way that their meaning is not entirely dependent on that content. As the content of many of these films is important to a broader understanding of the development of animated documentary, I will include in my discussion under the heading of 'nonfiction' animation, films that use animation as a means to directly engage with the historical world, but which Honess Roe specifically cites as falling outside the category of animated documentary viz., advertising, scientific, educational and public service films (Honess Roe, 2013:4). To these categories I would add animated films that may ostensibly be fictional, but whose narratives serve as an allegory for events or issues in the world, as well as experimental animated films. Considering these films alongside animated documentaries proper serves to provide insight into the multitude of ways in which animation

has contributed to various filmmakers' engagement with our world and how it has been used to communicate information and experience.

My historical overview follows the same basic chronology presented by Honess Roe in *Animated Documentary* and uses many of the same examples she discusses in that book. Given that many of the films Honess Roe has already addressed are considered landmark productions, this is to some extent unavoidable. I have tried to diversify the selection where I saw fit and have also included a section on Eastern European nonfiction animation, as it is relevant to the broader context of my study, given that my experiences as a Polish emigré provide the basis for the practical component of this research.

The historical overview does not aim to be comprehensive but will rather focus on key examples of animation used in a non-fiction context in order to trace a general development over time and identify common approaches, tropes and themes. Several of the films are focused on in detail, as each one helps shed light on different facets of this diverse field relevant to my own work, discussed in Chapter 4.

The decision to begin with a broad overview of the historical development of nonfiction animation and animated documentary is predicated on the understanding that in this field, theory follows practice, where theoretical insights originate in film analysis and a close reading of the myriad ways in which filmmakers have used animation to represent, interpret and comment on reality. I have chosen an interleaving of the historical overview and discussion of various films using theoretical concepts related to animated documentary and nonfiction animation. Where this may result in some fragmentation, I believe that this approach is justified, where a temporally linear approach will shed light on both how the subgenre has evolved over time and how a theoretical understanding of it has developed in response to and alongside creative output.

Chapter 2 introduces the historical narrative that forms the basis for my practical work, the animated documentary *Polonia*. In this chapter I outline the political upheavals that occurred in Poland in the early 1980s that led to the emigration of my family and the Strzelec family to the West, our families' stay at the refugee center in Bad Soden, West Germany and emigration to the US. The chapter will also provide a window into the broader social and political milieu that led to the upheavals, with a brief focus on communist rule in Poland and the social conditions in

the country during that time. My primary sources for this chapter are the interviews I conducted with my immediate family members and Piotrek Strzelec, as well as Norman Davis' *The Heart of Europe* (1986) and Lawrence Weschler's *The Passion of Poland: From Solidarity through the State of War* (1984). There is almost no literature on the refugee groups that were accommodated in Bad Soden, West Germany, in 1982-83, apart from a brief mention in the press and a short 1983 article in the *New Yorker,* so in this regard I have had to rely almost exclusively on the interviews I conducted.

Chapter 3 discusses *Polonia*, the practical component of my practice-led research process. It traces the film's six-year production and analyses its structure, aesthetics, use of archival materials, motion and sound. The reasons behind the design choices that informed these various aspects of the film's making are explored. The film's visual tropes and iconography are also discussed. The chapter also to some extent continues and expands upon historical narrative from Chapter 2, focusing in greater detail on the personal narratives of the two families.

Chapter 4 engages with the theoretical framework of animated documentary outlined in Chapter 1 to explore how the concepts of reflexivity and constructedness relate to the making of *Polonia*, herein understood as a process of *reconstruction* and *construction*. This is then further broken down into a deeper analysis of three broadly defined aspects of the film's production, organised around the categories of space, performance and sound, and how they contribute towards an understanding of reflexivity and meaning-making in this animated documentary. The spatial analysis of *Polonia* defines two broad categories of space that structure the film, viz. *archival* and *cinematic* space. Archival space is comprised of those elements of the film that are evidentiary and support the film's documentary narrative. The collection and presentation of these diverse archival materials constitutes a process of 'reconstruction'. The cinematic space is a constructed narrative space designed to both visualise the accounts given by the film's narrators and to self-reflexively reveal its own construction.

The significance of including 'fakes' – elements that mimic legitimate archival materials but are either wholly manufactured or substantively modify the form and content of archival materials – within the film's archival space is also explored in this chapter. While seeming to undermine the truth claims of the animated documentary, fakes are posited as a form of metacommentary,

both critiquing the superficial use of archival materials in documentaries and serving to highlight a film's constructedness.

Following Donald Crafton's concept of "performance *in* and *of* animation" (Crafton, 2013:15), the animated characters that are central to *Polonia*'s narrative are posited as 'avatars' of their real-word referents. They resist hyperreality and are animated within what Crafton terms the 'figurative' performance mode, with limited motion and lacking a sense of 'interiority' in their performance. They are, instead, 'activated' by the audience's projection onto them of inner depth and personality, derived from their real-world referents, manifest as the film's narrators. Identifying the distinction between animated documentary avatars and the animated characters we see in fiction clarifies the notion that in a documentary context, animation must always be in service to a historical narrative, resist hypperealism and always 'point back' to the historical world.

The chapter closes with a brief analysis of the film's audio elements, focusing primarily on its narration and the reflexive qualities of its music and foley.

Chapter 1

Animated Documentary and Non-Fiction Animation: Historical Overview and Key Theoretical Concepts

1.1 Early Nonfiction Animation

The early history of animated documentary is one of discrete episodes rather than any kind of consistent production within a formalised genre. Individual creators were driven by a spirit of experimentation and innovation, rather than consciously working within a defined mode. These individual contributions appeared sporadically during the course of the 20th Century, before finally gaining a critical mass as an identifiable trend in the century's final decade. There is general consensus among scholars and animation historians that Winsor McCay's *The Sinking of the Lusitania*, completed in 1918, can be considered the first animated documentary. Prior to working in animation, McCay had gained wide public recognition as a newspaper cartoonist, writing and illustrating popular strips like *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend, Little Sammy Sneeze* and *Little Nemo in Slumberland* (1905-1914, revived 1924-1927). These strips were notable both for their realism of form and perspective, as well as explorations of temporal distortions and manipulations of form and space and, where according to John Canemaker (2009: 95), in them McCay "consciously tested principles of animation through subtle sequential changes in the characters movements." McCay also performed as a vaudeville 'lightning-sketch' artist, popular in the late 19th century (Crafton,1993:48), where artists would entertain audiences through quick drawings that evolved and changed in both surprising and humorous ways. Donald Crafton has argued that this form of entertainment, popular in the late 1800s and originating in Victorian parlor games, is the true antecedent to early drawn animation (Crafton,1993:48). McCay's first foray into animation was *Little Nemo* (based on his newspaper strip) in 1911, followed later by the twelve-minute *Gertie the Dinosaur* in 1914. McCay incorporated both these films into his vaudeville act, where in the case of the latter, 'directing' the animated Gertie from the stage in front of live audiences (Roeder, 2014:6-8). McCay's precise and realistic drawings and his interest in temporal phenomena and his understanding of the sequential unfolding of action, as well as his vaudeville flair for the dramatic, all find expression in *The Sinking of the Lusitania.* The film was made to commemorate the sinking of an English civilian ship travelling from New York to Liverpool, struck by torpedoes from a German submarine off the coast of Ireland on 7 May 1915 (Canemaker, 2009:101) that resulted in the deaths of 1198 people, with several

prominent figures of the day numbering among the dead. Canemaker cites John Fitzsimmons, McCay's assistant, as saying that McCay's outrage at this event prompted him to make the film, which took twenty-two months to complete and numbered 25 000 drawings (Canemaker, 2009:101). The *Sinking of the Lusitania*'s use of animation can be defined as mimetic substitution, where animation is used to depict an event that was not or could not be captured in live action, the first of the three categories defined by Honess Roe that describe the way in which animation functions within a documentary context (2013).

The Sinking of the Lusitania begins by drawing the audience's attention to its production process with a series of live action sequences showing McCay undertaking the project and a discussion around technical aspects of the film, followed by a scene in the animation studio with animators at work and a demonstration of how the waves that are present throughout most of the film were animated. An intertitle even announces the number of drawings that had to be made for the film to be completed. This highlighting of animation's constructedness and artifice was common in animated films of that era, where the 'magic trick' of animation was often highlighted in one way or another and the animator inserted themselves visibly into their films, a phenomenon that Crafton terms 'self-figuration' (Crafton, 1993:11). However, the inclusion of these scenes in what is considered to be the first animated documentary makes them particularly significant: it is as if McCay is highlighting the constructedness of his film as a means of authenticating it, signaling to his audience that what they are about to witness is both a reconstruction as well as an interpretation of events. The film is realistic both in drawing style and motion. Aesthetically, it overtly mimics newsreel footage of that time. Apart from a brief underwater shot of a torpedo travelling towards the camera (with some fish scurrying out of its path), people floating in the water among the ship's debris and a mother sinking beneath the waves holding a small child, all the compositions in the film are wide, as if filmed by a cameraman from another vessel. The Lusitania being torpedoed and sinking beneath the waves takes place in what almost amounts to real-time (the *Lusitania* sank eighteen minutes after being fired upon, while in the film this happens over an eight minute period). This realism situates audiences as direct witnesses to the event, allowing them to become absorbed and emotionally invested, but maintains documentary integrity through McCay's emphasis that this is a reconstruction.



FIGURE 1.1. An intertitle in *The Sinking of the Lusitania* (left) asserting that the film is a record of events that took place in the real world and a frame showing an explosion (right) as the Lusitania is struck by the first torpedo.

Lusitania is something of an anomaly in that it remains the only film of its era to use animation in a journalistic style to depict real-world events. To the best of my knowledge, no other films from before the 1950s have been identified as meeting all three of Honess Roe's criteria for a film to be categorised as an animated documentary. Another curious fact is that, despite its unofficial status as 'the first animated documentary', *Lusitania* was made before 'documentary' had even been identified or defined as a distinct genre of filmmaking. Based entirely on eyewitness accounts, the film's depiction of events attests to the at-times unclear boundaries that separate reportage from advocacy or propaganda. The strong emotive and jingoistic rhetoric with which the film ends place it somewhere between a commemorative film and a propagandistic call to action for the war effort. Seen in this light, one can find similarities between *Lusitania* and other films from first half of the 20th Century that used animation in a non-fiction context more broadly and helps us to see McCay's film within some kind of historical continuity, rather than as an isolated incident.

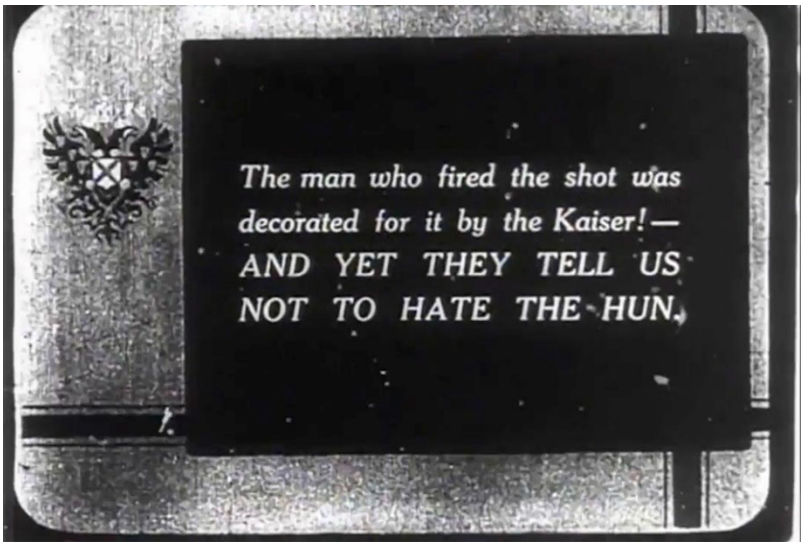


FIGURE 1.2. *The Sinking of the Lusitania* closes with an intertitle that is strongly emotive, reading as a call to action in the war effort against Germany.

Peace On Earth (1939), an allegorical tale promoting a strong anti-war message, falls outside of the documentary genre, but is noteworthy for the way in which it mirrors *Lusitania*'s aesthetic in its rendering of naturalistic animated depictions of the violence of war. The film uses rotoscoped (traced) animation showing tanks, planes, anti-aircraft guns and soldiers in gas masks, all battling in a muddy bombed-out landscape scattered with barbed wire fencing. These rotoscoped sequences are inserted into a Disney-style cartoon animation, framed by a narrative where anthropomorphic animals describe the horrors of this past conflict. There is a sharp contrast between the two styles of animation, with the cute, sentimental rendering of the cartoon animals and the bleak realism of the battle sequences. There is also little doubt that the rotoscoped sequences are modelled on images and footage from the First World War. Donna Kornhaber notes that these rotoscoped sequences capture the 'transparency' of photographic images (a term she borrows from Susan Sontag), which are "strikingly, arrestingly realistic, perfectly capturing the fluidity of human movement" and (again citing Sontag) capture a 'synthesis' of graphic depiction, "...the claim that 'things *like* this happened' - or, we might say, *could* happen" (Kornhaber, 2019:129). This fluidity of motion gives them an uncanny life-like quality that is in some ways reminiscent of Peter Jackson's *They Shall Not Grow Old* (2018), where grainy, jerky, black and white WW1 footage was 'brought to life' and made more immediate through a process of colourisation, stabilisation and the use of computer algorithms to create new in-betweens based on existing frames for smoother, more natural motion.

Kornhaber's view is that animation can reveal what official war narratives and propaganda obscure (2019:12). In this instance, she sets animation in opposition to photography. Again quoting Sontag, she insists that photographic depictions of war and the suffering of others, in their ubiquity, passivity and oft-times predatory nature, distance the viewer from the atrocities they depict. By contrast, animation can act as the vehicle for the testimony of those that have experienced war directly, as a 'witness' rather than merely a detached 'spectator' (Kornhaber, 2019:21).

Peace on Earth's overt echoing of World War 1 imagery and the uncanny, lifelike quality of the animation are what give the film its power and locates it in an uncertain position along the spectrum between fantasy and actuality. This is made clearer by viewing the film's 1955 remake, *Good Will to Men*, which has a near-identical narrative but where the war sequences are more generalised depictions of armed conflict and are missing the specificity of the images in the original, as well as the realism and fluidity of the rotoscoped animation. *Peace on Earth* shows that the boundaries that define documentary animation are not clear and that the relationship between animation and actuality is both layered and complex. Released in December 1939, the imagery depicted in *Peace on Earth* spoke directly to the new global conflict that has just erupted months before and its depiction of charred landscapes populated with ruins seems now to presage the devastation that would be visited on European cities over the coming years. As with *The Sinking of the Lusitania*, *Peace on Earth* can be seen as a call to action, promoting a strong pacifist anti-war message. Where *Lusitania* used a 'documentary' format to promote its message, *Peace on Earth* conveys it in the form of allegory, but both films use animation modelled on real world events in order to effect change in the world.



FIGURE 1.3. A side-by-side comparison of a First World War photograph with a still from *Peace on Earth*.

1.2 Scientific and Educational Animation

While these instances of animation rendered in a figurative realist style, either depicting or alluding to real-world events, are important precursors to the later emergence of animated documentary as a clearly defined subgenre, the bulk of non-fiction animation from the first half of the 20th Century falls under the category of what today could be termed *infographic animation*. Here, the medium was used as mimetic substitution in an instructional or educational capacity to show various processes and phenomena that were invisible to the human eye, like the movement of celestial bodies (Fleischer Studios' *The Einstein Theory of Relativity*, 1923), sound waves (*How the Ear Functions,* 1940) and blood and oxygen flow in humans and animals (*Experiments in the Revival of Organs,* 1940). They were created using either drawn animation or stop-frame object animation and consist of directional movement and processes represented by simple shapes and lines, combined with photographs, three-dimensional models or realistic paintings. During the First World War, the US Army commissioned Bray Studios (one of the major US animation studios at that time) to produce training films, showing the operation of various weapons and other tasks and processes related to military activity (Crafton,1993:158). Donald Crafton notes that rotoscoping, the technique of tracing live-action footage seen in Max Fleisher's *Ko-Ko the Clown* animations (and which imbued the soldiers in *Peace on Earth* with such uncanny life-like motion) was first developed and patented by Dave Fleischer's in 1915 with the intention of using it for military application (1993:170). The technique allowed for a high degree of fidelity and clarity in depicting various industrial and mechanical processes and Max Fleischer, who worked for Bray until he and his brother formed their own studio on 1921, used it in creating Bray's instructional films. Crafton notes that:

> By 1919, the studio was swamped with orders from the government, from industry, and from educational institutions. Bray realized [sic] that there was a vast untapped potential for these didactic productions, and decided to reorient his studio's direction. The burgeoning auto industry became the largest private client... (1993:160).

The studio had its own Educational Division and by the late 1920s had ceased to produce theatrical cartoons, focusing almost exclusively on Army and Navy training films (Pointer, 2020).

Outside of the USA, animation was also considered a viable medium for education and instruction. Mihaela Mihailova and John MacKay have documented how in 1920s Russia, Lazar Sukharebsky and A. Tyagai, both important writers on Soviet film, brought attention to animation's ability to explain hidden physical and chemical processes (Mihailova and MacKay, 2014). Mihailova, in a later publication, has noted that Dziga Vertov, the Soviet documentarian and film pioneer best known for his 1929 feature, *Man with a Movie Camera*, included animated maps in several of his films (Mihailova, 2019).

1.3 Infographics as Propaganda

During the Second World War, Disney produced animated sequences for the US Army's *Why We Fight* series (1942-5). These seven documentaries, directed by Frank Capra, originally intended to indoctrinate US troops, were also screened to civilian audiences (McBride, 2010). In *Prelude to War* (1942), the first in the series, we see animated cartography: an inky blackness spreads inside the borders of each of the Axis Powers territories, Germany, Japan and Italy, indicating that fascist ideologies have overtaken these nations; the islands of Japan are shown transforming into a dragon, Germany into a giant Swastika spreading across its neighbours, and Italy into Mussolini's symbol of fascism, the *fasces*, adopted from an ancient Roman symbol of authority (Britannica, 2019). In another sequence, an animated infographic illustrates how the reduction of the US army to 136 000 troops has left it with a smaller fighting force than that of the tiny country of Romania. Later, we are shown how each of the Axis Powers has annexed its surrounding territories, here again represented by a spreading, cartoony, inky black that engulfs these landmasses, and how each of these planned to expand its borders in future, ultimately conquering the entire globe. Animated sound waves are shown emanating from radio towers

and engulfing the planet, as a narrator proclaims that, "From Berlin, from Rome, from Tokyo, the campaign started – Propaganda! To confuse, divide, soften-up their intended victims..." (Capra, 1942). The words 'lies' and 'lebensraum', rendered in sharp, jagged lettering, are shown emanating from the radio towers between the concentric rings of the sound waves, dissolving into live-action footage of Hitler and Mussolini giving impassioned speeches. In the series' fourth installment, *The Battle of Britain* (1943), we are again shown a map of Germany's conquered territories in Europe, but here, the blackness reads as scorched earth, with its advancing edges animated as the flames of an expanding wildfire. The *Why We Fight* film series can be classified as documentary, but the films show no pretense of objectivity, and are emotionally manipulative and openly propagandistic. Their animated segments show a noteworthy development in non-fiction animation in the sense that they move away from the scientific accuracy of standard animated infographics to embrace the plasmaticness[1] of the cartoon line and communicate through powerfully emotive graphic symbols, moving closer to what Roger Cardinal (as quoted by Paul Wells) refers to as animation's "suppression of the categories of normal perception", and its ability to "annihilate the very conditions of rationality' (Wells, 2002:5).

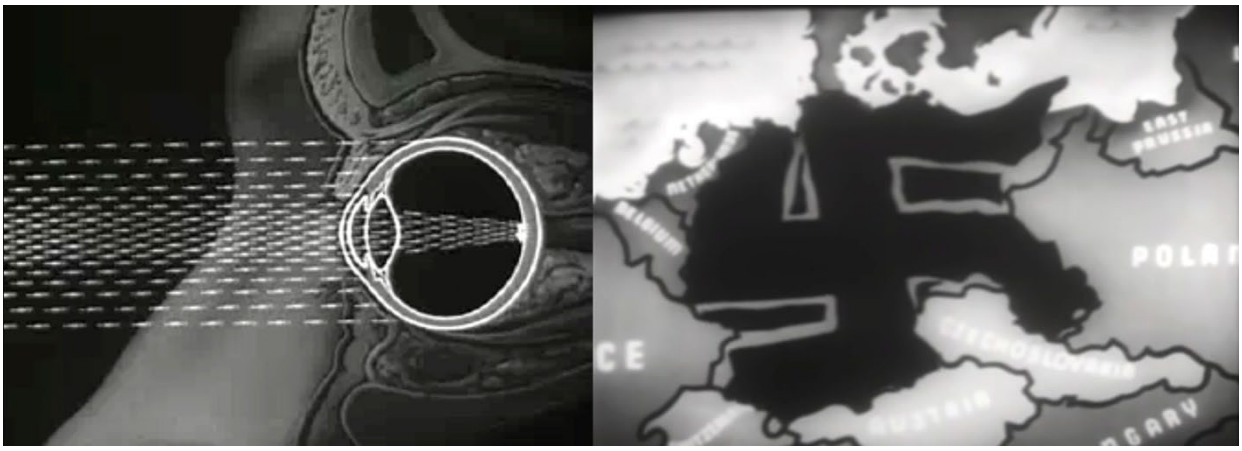


FIGURE 1.4. The movement of light rays depicted in *How the Eye Functions* (1941) and the transformation of Germany into a giant swastika in *Why We Fight: Prelude to War* (1942).

1.4 Western Nonfiction Animation in the Latter Half of the 20th Century

The move away from realism in non-fiction animation continued in the post-war period, with animators working in documentary and non-fiction modes exploring a broader range of aesthetic approaches. Where McCay had attempted documentary veracity through an accurate recreation

[1] A term coined by Sergei Eisenstein, denoting the ability to "dynamically assume any form" (Leyda, 1988 cited in Wells, 1998:22).

of events as a simulacrum of early 20th Century newsreel footage, animators in the latter half of the 20th Century used animation to comment on and interpret their subjects. There was also a tonal shift in these films and an expansion beyond the educational, journalistic and propagandistic modes of communication into more personal, lyrical narratives. This shift runs parallel to changes that were occurring in live-action documentary during this period, which Bill Nichols has described as an expansion beyond the dominant poetic and expository documentary modes to the observational, participatory and performative modes. According to Nichols' schema, the expository mode is one that comprises what he considers the four basic elements of documentary film – "indexical images of reality; poetic, affective associations; storytelling qualities; and rhetorical persuasiveness" and is characterised by the "informing logic carried by the spoken word" (Nichols, 2017:26). The poetic mode has its roots in avant-garde, modernist formal experimentation and lays emphasis on "visual associations, tonal or rhythmic qualities, descriptive passages and formal organisation" (Nichols, 2017:35).

The modes of documentary filmmaking that arose post-war marked a less formal approach, facilitated by the availability, from around 1960, of hand-held 16mm cameras and portable audio-recording equipment. These tools allowed filmmakers to engage more spontaneously and intimately with their subjects under informal conditions. In the observational mode filmmakers "abandon all of the forms of control over the staging, arrangement, or composition of a scene" and adopt a 'fly on the wall' relationship with their subjects, remaining unobtrusive and allowing situations to unfold naturally before the camera (Nichols, 2017:1). This style of documentary filmmaking also eschews narration and music, limiting itself to diegetic sound. While the differences between animation as a form entirely dependent on the intervention of the artist, and observational documentary are self-evident, they also share similarities.

John Hubley was a former Disney background and layout artist that had left the company during its 1941 general strike, worked in a US Army training film unit and later joined UPA (United Productions of America) in 1946. UPA was significant in the evolution of US animation, presenting an alternative to the sentimental realism and didacticism of Disney and "embraced a non-hierarchical structure which privileged and encouraged individual artists, and stood in direct opposition to Disney's industrial culture and its orthodoxies" (Wells, 2002:63). Though not uniform in their aesthetic, UPA films can be broadly defined as having employed 'limited' animated motion and incorporated modern art influences, with bold lines, simple stylised forms and backgrounds that abstracted space in a manner reminiscent of Picasso, Paul Klee and

Joan Miró. Made after John Hubley had left UPA to go into partnership with his wife Faith, *Moonbird* (1959) is a short animation structured around an audio recording of the Hubley's two young sons engaged in play, on the hunt for an imaginary bird. Unaware that they were being recorded, the children's interactions are unscripted and spontaneous. The recording has a verité quality, unclear in parts and with no audible edits. It is complemented by the animation, which resembles UPA films like *Gerald McBoing-Boing* (1950) but pushes the style further in highlighting its constructedness. The backgrounds are loose and expressive with visible brushstrokes and textures giving evidence of several different media used in their rendering - at times resembling a child's crayon drawings. The characters are also drawn loosely, with scratchy pencil marks visible beneath the finished inked lines in several frames. The forms of the characters distend and contract with their movement, changing in proportion and volume throughout the film. The media in which the images are rendered change in a seemingly arbitrary fashion throughout the film and at times the characters are semi-translucent, with background elements showing through them. The Hubleys made two more films using audio recordings of their children*: Windy Day* (1967), in which the children's stream-of-consciousness imaginings result in their physical transformation, and *Cockaboody* (1973), which uses ground-level perspective to simulate a child's view of the world.



FIGURE 1.5. Stills from *Moonbird* showing the film's loose, hand-rendered aesthetic

In the context of the historical development of animated nonfiction, the importance of these films lies in their relationship between the raw, informal quality of their recordings, complemented by and mirrored in the loose, expressive rendering and animation of the images. They showed that animation could tell stories that were idiosyncratic and personal, while still remaining grounded

in documentary truth. With the audio providing the indexical link to the real world, the animation could freely affirm its graphic qualities, while maintaining documentary authenticity. Although it is unlikely that the Hubley's made these films working consciously within a documentary mode, they had both worked on documentaries prior to starting their own company and the rhetorical documentary impulse is evident throughout their filmography. Their films consistently engage with nonfiction subjects, addressing science, philosophy and education, often in service of a utopian message. In a 1988 interview, Faith Hubley said that their interest lay in "...taking the ideas that were new, the emerging visions of the planet, which were being presented to the public in very technical jargon, almost in another language, a high-priest form – and to break down the gulf between insiders and outsiders" (McGillan,1988:13). Regarding their technical innovations, she notes:

> From a technical point of view, since John didn't have to deal with the studio, he didn't have to use conventional ways, so we could do anything we wanted to. Anything! We explored reticulation and paper as a medium, and it was the beginning of eliminating the hard-cel and the hard-line that I've always felt was ugly.... I am a bit of a slob and I like free-flowing line and texture. That was our contribution – aside from content and the amazing changes in sound, using children, using jazz and wonderful composers, using improvisation – to liberate animation from itself, and to go to watercolours and to paint pastels. It was a big, big liberation and resisted by the industry. (McGilligan,1988:13)

These innovations had an influence on the generation of animators that followed the Hubleys. Animator William (Bill) Mather saw *Windy Day* at a Cambridge animation festival in 1968, together with a documentary filmmaker from the BBC, Colin Thomas. The two were deeply impressed by "the use of raw unpolished sound with a highly controlled medium like animation" (Emmet 2011). Thomas put forward the idea for a series of animated films using "secret/discrete" recordings. These were eventually released in 1977 and 1978 as the BBC's *Animated Conversations* series and included two films by Peter Lord and David Sproxton of Aardman Studios (Emmet 2013). Lord and Sproxton were commissioned to create five more films using 'discrete' audio recordings for the BBC's Channel 4 in 1983, titled *Conversation Pieces* (Emmet 2013). The Aardman films in these series were all animated using clay figures shot in stop frame and are distinctive for their unrefined aesthetic. The modelling of -the puppets is rough, with visible indents, cracks and folds in the surface of the clay and in close-up one can

discern visible signs of their construction. The animation is stiff and choppy, though highly expressive. As with *Moonbird*, this raw treatment allows for the audience to hold a parallel awareness of, on the one hand, the illusion of movement and characterisation created by the animation and, on the other, the materiality of the media being used to create it. As with the Hubley's films, each narrative is structured around the recording, with the animation dependent on the audio for its content. Lord and Sproxton's commitment to maintaining the authenticity of these audio recordings indicates what Paul Wells refers to as "a documentary tendency" (Wells, 1998:59).

In 1989, the studio was again commissioned by the BBC to produce the *Lip Synch* series. One of the films was *Creature Comforts* by Nick Park, based on a similar concept of using verité audio. Park chose to interview people about the living conditions of zoo animals. Unsatisfied with the responses he'd received, he began questioning his interview subjects about their own living conditions and combined both sets of responses in the film's audio track (Wells,1998:59). The recordings were then combined with animations of zoo animals being interviewed about their living conditions, in the style of a mockumentary. To emphasise the effect of this being 'real' reportage, Park inserted a real microphone into some shots and the film begins with the sound of audio leader, an image of a meter indicating volume level and a woman's voice saying, "Sounds running. When you're ready" (Park, 1989). The film's audio track is carefully edited and includes sound effects, a move away from the 'raw' approach of the earlier films, though it still maintains a verité feel. The choice to use zoo animals creates the juxtaposition between the audio and visual elements on which the film's humour rests. The clay still has an irregular, rough surface, but the character design is an early version of what would become the Aardman house style - cartoony, with wide mouths and large, expressive eyes. The motion is sophisticated, responsive to the nuances of the recorded voices. The film won an Academy Award and its success led to *Creature Comforts* becoming a series. In the later films, the production*n design is even more sophisticated: the surface of the clay is smooth, with no visible imperfections and the set designs are colourful and highly detailed. The polished aesthetic of these films sits in stark contrast to the rough plasticine animation of the original *Animated Conversations.* Bill Mather, reflecting on how the technique of recorded audio paired with animation had evolved, felt that the concept had moved away from the authenticity of its documentary roots:

> I think although much of the animation got better, I regret that the films felt more scripted. Sound effects were added, and the original idea (eavesdropped, raw,

minimally edited sound) got lost. We're not now allowed to record people without their prior permission, an inconsistent mistake and another victim of fear of political correctness. Even when speech is unscripted, if people know they're being recorded, they 'clean up their act". So, all TV drifts towards processed entertainment U.S. style. When people are talking naturally, unscripted and unselfconsciously, set against animation I think is great. (Emmet 2011)



FIGURE 1.6. There is a stark difference between the visual aesthetic of the original *Animated Conversations* short, *Down and Out* and later installments of the *Lip Synch* the series.

1.5 Post-War Nonfiction Animation in Eastern Europe

In *Anti-Animation: Textures of Eastern European Animated Film*, Ülo Pikkov (2018) notes that during the Cold War era (1945-1989), animation in Eastern Europe could be broadly categorised according to several shared characteristics. All animation was state funded and subject to regulation and censorship; it was propagandistic (again, due to state oversight) and in the early Cold War period was predominantly rendered in a Social Realist style, which in later years diversified into a range of artistic treatments (Pikkov 2018). Though state control and censorship on creative expression was universal under communist rule, policies were not uniform both across different states within the Soviet Bloc, and during the various broadly-delineated eras of Soviet control during the Cold War period, defined by Pikkov as: a) the Stalinist era (1945-1953); b) the political 'thaw' under Krushczev (1953-1964); c) stabilisation/stagnation under Brezhnev and his immediate successors (1964-1985); and d) Gorbachev's era of perestroika and glasnost, 1985-1989/91 (2018:13). Anna Ida Orosz has written of a three-tier system with regard to cultural production in Hungary in the years following the Soviet invasion in 1956, until the collapse of the country's communist government in 1989 (2019). These three tiers identified artists as belonging to the categories of 'promoted',

‘permitted’ or ‘prohibited’ (Orosz, 2019:120). This stratification resulted in what she terms a ‘second public sphere’, a space for artists that had been either banned or unsupported by state agencies to continue creative production. Seen as dedicating themselves to children’s entertainment, animation directors were given a relatively greater amount freedom for creative expression (Orosz, 2019:120). Despite these apparent freedoms, Orosz notes that communist governments developed a tactic of co-opting creatively ambitious and politically dissenting animated films as proof of free artistic expression under communist regimes, to be féted at international festivals, but made inaccessible to audiences in their home countries (2019).

Working under the ever-watchful eye of the state censor, Eastern European animators couched political and historical narratives in allegory, often drawing on folklore and fairytales, employing “Aesopian language and frequent surrealist references” in depicting veiled historical narratives, with “strong pessimistic undercurrents and recurrent dystopian sensibilities” (Pikkov 2018:20). Orosz says that artistic works created under the communist regimes were “often filled with subtexts, and the audience actively engaged in both creating these subtexts and looking for what had been ‘written between the lines’” (2019:121). Paul Wells has observed that Czech animators Jiri Trnka and Jan Švankmajer demonstrated the facility of puppet animation as “a medium which could support significant social and political meaning” and could “remain ambiguous enough not to incur the wrath and intervention of the authorities” (Wells, 1998: 64). Despite the ambiguity afforded by this medium, neither Trnka nor Švankmajer managed to escape the ire of their communist masters. Several of Švankmajer’s films were banned at different points in the filmmaker’s career and he was prohibited from working as a director from 1973 to 1979 (Linsenmaier, 2009; Nedela 2019). Trnka’s *The Hand* (1965), “essentially an autobiographical work” (Wells 1998), that is considered by some to be “the single most renowned work of resistance animation put to film” (Kornhaber, 2020: 69) was a veiled attack on the Czech communist government’s control over artistic output. Though its intended symbolism was obvious, the film was initially sanctioned by the government as a means of co-opting its message, but after Trnka’s death in 1969, all copies of the film were confiscated and it was entirely erased from the public record (Kornhaber 2020).

Orosz has identified a ‘documentary turn’ in Hungarian animation in the 1960s, where ‘subjective-poetic documentary methods’ were a feature of György Kovásznai and Sándor Reisenbüchler (Ornosz, 2019). Kovásznai’s films move between media – painting, drawing, collage, photography, live action – and employ various styles and techniques, from stream-of-

consciousness modified-base paint animation to cartooning and photomontage. They are Modernist in aesthetic and by turns lyrical, absurdist and sardonic in tone, with a deadpan humour that is often seen in auteurist Eastern European film. Though using fictional narratives, his work is broadly nonfiction in its interests, as it engages directly with his society and the lives of his fellow citizens. Paul Wells has noted that his work “represents a relentless creative response to the Totalitarian regime and the emergence of ‘Pop art’” and that he “sought to use animation – however personal and seemingly abstract – as a documentary encounter with his own country” (Wells, 2018:22). Wells also notes that his work “anticipa[ted] the rise of animated documentary in the contemporary era as a way in which the subjective is readily imbued in the indexical and verifiably realist codes of conventional non-fiction texts” (Wells, 2018:24). *Diary* (1966) employs an exuberant and anarchic collage and paint technique, portraying a friendship that becomes a love triangle with a verité quality reminiscent of Francois Truffaut’s *Jules et Jim* (1962). Despite the particularities of its narrative, Orosz sees the film as a having a broader social relevance, giving an accurate picture of “young Hungarian urban intelligentsia” in the mid-60s, and cites a reviewer who claimed that the film depicted “today’s youth better than any editorial could ever do” (Orosz, 2019:131). *From Dusk to Dawn – Something Different* (1967) uses collage, photomontage and live action to show what Brigitta Iványi-Bitter calls a 'micro-history', a record and deconstruction of an individual's everyday life (Orosz, 2019:131).

Animators that escaped the Soviet Bloc during the Cold War-era could express their political views more openly and their work comes closer to being explicitly documentary in nature, even if still reliant on symbolism. Made in Paris in 1964, Walerian Borowczyk’s *Les Jeux de Anges (The Game of Angels)* begins with a disclaimer, saying that “Any resemblance to real persons or events in this film, living or dead, is purely coincidental”. Its opening and closing sequences evoke a train entering a death camp or Gulag. Here angels are mutilated and executed in a surreal industrial matrix of concrete cells. The film borders on abstraction, but its symbolism is clear and it becomes apparent that the disclaimer is intended ironically, for Borowczyk, a survivor of both Nazi-occupied Poland and Polish communism, is alluding to actual “penitentiary spaces...invested with the Kafkaesque machineries of repression...” (Owen, 2014:218-219). *Les Jeux de Anges’* documentary intent can perhaps be better understood if seen in light of Borowczyk’s connection to the Left Bank group of the French New Wave. The group, whose members included notable documentarians Chris Marker, Agnes Varda and Alain Resnais, can be defined as having worked in what Jonathan Owen terms a ‘liminal cinema’, which “incites us to question the nominal separateness of such categories as documentary and fiction, the essay

and the narrative film, live-action and animation" (Owen, 2014:217). Though Borowczyk's allusion to the reality of the mechanisms of systemic oppression is inarguable, his obliqueness must also be considered in light of him having developed his idiom under successive repressive regimes.

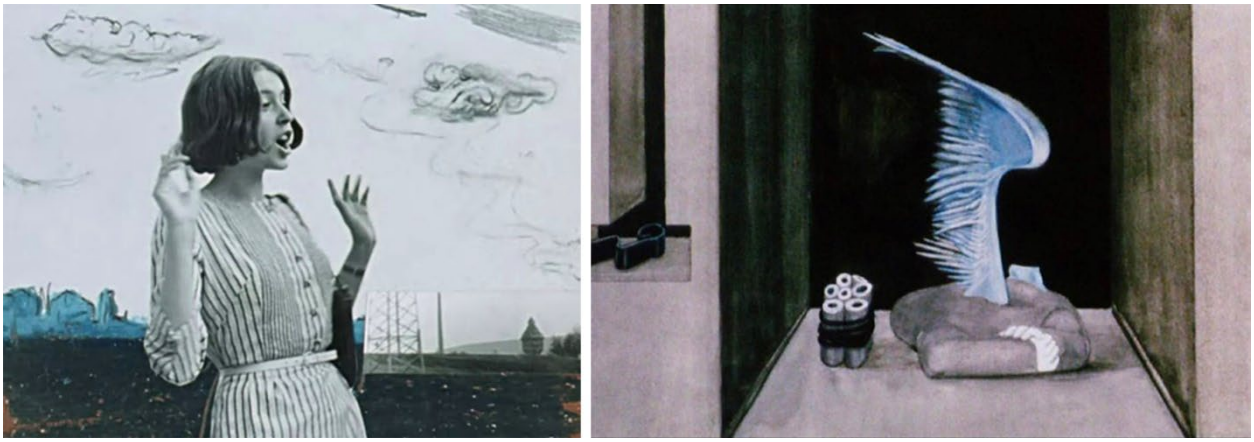


FIGURE 1.7. Stills from Kovásznai's *Diary* (1966) and Borowczyk's *Les Jeux de Anges* (1964)

1.6 Eastern European Animation After the Fall of Communism

Commissioned by the BBC in 1990 to make a film about the end of communist rule in former Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic), Jan Švankmajer created *The Death of Stalinism in Bohemia,* a ten-minute post-mortem of his country's communist regime. It uses montage, assemblages and stop-frame animation to trace and comment on the progression of Czechoslovakia's political history through the various phases of communist rule and the country's future in the post-communist era. The montage sequences of archival photographs and snippets of live action archival footage are fast and aggressive, accompanied by patriotic period songs. Where there are sequences of photos of a single scene or event, these are treated as key frames in very quick rudimentary animations that have a fractured, frenzied quality, at times bordering on the deranged. These montage sequences are interspersed with shots of vitrines that stylistically evoke Soviet artist Aleksandr Rodchenko's collages in their juxtaposition of black and white photographs with flat colour graphics and bold typography. Each contains various archival materials comprised of political paraphernalia: official portraits of communist leaders, various insignia, badges, political slogans ('Real Socialism') as well as key historical dates: 9 July 1945 - the day on which the Red Army entered Prague, the 1948 communist coup, the 1968 Prague Spring, and so on (Nedela 2019). The fate of the various communist leaders is communicated through powerful symbols – a noose, a skull breaking

through a photograph, portraits crumpled into balls. Each historical phase is also represented by a sequence of stop-frame animation and pixilation. In these animations, we see Švankmajer's characteristic grotesque, tactile symbolism: a surgeon slices open a bust of Stalin to deliver a similar bust of Klement Gottwald, Chairman of the Czech Communist Party, from the Great Leaders brain; the umbilical cord connecting the two is cut and the newborn is ushered into the world with a slap on the back of the head, to which it responds with a baby's wail. In another sequence, clay is taken from a bucket and smoothed into moulds by a pair of hands wearing fingerless wool gloves, producing body parts that are then placed on a conveyor belt to become rows of figurines resembling the idealised depictions of workers in Social Realist propaganda posters. A stirring patriotic anthem plays as the conveyer deposits the statuettes on a table where the off-camera figure with fingerless gloves is dining. The hands place a noose around the neck of each of the clay figurines, knock them off the table to hang, then cut the rope, causing them to fall into the same bucket of clay from which they were originally birthed. The entire process then begins again. This sequence is followed by Social Realist-style graph charts representing the Soviet planned economies, where the line that tracks production is animated moving to the top of the chart then wildly veering off along a chaotic trajectory. The final animation alludes to the Velvet Revolution and the end of communist rule in Czechoslovakia, but instead of signaling this as a joyous event, Švankmajer introduces uncertainty and ambivalence, with the pair of hands painting random objects in the colours of the Czech flag before unearthing Stalin's bust from a pile of newspaper and also painting it with the same colours. The final sequence mirrors the first: Stalin's bust is again sliced open, we hear the cry of a newborn, but the film ends before the can see what has been birthed. The identity of the future that democracy has delivered remains unknown.

The film is the only one in the Czech Surrealist's oeuvre in which he directly addresses history and politics. Seldom considered in the context of animated documentary, it epitomises the creative intersection between avant-garde sensibility and documentary veracity. Strongly polemical, it demonstrates how powerful a medium animation can be in engaging with nonfiction subject matter. The tactility of the film and its blending of archival materials with stop frame animation creates a porous border between historicity and fantasy, where Švankmajer is directly interacting with and manipulating history, bringing it to life, and engaging with it physically. He resurrects Stalin as a golem-like figure which he can physically manipulate in an act of exorcism, facing and reconciling himself with the spirit and memory of communist rule in his country. Švankmajer labels the film "A Work of Agitprop", perhaps because it is the only film in

the Czech Surrealist's oeuvre that addresses history and politics directly and appears to take a definitive stance against a particular totalitarian ideology. Jiri Nedela points out that the lack of overly political films in Švankmajer's filmography is not a sign of his political indifference (2019). Rather, it speaks to his "uncompromising standards" for, as a Surrealist, Švankmajer is not beholden to any political ideology and "demands conditions of freedom on a political level as well as on the level of subjective experience" as "The inner world of the individual can be mistreated even in a seemingly free society" (Nedela, 2019:136). Švankmajer is apprehensive of both communism and Western society as repressive of the authentic being and expression of the individual. Nedela argues that as a result of this, *The Death of Stalinism in Bohemia* transcends its historic milieu:

> "The cry accompanying the end credits could be not only of a newly born dictator but also of the victims of a new totalitarian regime. In this regard, the film has not aged at all. It depicts a dialectic nature of history, where each era, whether of a positive or negative sign, contains latently a rudiment of its opposite." (Nedela, 2019:144)



FIGURE 1.8. *The Death of Stalinism in Bohemia* (1990) and Paul Fierlinger's *Drawn from Memory* (1995)

Another Czech filmmaker, Paul Fierlinger, has lived as an expatriate in the United States for most of his adult life. His work is infused with an Eastern European sensibility. Much of it is based on personal recollections, both his own and that of others. In *Drawn from* Memory (1995) he narrates his childhood and early adulthood as the son of a Czech diplomat, spending the years of World War Two in the USA, before returning to Czechoslovakia at the war's end. Neglected by his parents and ashamed of his father's political opportunism, he is a disaffected young man, struggling against authority and living a bohemian life under both the shadow of his

father and that of the Czech communist regime, before eventually managing to escape to the West upon his father's death. The only documentary evidence Fierlinger provides to substantiate his narration of events appears in the form of a few family photographs and newspaper clippings. The subjective nature of the narrative is highlighted in the film's opening scenes, delivered in the form of a 'disclaimer' to the audience, where the unreliability of Fierlinger's memory is made explicit and he tacitly confesses to being, at least in part, an unreliable narrator. In the scene, he recalls having a clear memory of a volcano erupting outside the family's bedroom window as a young child in Japan, "an event which [he] was later told never really happened" (Fierlinger 1995). As Fierlinger makes this admission, the volcano depicted on screen vanishes, covered over by a blank white space. He also highlights the constructed nature of the animation he uses to illustrate these memories. The film's opening credit sequence is set to pencil tests of scenes we'll see later in the film. Even though Fierlinger's drawings are more akin to the editorial style of cartoons in *The New Yorker* than to any kind of hyperreal illusionism, the pencil tests strip these scenes of their internal cohesion and reveal them to be assembled layers of pencil drawings. Finally, the film's title highlights both the subjectivity of the narrative and the constructedness of its visualisation, signaling to the audience that they are witnessing a personal memoir, rather than a historical document.

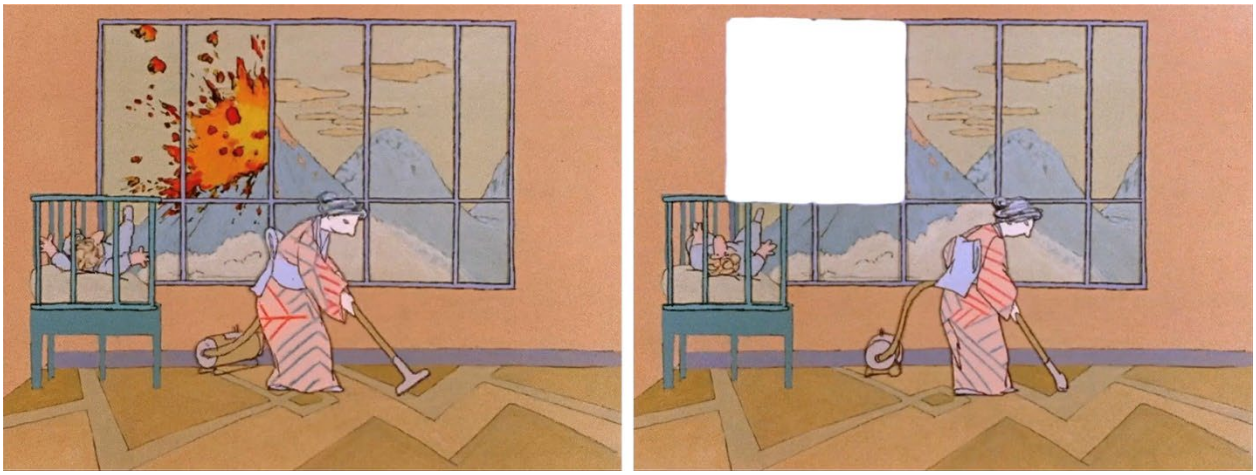


FIGURE 1.9. A visual representation of the unreliability of the narrator's recollection in *Drawn from Memory.*

1.7 Early Academic Writing on Animated Documentary

By the late 1990s, 'animated documentary' began to be addressed in academic writing as a distinct subgenre of animation. This was both the result of the substantial number of nonfiction animated films that were extant by that time, as well as the emergence of 'animation studies' as

a legitimate field of academic inquiry. As both Steve Fore and Annabelle Honess Roe have pointed out, the bulk of academic writing on animated documentary initially came from academics working in the field of animation studies and not from film scholars (Fore 2011:278; Honess Roe, 2013:2). As Fore notes, the result of this was that "animation historians and theorists who wished to draw on documentary theory [needed] to do so largely through strategies of inference and analogy because documentary theorists themselves [had] rarely incorporated significant discussions of animation-based examples in their arguments" (Fore 2011: 278).

Paul Wells' 1997 article, *The Beautiful Village and the True Village: A Consideration of Animation and the Documentary Aesthetic,* in many ways set the template for a substantial portion of academic writing on this subject that followed. In it, he addresses the central question that is repeatedly raised in any consideration of animation as an authentic nonfiction or documentary form: how can a method of filmmaking (or 'moving-image making') that is overtly constructed and mediated, be suitable for representing an exterior, objective reality? (Wells 1997) Live action carries the indexical trace of the events it records – what Steve Fore refers to as "an umbilical connection to a pre-existing reality" (Fore, 2011:278). Animation, on the other hand, is entirely constructed. Therefore, what role can the entirely 'inauthentic' play in a genre dedicated to an exploration of 'the real'? This question has remained perennial in discussions of animated documentary, which to some extent have remained fixated on the binary opposition between the medium of animation on the one hand and live action on the other.

Wells' point of departure is in acknowledging that all documentary is necessarily subjective, as it is driven by cinema's tendency towards aestheticisation, where it offers the *truth of cinema*, rather than an objective representation of reality (Wells, 1997:40). Rather than being an objective record, it is what John Grierson termed as "the creative treatment of actuality" (Wells, 1997:40). Grierson's dictum has been cited in almost every significant article or book on animated documentary and the acknowledgement of the subjective nature of the documentary form is the standard bedrock on which arguments in defense of animation's ontological status as a medium fit for nonfiction, and more specifically *documentary* representation, are built. The acknowledgement that documentary is at its heart an interpretative form allows for animation to be considered as a legitimate medium for other types of interpretation of reality, or what Bill Nichols refers to as 'the historical world' (Nichols 2017). Wells suggests that animation adheres to Grierson's criteria for what constitutes documentary, using the example of Norman McLaren's

Neighbours (1950). This film is both a creative treatment and is 'truthful' in that it makes explicit its constructedness, while its subject matter, an allegory for both the Cold War and war in general, "prick the social conscience in a way that Grierson would have wholly endorsed" (Wells, 1997:41). In his view, 'actuality' in the context of animated documentary is not "the unmediated recording of reality, but...an interrogation of the ways in which 'the real' has been constructed" (Wells, 1997:41). He concludes that, owing to this inherent tendency to reveal its own construction, animation reconciles documentary's cinematic tendency towards aestheticisation with its imperative to articulate social truths. He proposes four categories (using Richard Barsam's categories for live-action cinema) in which animation may operate in a documentary context:

- The *imitative mode* mimics the conventions of live-action documentary and includes both realist depictions of events – à la *The Sinking of the Lusitania* – as well as abstract and infographic visualisations (as discussed in 1.2 Scientific and Educational Animation).
- The *subjective mode* allows for the depiction of subjective experience – dreams and individual perspectives.
- The *fantastic mode*, which Wells associates with Švankmajer's work, is where realism is used to express 'perceived knowledge' rather than 'received knowledge'. Wells uses the busts of Stalin and Gottwald in *The Death of Stalinism in Bohemia* to illustrate this point, where the received interpretation of and associations with these icons is subverted by Švankmajer's 'fantastic' treatment to offer a political critique.
- The *post-modern mode* – analogous to Nichol's *performative mode* – is where the ability of documentary as whole to communicate any kind of objective or verifiable truth is questioned and the documentary image is seen as 'merely an image', an 'imaginative reconstruction' with no substantive evidence to support its truth claims (Wells, 1997).

Published in the same year as Well's essay, Sybil DelGaudio's *If Truth be told, can 'toons tell it? Documentary and animation,* draws a parallel between Bill Nichols *reflexive mode* – characterised by the foregrounding of the processes of documentary construction – and animation (1997). DelGaudio sees animation as a form of 'metacommentary', always self-reflexively revealing its own construction, creating "a rupture between the signifier and the signified" and allowing for an element of 'epistemological doubt' regarding what is being shown to enter into the viewer's experience (DelGaudio, 1997:192). Animation's ability to seed this kind of healthy skepticism through the foregrounding of its constructedness is a facility that is less

commonly found in live-action documentary, where the indexical bond of the image to its referent seduces viewers into an assumption that they are observing an unfiltered, objective reality. DelGaudio raises the issue of how a documentary filmmaker might represent events which cannot or could not be filmed, where a camera was not present, events that took place in the past, or the representation of scientific phenomena (microscopic and theoretical) and sees reflexive animation as a fitting mode for their representation. However, she is careful to distinguish animation which strives towards realism, such as Disney's 'illusion of life' approach, attempting an erasure of the visible traces of their methods of production, from styles that are openly self-revealing in terms of their technique. Here she cites the graphic UPA style and the work of the Hubley's on their 1964 film *Of Stars and Men*, contrasting it against the pre-historic sequences in Disney's *Fantasia* (1940) (1997:194). Both films depict phenomena beyond the reach of the live-action film camera, but where Disney strove towards hyper-realism, using rotoscoping to mimic the motion of magma in the Earth's formation, the Hubley's visualised scientific theories about the cosmos through and simple drawings with flat colour and visible graphic textures, reminiscent of their work on *Moonbird*. In contrast to Disney's illusionism and concealment, the Hubley's work is self-reflexive and self-revealing as an interpretation, rather than a depiction, of phenomena that exist in reality they extend beyond our ability to witness and record directly.

Paul Ward builds on Wells' and DelGaudio's insights in *Documentary: The Margins of Reality,* an exploration of the various modes that documentary can operate in, including animation. His contention is that there is a persistent essentialism in the common understanding of what constitutes documentary film, namely that it must be as close to a recording of unadulterated reality as possible (Ward 2006). In Ward's view, this attitude goes back to the dogmas of the 'direct cinema' movement of 1960s America, where filmmakers worked in what Nichol's has defined as the observational mode (2006). While this 'unobtrusive' style of documentary filmmaking strove for a 'direct' representation of reality, the very presence of the filmmaker is in itself a disrupting factor on the behaviour of those being filmed and their presence can never be truly erased. Perhaps the closest we can get to a natural or objective recording of reality would be footage from a security camera, locked into a fixed position and automatically recording whatever passes before it. Even here, the intent behind placing a camera at a certain location automatically introduces a bias or power dynamic. This is not to say that spontaneous events cannot occur before the camera, but that to hold documentary to a standard of some invisible, impartial eye is unrealistic.

According to Ward, documentary is distinct within the broader category of non-fiction films in that it is defined by what he refers to as a "dramatic underlying organising principle" (2006:7), where the tension between 'creative treatment' and 'actuality' is an inherent and ever-evolving aspect of the genre:

> The only unchanging thing about documentary is that it is a form that makes assertions or truth claims about the real world or real people in that world (including the real world of history); *how* it does this *is* something that is subject to change (Ward, 2006:8).

In Ward's view, the 'how' of documentary production includes animation, which he considers to be "one of the clearest challenges to simplistic models of what documentary is and can be" (Ward, 2006:85). He restates Wells' and DelGaudio's points regarding the reflexivity of animation in a documentary context and its ability to represent subjective experience but goes further in outlining some of the affordances that animation brings to documentary. He notes animation's facility for creating anonymity by 'cloaking' its subject, necessary in instances where the identity of an interviewee may need to be protected (Ward, 2006), such as minors, whistleblowers, refugees and people with medical conditions that may carry some stigma. Citing the series *Animated Minds* (2003) – where sufferers of various mental disorders give testimony of their lived experience – Ward sees animation as affording an 'intensified' understanding of the social world, breaking the paradigm of "the indexical correspondence we have become accustomed to" while maintaining a documentary veracity through reflexive visualisation and, in the examples he gives, a pairing with indexical audio recordings (2006:91). In *Animated Minds,* the animation gives the viewer insight into an otherwise inaccessible domain of subjective experience, 'penetrating' beneath "the apparent certainties of mere appearance" (Ward, 2006:96). Ward raises an important point when he observes that not only does the foregrounding of animation methods/techniques and materials provide an animated documentary with reflexivity, but that "in the very form that the material takes we can discern critique" (2006:97). Herein can be found an acknowledgement that the methods and materials used to create animation carry their own inherent potential for signification, separate from the meaning communicated through the *form* they are made to take. The range of visual treatments and styles available to the animator working in a documentary context allow for a wide range of creative possibilities in signification and meaning-making in the interaction between method,

material, form and subject. Ward also highlights the unique importance of indexical audio recordings in animated documentary, where the verité quality of the audio connects the animation to an external reality (2006). The content of the audio recording – whether a real conversation, an interview or a testimonial – can be interpreted by, contrasted with and commented on by the animation to evoke layers of meaning that would not evident if either the visual or audio elements of a film were taken in isolation (as we see done to humorous effect in Aardman's *Creature Comforts*). Ward observes that the combination of indexical audio with a patently constructed visual "prompts [the viewer] to consider the *nature* of that construction, and its relation to the sounds [they] are hearing" (2006:99).

1.8 Animated Documentary and Realism

The importance placed on the reflexive nature of animation in discourse on animated documentary necessitates a discussion of 'realism', both as understood in animation generally and more specifically in a documentary context. Paul Wells acknowledges that 'realism' with regard to film is complex, as "principles of organisation and manipulation intervene with any notion that a film has shown unmediated reality" (Wells, 1998:24). In his view, animation stands apart from these debates as it is "a medium which is informed by self-evident principles of construction" (Wells, 1998:24-25). In a recent essay, he enunciates this reflexive quality of animation in reference to Donald Crafton's concept of the 'self-figuration' of the artist (1993:11):

> Such image-making resists the classical sutures and closure of traditional cinema (that normally hides its creator) and privileges the presence of the artist or creative practitioner as a figure that in essence is 'deconstructing' received knowledge of material culture and representations of reality, and thereafter, 're-constructing' an alternative point of view or epistemological perspective. The 'self-figurative' is usually recognized [sic], however, because of the broader 'enunciative' identity of animation, and its rhetorical intervention in the representations of different modes of psychological, emotional, physical and material reality. As such, the 'self-figurative' is not just about the presence of an artist or creative practitioner, but about animation being 'identified' as a mode of visualization [sic] and 'situated' in a context that thereafter may be defined as playing out new iterations of social and cultural knowledge and aesthetic innovation (Wells 2018:16)

Wells posits that animation operates in a realm of 'hyper-realism' (after Eco) as "neither a completely accurate version of the real world nor a radical vindication of the animated form" – in effect, a form of heightened realism which is "essentially overdetermined...simultaneously realistic but beyond the orthodoxies of realism" (Wells, 1998:25). This hyper-realism achieves verisimilitude to live-action film through the following means:

- the design, context and action correspond to that seen in live action film's representation of reality;
- characters and objects adhere to convectional physical laws
- sound design is diegetically appropriate; and
- the construction, movement and behaviour of bodies (human, animal, insect etc.) corresponds to that seen in the real world (Wells, 1998:25).

A film may be rendered in any style (including 'cartoonish' exaggeration) or using any technique, but if it adheres to the above criteria it may be considered 'hyper-real'. Wells looks on Disney's feature films as the benchmark of hyper-realism and the standard by which all other animation's degree of realism may be measured (1998). Referred to by some as the 'illusion of life' approach to animation (after the title of the book written by Disney animators Ollie Johnston and Frank Thomas, published in 1981), the Disney aesthetic from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937) onwards was "designed to mimic as closely as possible the visual tropes of classic Hollywood realist cinema" (Fore 2007:317). Disney's hyperrealism was achieved through naturalistic design of forms, extensive referencing of physical bodies in motion (at one point, zoo animals were brought into the studio to allow animators to study their movement), rotoscoping and a negation of the flat picture plane through the use of the multi-plane camera to achieve depth-of-field effects. The Disney method strove towards an erasure of all traces of the animation's construction – and by extension the presence of the artist – in order to achieve an immersive and self-contained filmic reality that audiences could inhabit.

Maureen Furniss conceives of animation as existing on a continuum, on one end of which she places *mimesis,* represented by the realism of live-action cinema and "the desire to reproduce natural reality", and on the other *abstraction,* defined as "the use of pure form – a suggestion of a concept rather than an attempt to explicate it in real life terms" (Furniss, 1999:5). While Disney's hyper-realism is a good benchmark for animation's drive towards mimesis, abstraction is best represented by the 1920s experiments of Walter Ruttman and Oscar Fischinger, and

later, the films of Len Lye and Norman McClaren. Here the animators are concerned with 'pure motion' and the play of formal visual elements, usually in relation to music. Rather than attempting to create a heightened but internally-cogent simulacrum of the real world, abstract animation reveals the presence of the artist and what Wells terms the 'evolution of materiality', a focus on and revelation of the materials used in the construction of the film. Furniss acknowledges that most animation does not exist at either extreme of this continuum, but as varying permutations of mimesis and abstraction, but one can infer from the qualities of the two binaries that that the greater the degree of 'abstraction' in an animation, the greater its reflexivity (1999).



FIGURE 1.10. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937) (left) shows a strong mimetic quality, while Norman McLaren's *Begone Dull Care* (1949) (right) is clearly representative of abstraction.

Writing in the 2011 special issue of *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, dedicated to the subject of animated documentary, Steve Fore observed that the notion of animation as a legitimate documentary medium had begun to be taken seriously by scholars, something which in his view was attributable firstly, to:

> ...debates among documentary scholars over the past two decades...which cumulatively had eroded...a belief in the holy grail of 'objectivity', coupled with a recognition that the truth value of documentary is contingent and contextual and ultimately not significantly different from creative expressions that may be most easily recognized [sic] as fictions. (2011:278)

The second factor was the advancement in photorealistic CGI, resulting in animation moving towards ever-greater verisimilitude with live-action film as part of a more general breakdown of

distinctions between the two media (Fore 2011:278). This aligns with what Lev Manovich had expressed in *The Language of New Media* (2001), where he claimed that the advent of 'digital cinema' translated both animation and indexical live action footage to pixels, a levelling that transformed the live action image into a manipulable 'elastic reality" (Manovich 2001:300). Manovich's thesis was that animation was now the dominant medium, with digital cinema "a particular case of animation that uses live-action footage as one its many elements" (Manovich 2001: 302). Fore, meanwhile, has suggested that as digital cinema was weakening the evidentiary indexicality of live action footage, so advances in CGI photorealism were destabilising Wells' assertion that all animation is intrinsically and self-evidently reflexive (2007:124). While Fore admitted that these developments in CGI photorealism had been uneven – attempts at entirely photoreal CGI human characters had up until that point been unconvincing (2007a:319) – they nevertheless blurred the boundaries between animation and live action in ways that went beyond earlier forms of mimesis. Jeffrey Skoller echoes Fore and Manovich's claims and considers the specific impact that they may have in the realm of documentary filmmaking:

> As epistemological, technological and aesthetic transformations occur throughout our society, the binaries between the truth claims of documentary cinemas and the impressionisms of animated filmmaking seem increasingly irrelevant (Skoller, 2011:207).

Released in 1999, the BBC's *Walking with Dinosaurs* series used animatronics and photorealistic 3D animation renderings based on fossil evidence to give viewers an immersive experience of prehistoric life on Earth. The modelling, texturing and motion of the dinosaurs was akin to that seen in Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993) and even today appears quite convincing. In discussing Hollywood and the computer graphics industry's goals with regard to realism, Manovich notes in *The Language of New Media*, that: "...achieving synthetic realism means attaining two goals – the simulation of the traditional codes of traditional cinematography and simulation of the perceptual properties of real-life objects and environments" (Manovich 2001: 191-92). As per Manovich's definition, the goal of *Walking with Dinosaurs'* creators was not just to create photorealistic depictions of dinosaurs, but to frame the show as an actual nature documentary, using the formal structure and aesthetics of that genre. Footage was shot in a shaky 'hand-held' style, mimicking a shallow depth-of-field, as if cameramen had been present to film the ancient creatures in their natural habitat. Other tropes included 'night vision'

shots and an editing pace concomitant with that used in nature documentaries. Annabelle Honess Roe notes that this strategy of "authentication" – asking the audience to suspend disbelief that what they are witnessing is an actual record of creatures that lived millions of years in the past – is "premised on assumptions of what certain types of documentary footage should look like" and that "indexical quality demands resemblance, and resemblance, in turn, guarantees indexicality" (Honess Roe, 2013:42). *Walking with Dinosaurs'* mimicking of the nature documentary format extends to its use of narration. In the series' UK version was done by Kenneth Branagh, whose confident, resonant 'Voice of God'-style intonation, provided a reliable voice of authority to help 'sell' the notion of the series as a *de facto* nature documentary. Branagh speaks in the present tense throughout the series, referring to the dinosaurs as if they were living creatures rather than animated reconstructions (Honess Roe 2018:19).

Both the visual and audio treatment of *Walking with Dinosaurs* locates the series in the tradition of Disney hyperrealism, in the sense that the animation is lacking in any reflexivity and great effort has been made to create a perfect simulacrum, indistinguishable from a real nature documentary. While the series uses the same strategy as *The Sinking of the Lusitania* in mimicking media to achieve a more convincing realism, it lacks McCay's foregrounding of its own construction. One might say that in this particular case, the mere fact that extinct species are being depicted makes it palpably obvious that audiences should not confuse the series with actuality i.e., that they are not in fact seeing real dinosaurs, but a high-fidelity reenactment based on scientific evidence. However, the mimicking of the nature documentary format, Branagh's confident narration and the lack of a meta-commentary regarding the show's construction allows it to obfuscate certain historical inaccuracies that were not supported by scientific evidence, particularly with regard to the dinosaurs' behaviour and habits (Honess Roe, 2018:19).



FIGURE 1.11. *Walking with Dinosaurs* mimics the nature documentary aesthetic.

Where *Walking with Dinosaurs* presents a contemporary version of animation used as a hyperreal simulacrum, Chris Landreth's *Ryan* (2004) offers a far more complex engagement with animated realism in a documentary context. The film tells the story of Ryan Larkin, an animator that worked for the Film Board of Canada's Animation Unit in the late 1960s and 70s. The young Larkin met with early success and was nominated for an Academy Award for his film *Walking* in 1970 (Landreth 2004). Having completed another well received film, *Street Musique*, in 1972, Larkin spiraled out of control as a result of drug and alcohol abuse (Landreth 2004). He stopped working for the Film Board in 1977 and by the late-1980s had become homeless (Stone 2007). Landreth and Larkin first met in 2000, as members of the pre-selection committee for the Ottawa International Animation festival, which led Landreth to create his film (Stone 2007). The fourteen-minute short adheres to many of the conventions of a documentary in Nichols' expository mode, with voice-over narration by Landreth, archival photographs and cutaways to footage from Larkin's animated films and dramatic reenactments of episodes from his life. The overall structure of the film falls within the participatory mode and is presented as an interview between Landreth and Larkin, using indexical audio recordings of their conversation, with contributions from a few other characters from Larkin's past.

The visual aesthetic of *Ryan* is referred to by Landreth as *psychorealism*, which he defines as "co-opting elements of photorealism to serve a different purpose – to expose the realism of the incredibly complex, messy, chaotic, sometimes mundane, and always conflicted quality we call human nature" (Robertson 2004). It deconstructs the photoreal CGI models of Landreth and Larkin, tearing them open to reveal saturated areas of colour, turning each figure into a living graffiti-canvas of the traumas they have suffered. On close inspection, the characters that Landreth has modelled more closely resemble realist paintings than live action footage, a

slightly stylised, 'heightened realism', rather than a photoreal depiction of their real-world referents. However, the juxtaposition of the mimetic and abstract elements in their rendering seems to increase their photoreal quality, in the same way that a grey tone may appear lighter when placed against a dark background, such that, ironically, they appear more natural and 'real' than they might if they were modelled in an entirely photoreal style. The technique also sidesteps the pitfalls of the 'uncanny valley', a concept first introduced by Masahiro Mori in the 1970s, denoting the phenomenon where the closer in verisimilitude a human simulacrum is to its referent, the stranger and more unsettling it feels to the viewer (Caballar 2019).

Landreth begins the film by introducing himself in the form of his CGI avatar, as both the film's author, participant and – to some extent – subject, interweaving his own personal narrative with Larkin's throughout, drawing parallels between their shared history of substance abuse and psychological trauma. Then, in what is essentially a version of the same trope we first witnessed in *The Sinking of the Lusitania*, Landreth reflexively foregrounds the animation by describing the deconstruction of his virtual body, as a simulacrum exposing its own constructedness. A 'whole', unadulterated version of Landreth's avatar, standing in a bathroom, turns to a mirror in which is reflected his 'psychoreal' self, riddled with tears, cuts and missing portions that reveal areas of glowing saturated colour. We also see that the bathroom reflected in the mirror is distorted and wavy, a sign that it represents a world beyond physical reality – a 'psychoreal' environment, a melding of a mental and physical space. Landreth explains the origin of each of the psychological 'scars' on his body, linking each to a specific trauma that occurred in his life. As multicoloured tendrils reach out and smother Larkin's avatar's face, we cut to the same thing happening to a photograph of his two-year old self, further complicating the boundaries between reality and simulation. The film then cuts to a CGI cafeteria setting where the interview between Landreth and Larkin takes place. The cafeteria has the same distorted, wavy appearance as the bathroom's reflection in the first scene, signifying that the action is taking place in the psychoreal realm. Larkin's avatar is even more distorted and broken than that of Landreth, with whole chunks of his face and head missing, but still bears a highly mimetic resemblance to the real Larkin in his appearance, movement and mannerisms[2]. A boom mic is situated above the table where the two have their conversation – perhaps a nod to the microphone that appears throughout Nick Park's *Creature Comforts* – a film that Landreth first referenced when planning *Ryan* (Robertson 2004). On the table in front of Larkin is a flask with what appears to be

[2] See live action footage of Ryan Larkin and Chris Landreth in this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nCsVnYWdXo

alcohol, which intermittently sprouts a pair of retractable cartoon hands that reach out and beckon to Larkin, prompting him to pick it up and drink from it. Larkin then refers to his film *Walking*, whereupon Landreth hands him one of that film's original drawings. We can assume that the drawing we see in the film is a scan of the actual drawing, composited into the CGI space and by virtue of its indexical quality, more 'real' than the animated character holding it. The drawing then begins to animate, becoming footage of the film *Walking*, filling the screen. Landreth then hands Larkin a poster with a black and white photograph of the young Larkin and his girlfriend, which becomes a cut-out in a Monty Pythonesque recreation of the 1970 Academy Awards, where *Walking* was nominated for best 'Short Subject (Cartoon)'. The film later revisits the photograph in the poster, now depicting a CGI version of the young Larkin which begins to speak in Larkin's voice and demonstrates the process by which he referenced his own movement in creating his films. The image then inverts from white to black and Larkin's movement takes on a 'multiple-exposure' stroboscopic effect, highly reminiscent of Norman McLaren's 1968 film, Pas De Deux (McLaren mentored Larkin at the National Film Board). Young Larkin's avatar is then composited into footage from *Street Musique*, where he interacts with the drawings and mimics their movement. This is followed by a scene with Larkin alone in the dark, unshaven, as the coloured tendrils explode from within him and smother his head, symbolising his mental deterioration. The film reaches its dramatic apex when Landreth confronts Larkin directly about his drinking, prompting a violent and emotional outburst from Larkin, which is perhaps the film's most verité scene, highly dramatic and clearly unscripted and unplanned.

Throughout *Ryan* we witness Landreth playing with notions of realism and indexicality while maintaining an ever-present reflexivity. Various representations of external and internal realities are elevated and subverted throughout the film: the real world represented by the indexical audio recording of the interview; the 'meta' CGI world of Landreth the narrator that we are shown in the opening bathroom scene; the 'psychoreal' world representative of the character's mental states; the historical world of archival photographs and Larkin's old films – which themselves are pure animation, but in contrast to the CGI of the rest film, appear to have an indexical quality. In this way, *Ryan* challenges the binary of photorealism and overtly constructed animation, existing in a liminal space between these two poles and demonstrating how documentary animation can evoke the essence of a personality through creative visual design, emotive performance and indexical audio.

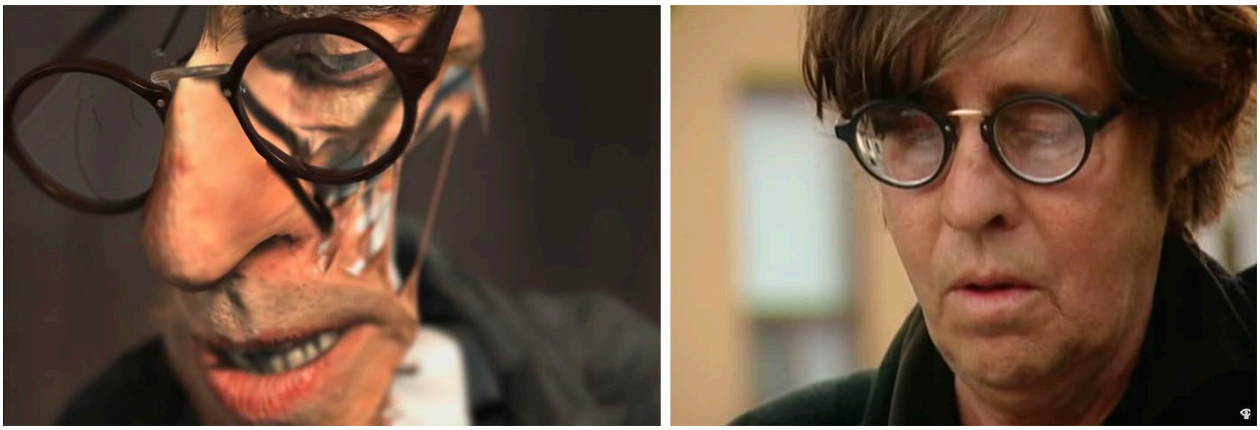


FIGURE 1.12. *A* comparison of the real Ryan Larkin (as seen in *Alter Egos*, a live action documentary tracing the making of *Ryan*, released at the same time as the animated short) and his CGI simulacrum.

1.9 The 'Mainstreaming' of Animated Documentary

In 2008 director Ari Folman released his feature-length animated documentary, *Waltz with Bashir*. A year earlier, the adaptation of Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* also had a theatrical release. Both films received an overwhelmingly positive critical response and were nominated for and won several international awards, with Folman's film nominated for the prestigious Cannes Palme d'Or. Their broader significance lies in that they helped catalyse public awareness of animated documentary, leading to a rise in the popularity of the subgenre and a dramatic increase in creative production within the field. Although the two films share many superficial similarities, they are marked by crucial differences in their uses of animation to depict real world historical events and subjective experience. In the context of a discussion of hyperrealist and reflexive approaches to documentary animation, a useful comparison can be made between them.

Persepolis presents Satrapi's life story from childhood to the present day, as an Iranian woman living through the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, her life as a student in France, her return to Iran and her second emigration to France in the 1990s. The film is based on a set of graphic novels written and illustrated by Satrapi (published in 2000 and 2004). *Waltz With Bashir* follows filmmaker and former Israeli soldier Ari Folman on his personal journey to recover his lost memories of his involvement in the massacre that took place in the Sabra neighborhood and adjacent Shatila refugee camp in Lebanon during the 1982 Lebanon War. Both films feature narratives that take place in the relatively recent historical-political context of the Middle East. Both are biographical works by a single author and feature a central

character that is the animated representation of that author, guiding the audience through each film's narrative. Both films are almost entirely rendered in the medium of 2D animation (though *Waltz with Bashir* uses a combination of 2D animation, Flash animation and 3D animated models rendered to look like 2D drawings). Folman's film is structured along the lines of journalistic reportage, with the filmmaker going on a personal journey to reclaim his lost memories. *Persepolis*, meanwhile, is structured as a personal biography, seen from a single authorial perspective through a cinematic lens. Where Folman's film attempts to gather evidence, giving voice to interviews with Folman's friends and former comrades, *Persepolis* is entirely subjective and relies on a single narrator revealing the events of Satrapi's life. *Waltz With Bashir's blended* technique of Flash animation and traditional 2D animation results in a slightly awkward, stiff movement that does not fall within either the category of a Disney-esque hyperrealism nor the more expressive style associated with modern cartoons. *Persepolis* on the other hand follows traditional 2D hand-drawn animation methods, resulting in a smooth consistency of motion, one that supports its hyperrealist aesthetic. Crucially, while *Persepolis* is entirely animated, *Waltz with Bashir* is punctuated in its final moments by a break from animation to live action archival footage showing the aftermath of the Sabra and Shatila massacre. This shift in medium signifies the lifting of Folman's fog of memory and his confrontation with the aftermath of the Sabra and Shatila massacres. The inclusion of the live footage not only shocks the viewer with the visceral impact of the reality of the horrific events that took place but also contextualises the animation that came before it. The aesthetic schism in the film clearly delineates a hierarchy between the animation and the live action footage: the latter is 'the real thing', an indexical record of an event that occurred in our world, whereas the animated segments of the film signify a numbed, grasping recollection of the past, as well as providing an analogue for the 'war film', stylistically alluding to films like *Apocalypse Now* and *Full Metal Jacket* through mise-en-scene, cinematic action and fantasy sequences, together with a prominent soundtrack comprised of well-known pop and classical music and an electronic score. This is a reading of the film supported by Folman himself:

> "I didn't want anyone to leave the theater thinking "This is a very cool animated movie with great drawings and music." I wanted people to understand this really happened. Thousands of people died that weekend. Most of them were kids, unprotected women and old people. It puts the whole film into proportion and perspective" (Erickson, 2008)

By contrast, while *Persepolis* points to the real world through drawn depictions of historical events and locations, it remains hermetically sealed within its hyperreal, aesthetic uniformity. Within this hyperrealism, the film utilises formal and spatial distortion and fantasy sequences. In one sequence it briefly shifts from its traditional 2D drawn animation technique to a cut-out style of animation in its recounting of the history of Iran, but its treatment of this technique is still in keeping with the overall visual style of the rest of the film. The closest the film comes to self-reflexively breaking out of its aesthetic mould is when Satrapi and her collaborator, Vincent Parronnaud, are shown at an airport in what one assumes is the present day, still rendered in the 2D animation style of the rest of the film, but now in colour, in contrast to the rest of the film's grayscale palette. Despite these inclusions, Persepolis never reflexively draws attention to itself *as animation*, that is, to its own constructed nature. The audience is invited into a self-contained world which, though situated in the historical world, nonetheless functions aesthetically at the level of the world of a Disney film.



FIGURE 1.13. A young Marjane is comes into conflict with religious stricture in Iran in *Persepolis* (left), and the animated version of Ari Folman as seen in *Waltz with Bashir* (right).

Following the popular and critical success of *Ryan, Persepolis* and *Waltz with Bashir*, animated documentary began to receive more attention in academic discourse, with *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal* dedicating an entire issue to the subject in 2011. In 2013, Annabelle Honess Roe published *Animated Documentary,* the first book-length theoretical exploration of the subgenre. In it, she consolidates much of what had been said in extant scholarly work about animation's role in documentary, but also critiques several of the ideas that had been put forward in the discourse. She rejects attempts by several authors to situate animated documentary within Bill Nichols' schema of documentary classification and takes issue with the four modes proposed by Wells in his 1997 essay, interpreting them as a response to then-current Postmodern debates around objectivity in documentary (2013:21). Honess Roe

understands that these debates were resolved with (in her view) the consensus being that "objective representation is a fantasy" and proposes that the key question is not whether live-action and animated documentaries are able to represent reality, but *how* they might do this and *what type* of knowledge they are able to convey (Honess Roe 2013:22). Noting that animation "has the capacity to represent temporally, geographically and psychologically distal aspects of life beyond the reach of live action" (2013:22), she proposes three categories for how animation functions in documentary, namely: mimetic substitution, non-mimetic substitution and evocation (Honess Roe 2013:23).

Mimetic substitution acts as a direct replacement for live action footage and is used in instances where filming could not take place, for reasons that are either temporal (a projection of events in the future, or in a past before film cameras existed) or geographic (depicting phenomena that occur at a microscopic or sub-atomic level, or in other parts of the cosmos), or for any other reason that events were not recorded (Honess Roe, 2013:23). Examples of this range from *The Sinking of the Lusitania* to *Walking with Dinosaurs*, as well as many of the scientific and educational films that use animation. According to Honess Roe, this type of animation is analogous to reenactment in live action documentary and attempts to mimic the appearance of live-action footage (2013:24). Non-mimetic substitution also acts as a stand-in for live-action footage, but uses more expressive styles of animation that interpret indexical audio recording, as seen in the Hubleys' *Moonbird* and the Aardman *Animated Conversations* films (Honess Roe, 2013:24). Both mimetic and non-mimetic substitution may also be used to shroud the identity of a subject, as in the case of refugees or other at-risk groups (Honess Roe, 2013:24). Evocation operates in a different mode to the first two categories. Rather than acting as a stand-in for live action footage, it visualises that which cannot be filmed, namely concepts, emotions and psychological states (Honess Roe, 2013:25). The examples Honess Roe gives of this category are from the *Animated Minds* series (2003, 2009), where interview subjects describe their experiences of living with various mental illnesses, visualised using a range of animation styles and techniques. She points out that these three functions are not siloed off from one another, but that a single film may employ two or even all three of them (2013:26).

Honess Roe suggests that the ontology of animated documentary is characterised by *absence* and *excess*, where animated documentaries are defined by the absence of live action footage, but the animation that replaces it far exceeds live action's stylistic and expressive capacities (Honess Roe 2013:27). She places great emphasis on the presence of indexical sound, noting

that "...non-conventional means of visual inflection in documentary, such as animation, encourage us to rethink not only the significance of what we are hearing, but also the relationship between what we hear, what we see and reality" (Honess Roe 2013:28). The presence of indexical audio uncoupled from its correspondent live action visual element "is simultaneously disembodied and embodied [or re-embodied] via animation" (Honess Roe, 2013:28).

In the course of her exploration of the nature and significance of animation as a documentary medium, Honess Roe interrogates the privileged position that live action holds in documentary representation, questioning the perception that its indexical trace of the profilmic world lends it the ability to act as evidence of events that took place in the world (2013). She cites Göran Sonnenson, saying that a photograph is both indexical and iconic and will continue to communicate as an icon, irrespective of its indexical status (2013:31). Along the same line, she refers to Tom Gunning's observation that a photograph's iconic and indexical properties may have little relation to one another and that "our evaluation of a photograph as accurate […] depends not simply on its indexical basis […], but on our recognition of it looking like its subject (Gunning, 2007 in Honess Roe 2013:31). She cites several writers who point out that the correlation between the photographic image and the reality we would have witnessed if we were there ourselves is distorted by framing, lighting conditions, exposure and so on (Winston and Tsang, Allen in Honess Roe 2013:32). Returning to the point made by Manovich and several other scholars following the 'digital revolution' around the turn of the last century, she notes that the supposed evidentiary status of the photographic image and live action footage is further complicated by the ease with which digital images can be manipulated and altered (2013:38). Ultimately, she remains ambivalent about the way in which the indexical image is used as validation for documentary's truth-claims and makes no final proclamation on this subject other than to acknowledge its complexity. Her focus remains on what animation contributes to the documentary genre and how "astute and imaginative creative choices of how to visually represent, interpret and infer reality can enable truth claims of a different order to live-action documentary" (Honess Roe 2013:39).

1.10 Contemporary Theories of Animated Documentary

The evolution of animated documentary theory since the publication of *Animated Documentary* reflects the changes that have taken place in the media landscape in recent years. Paul Wells has said that our era is seeing the 'animification' of human experience, characterised by the

"omnipresence of animation...that speaks to social and cultural processes and practices, which are in turn informed by cultural and political knowledge" (Wells 2018:12). He identifies animation as now embedded into our daily experience through a spectrum of media, ranging from 'animation as moving image' (features, shorts, commercials) to 'animation as an applied tool' (motion capture, motion graphics, visual effects) to forms that are inherently 'non-artistic' in that they do not foreground the presence of an artist or creator (mobile apps, real-time interaction, medical imaging, data visualisation) (Wells 2018:15). In addition to the current ubiquity of animated content in our daily experience, there have been dramatic improvements to photorealistic CGI modelling, lighting, texturing and motion, as well as to the ways in which photographic images can be digitally manipulated and altered. This, along with other recent developments, like game engines' ability to perform real-time rendering of photoreal environments combined with in-camera compositing (Penington 2020) and the phenomenon of AI[3]-generated 'deepfakes'[4], have collectively blurred the lines between the live action indexical image and constructed simulacra. In light of these changes, Steve Fore's statement that

> It is becoming increasingly clear that the theory and practice of the animated documentary help to illuminate several technical and conceptual issues that are central to contemporary visual culture (2011:278)

seems even more relevant today. Animated documentary represents the intersection between what Bill Nichols refers to as "*the* world in which we live rather than *a* world imagined by the filmmaker" (Nichols 2017). Nichols notes that while documentary is a rhetorical form of filmmaking that makes an argument for a particular view of the world and an interpretation of facts, it has an ethical responsibility to not be complicit in promulgating a pseudo-reality based on false evidence and willful misrepresentation (Nichols 2017). Documentary's ability to offer the viewer a likeness of the world that is familiar is often the basis for belief: "we see what was there before the camera; it must be real" (Nichols 2017), which has always been open to manipulation and distortion, but is now complicated further by the increased ability of media creators to

[3] 'AI' is the acronym for 'Artificial Intelligence', defined as the ability of computer systems to autonomously "reason, discover meaning, generalize and learn from past experience". While general artificial intelligence – the ability of a computer to think like a human – has not yet been achieved, some software can autonomously perform specific tasks and have been used in areas like medical diagnosis and search engines (Copeland).

[4] 'Deepfake' is the term for images, videos and audio of fake events created through artificial intelligence 'deep learning'. Deepfakes are often used for 'face-swaps', mapping the face of one person onto the body of another, allowing or can generate entirely new, photoreal faces of non-existent persons. (Sample 2020)

employ digital imaging tools to doctor content that is then presented as if indexical. In light of this, discussions by scholars regarding the reflexivity of animation seem more relevant today than ever before.

In her book *Animating Truth*, Nea Ehrlich posits that this blurring of boundaries between the real and the photoreal is a major aspect of today's media, where non-photoreal, transparently constructed imagery is increasingly being used to depict factual content, something she sees as "an essential aspect of what we now call the era of post-truth" (2021:2). In her view, this is driven by information overload and a breakdown in viewers' trust of news media outlets, resulting in a greater openness from audiences towards animation's ability to clarify, simplify and condense information (2021:6). This acceptance of animation as a credible news medium is part of a broader "pervasive use of non-photorealistic animation within digital media" (Ehrlich, 2021:2) in part driven by a decades-old skepticism about the truth-value of traditional photography and accelerated by its recent move into the digital realm (2021:38), but also by a more general blurring of boundaries between physical and digital realities. Ehrlich's position is that we now live in a 'mixed-reality', inhabiting both the physical world and the digital-virtual-online world, where *on*-screen reality becomes *in*-screen reality, by virtue of the interactive capabilities that technology affords us (2021:3). She argues that as a consequence of this, "new theorizations [sic] of documentary are required; for photography both resembles and relies on material reality" and a world that is both real and virtual requires other means of representation (2021:3).

She points out that the ubiquity of animated imagery surrounding us, whether online, on phone apps, billboards, shop displays and in virtual reality, has rendered animation both fact and fiction (Ehlrich, 2021:8). To illustrate this point, she uses the example of an animated in-flight safety video, where the content ought to create panic in passengers, showing as it does the possible crash of the airplane on which they find themselves. Panic, in this case, does not ensue, as the medium of animation has an association with fantasy that allows the viewers to isolate the information they are given from an emotional reaction to that information (2021:8). She notes that this "double allusion to both fact and fiction" can also be seen in data visualisation, where abstract graphics that are only superficially analogous to their referents in some of their formal properties – for instance, in which the relative size and position on the picture plane may represent an equivalence to a real-world value of an asset – and be arbitrary in others (colour, shape, texture), are taken as 'factual' representations of real-world phenomena (2021:8). Her

view is that the widespread use of non-photoreal graphics and animation and the public's understanding of animation as capable of being both fact and fiction (as well as the undermining of the truth-value of indexical photographic image through digital manipulation) means that photoreal images are no longer read as signifiers of 'the real' (2021:11).

Asserting that indexicality is the basis for documentary's truth-claims, Ehrlich re-interrogates the concept of indexicality for a world that now operates in both physical and digital realities. She goes back to Charles Sanders Pierce's original definition of the index as both *trace*, or a direct imprint, implying a physical connection, and as *deixis,* meaning 'to point to', to 'show' or, in Pierce's own definition "anything which focuses attention" and does not imply a physical connection or imprint (Ehrlich, 2021:64). With this broader understanding of indexicality, she suggests that animation can contain: "i) the index as a trace of the physical; ii) the index as deixis of the physical; iii) the index as deixis of the non-physical" (2021:66). In the first category, Ehrlich contests Honess Roe's view that the iconic image can be considered evidentiary (if an image resembles its referent, it is evidence of that referent having existed) which she critiques as 'pre-photographic logic' and instead proposes the adoption of what she refers to as a *post-photographic documentary mentality*, where an image must contain an indexical trace with its referent, but not necessarily a visual resemblance to it (2021:68). She notes that a technology like motion capture creates animation that is indexical both through trace and deixis, as it captures a physical actor's movements as numeric code before 're-embodying' them thorough a CGI model (2021:67). She also refers to machinima as an example of how an indexical trace of user's keyboard commands or physical actions via a computer mouse or motion sensors is captured and then rendered as animation through a game engine (2021:68). In the second category, the index as deixis of the physical, animation is used to represent that which cannot be photographed. This would include the visualisation of scientific data of physical phenomena that cannot be seen with the naked eye. These visualisations can be visually abstract or mimetic, in some cases even taking the form of what Ehrlich terms "theoretical photorealism" (as in the case of highly detailed renderings of microscopic phenomena) (2021:69-71). The third category, animation as a deictic index of the non-physical, refers to animation visualising that which cannot be seen, specifically "non-photographable non-physical" digital realities, "grounded in mathematics and code" (2021:74). While Ehrlich acknowledges that non-physical realities also exist in the form of beliefs and "constructions of knowledge", digital realities are different "in the sense that they appear visually uniform to all who have technological access" (2021:77).

Having reconsidered what constitutes an index, Ehrlich asks how this may contribute to the understanding of animation as a documentary medium. Going back to Grierson's definition, Ehrlich affirms that all documentaries are narrative constructions, based on indexical evidence, and that animation "merely highlights" and draws attention to this constructedness (2021:76). She ends this part of her discussion by noting that:

> The animated index, as both trace and deixis, is not only capable of indicating the mixed realities of today, it also fulfils the dual function of a document-as-proof and/or as indication, and consequently can act as a form of legitimisation and credibility for documentary works. (2021:78)

As Ehrlich notes, animation's status as a trusted medium for conveying factual narratives about the world is dependent both on the unique conditions of our current media landscape and on the way in which animation is used within a documentary context (Ehrlich, 2021). There appears to be consensus among many of the leading theorists of animated documentary that *reflexivity,* by means of emphasis on animation's constructedness, is what elevates it above fantasy to a credible documentary medium. The focus of this research is to explore how, in a non-fiction narrative, animation's constructedness can be foregrounded, and thereby add layers of meaning to a film's content. The following chapter will provide historical context for the non-fiction narrative of *Polonia*, the animated documentary I created as part of a practice-based research process.

Chapter 2

Historical Context

On 13 December 1981, at 6am, families across Poland awoke to these words broadcast over the public airwaves:

> "*Citizens of the People's Republic of Poland! I turn to you today as a soldier and as the Head of the Polish Government. I turn to you with matters of the greatest import. Our Fatherland has found itself on the edge of a precipice..."*

They were spoken by General Wojciech Jaruzelski, head of the Poland's communist Government, announcing a nationwide 'State of War' and the declaration of martial law. The announcement signaled a dramatic shift in the country's status quo and would impact the life of every Pole, with long term social, political and personal repercussions. Hours earlier, families across Poland were woken by UB[5] and militia officers armed with arrest warrants. The arrests targeted prominent members of NSZZ Solidarność (referred to in Western media as 'Solidarity'), Poland's first legal independent trade union under its Communist government and the first within the entire Soviet Bloc. The government's declaration of the State of War and crackdown on Solidarity was the culmination of a dramatic turn of events in Polish politics that that had begun with a general strike in the Lenin Shipyard in the Baltic city of Gdańsk, on 14 August, 1980 (Weschler, 1984:219).

2.1 Communism in Poland and the 1980 Lenin Shipyard Strike

Poland's economy had been in decline since the late 1960s. It had been artificially boosted in early 1970s through massive foreign loans to fund manufacturing – leading to a brief period of false prosperity – but by the mid-1970s the world markets were uninterested in buying Polish manufactured goods and Poland's foreign debt began to balloon (Weschler, 1984:216-218).

[5] *Urzad Bezpieczeństwa* – 'The Ministry for Public Safety'. The Polish government's secret police who, "in their organization, methods and mentality" mirrored the Soviet NKVD, progenitor of the KGB (Applebaum, 2013:72).

Proposed food price increases in 1976 had led to countrywide strikes, the latest flash point in a history of confrontations between the communist government and its people[6].

These economic troubles weren't just the result of bad economic policy, but of systemic dysfunctionality. According to historian Norman Davies, Communism in Poland "had no compelling reason to exist" (Davies, 1986:2). It was not an ideology that had grown organically among the Polish people, but had been thrust onto the country through Stalin's machinations during and after the Second World War[7]. Davies notes that the 'Polish People's Republic' was "a legal fiction": a country where 'the people' had no political voice, dominated by an elite "which had arrogated to itself the right to rule the state on their behalf" (Davies, 1986:7). It was in fact, as Davies notes, "two nations", namely "power" and "society" (1986:45), the former wielded by an elite whose privileges were guaranteed by the *nomenklatura*, "an elaborate system whereby the Communist Party exercise[d] the right to appoint the top 100 000 bureaucrats and administrators in Poland" that, by the early 1980s, had "degenerated into a lunatic collage of incompetence, privilege mongering and outright corruption" (Weschler, 1984:68).

By 1980, Poland was the proverbial powder keg. The 'spark' came with the firing on 7 August of Anna Walentynowicz , a crane operator and popular activist at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk. The authorities had done this as a preemptive action, hoping to avoid the Gdańsk Shipyard joining in on a series of strikes that had broken out countrywide in July of that year, as a response to sudden and substantial increase in the price of meat (Weschler, 1984:218). As a response to her firing, similar dismissals of other workers and the food price increases, workers put down tools on 14 August and sealed themselves in the shipyard (Weschler, 1984:27). Lech Wałęsa, a recently fired electrician from the yard, led the strike and headed negotiations between the striking workers and the government authorities. After seventeen days of negotiations, with the strike having spread around the Baltic region, the government and the strike committee signed an agreement that allowed for the formation of a "free, independent trade union with the right to strike, better health and working conditions; Saturdays off; Sunday

[6] In June 1956, seventy-four workers and militiamen died in the city of Poznań during riots for 'Bread and Freedom' (Davies, 1986:9). In 1968, government forces put down student protest across the country (Weschler, 1984:26). In 1970, workers at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk went on strike against sharp increases in food prices. The strikes spread to the neighbouring cities of Szczecin and Gdynia and were put down violently, resulting in 45 dead and 1 165 wounded.

[7] Anne Applebaum provides a comprehensive account of how this happened in her 2013 book, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern* Europe.

mass broadcast over the radio; loosened censorship and political repression" (Weschler, 1984:219).

2.2 Solidarity

The signing of the agreement and the formation of Solidarity as an independent trade union brought about a sea change in Polish politics and society. Lawrence Weschler, a New York Times journalist, travelled to Poland several times between 1981 and 1982 and experienced first-hand how Polish society had become revivified by these new freedoms and the tragedy of the events that were to soon follow:

> People who hadn't been allowed to speak their minds for thirty-five years had suddenly come unstopped. They'd talk to you – *as if talking mattered* – and their talk would seem to rise from some deep, clear core of truth and value...In a way, I began to realize [sic] that I was reporting on what it is that comes alive when a place – any place – comes alive, and then what it is that gets repressed when a place, any place, gets repressed. (Weschler 1984: xv-xvi)

Solidarity enjoyed massive popularity, with over 10 million registered members – roughly one in two of Poland's adult population. During the months following its formation – August 1980 to December 1981, the country's "Political life was alive and spontaneous for the first time in a generation" (Davies, 1986:18), with liberties unheard of in the communist nations of Eastern Europe, representing a major threat not only to Poland's communist government, but potentially to the political hegemony of the entire Soviet Bloc. Ironically, nearly forty years after the formation of the authoritarian, Soviet-dominated socialist "People's Republics", it was a genuine and spontaneous people's movement that threatened to undermine the teetering edifice of the communist behemoth that straddled the territories that lay behind the 'Iron Curtain'. Anne Applebaum, in *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern* Europe, notes that by the 1980s, each of the Eastern European communist states had evolved their own unique versions of the communist model, but that what they all had in common was a lack of stability (2013:492). This instability was the natural result of trying to impose a totalitarian system on a population. Applebaum notes that,

> By trying to control every aspect of society, the regimes had turned every aspect of society into a potential form of protest...The state had dictated that no one

> could form independent organizations – and so anybody who founded one...became an opponent of the regime...And when large numbers of people joined an independent organization – when some 10 million Poles joined the Solidarity trade union, for example – the regime's very existence was suddenly at stake (Applebaum, 2013:492-93).

Norman Davies, writing in 1983, was both succinct and prophetic in his assessment of the situation:

> For thirty-six years, Polish politics had taken little account of the people in whose name the Party reigned. Thirty-six million people were the passive object of politics. In 1980, they rose up determined to be one of its active subjects. The SOLIDARITY movement was the incarnation of that determination. The ruling Party suffered a stroke from which it is unlikely to recover (Davies,1986:16).

2.3 The 'State of War'

In answer to this threat, the military action targeting Solidarity was planned months in advance and could be traced back through Jaruzelski's promotion from Minister of Defense to Prime Minister in February 1981 and then to the supreme post of Party Secretary in September of that year (Davies, 1986:22). The records of the events of the night of 12/13 December show a coordinated attack on Solidarity, beginning with a countrywide cutting off of telecommunications, followed by raids on Solidarity offices by ZOMO[8] units and the arrest of key union members (Dębska, 2006:10-13). Codenamed operation 'Fir Tree', these coordinated arrests took place across Poland, with a total of 9962 persons arrested and interned during the period of martial law (Dębska, 2006:10).

My father, Kazimierz Pater, was at the time a 45-year-old otolaryngologist, Solidarity member and Chairman of the Medical Workers' Union in Lubin, a large town in the province of Silesia in the South West of Poland. After being woken at around 3 or 4am by two Militia officers and a UB officer, he was placed under arrest and escorted to a waiting Militia car (see Appendix B).

[8] ZOMO was the acronym for *Zmotoryzowane Odwody Milicji Obywatelskiej* (Motorised Reserves of the Citizen's Militia), referred to by Weschler as the Polish government's Internal Security Forces, the "minions of the Communist Party", used to quell riots and break up public protests (Weschler, 1984:91).

My mother, Zofia Pater, was not told where her husband was being taken (see Appendix A). Kazimierz was then driven to the local militia station and placed in a holding cell. He later recalled how, having spent several hours in the cell, he overheard General Jaruzelski's announcement on the radio and only then realised the broader situation.

> "We stood along the walls, each of us accompanied by two storm troopers; we were not allowed to sit on the floor, or to speak. We stood there for some hours and when the lights went out in the room, I felt a sense of relief. If they've switched off the lights that means they'll start roughing us up, and if they rough us up, that means they don't have orders to shoot us on the spot. But even these fears proved groundless because the officer...left the room and the lights came on again. General Jaruzelski's voice echoed from the speakers in the corridor and it was then that all of us – captors and captured – learned that 'Poland lives and will go on living'." Lech Dymarski, interned Solidarity member, Strzebielinek (Dębska, 2006:20)

At the same time, a few blocks from where my family lived, Zdzisław Strzelec was experiencing an almost identical turn of events as Kazimierz. Zdzisław was the Press Officer for Solidarity in the county of Legnica, within which Lubin is situated. His son, Piotrek, recalls how he was woken by voices outside his room in the early hours of the morning (see Appendix E). His father was arguing with militia and UB officers at the door of the family's apartment. By Piotrek's reckoning, his father was stalling for time, while his mother tried to unsuccessfully dispose of incriminating documents. Zdzisław was arrested and driven to the militia station, though it is not clear if it was the same one as Kazimierz was taken to, as neither of the men recalled seeing the other there. They and several others were then transported to and interned at the prison facility in Głogów, a town situated about forty kilometers outside of Lubin. Głogów was only one among forty-six other internment facilities across Poland to which those arrested under 'Fir Tree' were taken.

Under martial law, the right to strike and protest was suspended, public gatherings were prohibited, a nightly curfew was imposed, personal firearms had to be turned in, correspondence was censored, adults and children over the age of 13 were required to carry identification documents, there were restrictions on domestic travel, a prohibition of travel outside of Poland's borders, and flights in and out of Poland were cancelled. There was also a

ban on “tourism and water sports in Polish territorial waters, both external and...” – perhaps due to Communist governments’ lack of a sense of the absurd – “...internal” (Dębska, 2006:14; Wikimedia Commons, 2018). In addition to these other restrictions, photographing or filming of army and security personnel and military and government buildings was prohibited (Dębska, 2006:25). Poland was placed under the rule of the Military Council for National Salvation, better known by its acronym WRON (*Wojskowa Rada Ocalenia Narodowego*) and known popularly as *wrona* (‘The Crow’) (Davies, 1986:23). The council, made up of “fifteen generals and a cosmonaut” (Stone, 2011:534) was headed by General Jaruzelski.

Army platoons were deployed from their barracks to towns and cities across Poland. Tanks moved along streets and armed soldiers manned checkpoints. Testimonials taken from a cross-section of those who experienced these events first-hand provide a nuanced and complex picture of the feelings and attitudes on that first day of Martial Law:

> “Each of us was given a magazine with live ammunition...We were told not to use [it]. On no account to shoot, but to listen to the patrol officer’s orders. In extreme cases, we were to shoot upwards, using blanks... I tried not to look at people. I was ashamed. I walked along, pretending that I was not from the town. People knew that I was not there of my own free will, that somehow I have to do this and that I deeply regret it. I think they are probably a little sorry for us.” Maciek, “soldier on basic military service.”
>
> “At about midday I set off to visit my sister. There are tanks on Chałubinski Street, and on Rakowiecka Street – how strange...There are quite a few people at bus stops and on the buses. The atmosphere is merry – almost jovial. Most people laugh out loud at each encountered armoured vehicle or group of warriors. It seems to absurd, as if we were watching a film. It does not occur to anybody that they might start to shoot. The anti-tank barriers on Poniatowski Bridge are greeted with howls of laughter. People talk loudly among themselves and comment on these absurdities.” Ludmiła Niedbalska, Warsaw, 13 December 1981.
>
> (Dębska, 2006:21-23)

Strikes in several plants and factories, as well as one at Wroclaw Technical University, were put down by ZOMO, sometimes violently, with tanks, tear gas and truncheons (Dębska, 2006:42). In total, several hundred injuries were reported, both on the side of the strikers and ZOMO, and there were reports of isolated deaths. Most notably, seven miners were killed by ZOMO troops at the 'Wujek' mine in Silesia on 16 December, where a protracted strike had taken place (Davies,1986:23).

2.4 Emigration

Following the arrests of Kazimierz and Zdzisław, both the Pater and Strzelec families lived in a state of uncertainly for several weeks. Neither Zofia nor Zdzisław's wife were informed as to their husbands' whereabouts. Zofia recalls that it took two weeks for her to find out that Kazimierz was in Głogów Prison, through a family acquaintance that had connections with the militia. Zdzisław's wife also had to wait a month to finally get information on where her husband was being interned. Kazimierz was identified as a potential troublemaker and was later moved to a prison in Ostrowo Wielkopolskie, north-east of Głogów.

On 3 March 1982, the Polish government announced that all internees could apply for a one-way visa to leave Poland (Weschler, 1984:226). Both families, uncertain of their futures in their motherland, seized this opportunity, hoping for a better life in the West. The Pater family left Poland on 31 July, 1982 for a spa-turned-refugee facility in West Germany, in the town of Bad-Soden Sälmunster, near Frankfurt. The Strzelec family also came to stay at this facility. Both families were part of the first wave of Polish refugees that were housed there,[9] while they made arrangements to emigrate to permanent locations in the West. Both families moved to the US – the Strzelec family to Salt Lake City, Utah, where they live to this day, and the Paters to the small city of Everett, near Seattle, in the state of Washington. Despite making efforts at building a new life in the US, Kazimierz and Zofia Pater, both medical doctors, faced difficulties in having their qualifications recognised. The family lived on government welfare for two years, before deciding to once again emigrate, to South Africa in 1984, where they were able to find employment and continue in their professions.

[9] The facility was funded by the UN's International Organisation for Migration (Appendix D) and functioned at least until June, 1983 (Markham, 1983).

2.5 The 1989 Polish elections and the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe

Poland's government officially ended the State of War on 22 July, 1983 but continued its repression of Solidarity and the harassment and arrest of dissidents (Davies,1986:xiii). Solidarity remained operative as an underground movement throughout the 1980s, while the Communist regime remained unpopular among the vast majority of the population and the country's economic woes continued (Weschler, 1989). In 1988, yet another attempt by the government at raising food prices was again met with strikes, demanding the reinstatement of Solidarity (Weschler:1989). The government refused to relegalise the trade union, but invited all sectors of Polish society to roundtable negotiations. Commencing in February 1989, negotiations were held between the Polish Communist Party Central Committee on the one side and prominent intellectuals and Catholic clergy on the other (unofficially representing the interests of Solidarity). As Weschler notes, there was a surreal quality to these talks:

> Someday, no doubt, somebody will write a novel or a play about those talks. It's hard to imagine a situation with more intrinsic dramatic potential, for time and again former prisoners were being brought face to face with their former jailers and tormentors. All during the negotiations, extraordinary corridor stories were circulating through Warsaw. For example, there was one about Zbigniew Bujak, Solidarity's legendary Warsaw regional leader, who for more than four years after the imposition of martial law had managed to evade arrest, even though he had some close calls: once he literally ran out of his sheepskin coat as he was being nabbed by security agents, leaving them holding nothing but the coat. During the talks, the story goes, Bujak found himself in colloquy with General Kiszczak, the head of security and, indeed, the man who did eventually succeed in jailing him. "By the way," the General told Bujak, "I have your coat in my office. You're welcome to come by and pick it up whenever you like" (Weschler, 1989).

The negotiations ended in a decision to hold free elections on 4 June 1989, where Poles would be given the chance to vote for 35 seats in lower house of parliament and all the seats in the Senate (Westad, 2018:584-5). They resulted in a government that was dominated by Solidarity, with Jaruzelski voted in as president by a narrow margin, but with Tadeusz Mazowiecki as the first non-communist Prime Minister (Weschler, 1990; Niedenthal, 2017). Photographer Chris Niedenthal, who extensively documented Poland from the 1970s through to the 90s and who

photographed the 1989 elections, observed that, “After the elections, the Polish People’s Republic had virtually ceased to exist” (Niedenthal, 2017:8).

2.6 Postscript

Soon after the Solidarity gained power after the June 1989 election, it split into two opposing factions and, like many revolutionary movements, has never regained the cohesion and coherence it had when it was united in opposition to an oppressive and totalitarian regime. Today, Solidarity “has shriveled to a narrow and deeply conservative force”, claiming to represent those “left behind by Poland’s often painful transition to capitalism”, who accuse Lech Wałęsa of having sold out the country’s workers and support the divisive, ultra-conservative and intolerant Law and Justice Party that heads the current Polish government (Higgins, 2021). It’s former leaders, Wałęsa and Michnik, have distanced themselves from the movement. Wałęsa feels that it no longer represents its original “interests and goals”, while Adam Michnik, one of Solidarity’s leading intellectuals in its heyday, is more explicit in his criticism:

> Back then [in the 80s] it was a mass movement of millions with different tendencies and currents, but its essential premise was that Poland be democratic, tolerant and pro-Western...Today’s Solidarity is an organization [sic] with only a few people, which supports the destruction of democracy and supports anti-Western forces (Higgins, 2021).

Chapter 3

The Making of *Polonia*: Processes and Iconography

This chapter will outline the production process of *Polonia*, a half-hour animated documentary that follows the story of my own as well as the Strzelec families' experiences of the State of War and emigration from Poland in the early 1980s. It constitutes the practice component of this research project and was guided by an experimental approach in its development of a visual aesthetic, animation and formal and narrative structures: eschewing a rigid production pipeline and instead following a more free-form process that was responsive to archival materials, developing technical knowledge and theoretical influences throughout its production period. From a theoretical standpoint, Annabelle Honess Roe's *Animated Documentary* was the key text that guided my initial work on the film, while Ari Folman's *Waltz with Bashir* was its key aesthetic and technical influence. Both Honess Roe's text and Folman's film impressed on me the importance of the narrator's voice as *Polonia*'s dominant indexical and structuring element. As production progressed, the film's stylistic palette expanded under the influence of diverse sources – including the animated documentaries of Mickey Duzyj, comic art and Polish poster design from the 1960s to the 1980s. The discovery of new archival materials and opportunities for travel to Poland and Germany, where I could document many of the film's locations, were fortuitous occurrences that also enriched and diversified the film's content. Finally, the technical insights that the making of the film yielded, the skills that were developed and honed during the course of its production and the processes of formal, structural and narrative problem-solving all contributed the final outcome.

3.1. *Airmail*

The project that would eventually coalesce as *Polonia* (which translates as 'Polish diaspora, or 'Polish overseas community') was first conceived around 2011, as a possible docuseries or series of short webisodes, taking as its subject my family's stay in Vitagena, a resort located near the town of Bad Soden Salmünster, West Germany, in the summer of 1982. Throughout my childhood I had heard stories about our stay there, and even though I had been present at many of the events that were recollected, I was too young to have had a clear memory of them. Through multiple retellings these stories took on for me a kind of mythic quality. A suggestion was made by my friend, Dr Peta Von Horsten, that I turn some of these stories into a short film. The concept for a docuseries, perhaps one where each episode would explore the story of one

set of Polish émigrés, grew out of these initial discussions. While the series never came to fruition, I did get as far as creating a title sequence for it, one which was then re-formatted as the short film *Airmail*, completed in 2014. The film's title-sequence roots are apparent in its free-associative, poetic structure and narrative, which is very loosely based on my family's experiences of emigration, but it contains only fleeting references to specific historical events and biographical details and its symbols are generally opaque and open to broad interpretation.

While the film that became *Airmail* had deviated considerably from my initial interest in exploring my family history through animation, it became a valuable template for several production techniques and a particular visual style that I was keen to explore further, the key elements of which were:

- Actual or *faux* archival materials – documents, photographs, postcards and various objects – presented both wide, as tableaus via a 'God's Eye-View' framing, or in extreme close-up, resulting in macrophotography aesthetic.
- A mixed-media approach to animation that included hand-drawn paper animation, digital 2D animation and digital puppet animation.
- An extensive use of virtual camera movement leading the viewer through the narrative, with the camera moving over surfaces and through them, leading to a conflation of spaces that were signified as 'real' – constructed using archival materials – and animated narrative space.

I had initially intended for my next film – as the 'practice' component of this practice-led PhD research project, to be relatively short in length and based on a fictional narrative, again broadly analogous to my family's experiences of emigration. In discussions with my supervisor, Prof Christo Doherty, he suggested that I consider a longer film and in the format of an animated documentary. Having the film be a documentary seemed an obvious choice, given my interest in my family's narrative and the 'archival aesthetic' and production techniques that I had developed in *Airmail* seemed perfectly suited to this format. While *Airmail*'s aesthetic and production techniques would serve as the initial template for *Polonia*, they would be developed and expanded upon over what would ultimately grow to be to a six-year production period.

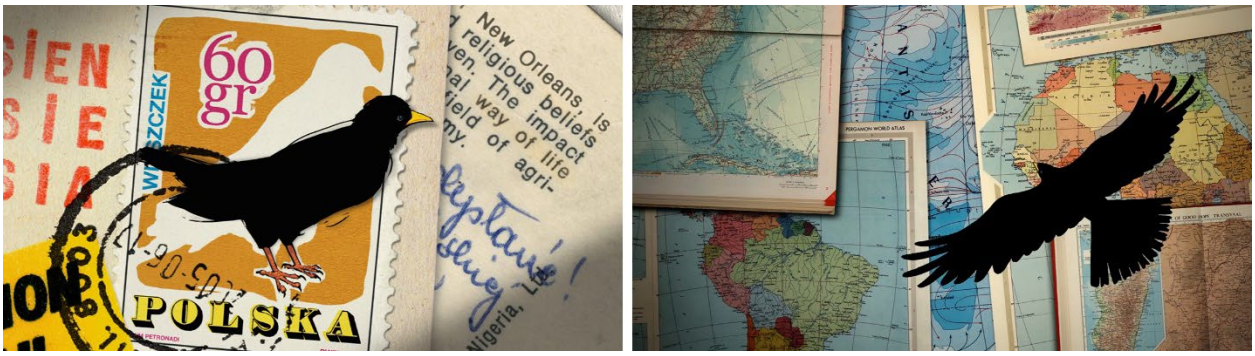


FIGURE 3.1. A still from *Airmail* (2014), showing an early version of 'macrophotography' document aesthetic.

3.2 Production Phase 1, August 2015 – April 2017

3.2.1 Opening

A low-angle shot of the top half of St Basil's cathedral. The camera slowly tracks towards it and the sound of a Russian choir singing the Internationale rings out. The music swells but is then abruptly cut off by static as what appears to be a giant boy walks into shot. The boy crouches beside the cathedral and moves in to get a closer look at it. The camera cuts to an extreme close-up of one of the cathedral's terraces, on which stands Josef Stalin, dressed in a white tunic, arm waving from side-to-side. Behind him, we can make out the giant blurred face of the boy, filling the screen. We hear the sound of a station being searched for on an AM/FM radio – amidst the static, one can make out German being spoken. A new music track kicks in, a cheesy pastiche of synth-heavy 1980s pop songs. The camera cuts to another close up of Franklin D Roosevelt, waving back. The camera tracks away to reveal to reveal Roosevelt standing on the steps of the United States Capitol, the building cradling what appears to be a golf hole. As the camera cuts to a wide overhead shot, the location is revealed to be a mini-golf course, with a diorama of the Cold War geopolitical landscape. St Basil's, representative of Soviet Russia stands opposite the Capitol building, symbol of the American government. It is clear now that the figures of Stalin and Roosevelt are tiny figurines, locked in a perpetual mutual regard. The boy kneeling behind St Basil's stands up and we see two more boys on the mini-golf course, one striking and sinking the ball as the camera pans up, past the boys, over a green lawn and a narrow road towards a building with a sign that reads VITAGENA. The camera keeps moving further up, onto a wooden surface lying beneath what we now see is a painting on which the entire scene we just witnessed has played out. Before us are arranged newspapers, family photographs, slides, a pencil, brushes, an eraser, letters spelling POLONIA and a notebook with what look like storyboard sketches of the opening scene we just watched.

This opening scene of *Polonia* presents a microcosm of the film as a whole, that is, an account of two families' intersecting histories, situated in a broader geo-political narrative, interpreted through animation and a creative treatment of archival materials. The making of *Polonia*, at least in its early to mid-stages, followed a fairly unconventional path. While there was a structure, it was not the standard film production pipeline of preproduction, production and postproduction, with its established linear sequence of script, storyboard, voice recording, animatic, character design, background design, production stills, animation, foley. Nor did it follow (again, in these early stages) what is now a fairly standard practice in animated documentary production of first obtaining audio recordings (either of interviews or the 'incidental' audio heard in films like Aardman's *Animated Conversations)* and then creating animation in response to them. The film's opening sequence, a fantastical re-imagining of my brothers and I at the Bad Soden mini-golf course, arrived more or less fully formed, before almost any preproduction had been done on the film proper and before any interviews had been recorded.

An incident that was often recounted among the Bad Soden stories was of my brother, Ziemek suffering some minor injuries while playing mini-golf. One of the refugee children (the son of a well-known political cartoonist) had accidentally hit him in the face on a back-swing with his club; when my brother then moved to the boy's opposite flank so as not to get hit again, the club swung in the opposite direction, once again connecting with Ziemek's face. While the slapstick nature of the incident made it perfectly suited as material for a humorous animated sequence, a more important element seemed to be the mini-golf course itself. The story caused me to focus on that locale and I became fixated on it as the 'key' that would allow me to reconnect with the experience of our time in Bad Soden. At this early stage of production, I had managed to collect very little visual reference. Some very hazy memories and a few photographs of present-day Bad Soden, Vitagena (now a rehabilitation clinic) and the still extant mini-golf course, which I'd found on Facebook, were all that I had available with which to work. The concept for the film's opening was in part based on these limitations, but also on the notion of setting the stage with an overtly symbolic sequence, one that would signal the intersection between the film's personal and political-historical narrative and themes and be bold and cinematic in its execution. The sequence also establishes the film's visual language, juxtaposing hyperrealist 2D cartoon character animation against reflexive, overtly 'constructed' backgrounds, using painting, drawing, collage in 'handmade' aesthetic, and assemblages of archival materials that relate directly or indirectly to the narrative of whichever scene in which they are included. As noted,

this aesthetic was one that I'd developed prior to beginning production on the film, but it was expanded upon in the opening scene with the inclusion of a large painting for the scene's extended camera pan. Intentionally rendered on old board, covered in writing, in order to reflexively draw the viewer's attention to its surface, this painting would be the first in a series and introduced a production technique that would be central to the films' development and cinematic language.

The friendly wave between Roosevelt and Stalin signifies the genesis of Poland's subjugation under communist rule: as noted in Chapter 2, the agreement made between Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin at Yalta in February 1945 confirmed Poland's post-war borders and its status as a Soviet 'zone of influence' (Applebaum, 2013:74; Davies, 1986:79). The waving figurine of Stalin wears a white tunic, alluding to his appearance at the Potsdam Conference in June-July that same year, the last member of the 'Big Three' still in office. While the symbolism of the two leaders waving to one another will likely be lost on audiences without a good knowledge of World War Two history, it is one that will likely speak to Poles, particularly those of the older generation. The choices that were made regarding the symbols and visual metaphors used throughout the film, their specificity versus how understandable they would be to a broad audience, is a topic that I will return to repeatedly throughout this chapter.

This sequence also establishes the film's visual language, juxtaposing hyperrealist 2D cartoon character animation against reflexive, overtly 'constructed' backgrounds – using painting, drawing, collage in 'handmade' aesthetic – and assemblages of archival materials.

The 2D cartoon aesthetic was partly resolved at this stage in the character design of the three boys and in the processing and treatment of the drawings. The design was based on two sources, namely the Polish cartoon series *Bolek i Lolek* and the Polish comic *Tytus, Romek i Atomek.* The former was the highly popular and longest running children's cartoon in the Polish People's Republic, first airing in 1963, with its final season completed in 1986 and a feature film appearing in 1977 (Sitkiewicz, 2011:137). It follows the adventures of two brothers, the older Bolek and the younger Lolek, a dynamic based on "the long tradition of comedy duos" (Sitkiewicz, 2011:139). The series was aimed at young children and had a pedagogical aspect, where the boys learn about the world in the course of their adventures, travelling across Poland and internationally and modern in tone, with the boys inspired by things they watch on television or read in the news, where for example, in one episode they build their own space rocket,

inspired by Yuri Gagarin's 1961 earth orbit. Their dress, where they lived and their recreational activities all reflected life in communist-era Poland (Sitkiewicz, 2011:140). The character designs are simple and geometric, typical of the time-period in which they were created, “drawn with a simple line, almost that of the compass and ruler” (Sitkiewicz, 2011:138) and the show’s overall aesthetic resembles a slightly cruder version of UPA or Hanna-Barbera cartoons of the 1950s and 1960s. It is interesting to note that critics and the Polish film community responded negatively to the introduction of this and other serialised animated television children's shows in early 1960s, as they were seen as a threat to auteurist animated films, replacing formalist experimentation with a schematic cartoon style and “cheap moralising” (Sitkiewicz, 2011:138). The creators of the new shows said that they were aiming for a clean, simple graphic style, suitable for children's perceptual and cognitive abilities – an approach that was vindicated by these shows’ popularity among younger viewers (Sitkiewicz, 2011:141). Using these characters as the template for the avatars of my brothers seemed a natural choice. Remembering watching the cartoon as a child, I have a memory of even then noticing parallels between the cartoon siblings and my brothers: apart from them being close in age (the characters are two years apart, my brothers a year) the cartoon’s dynamic of the older, responsible brother and the wilder, younger one was reflected in my brothers’ relationship.

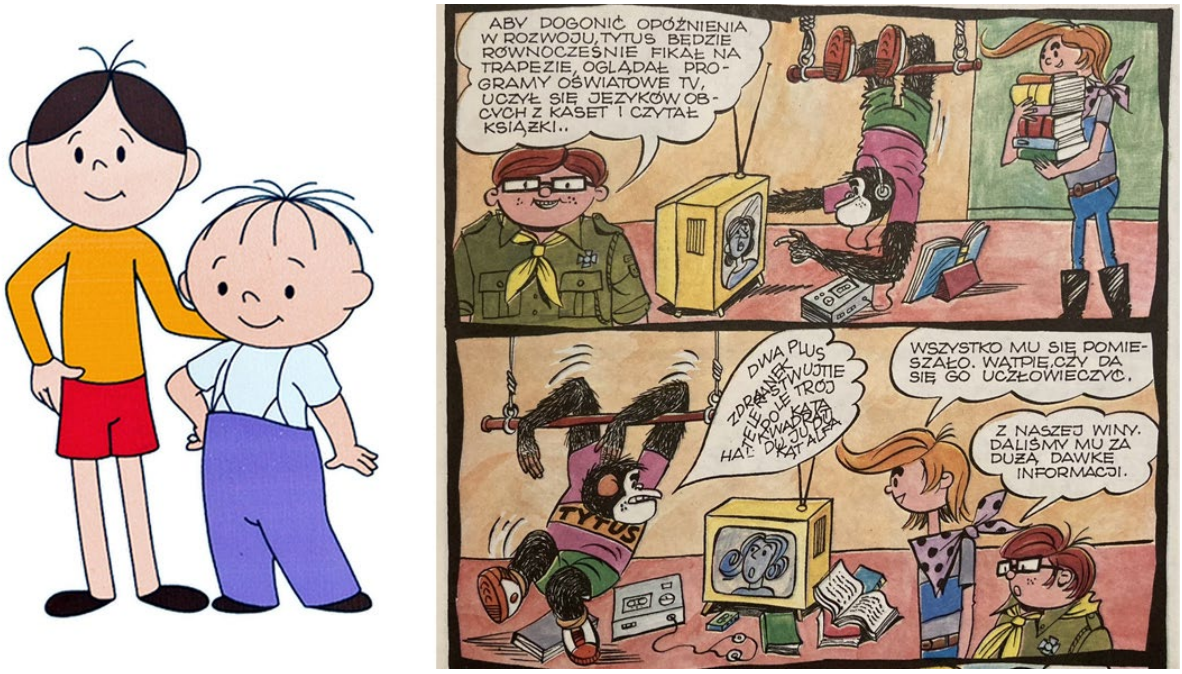


FIGURE 3.2. *Bolek i Lolek* (left) and panels from the more chaotic *Tytus, Romek i A’Tomek* (right)

A secondary influence was the comic book trio *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek*. Far more anarchic and subversive than *Bolek i Lolek*, the comic book revolved around the adventures of two boy scouts – Romek and A'Tomek and Tytus, a talking chimpanzee who wants to become human. Also highly popular, it holds the record of the longest-published Polish comic, with a publication history running from 1957 to 2009 (Dordević 2021). The stories are absurdist, fantastical and surreal, where, in one version of Tytus' origin, he comes to life from ink spilled by the comics' creator, Henryk Jerzy Chmielewski. While the boy scouts' round heads and button noses are similar to those found on *Bolek i Lolek* and both sets of characters have black orbs for eyes, these comic characters are drawn in a style that is cruder and looser than the clean lines of the cartoon, with bold strokes and heavy ink lines, reminiscent of underground comic art.

In designing the characters in *Polonia*, attention was paid to period-specific details, such as clothing and personal items such school bags, which were referenced from family photographs and internet searches. The character animation was mostly done using a combination of traditional methods and digital tools. Most of the sequences were drawn in pencil on paper, then inked, scanned then coloured and textured in Photoshop. Colour schemes, including skin tones, were created by selecting colours directly from reference images using the Eyedropper tool in Photoshop. Textures were added to give the 2D characters a more handmade look and to soften the flat digital colouring, and were created using scans of old paper, which were then overlayed on top of the coloured frames in Photoshop. The characters were rendered with shadows and highlights, giving them a more volumetric appearance than the Polish cartoon and comic on which they were based.

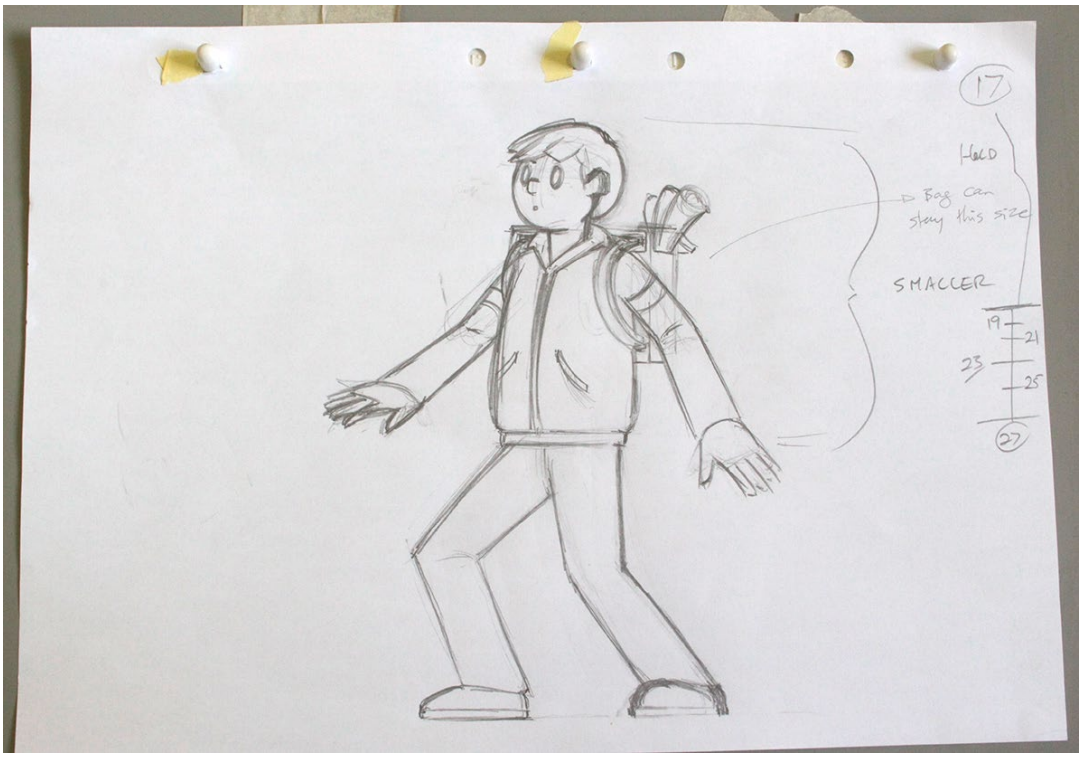


FIGURE 3.3. A pencil drawing of my brother Ziemek's cartoon avatar on punched animation paper



FIGURE 3.4. An example of the colouring and texturing process on *Polonia's* 2D characters.

3.2.2 Visit to Lubin, Audio Recording, Interviews and Storyboards

In August 2015, I travelled to Poland on a family vacation. This was fortuitous, as one of the places we visited was Lubin, where my family had lived in our last years before our emigration. During our stay there, I was able to visit and document many of the locations that would be

featured in *Polonia*. On our taxi ride from Lubin to our next destination, the taxi driver, a family acquaintance, asked my mother about the circumstances of our leaving Poland in the 1980s and she recounted the entire series of events, from the arrest of my father, through to our stay in Bad Soden, our time in the States and eventual settlement in South Africa. Unprepared, but realising value of this opportunity, I recorded the conversation on my Blackberry, which was already at that time an old model and barely up to the task. While the sound quality of the recording was poor, it was informal and spontaneous and the lack of acoustic clarity was made up for by its verité tone. The structure of the conversation seemed to fit perfectly with what I had in mind for the first portion of the film and, once I had returned home and completed the opening sequence (described in 3.2.1) I began storyboarding. These storyboards were drawn in the same manner as almost all the preproduction drawings for the film, as rough thumbnails, in a set of notebooks. The storyboarding process was not consistent, nor was it comprehensive or sequential. Pre-production drawings on *Polonia* ranged from these thumbnail storyboards, to more random sets of drawings and were done as needed, in the order that various scenes were tackled. Some of these drawings were made up to a year before work began on a final scene, a way of ‘seeding’ ideas that could gestate over time and be repeatedly modified and revised before production began on the scene *proper*.



FIGURE 3.5. An example of the rough sketches for some of *Polonia*'s early scenes.

Between January and May, 2016, I conducted interviews with my immediate family and with Piotrek Strzelec. These semi-structured conversations were recorded and in almost all cases ran to about an hour in length. While I had easy access to my immediate family, my parents and two brothers, it was more difficult finding other people to interview. My original plan had been to try and contact as many people as possible that had been in Bad Soden in the Summer of 1982. My idea was to include a range of voices speaking about their experiences at the Vitagena 'refugee camp', with the bulk of the film focusing on our stay in Germany. I was given the names of several people I might try to contact by my brother Dobek and my parents, but I received no response from the people to whom I reached out. The Strzelec family – in particular their son Piotrek – had come up repeatedly when I'd interviewed Dobek and from it I gleaned that the family may still be living in the United States, in Utah. An internet search led me to the website of the Utah Aviation Society, where the name 'Piotrek Strzelec' was listed. I established contact with Piotrek and he was enthusiastic in responding to my request for an interview, which we

conducted via Skype on 29 May, 2016. He also sent me scans of family photographs, documents and newspaper cuttings, many of which would be included in the film.

The recordings of these interviews – along with that of my mother's conversation with the taxi driver in Poland – now became the basis for working out the rest of the film's narrative. Four hours of recordings needed to be edited into a coherent narrative. As could be expected, the outline of the stories told to me by my family and Piotrek Strzelec was the same, as each person recounted the same basic sequence of events, though from different perspectives and with different details. I listened to the recordings repeatedly, noting congruencies and deviations. A three-act structure emerged naturally as a consequence of the narrative's three locations: Poland, Germany and America. Five different narrators needed to be balanced and based on the content of the interviews, I decided to give more attention to the adults' narrative for the events that took place in Poland and focus more on the children in Germany. The USA narration would be a mix of both. My mother's narration of events was the most condensed and immediate, particularly in her recollection of my father's arrest and the weeks that followed, so large portions in the early part of the film were given to her. Finding points of connection in the individual narratives was very interesting and rewarding, as it allowed a conversation to take place between the narrators and different points of view on the same events. Though the basic structure was established early on, the film's complete narrative wouldn't be finalised until very late in the production. Scenes were constantly added, taken out and re-arranged. The first cut of the film ran to almost an hour and had to incrementally be cut back as the production time ran longer, mainly as a result of the very arduous colouring and texturing process of the 2D animation.

3.2.3 Experimenting with form and structure

During the months that I was recording the interviews, I completed the sequence showing my father's arrest, based on audio edited from the taxi-recording of my mother and my interview with my father (which took place in January, 2016). The storyboarding for this sequence was very tight and the framing and editing are the most conventional in the entire film. The sequence plays out as a tense drama, full of fairly quick edits, with limited camera movement, apart from a long pan up to the starry sky in the final shot. There were some experiments with backgrounds and the one 'innovation' was including the live-action footage of the coat in which my father had been arrested, which he still owned and loaned to me.

Not sure of how the scenes following my father's arrest would have looked like, I began working on a large landscape painting of Lubin, which included the main road on which the Polish Army performed its 'tank deception'[10] on the morning that the State of War was declared, the bridge on which the townspeople had congregated, the hill overlooking the road, with its characteristic water tower, and some of the mass-housing 'blocks' that covered that part of town. Working on large landscape painting of Lubin with no preplanned shot framing or camera movement was an unconventional production technique. In a standard animation pipeline, one would usually first storyboard a sequence, frame individual shots and thereafter create backgrounds for them. Instead, I had opted to paint the landscape and 'find' the sequence and the shots within it, as one would on a live-action stage set. It was an interesting experiment, though very slow to execute, with a number of different camera movements and framing options tried over several months. The background was re-used for a later sequence in the film, with added elements and different framing and became representative not just of Lubin, but of the Polish People's Republic as a whole.

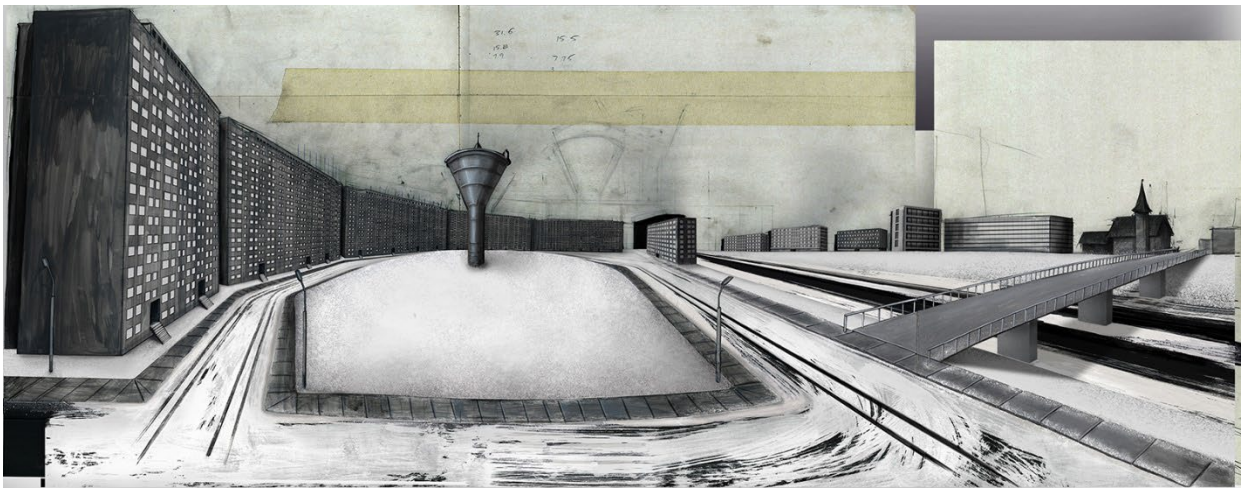


FIGURE 3.6. The large landscape painting of Lubin, which acted as a stage for extended sequences, created using digital painting over a hand-painted acrylic base.

Going forward, the film began to adhere more closely to the approach I'd taken in *Airmail*, where shots would be designed individually as discrete episodes and connected through transitions. The camera became a stronger presence, an 'eye' leading the viewer through the narrative and used to shift between and conflate 'cinematic' and 'archival' spaces, with the assemblages of archival materials becoming large landscapes over, into and out of which the camera could

[10] As described by Zofia Pater in my field recording of her conversation in August, 2015 (see Appendix A).

move. The structuring of the film took on a puzzle-like aspect, with sequences created in a modular fashion as episodes comprised of one or more shots – usually accompanied by the voice of a single narrator – that could then be re-ordered, depending on changes to the narrative. At this stage of production there was still a lot of formal experimentation and several sequences were designed that were later abandoned or repurposed. Mindful of the time and effort spent on abandoned scenes, as many elements as could be salvaged were reused. It was to some extent an intuitive process, where it wasn't always clear how a particular shot might fit into the film's the overall structure or what the significance of particular iconography might mean. A good example of this is the motif of the starry sky and moon, that repeats throughout the film. By repeatedly returning to the image of the night sky, I wanted to maintain the sense of a larger presence that hovered over the events in the film – a force – indicative of the Poland's communist government, the Soviet empire, the broader geopolitical Cold War conflict – but also something beyond that, more abstract, like fate or the *zeitgeist.* The idea of using the iconography of space was to endow this presence with qualities that were both awe-inspiring and alien, beyond the understanding of the protagonists, particularly the children. Having the film's narrative take place from a child's point of view was decided at the outset. This was what in part led to the decision to have a striking, more overtly-cartoony visual design for the child characters that stood apart from the more realistic design of the adults in the film. Using the repeated motif of the full moon was inspired by an illustration of it that I found in an old Polish encyclopedia, and which I incorporated directly into the film. It complemented the iconography of the starry sky and also led to more fantastical, surreal scenes, like the ones where the prisoners are transported to the moon and a giant onion destroys a prison in Siberia. These scenes were in keeping with the child's perspective and with the surreal, formalist tradition of Polish illustration and animation.

The modular, experimental approach that I opted for in the design and structuring of the film led to a somewhat meandering, circuitous production path, but resulted in individual sequences and an overall formal structure that I would not have been able to conceptualise if I had followed a more traditional production pipeline. Only the sequences up to and including the arrest of Piotrek's father were storyboarded in a conventional way. All the rest of the scenes that followed usually originated from loose sketches, often 'seeded' up to a year before production of those shots was initiated, giving the ideas time to grow and gestate. When final work on a shot began, its individual elements were created and composed in Photoshop before being imported into and re-assembled in After Effects, where the shot was 'found' through experimenting with

framing and camera movement. Compositions were often worked on in both software programs simultaneously, with changes made in Photoshop updating 'live' in After Effects.

Many of the shots in the film were set up so as to 'echo' previous shots or to reflect certain visual elements. I felt that this would act as a subtle structuring device, making the film more cohesive by creating familiarity through repetition. Several different kinds of scene transitions were developed that were repeated throughout the film. These were often used over more traditional 'cuts' to maintain a certain flow in the pacing and the feeling of a continuous journey. To some extent, some also function symbolically: the 'wipes', using a black bar, are meant to vaguely denote an oppressive force or system, a rigid and labyrinthine bureaucratic state; when the families are in Bad Soden, the colour of the bar is inverted, using the white borders from one of the Vitagena postcards, signalling new freedoms in the West. These devices were meant to communicate subtly, contributing to an overall *gestalt*, rather than making an overt statement.

3.2.4 Iconography

As already noted, and as will be analysed in greater detail in Chapter 4, *Polonia* blends both archival and cinematic aesthetics or 'spaces'. These spaces function both as literal visualisations of the story being told by the film's narrators, but also use symbols and visual metaphor to comment on, contrast and enrich the spoken narrative. A prime example of this is the visualisation of Poland's communist military regime as a giant metal crow, assembled from various weapon parts and military equipment – its beak a gun, its wings swords and pieces of fighter jets, with various military insignia and medals. Its wings bear the same white stencilled numbers and letters as those on the T-72 tank[11], used by the Polish army during the State of War, ubiquitous in photographs of the army's takeover of urban streets and squares. The crow appears in that part of the Polish chapter of *Polonia* narrated by my brothers and represents a child's nightmare, a fantastical, powerful, monstrous presence that can swoop down and snatch up family members at will and with no recourse. The idea for this anthropomorphised version of Poland's government was borrowed from several cartoons found in the underground press that were in circulation during the State of War. It grew out of a pun on the acronym for the Army Council of National Salvation, a twenty-one-man body comprised of army generals and commissars that were put in charge of running the country after General Jaruzelski's coup (Weschler, 1984:87). In Polish, the council's name reads as *Wojskowa Rada Ocalenia*

[11] The T-72 is a Soviet/Russian battle tank that began production in 1973 (Eastwood 2021).

Narodowego, and its acronym, *W.R.O.N.,* is very similar to the Polish word *'wrona',* which means 'crow'. This similarity resulted in a popular rhyming slogan, '*wrona skona' or* 'the crow will fall', accompanied by cartoon depictions of a crow in dark glasses and a military cap, as an obvious reference to General Jaruzelski. While in some of these depictions, the Jaruzelski crow is shown as weak and comedic, in others he is more sinister. One cartoon by artist Jan Lebenstein depicts the General as a grotesque, skeletal anthropomorph, speaking on a telephone, with the caption, "Everything is fine, Comrade"; in the background are four coffins on the steps of a building with a gate bearing the sign 'Wujek Mine'. The cartoon alludes to an incident at the Wujek Coal Mine in Silesia, South-West Poland, on 16 December 1981, where the break-up of a strike resulted in the massacre of nine miners by ZOMO riot police (Weschler, 1984:88). The cartoon can be read to mean that Jaruzelski is on the phone to the Russian government, assuring them that order has been restored in Poland. Jaruzelski's line of defense for declaring the 'state of war' was that he was forestalling a Soviet invasion of Poland, as the latter saw the growing popularity of the Solidarity movement as a threat to the stability of the entire Soviet Bloc (Suraska, 1998:68).



FIGURE 3.7. From left to right: Soviet-built T-72 tanks roll into urban centers during Poland's 'State of War'; a cartoon of 'the crow', a clear caricature of General Jaruzelski, with the phrase 'the crow will fall'; a more sinister rendering of the General as the crow by artist Jan Lebenstein.

Polonia's version of 'The Crow' forgoes making a direct reference to Jaruzelski and instead acts as a more general symbol of an expansive and repressive military regime, more stylistically reminiscent of classic depictions of a winged Angel of Death (a good stop-frame animated example of which can be seen in Terry Gilliam's 1988 film, *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen).* However, while this version of the Crow may have a more threatening presence

than that depicted in Polish underground cartoons of the early 1980s, it is in many ways as comedic a figure as those found in the latter. Interpreted on a personal level, hearing its approach at first evokes fear in the cartoon avatars of my brothers, where the sequence ends with them laughingly evading its grasp as it cries out impotently against the backdrop of the full moon. Despite its fearsome visage, the Crow, together with its 'accomplice', the Moon, which illuminates its path – both symbols of repressive Power and State terror – are unable to thwart the subversive antics of two small boys.

While the design of *Polonia*'s Crow was intended to appear more overtly threatening to the children in *Polonia*, it was also crafted as a more generic symbol of terror than that in the underground cartoons, one that would communicate more clearly to international audiences. The specificity of the events in *Polonia*'s narrative and the iconography that arose around the Solidarity movement and the period of Martial Law, meant that much of the film's visual language may remain opaque to anyone without a comprehensive knowledge of recent Polish history and the history of the Cold War in general. As with the design of the Crow, attempts were made to ameliorate this problem by making the iconography more generic and universal and to bolster its meanings through narrative context and tonally through music choices and sound design (this is discussed in greater detail in section 3.2.5).

One instance in which *Polonia*'s iconography becomes perhaps too hermetic for international audiences to grasp is in one of the film's final scenes, where a black-and-white cowboy walks through a desert landscape. Superficially, the scene illustrates Piotrek Strzelec's narration, where he refers to America as 'the Wild West'. An observant viewer might note that the monochromatic cowboy, contrasting sharply against the saturated colour of the Utah landscape, is an animated photograph of Gary Cooper from *High Noon* (1952). On a superficial level, the decision to include the figure came from Piotrek's mention that many John Ford films had been shot in Utah, where he now lives (see Appendix F), but the full significance of the iconography will only be apparent to those audience members who are familiar with what for Poles is an indelible political image – the 'High Noon' Solidarity poster for the 4 June 1989 elections.



FIGURE 3.8. The iconic 'High Noon' Solidarity election poster, using a film still of Gary Cooper in his role as an old-West marshal (left) and its transposition in *Polonia*.

The 'High Noon' election poster, designed by Tomasz Sarnecki, shows Cooper on a white background, carrying a ballot paper instead of the pistol that the actor held in the original film frame from which the image was excised. On his breast is pinned a red-and-white Solidarity badge, mirroring the large Solidarity logo positioned above and behind him. Below him the text reads 'At High Noon, 4 June 1989'. The use of a stereotypical American symbol of justice to represent what was in reality a moral reckoning for Poland's communist regime was not incidental, and the poster quickly became iconic (Świeszewski 2019). In *Polonia,* the cowboy presents a more ambiguous figure. He wanders alone through the desert, no longer holding a ballot paper and without the Solidarity badge on his breast. The potential for meaning is open-ended: perhaps he represents those members of Solidarity and other Poles that never returned to Poland after emigrating, choosing for any number of reasons to make their adopted countries their permanent homes, or, having removed his badge, the cowboy, like Wałęsa and Michnik, has disassociated himself from a movement that, once revolutionary, has now become reactionary and where it once united Poles, now divides them. In this sense, the cowboy may be seen as embodying Solidarity in its present state, wandering alone, lost in the desert.

3.2.5 Sound Design and Score

As detailed in section 3.2.2, the process of creating *Polonia*'s sound design began with editing the recordings of the interviews that I'd conducted with my family members and Piotrek Strzelec,

as well as the field recording of my mother's conversation with a taxi driver in Poland. Though these recordings form the core of *Polonia* – as a narrative medium, structuring element and index – music and foley were added to expand the film's soundscape.

During the making of *Airmail*, I had worked closely with sound designer and musician Garth van der Merwe and had intended for our collaboration on *Polonia* to function along similar lines. However, due to the cultural and historical specificity of many of the sound elements that I wanted to include in the film, I found myself taking over the role of foley artist on *Polonia*. While some of the film's foley effects were ones I recorded, most were sourced from websites like freesound.org. These sounds were needed to match action taking place on screen – a car door closing, cutlery hitting a plate, the sound of a crowded restaurant, and so on. The sounds were diegetic, emanating from within the on-screen world. Other sounds were used more expressively and, in their mismatch between what the viewer sees and hears, connote a symbolic meaning. For instance, when the giant boot stamps down next to the open prison cell of the newly-freed Solidarity members in the film's Siberian fantasy scene, this is matched with the sound of a prison cell door slamming shut. The symbolic meaning here appears self-evident, given the context of the narrator's observation that the Polish communist authorities "could have done anything [to the internees]" (see Appendix A). Other sounds were taken from archival sources and were used as 'evidence' of what was being discussed in the film's narration and shown on screen, to create an immersive experience for the viewer of a specific temporal-historical period. For instance, when my father recounts his experience of hearing General Jaruzelski's speech on the radio from his holding cell at the militia station, the soundtrack plays a recording of the actual speech.

The multiplicity of meanings behind some of the foley choices will remain opaque to audiences: the 'Voice of America' audio snippet that is heard when Dobek and Ziemek's interview portions are introduced fits comfortably within the Cold War context and helps create an authentic texture of that era. However, the inclusion of this snippet was prompted by memories of my father tuning into that station every evening, using his small Grundig radio (shown earlier in the film). The show's familiar musical theme would dip in and out of heavy static as my father tuned into the station, struggling to maintain a clear signal.

Similar to the way in which the film approaches foley, *Polonia*'s musical score is used in both a 'traditional' cinematic sense, that is, to set a mood and heighten an audience's emotional

response – as well as symbolically, or to capture the feeling of a particular geographical location and era in the historical world. Garth van der Merwe composed most of the film's original score, which fulfills the film's affective function. Two exceptions to this are the song that plays over the opening scene's aerial pan of Vitagena and the song that accompanies the *faux* 'credit sequence' at the start of the film's USA segment. The songs are a pastiche of a mid-80's pop and rock music, locating these scenes amidst the optimism and bravado of the Reagan era.

Concomitant with the film's archival foley elements, *Polonia* also uses several historical songs, sourced from the Public Domain.

3.3 Production Phase 2, May 2017 – February 2020

3.3.1 Extended Stay in Poland and Visit to Bad Soden

In May 2017 I was given the opportunity to stay with a Wits research group for one month in the city of Szczecin, near Poland's border with Germany. Though the purpose of this trip wasn't directly related to my PhD research project, my extended stay in Poland gave me the opportunity to collect a wealth of reference material for my film through photographs and video footage. I was again able to visit Lubin, this time equipped with a higher quality camera, and document those locations that were relevant to the film's narrative. The trip to Lubin afforded me the opportunity to photograph the interior of the train, a slightly updated model of the ones used in the 1980s, that later served as material for the scene in which my family is depicted travelling by night from Poland to West Germany. I was also able to photograph several items at various museums. The Szczecin Transportation Museum had a number of cars from the era of the Polish People's Republic, as well as an actual T-72 tank, still with its distinctive white lettering stenciled on its side. The National Museum in Szczecin (Centre of Dialogue Upheavals) has a permanent exhibition documenting the city's history from the outbreak of WWII to the end of Poland's communist era and houses several interesting displays, including a large number of Solidarity leaflets, badges and documents; several surveillance devices used by the communist State to monitor its citizens and weed out any potential subversive activity; as well as a rather menacing - and eerily neon-lit – mannequin dressed in full riot gear, complete with shield and gas mask. Many of these items found their way into the film as archival material or served as reference for original art.

The most valuable part of my stay was a weekend journey across Germany to Bad Soden Salmünster. Disembarking from the train and seeing the distinctive 'x'-shaped picket fences that

I had painted in Polonia's opening scene, walking through a town that I had been focusing on so intently for the past two years and that had such significance to my family history, was a surreal experience. I was there on a Sunday and the town was very quiet, though some friendly locals directed me to where the Vitagena spa had once been: a few kilometers from the town itself, by way of a short hike along a forest road. The former Vitagena – now renovated, with considerable extensions and re-christened the Salztal Klinik – stood overlooking a heavily forested landscape of rolling hills. Several other spas, clinics and rest homes surrounded it. To my delight, I found that the mini-golf course that had been spoken of at length in the interviews with my family and Piotrek was still there, directly across the road from the Klinik. I introduced myself to the owner of the golf course and showed her some photographs I had on my iPad, scanned from slides taken when my family was there in 1982. She seemed delighted by them, but unfortunately spoke no English, so I was not able to ask her if she had any information about the waves of Polish refugee groups that had invaded this idyllic place back in the early 80s. I spent several hours photographing and videoing every part of the Klinik's exterior and the locale around surrounding it, as well as the town of Bad Soden itself. This material and my experience of visiting there proved invaluable in building a more accurate picture of my family's stay as refugees in Germany and, together with the aforementioned slides and as some old postcards of the area that I found for sale on the internet, formed the basis for creating the 'German' portion of the film.

On my return trip from Bad Soden, I stopped for a short stay in Berlin. Though the city hardly features in *Polonia*'s narrative – there is a brief section near the film's end that references the fall of the Berlin Wall as a symbol for the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe – I found that reflecting on its centrality and significance in the history of the Cold War to be deeply inspiring and its atmosphere helped immerse me in the era that I was trying to depict. I was particularly struck by the stark aesthetic and tonal differences between the city's former Eastern and Western zones. The latter was vibrant and cosmopolitan, its architectural style reminiscent of other Western European metropolises, while the former was quieter, with a palpable stillness, the broad avenues and Modernist housing blocks reminiscent of other cities in the former Soviet Bloc.

3.3.2 Streamlining Production and Blocking Scenes

After my return from the Szczecin research trip, I travelled to Poland on a family holiday and again used the opportunity to photograph Lubin. I now had well over a hundred high resolution

photographs of the town that I could use as material for creating backgrounds, prompting me to adopt digitally manipulated photo-collage as my primary means of ‘building’ the remaining scenes that were set in Poland. This decision was prompted not only by the quality and amount of material that I now had available, but by the relative ease and speed that working with photographs over painting and drawing afforded me.

The photos I had taken in Lubin presented me with an interesting challenge: in the intervening years since the ending of the communist era, attempts have been made to transform Lubin’s mass-housing projects, which in the early 1980s were exemplars Eastern European “oppressive urban environments”, informed by a philosophy that “advocated the social-transformative role of architecture and its potential to foster the collective”, that resulted in “architectural and urban planning during the communist era [that] veered toward uniformity” (Rogoff, 2021:98).
In the early 1980s, the part of Lubin where my family lived had been populated by drab, grey concrete 'block’s, erected in giant beehive-like arrangements, surrounded by large areas of sandy earth with patches of grass. The renewal of the area in the post-communist era had, to some extent, been successful: the buildings have been repaired and renovated and, while their interiors hallways and elevators remain aesthetically much as I remember them to have been from previous visits in 1989 and 1992, the exteriors have been painted in various saturated pastel hues, creating a friendlier – if slightly kitsch – appearance. The area has also been ‘greened’ with well-kept lawns and trees further softening its former severity. These changes resulted in my having to ‘re-age' these buildings in the photos I took on my visits to Lubin in 2015 and 2017, returning them to the bleakness of the Communist era.



FIGURE 3.9. A side-by-side comparison of the same location in Lubin, 1982 (left) and in 2017 (right).

This change in technique and materials in creating backgrounds was part of a broader reassessment of the creative process involved. Having spent almost a full two years in production, I had less than ten minutes of completed footage and was still working on the part of the narrative set in Poland. It was apparent that I needed to find ways to streamline my production methods. The archival slides and new photos and footage that I had of Bad Soden allowed me to 'bloc', or map out, the portion of the film set in Germany. This method of blocking made it easier to get a sense of the form and direction that the film would take visually in relation to the structure set by the edited audio interviews. It was also a quicker method than storyboarding and aligned with the shift towards a more photo-based aesthetic approach. I wanted to extend this blocking method to the portion of the film set in the USA but was hesitant to lean too heavily on the archival material I had available from that time period, which was primarily photographic and mostly comprised of a repeated motif of family members positioned in the foreground against the backdrop of various locales. A solution to this problem came in the form of my discovery of the 'Documerica' photo archive. Commissioned by the American Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Documerica project ran from 1971-1978 and its purpose was to photographically document the effects of pollution, land development and urban decay across the United States during that decade (Simmons 2009). Utilising the talents of many seasoned professional photographers, the project amassed a vast archive of photographs that not only fulfilled the mandate to document environmental degradation but provided a detailed portrait of life across the United States, both environmentally and socially, in both urban and rural areas, during the 1970s. The archive currently sits in the Public Domain and each image can be downloaded at a very high resolution for both personal and commercial use. Scouring these images, I realised the potential they held for creating a period-appropriate portrait of the American urban and rural landscape in the early-to-mid 1980s, the period in which the American portion of *Polonia*'s narrative is set. Many images from this archive found their way into the final cut of *Polonia* both in whole or in part, as backgrounds and as elements within digitally-collaged compositions. They not only provided the correct tonal and textural qualities for that era but helped to both block those scenes set in the USA, as well as cut down on production time. The blocking of scenes was then completed for the final portion of the film, set in Poland in 1989, which shows the collapse of communism in Poland, East Germany and other countries and satellite states in the Soviet Bloc, using images sourced both from visits to Poland and Berlin, as well as various Public Domain images, sourced primarily from the Wikimedia photo archive.

3.3.3 Changing Aesthetics

This production method of using photography as a blocking device not only aided me in creating a visual framework for the remaining parts of the narrative, but also pointed towards a shift in aesthetic for the parts of the film that were set outside Poland. As with the final Polish scenes, digitally-manipulated photo-collage became the primary method of building the cinematic world in which the remainder of the film was set. A decision was also taken to shift the film's colour palette. The first part of *Polonia* is dominated by greys, blues and beiges, indicative of the colourless world which many perceived the Eastern Bloc to be. I wanted the parts of the narrative that followed the two families' emigration to the West to strongly contrast this grey world with saturated and varied colours. This contrast may lean towards trope, but nonetheless it represents the actual experiences of my film's protagonists. In the interviews I conducted, there were repeated mentions of not only the marked change in lifestyle that awaited those arriving in West Germany, the freedom of movement and material comforts (particular mention was made of the quality, amount and variety of food that was now available to them) but also the striking visual differences between the East and the West. My brother Ziemek made specific reference to how "grey and dour" Poland had been and that his impression of entering Germany was like that of "a lid being lifted off a kaleidoscope", full of colour (see Appendix C). When I mentioned this to Piotrek Strzelec in my interview with him, he corroborated it:

> Yes – *the stores* – mainly, it was the stores. It was an unbelievable experience. Colour, everywhere. Coca Cola, all the different coloured sodas – orange, green, all different kinds... Packaging, adverts – oh dear – magazines! It all had such an influence on us. Everything became so colourful. Poland was so grey. Maybe we see it that way now because we look it through black and white photographs, but that's not necessarily the case. It *was* grey. Those neglected cement buildings...Who had any ambition to make it beautiful? What for? Only the churches were beautiful, but apart from that, life was grey. Maybe the posters were colourful. But what was on those posters, maybe one didn't even want to look at it... (see Appendix E)

The archival materials that I had available to work with in constructing *Polonia* provided further proof of this. Almost all the materials from Poland reflected this: the paper of official documents was beige and printed material – including children's books – had a dull quality to them, likely the result of both inferior inks and substrates. Most photographs were black and white (though

there were some brighter-coloured slides and photographs). By contrast, those materials that I had from Germany - colour slides (and the bright red cardboard box they came in) and a set of postcards of Vitagena and Bad Soden postcards were much brighter. The printing was done on better quality card and with thicker, more opaque ink. The handful of family Polaroid photographs I have from Vitagena were taken with the camera we purchased there, which is still in my possession. Even this cheap, plastic relic of the 1980s has a cleanness and modernity to its design that is lacking in the items we kept from our days in Poland and its textured beige surface is punctuated with a multicoloured rainbow spectrum motif that was ubiquitous in early 1980s commercial design.

The depiction of Germany in *Polonia* was constructed from both the photographs taken during my trip to Bad Soden in April, 2017, with their dominant blue skies, green trees and fields, and these cleaner, brighter archival materials. To further contrast the shift from communist East to capitalist West, this portion of the film relied less on depictions of perspectival space, using instead printed matter as a means to create a world that spoke of luxury, variety, and recreation. To achieve this and to supplement the genuine archival materials I had available, I recreated several print adverts and 'props' (such as a Pepsi can) from that time period. To keep this visual treatment consistent, most of the cinematic space (this term will be unpacked in detail in Chapter 4) of the animation backgrounds was framed as existing within the printed archival matter. An example of this can be seen in the depiction of various episodes during the stay in Vitagena, as recounted by my brother Dobek and Piotrek Strzelec. Each episode is framed discreetly within the picture matrix provided by an archival postcard of Vitagena, which has been digitally altered so that each of its picture windows reveals a separate animated scene. As each episode is recounted, the viewer is 'inserted' into each of these picture windows, then withdrawn, through the movement of the virtual camera. The postcard used as the framing device is shown in its original form earlier in the film, at the point where the Polish families first arrive in Bad Soden.



FIGURE 3.10. The original Kurheim Vitagena postcard (left) and its modified version (right), providing a matrix of windows, each containing an animated scene of an episode from the narrators' recollections of their time at the spa.

3.3.4 America

I had originally intended to have the portion of the film that covers the stay of both families in the USA to be much longer and more detailed. From my interviews, I had a wealth of material covering their time in the US and wanted to use it to contrast the hope and idealism they felt when leaving Poland with the realities of being a refugee, far from their country of birth and their friends, relatives and communities. However, having at this stage already been in production on the film for several years, I realised that including a detailed exploration of the period in the US would be impossible, given how much work would be involved in realising this and how it would further extend the already ample production time that the project had consumed. I chose instead to provide a brief glimpse into that period, creating an impressionistic picture of some of the complexities that each family faced and, in the case of my own family, focusing on the circumstances that led to my parents' decision to emigrate from the US to South Africa. To facilitate this, I used a condensed visual shorthand. Both families' arrival in the USA is framed anticlimactically, beginning with high hopes, followed by disappointment. In the case of the Strzelec family, Piotrek's description of his family's fixation on and fantasies surrounding a postcard of Salt Lake City received from a friend years prior formed the perfect narrative framing device to encapsulate his family's initial disenchantment with their new home, though much of this was communicated through Piotrek's narration and was not made explicit on screen. My family's similar experience of hope and disappointment was depicted more iconographically, using a cartography, so as to condense space and time and reminiscent of the animated maps used in Disney's 1940s *Why We Fight* series. The family is shown setting out on its journey full of optimism, marching to the heroic strains of the US Navy's *Anchors Aweigh*, the Iron Curtain

receding behind them, only for the sequence to end on a dejected note, under a literal rain cloud, representing both the weather that is endemic to the Pacific Northwest and my family's dashed hopes of building a stable and prosperous life there.

These sequences are followed by the 'proper' opening to the USA chapter of *Polonia,* a *faux* title sequence closely modelled on the opening credits of the 1980s sitcom, *Dallas*. The show was hugely popular in its time, running for a total of fourteen seasons, from 1978 to 1991, airing in the 'prime time' slot on CBS. According to its creator, David Jacobs, the show "transcended entertainment and became a worldwide sociological phenomenon...if not a symbol of the 80s, at least a singular expression of it" (Jacobs, 1990). Jacobs is no doubt referring to 'the '80s' as they were experienced by the freer, more materially prosperous capitalist societies of the West, precisely the reason I adapted its iconography as a symbol of both how the USA projected itself outwards into the world and how many in the world perceived it during that era. The decision to use an allusion to a popular television show as an introduction to and encapsulation of my brother Ziemek's (and both families') experiences in the US was initially prompted by something he had said in his interview:

> We had American films, 'The Streets of San Francisco' and 'Kojak' and things like that, but I didn't connect that to the fact that America was a country that actually existed. It was more like some kind of mystical place or something from television rather than being a real country. So, when we heard that we going to the States, I realised that it was real, and one could get there in some way (see Appendix C).



FIGURE 3.11. *Polonia*'s 'USA' title sequence (left) is modelled on the opening credits of 1980s television sitcom *Dallas* (right).

The Reaganist visuals in the title sequence are accompanied by an 80's-style hard rock song written and performed by myself, sound designers Garth van der Merwe and Garrick van der Tuin and Ian Finch. To recreate the 'Dallas' sequence, images from the Documerica photo archive were used. The first few images depict scenes of prosperity in the form of an aerial view of Washinton DC, construction equipment gleaming in the sunlight and a golden field of wheat. These soon give way to images of pollution, traffic congestion and inner city 'project' housing and the sequence ends with sudden jolt on a shot of a street in Brooklyn, New York City, with Manhattan Bridge in the background. The shot depicts the antithesis of the 'American Dream' and the projection of the USA as a land of prosperity, as depicted in the *Dallas* title sequence. This image mirrors a different view of the same bridge from an earlier scene in the film, a 1936 black and white photograph taken in Manhattan, with the bridge in the distance, when Piotrek Strzelec was describing the 'naïve optimism' with which the refugee Poles in Bad Soden were awaiting their new lives in the US.



FIGURE 3.12. A side-by-side comparison of the two images of the Manhattan Bridge used in *Polonia.* The image on the left is of Pike and Henry Streets in Manhattan, 1936. The second, on the right, is from 1974, Brooklyn.

3.3.5 Typography

A recurring visual motif throughout *Polonia* is the prominent display of type. Apart from the content of the on-screen text, the information it conveys via written language, the formal qualities of the various typefaces in terms of shape, colour and texture help to situate the narrative within a given era and various geographic locations. The typewriter lettering on heavily textured tan paper used for Poland's communist-era official documents, in the form of arrest warrants and a prison release form, speaks to the oppressive nature and the banal evil of State

bureaucracy. In the Vitagena sequences, the typography changes dramatically with the film's expanded colour palette and the variety of ostentatious letterforms – signifying not only the attractions of previously-inaccessible commercial goods, but more broadly the greater options and possibilities of a freer society. Once the families leave Poland and take on the status of refugees, their lives are further defined by various official documents, the form of passports, identification documents, official notices. While more diverse in their visual design, they mirror the same impersonal, faceless bureaucratic powers that have power over individuals' lives, granting or limiting movement, employment and civil rights.



FIGURE 3.13. Examples of typography found on archival materials that were used throughout the film, signifying the different phases of the protagonists' journey.

Most of Polonia's typography was collected from archival sources, scanned from various documents and printed matter in mine and Piotrek Strzelec families' possession. Some of it was manufactured, designed to convey various layers of meaning. As with some of the film's iconography, the specific meaning behind certain design choices may be too opaque for viewers to decipher, but contributes to a sequence's overall tone and *gestalt*. For instance, the design of the 'Salt Lake 1986' text that appears over the image of Piotrek and his father driving in the desert during the film's American segment is based on a car decal that appears on the cover of *Heartbeat* City, the second album by New Wave band The Cars. The style of lettering is both a reference to Piotrek's tenure in a New Wave high school band – something that is never explicitly stated in the film – as well as the family's proud ownership of a *second* car, a

Chevrolet Camaro, signifying a certain degree of material prosperity and stability in their adopted country.



FIGURE 3.14. The ‘Salt Lake 1986’ title in the American segment of Polonia (top), makes reference to a Piotrek Strzelec’s affinity for New Wave pop music and his family’s Chevrolet Camaro. The title is modelled after the ‘340 WEDGE’ decal (bottom right), featured on the hood of the Camaro on the cover of New Wave band The Cars’ album *Heartbeat City* (bottom left).

On-screen text takes on additional significance in *Polonia*, as the film’s audio narration is in Polish, while the film is intended for international audiences. Due to the speed with which Polish is often spoken, to facilitate ease of reading, the language needed to be simplified and summarised in the subtitles, without losing the overall spirit and nuance of expression. Nonetheless, the density of the spoken narration means that much of the film is annotated with voluminous subtitles, potentially distracting non-Polish speakers from an appreciation and analysis of the film’s imagery. Limited character action and a generally slow and gentle camera movement were used to try and facilitate a balance between the reading of subtitles and

following on-screen action, but had to be balanced with what needed to overall be a fairly brisk pace. Where on-screen text appears in written English, it seems that it would provide some relief from the need to constantly read the small text of the subtitles and an opportunity was missed in not integrating on-screen text more dynamically into the mise-èn-scene.

An example of how this might be done can be seen in the animated feature, *Into the Spiderverse* (2018). In a scene where the protagonist, Miles Morales, first begin to experience newly-acquired superpowers that heighten his senses, the character's internal monologue is visualised on-screen via a series of animated captions. Reminiscent of comic book panels, they are stylistically in keeping with the film's integration of a comic-book aesthetic into a 3D animated cinematic space. A similar tactic could have been used in parts of *Polonia* to support the film's dual-language design, integrating image and text more graphically, so as to alleviate some of the cognitive load on viewers that are non-Polish speakers.

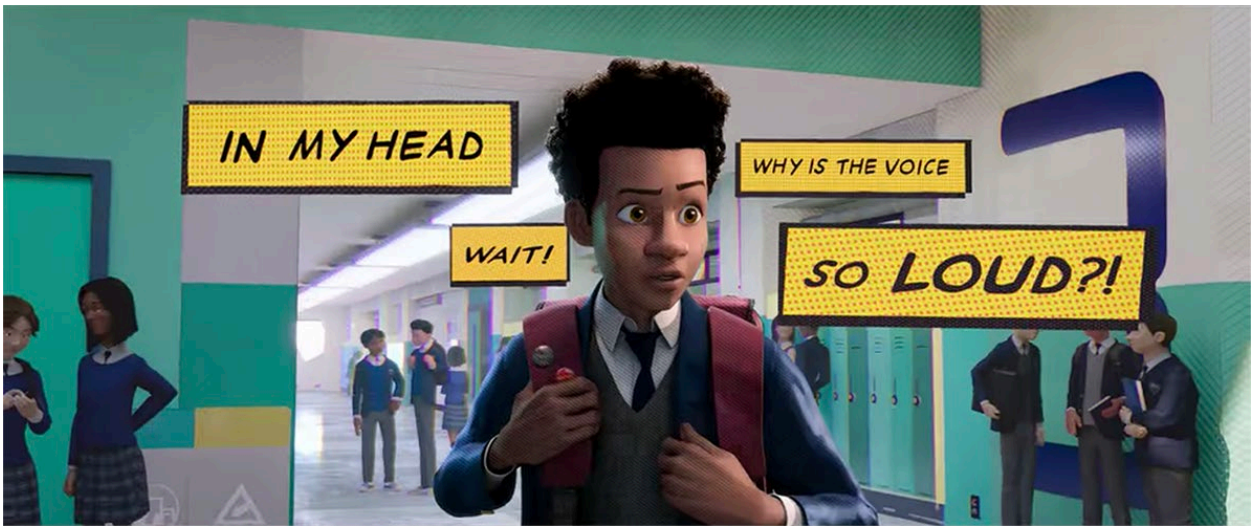


FIGURE 3.15. On-screen text is used to visualise Miles Morales' internal monologue in *Into the Spiderverse* (2018), utilising the mechanism from its comic book source.

3.4 Production Phase 3, March 2020 – July 2021

The final stage of *Polonia*'s production began when – due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 global pandemic – a three-week national lockdown was declared in South Africa from 26 March 2020. Despite the seriousness of the situation, I experienced the period of lockdown as a highly productive time. As the initial three-week lockdown was extended into successive months, and partly freed from professional work commitments (at least in the initial few weeks), I was able to

focus almost entirely on creative work, with a consistency and focus that it had been difficult to maintain prior. I was able to return to creating scenes that were more ambitious in their scope and level of detail, such as the train journey through East Germany, the pool and restaurant scenes in Vitagena and the Vitagena bus. My drawing became more confident, looser and more expressive, facilitating a higher output of 2D animation.

As the film drew near the end of its production period – almost six years since its inception – I allowed a spirit of free-association to guide some of my design choices, drawing on references that may have seemed tangential but were informed by my current interests. One of these was the sequence that covers the experiences of Piotrek Strzelec and his family in the USA. As noted, the entire American segment of the film was truncated, as engaging with it in a more comprehensive way would have entailed an untenable extension of an already long production period. Opting for an impressionistic summary of the Strzelec family's experiences in Utah, I drew inspiration from the early-to-mid-20th century cartoon strip *Krazy Kat*, by George Herriman. Years ago, seeing an original *Krazy Kat* strip at the Pompidou Centre in Paris had left a deep impression on me and my rededication to drawing during the extended lockdown period was partly driven by a renewed interest in cartooning and comic art, leading me to see the potential of refencing Herriman's work in my film. The format of a panel-based comic strip spoke to the sequential nature of animation and also allowed for a conflation of geographic elements. The Strzelec's move to Salt Lake City, Piotrek Strzelec's references to America as the Wild West and Utah location for the filming of many of John Ford's films were all elements that aligned with *Krazy Kat*'s Monument Valley-inspired setting (Whitney).

Placing Piotrek and his family in a cartoon-strip setting removes them from the internal cogency of the established rules of their cinematic depiction, signaling an even less 'realist', mythic rendering of the family. This reading is substantiated when, in the next shot, an aerial view of the family's home (a digitally painted-over Google Earth image) contrasts the one depicted in the cartoon-strip landscape.

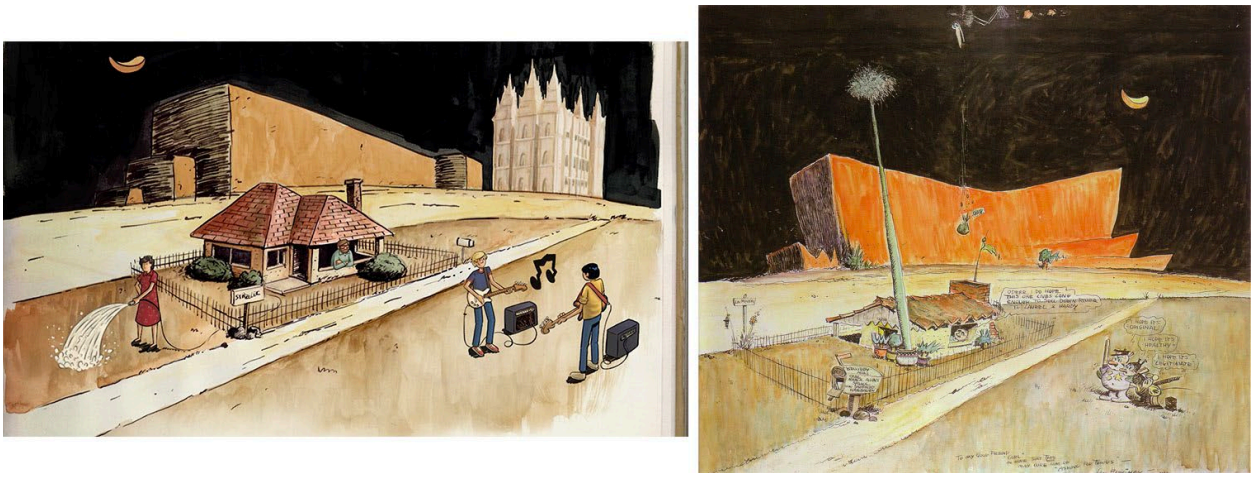


FIGURE 3.16. A comparison of the cartoon-strip-style rendering of the Strzelec family in their new home in Utah (left) with the inspiration for the image, George Herriman's Krzy Kat cartoon, its setting inspired by the Utah-adjacent Monument Valley landscapes.

Many of the production's final months were taken up with completing the film's soundtrack. I discovered that *Utah, We Love Thee*, the state's former anthem, was in the Public Domain and seemed a fitting accompaniment to the conclusion of the Strzelec family's odyssey and Garrick van der Tuin and I recorded a version of the song. Sound design post production and audio mixing were completed in July 2021.

Chapter 4

Constructedness, Spatial Dynamics, Minimalism, Fantasy, and Actuality in *Polonia*

The making of *Polonia* brought to light the issue that is central to all animated documentary: the tension between actuality and fantasy – the historical narrative upon which the film was based and my creative interventions as the film's maker in giving that narrative a form. The resolution to this tension that emerged from this creative practice was the conception of the film as a construct, comprised of physical, digital, visual and auditory processes, a structure that both *held* and was *constructed in response to* the film's narrative. This conception of the film aligned with the strand of theory that considers the self-reflexive foregrounding of constructedness as the authenticating factor granting animation documentary veracity. It also allowed me to consider the film I had created in material terms, as a *spatial construct*, where space is used to represent different orders of materials (indexical, archival and those wholly manufactured for the film) and to maintain an awareness in the viewer of the 'seams' of the film's construction, through the juxtaposition of *archival* and *cinematic* space and through the subversive insertion of 'fake' archival materials. *Polonia* also revealed that animated characters serve a unique function in a documentary context, distinct from that seen in purely fictional animated films. Their role as 'avatars', dependent on the audience's ability to connect them to real-world referents in order for them to be perceived as having interiority and significance, supports the understanding that animation can only claim documentary credibility when it acts in service of historical narrative, forever pointing back to the reality it represents and interprets.

4.1 Realism and Constructedness

Every animated documentary, irrespective of subject matter, must address the tension between fantasy and actuality, the wholly constructed and the real, that is at the heart of the subgenre. Despite a history of nonfiction animated film production spanning over one-hundred years and with twenty-five years of academic discourse on the sub-genre, it sustains a certain productive tension. Photography and live action footage, in their capacity to act both as index and icon of the physical world and phenomena that occur within it, have long held a dominant status as the media most capable of documenting reality. Since the 1970s, the accuracy of this claim has been repeatedly questioned and legitimate arguments have been made regarding how the truth-claims of the photographic image are compromised both through the subjectivity, fallibility and

the agendas of those that capture these images, as well as addressing the technical limitations of the medium itself in accurately representing reality (Ehrlich 2021:38, Honess Roe 2013:32). I would argue that while many of the accusations levelled against photography and live action are valid, the indexicality of the photographic medium still affords us the most immediate representation of the real, as pertaining to print and screen-based platforms. To use a powerful example, when New York's Twin Towers fell on September 11, 2001, audiences around the world watched in horror as these events unfolded. As a young student at a media college in Cape Town, I was working in my studio when I heard on the radio, erroneously as it transpired, that the Empire State Building had been attacked. Curious to know more, I went down to the editing suites, where there was a television with a live news feed from New York, showing one of the towers billowing smoke. As the news anchor spoke, behind him in the distance could be seen a small object travelling across the sky and soon the second tower exploded. It was surreal and horrifying to witness a catastrophe of this magnitude unfolding in real-time, with such immediacy. This was *happening*. In the moment of witnessing an event such as this, subjective interpretation is overwhelmed and silenced, leaving only the reality of the phenomenon itself, bare and real. When it comes to things which are important to us, catastrophic events, memories we wish to preserve, snapshots from deep space transmitted to us by the Hubble Telescope, I would argue that there is an urge to find images that show us these phenomena to be as close to reality as possible.

This is not to say that we do not live in perverse times. Nea Ehrlich's argument in *Animating Truth* is that we now inhabit a post-truth world, defined by fake news, extreme and entrenched political and cultural positions and 'truthiness' – "the quality of preferring concepts or facts one wishes to be true, rather than concepts or facts known to be true" (Mirriam-Webster quoted in Ehrlich 2021:29). To return to the example of the attack on the Twin Towers in New York on 9/11, in the wake of that tragic event numerous conspiracy theories sprung up. It is irrefutable that the towers fell, but, more than twenty years after the event, *how* and *why* they fell seem for some to still be points of contention. One popular theory claims that the towers collapsed due to planned detonations, rather than the impact of the planes (Spišak and Takács, 2021), or that no Jewish people were killed in the attacks (a claim that has been falsified), the basis for a theory claiming that the Israeli government staged the attacks in order to goad the US government into attacking that state's regional enemies (Sardarizadeh, 2021). Conspiracy theories are not a new phenomenon, but their apparent increased proliferation in recent years points to an increasing mistrust in information emanating from 'official' news sources, such as government agencies

and corporate and state-run news networks. This atmosphere of mistrust is currently manifest in the widespread debates around the origins of the Covid-19 virus, governments' responses to curbing its spread, and the efficacy of the vaccines created to combat it (Spišak and Takács 2021; Akther and Nur 2022).

Compounding these attitudes of wariness and distrust is the awareness that the images we see on screens, presented as evidentiary, may be unreliable. The existence of ever-more photorealistic CGI, advanced compositing software, the ability to seamlessly alter digital images and newer phenomena like DeepFakes have emerged as powerful tools for manipulating audience perceptions of what is real and what is not (Sample 2020). While photography and live-action footage remain the *de facto* televisual media for representing the historical world, these emergent technologies, coupled with the public's mistrust of media, has led to a greater skepticism of the photographic image, what Ehrlich refers to as "an ontological anxiety about the loss of the real through the loss of indexicality" (Ehrlich 2021:29). This has been mirrored by an increased acceptance and popularity of animation as a documentary and non-fiction medium (Ehrlich, 2021:28-30). In Ehrlich's view, the two phenomena are related, where, while images that look photoreal are treated with suspicion, those that fall under the category of what she terms 'precarious aesthetics', that is, low resolution or blurred images, are perceived as being more authentic (2021:38). Ehrlich proposes that if such images are seen as existing along "a continuum between photorealism and the abstract", their acceptance by the public means that non-mimetic images – including animation – are now considered more credible (2021:39). Ehrlich proposes that animation currently occupies a unique ontological position as a medium for representing reality, a position that is by no means permanent or fixed, but one that has grown out of the unique point we find ourselves in our current media landscape:

> ...animated documentaries are masked, self-reflexive documentary aesthetics that both hide and expose information, and foreground issues of truth verification versus disinformation, and thus they act as a perfect form of representation for the zeitgeist (2021:201)

This follows from Ehrlich's contention that 'realism' is a pluralistic term: a 'believable articulation of the real' that can, in her view, refer both to "a close approximation of...the world exterior to representation" and to that which meets the standards of what has already been deemed 'realistic' (such as certain kinds of cinematography) (2021:201). In her view, what is considered

to be realistic is contingent upon direct perception, technology and ideology, therefore "realistic representation must always be in flux" (2021:201). Based on this view, the framing of realism as the basis for documentary truth-claims in terms of *familiarity* and *defamiliarisation* become central to Ehrlich's argument for the validity of animation as a documentary medium (2021:204-2012). In her view, the 'familiar' carries negative associations, in the sense that this implies a passive, uncritical reception of content, while 'defamilarisation' becomes a means of encouraging critical engagement with media (2021). This framework offers a more nuanced analysis of how animation functions within a nonfiction context by distinguishing different ways in which nonfiction animated content is both produced and consumed. Ehrlich champions reflexive, non-photorealistic animation as a medium for potential defamiliarisation in a nonfiction and documentary context, creating "multi-layered representations that require active engagement and viewer interpretation" (Ehrlich, 2021:202). However, she also cautions against careless, superficial applications of nonfiction animation that merely illustrate the content of the soundtrack, as potentially undermining the veracity and effectiveness of the sub-genre:

> ...many documentaries now use animation, but not necessarily in ways that explore what the aesthetics can contribute, or what layers of meaning they might add...With the growing visibility of animation in non-fiction, this may be creating uncritical spectatorship...viewers are becoming desensitised to the multi-layered possibilities of complex visual information transferal through animated representations that offer no additional meaning of their own (2021:205).

Ehrlich questions whether this desensitisation, coupled with the sheer volume of animated content that is now available for consumption and the familiarity with the medium that this engenders, may ultimately render animation "invisible" (2021:205) and thereby compound the problems of information communication and reception in a 'post-truth' era. This leads back to the importance of the reflexive foregrounding of constructedness in animated documentary aesthetics, concomitant with the subgenre's perennial tension between fantasy and actuality. Reflexivity has been considered to be at the core of an ontology of animated documentary since the earliest attempts by scholars to resolve the contradiction inherent to a subgenre that tries to represent phenomena in the real world accurately and truthfully without being indexical. However, the notion of what reads as reflexive is in constant flux. In 1998, Paul Wells claimed that all animation was inherently reflexive, by virtue of its apparent constructedness (Wells, 1998:24-25). In 2001, Lev Manovich heralded the arrival of digital cinema and the resultant

plasticity of the live action image resulting, in his view, in live action having become another form of animation (Manovich 2001:300). Steve Fore pointed out in 2007 that there was an increased breakdown between the categories of 'live action' and 'animation', owing to the growing photorealism of CGI animation, destabilising Wells' claim of animations' inherent reflexivity (2007:124). While Fore went on to note that CGI animation at that time still hadn't managed to achieve perfect verisimilitude, particularly in its rendering of human characters, compromised as they were by the 'uncanny valley' effect, subsequent advances in photoreal CGI animation, coupled with the emergence of DeepFakes, have further blurred the boundaries between the indexical live action images and constructed ones even further (For 2007a; Ehrlich 2021). The media landscape that Ehrlich describes suggests a polarisation not only of the indexical and the constructed, but of the photoreal and the non-mimetic. In her view, the blurring of boundaries precipitated by digital media has led audiences to assess content as more or less trustworthy not in terms of medium, but aesthetics (2021:38). Both photorealism and animation hyperrealism (as defined by Wells) hide their constructedness and are each in their own way unsuited to documentary representation. Photorealism, by seamlessly blurring the distinction between the real and the fabricated, denies viewers the choice to make up their minds about what is true and what is false. Hyperreal animation, meanwhile, fosters uncritical spectatorship by lulling its audience into a comfortable acceptance of the 'familiar'.

Hannah Frank, in discussing the differences between the indexical photographic image and what she refers to (after Sergei Eisenstein) as the 'phantasmagoric' animated image, compares animation to painting (after Staley Cavell) thus:

> The frame of a painting is centripetal, pulling us inward, toward a world found only within its borders; the photograph, by contrast, is centrifugal, pushing us outward, beyond its bounds: a window. Thus live-action cinema offers us one thing, a view of the world, and cel animation offers us something different, *a* world governed by a physics all its own, a plasmatic and limitless world where bodies never bruise and anvils are always falling from the sky (2021:49).

The notion of centripetal and centrifugal forces is a useful one, creating a vivid schematic of two diametrically opposing tendencies. What Frank refers to as the 'phantasmagoric' can be substituted here for 'hyperreal', where both are understood to refer to a self-contained world that does not acknowledge its own constructedness. Animation that is reflexive belongs to a different

category, one that knowingly reveals the seams of its construction, reminds the viewer not to confuse it with reality and, in doing so, points back to the distinction between the real and its alternatives. When animation is reflexive, these centripetal and centrifugal forces do not act in opposition, but in tandem with one another, where we are pulled into the world of the animation, only to be pushed back out by it towards the real. To illustrate this point, it may be useful to again compare *Persepolis* and *Waltz with Bashir,* two films that apply animation to nonfiction narratives in distinct ways. *Persepolis* creates an aesthetically self-contained, hyperreal world that only 'points' to the external world, beyond its representation, through its narrative. We hear Marjane narrate her story, one that takes place in the historical world, the facts of which can be verified or disproven through further research and gathering of evidence. The film's visual representation of the narrative is based on that historical world, but is hyperreal in the sense that, save for one sequence that adds colour to the film's otherwise unform greyscale palette (which in itself is an established cinematic trope) never draws attention to itself *as animation*. The film has both centripetal and centrifugal forces – we are drawn into the cartoon world of the film and it then directs us back to the historical world – but in this case, these forces are 'weak'. By contrast, *Waltz with Bashir*'s centripetal and centrifugal dynamic is much stronger: we are pulled into its animated world, but the film's more overt documentary format, structured around a series of interviews and conversations between the filmmaker and various friends, old army acquaintances and a reporter – remind us that this animated world is not self-contained, but is a simulacrum of the real world. Moreover, the film is built around the premise of Folman trying to uncover lost memories. This journey is enacted through the animation, so when Folman's psychologist friend explains to him the way in which memories are subjective and fallible, we can understand this as an aspect of the film's self-reflexivity. Finally, the live action scenes at the film's end centrifugally, and violently, eject the viewer back into reality.

In reframing realism as dependent on a questioning, critical viewer engagement over the passive acceptance of the familiar, truth claims based on fidelity and an indexical link to a referent, Ehrlich argues for reflexive nonfiction animation as the ideal medium for engaging with 'the real' in this present historical moment and media landscape:

> Since realism is so intertwined with ideas of transparency, opacity and therefore also deceit, it may be animation's overt constructedness that it more rather than less realistic...animation's unique and endless visual potential affords it the ability to

destabilise existing conventions and expectations, if used imaginatively (2021:206-7).

Animation offers a wealth of expressive potential in representing the historical world, but it must prove itself worthy and reliable every time it does so. Chapter 3 touched on some aspects of how *Polonia* engages with historical narrative through its visual design, sound design and iconography. This chapter will explore in detail the ways in which *Polonia* foregrounds its constructedness through an analysis of its use of materials, visualisation of space and performance. In undertaking this analysis, the intention is to explore how the film, as the practical outcome of a rigorous creative process, highlights various approaches, strategies and experiments that can contribute to a greater understanding of the various ways in which animation can meaningfully serve as a documentary medium.

4.2 Materiality, Reconstruction, and Construction

The making of *Polonia* was informed by three goals: a) to explore a period of time and a series of events of which I had little recollection, but that had a profound impact on my family; b) through the uncovering of those personal narratives to document a period of geopolitical history and c) as a filmmaker and animator, to experiment with form and process in conveying this narrative by giving it a material form.

Materiality and constructedness underpin every aspect of *Polonia* and the process of making it can be interpreted as a dynamic between *reconstruction* and *construction.* 'Reconstruction' refers to the rebuilding of something that is broken, making whole that which has been fragmented. It reflects the work of the surgeon, artisan or engineer, but also that of the historian and the detective, and in that sense calls to mind the gathering of evidence, conducting of interviews and quest to uncover disparate facts that can be woven together to form a narrative. The work of the documentarian mirrors this process. Bill Nichols' choice of referring to the real world as 'the historical world' suggests both that reality is always receding away from us, a wake trailing behind the awareness of the present moment, and the traces of which are always waiting to be uncovered and reconstituted into a facsimile of what was.

Personal narratives that deal with past events are often framed in terms of *memory* and are often perceived as unreliable, susceptible to omission, suggestion and change. Jan Fierlinger admits to the instability of his recollection of past events right at the beginning of his

biographical *Drawn from Memory* (Fierlinger, 1995). Similarly, Ari Folman, on a quest to uncover his lost memories in *Waltz with Bashir*, comes to the realisation that the memories of a single individual are neither stable nor conclusive. Victoria Walden sees memory as "a slippery thing...better understood as always in a state of becoming, as related to the present as much as the past, and as a creative, networked process rather than a simple transmission of data" (Walden 2019:82). In their Introduction to *Animation and Memory*, the authors state that memory is intrinsically less about remembering past events than creating a personal narrative, which goes beyond recollection and becomes a "performative practice mediated through various modes of recounting such as places, rituals, as well as a variety of textual, visual and other sensory media" (Gageldonk, Munteán, Shobeiri, 2020:1-2). Both they and Walden identify animation, a medium with vast expressive potential, as uniquely capable of representing the fluid and shifting nature of memory (2019,2020). Jonathan Murray contends that – apart from the fact that the shifts between present, past and fantasy in *Waltz with Bashir* would have been logistically difficult to execute in any other medium – the film's use of animation is "a vehicle designed to facilitate a much broader exploration of the nature of human memory per se" (Murray, 2019:177).

While memory was the foundational element in the creation of *Polonia*, it was not my own memory that was the driving factor in piecing together the film's narrative, but the memories of a group of five other individuals. In conducting the interviews that serve as the primary source for the film's narrative, the interviewees often expressed uncertainty about remembering certain events correctly, were unable to recall certain names and there were discrepancies between – and even conflicting accounts of – different individual's memories of the same events. A perfect case in point was the recollection of the train journey from Poland to West Germany. In his version of this episode, my father recalled some kind of plastic sheeting being pulled over the train when it reached the East German border, blocking any view of the outside world from within the train (see Appendix B). When I mentioned this in my later interview with my brother Dobek, he said he had no memory of that happening and instead gave a detailed account of how the border appeared, with high embankments on either side of the train, guard towers and barbed wire (see Appendix D). The fallibility of memory makes every interviewee a potentially unreliable narrator and at several points in the film I tried to draw attention to this, as when my brother Dobek contradicts the preceding account by my brother Ziemek, saying that they were not putting up fliers around Lubin as a form of protest, but rather painting on walls (see Appendix D).

Many details were corroborated independently by the interviewees who, to the best of my knowledge, did not discuss their interviews with one another (which I am certain of in the case of Piotrek Strzelec). The likelihood for group corroboration is further increased when a person far outside that group, in this case, Piotrek Strzelec, who had no contact with my family for decades before the interview, is included in that group. Of course, memories are not the only means of accessing the past and recollections can be corroborated though the supporting evidence of various archival materials, videos, photographs, documents, objects, letters and news articles, both from within family and public archives.

My experience of the process of piecing together these fragments of the past, through personal accounts and the gathering of tangible, substantiating evidence, can best be described as an act of 'reconstruction' and forms one half of the process that led to the making of my film. As noted, reconstruction denotes 'making something whole that was broken', but what is implicit in the term is that which has been reassembled will never quite match the original – seams and fissures may still be visible, with perhaps entire pieces of the whole still missing. In this sense, a reconstruction can also be understood as 'an accurate as possible' facsimile of the original. The second part of the creative process, 'construction', indicates the building of something new or adding to an existing thing. It has connotations of a systematic, structured approach. While the term seems to elide both spontaneity and organic growth, this was not true in the case of *Polonia*, as much of the film's creation was guided by intuition and even free-association (as described in the previous chapter). Nonetheless, throughout its making, there was the awareness that, as the film grew in scope, each completed element constituted another brick or seam added to a complex architectonic structure.

Both reconstruction and construction carry connotations of material and materiality and speak to physical processes of collecting, assembling, analysing, categorising, reconstituting and shaping materials. While the *film as historical narrative* and the *film as a constructed vehicle for that narrative* can be conceived of as being separate, they are, in fact, both occurring at once. It is neither the case that the visual elements of the film simply 'illustrate' the spoken narrative, nor that the narrative has an autonomous existence outside of the materiality of the film. While it is true that the individual accounts from which the film's narrative was constructed exist as memories in the minds of each of the interviewees, what the film presents are individual instances of those memories *materialised* as audio recordings, thereafter edited together to

create a single, new collective narrative. Memories become the material for a collective interpretation of past events. It is also worth stressing that while interviewees were granted access to the audio recordings from the interviews and were shown several cuts of the film during its production, all the creative decisions – selecting what material to leave in and what to leave out, the sequencing and structuring of the material (what to juxtapose, where to highlight synchronicities and parallels) and what other audio and visual elements to couple the various portions of the recorded interview with – were the work of a single author. The various documentary modes, as conceptualised by Nichols, cover a full spectrum of creative approaches to engaging with a subject, from those that stress narrative (the expository mode) to those with more overtly formalist concerns (the poetic mode). As Annabelle Honess Roe has pointed out, animated documentaries are usually created by animators (2013:2),[12] who interpret the world graphically and kinetically, and who would approach their subject matter with a formal bias. This approach is not unique to animators: there are many examples of live-action film directors with formalist preoccupations. One gets this sense from the formal experimentation of Jean-Luc Godard's 1960s films or the work of Wes Anderson. Michael Chabon likens Anderson's work to the boxed assemblages of artist Joseph Cornell, each one a world in miniature (Chabon in Seitz, 2013:22). Chabon comes to an interesting conclusion regarding Anderson's work: where the director has been critiqued for the overt artifice of his cinematic style, Chabon defends him by putting forth the same argument made by Nea Ehrlich and other theorists regarding animated documentary. Though Anderson is not a documentarian, the argument put forth by Chabon applies with equal resonance to all filmmaking:

> The things in Anderson's films that recall Cornell's boxes – the strict, steady, four-square construction of individual shots, by which the cinematic frame becomes a Cornellian gesture, a box drawn around the world of the film; the teeming, gridded, curio-cabinet sets at the heart of *Life Aquatic, Darjeeling*, and *Mr. Fox* – are often cited as evidence of his work's "artificiality", at times with the implication, simple-minded and profoundly mistaken, that a high degree of artifice is somehow inimical to seriousness, to honest emotion, to so-called authenticity. All movies, of course, are equally artificial: it's just that some are more honest about it than others. In this

[12] To this I would add the caveat that most *short* animated documentaries are made by animators and are often the works of a single author. Feature-length animated documentaries, while no doubt featuring the work of animators, may be conceived of and directed by people who are not themselves animators. Ari Folman is an example of someone who is not an animator, but who works in the medium of animation.

> important sense, the hand-built, model-kit artifice on display behind an Anderson box is a *guarantor* of authenticity; indeed I would argue that artifice, openly expressed, is the only true "authenticity" an artist can lay claim to (2013:23).

Polonia, too, is a constructed, highly regulated, miniature of the historical world, grounded in recorded interviews that serve both as the primary index to the real world outside the film, while comprising the human element within its construct. This engagement with living memory, aided by the forensic gathering and assembly of archival material, which was then supplemented, responded to and extrapolated through reflexive animation, constitutes the reconstruction and construction that were the process of *Polonia*'s creation – an iterative process of reconstituting the past and giving it new form, reflecting the tension between fantasy and actuality at the heart of all animated documentary.

4.3 A Taxonomy of Materials and Space

The dual processes of reconstruction and construction that drove the creation of *Polonia* are manifest in the film both as distinct aesthetics and as a spatial taxonomy. The first of these, *the archive*, is broadly representative of the process of reconstruction and is comprised of those elements that are directly imported from the historical world and are inherently indexical of it: official documents, family photographs, newspaper clippings, various objects, audio recordings of interviews and archival audio, including radio and television broadcasts and old music recordings. Taken together, they manifest as a distinct *archival space* within the film. The second category within the spatial taxonomy is *cinematic space*, representative of the process of construction. The elements that comprise this space include visual and audio elements that have been in part or wholly manufactured. Some of these materials carry an indexical link to the real world in that they are photographs of external locations, photographs of objects, scanned textures and so on. However, despite their indexical qualities, they are materials that were created as part of the film's production and hence the evidentiary properties of their indexicality are in the order of what Jacques Rivette referred to when saying that "every film is documentary of its own making" (Zoller Seitz, 2013:62-63). I have labeled this part of the film the cinematic space, as it functions in a way that is analogous to reenactment in a live action documentary and in some respects adheres both to the laws of perspective and continuity editing. This space is inhabited by the cartoon avatars of the narrators and other persons included in the narrative. Live action footage in *Polonia* belongs to either the film's archival or cinematic spaces, depending on its content.

I have delineated these two spaces as distinct categories because they help clarify the iterative process of reconstruction and construction that went into *Polonia's* making. They signify ontologically distinct layers or orders of representation of reality. However, they should not be considered as entirely separate from one another. For most of the film's duration, these two taxonomic orders – the indexical and the manufactured, the archival and cinematic spaces – blend to create hybrid forms and are nested inside one another, only occasionally represented as entirely distinct. Taken in totality they can be seen as a single, reflexive construct that represents and interprets a historical geopolitical narrative.

4.3.1 Archival space

As Aylish Wood has noted, space in cinema is often considered 'indirectly', not as a subject of attention in itself, but "representationally and expressively" (Wood, 2006:134). It is 'representative' in the way in which it locates action and creates continuity and 'expressive' in providing information important to character and plot, part of what Wood refers to as "the triadic relationship between character, space and action" (Wood, 2006:134-137). The archival space in *Polonia* exists primarily in order to present real-world 'evidence' that supports the documentary narrative and, in that regard, it fulfills an expressive function. In the same way that in the opening sequence of Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) the camera's slow movement through the *mise en scène* establishes James Stewart's character as a photographer and provides a backstory for his injury, so do the archival materials in *Polonia* provide information about both narrator and narrative.

The visual materials in the archival space comprise 'genuine' archival items in the form of printed matter such as documents, photographs, newspaper clippings books, as well as family heirlooms such as badges, my father's transistor radio and the coat he wore when arrested. By 'genuine' I mean items that have a direct connection to the time period in which the film's narrative takes place and were kept in our family's personal 'archive' from that time until the present. Other items that may be considered archival and that were included in the film were sourced from outside the family archive in the form of images and documents downloaded from the internet, items ordered online (specifically, a set of postcards of Vitagena and Bad Soden Salmünster from the early 1980s) or photographed in museums and at various other locations during my visits to Poland.

The archival ‘space’ refers both to the totality of archival materials present in the film and includes items like my father’s coat, that were shot in live action. It also refers environments constructed from and for archival materials photographed or scanned and digitally assembled into compositions. These compositions re-present the archival materials as objects within a simulated environment, existing temporally within the eternal present of the film. They include ‘props’ that assist in the ‘narrativisation’ of particular compositions or act as overt signifiers of the film’s constructedness. An example of the former category would be wooden background surfaces to signify tables, or the spy glass and ashtray seen in Fig. 35, framing the documents shown in the composition as a POV (Point-of-View) shot, as if they were being examined by an in-film off-screen presence, acting as both a proxy for the film’s creator and for the audience themselves (a form of self-figuration that will be discussed later in this chapter). The latter category, that is materials overtly drawing attention to the film’s constructedness, includes multiple instances of pencils, brushes and erasers comingling with ‘genuine’ archival materials. One short sequence in the film's latter half shows photographic slides from Vitagena arranged on a lightbox with an animation ‘pegbar’ (registration device) near the top of the frame – the very same lightbox on which most of the films 2D animated sequences were rendered.

An example of the ‘expressive’ function of the archival space in *Polonia,* where the images on screen both represent what the narrator is describing and add additional contextual information, can be seen when my father, Kazimierz Pater, speaks of the circumstances that led to his arrest. At the point where he makes reference to his position as the Vice Chairman of the Lubin Medical Workers Union, the viewer is presented with a wide shot of a tableau of printed matter. In this instance, the tableau serves both as a narrative device and as the portrait of an individual and is representative of one of the formats for presenting the archival material that is repeated throughout the film. We are presented with my father’s medical diploma, a photograph of him together with co-workers at his hospital, a photo of his wife, also a medical doctor, and beneath these, the documents for his arrest, all in top-down view, arranged on a background that alludes to the wooden surface of a table. The items clearly support and provide background material to his narration of his professional life. At the center of the composition is my father’s pocket atlas that – once animated in stop frame – will facilitate a direct transition to the next shot in the sequence. In the top right corner of the frame is a photo of Polish Siberian refugees, a reference to my father’s status as a *Sybirak*, forcibly transported with his entire family as child to Siberia when Russia invaded Poland at the start of the Second World War. His family spent six years in

a Gulag near Irkutsk and were only allowed to return to Poland a year after the war ended. These events are not covered in *Polonia* and the photograph's relevance to the film's narrative would be opaque for most viewers. The photograph is not from my family's personal archive, but was accessed from within the Public Domain, as my father possessed no documents or photographs from his childhood and rarely discussed that period of his life, even though those early childhood experiences were foundational to his character. This blending of material that is overtly evidentiary with that which is more difficult, perhaps even impossible, to decipher, establishes the archival space as a dense, layered reconstruction, comprised of both of material that points towards a cogent narrative, but also of the deeper, fainter, recesses of memory that cannot be accessed and of information that is intentionally withheld.



FIGURE 4.1. Documents related to Kazimierz Pater's profession as a medical doctor, his pocket atlas and a photograph of *Sybirak* refugees travelling to Persia in 1942 form an archival tableau that serve as a biographical portrait.

The inclusion of material that does not contribute to the film's narrative also speaks to the secondary function of the archival space, one which is *textural,* denoting both the aesthetic and tactile quality of surfaces and referring to the property that archival materials possess to evoke the tone of specific eras of history and geographic location. As physical objects, 'archival materials' are repositories of information both in their content and form. We may think of a typed memorandum as primarily a textual artefact containing written information, but its formal

qualities, in terms of the texture, colour, shape, weight and smell of the paper, tears and folds, the irregularities in the letterforms and the colour and opacity of the ink, all carry layers of evidence and meaning as to its age, its place of origin and how it was transported and kept. Taken in its totality, the letter becomes a capsule of a moment in time and place.

Hannah Frank, in *Frame by Frame: A Materialist Aesthetics of Animated Cartoons* (2019) documents an intensive process she undertook in studying thousands of archival cartoons, animated using the traditional method of inking and painting on celluloid, then shot frame by frame under a rostrum camera. Frank forensically examined these cartoons as historical documents, freezing each frame and examining it as a photograph, in isolation from its twenty-four frames per second continuity. Her book is a fascinating exploration of cartoons as indexical documents, containing the traces of the labour and processes that went into their creation. Her meticulous analysis of these individual frames demonstrates how animation can be read as content and form, both intrinsically and extrinsically:

> To look at animation as photography is to find the world that has been cropped out of frame. This is the Bazinian axiom of the "film as a window to the world". But it is also to find the world within the image, to study the windowpane as well as the view beyond it (Frank, 2019:72).

In a filmic context, as they are foregrounded and framed by the screen, archival materials often function as signifiers of meaning through their formal qualities as much as they do through their content. Printed matter is particularly potent in its formal and 'textural' properties when shot in extreme close-up. Here the grain and texture of the substrate, the organic irregularities of ink pressed into paper, all act as potent indices of physical processes that signify the world 'out there', beyond the screen. Frank's analysis often focuses on the incidental and the accidental details of the frames she examines. Wear and tear on a substrate, dust and scratches, all become weighted with significance when seen as evidence of physical processes and markers of the passage of time.

While these textural details add layers of meaning, an emphasis on the formal properties of archival materials, over their content, can result in an 'aestheticisation' of the archive. Here, the danger is that materials are not presented for their contextual significance to the case being made by the filmmaker, but only act as superficial signifiers of 'evidence', for cinematic effect.

As with many aspects of documentary production, the line between substance and spectacle can be a fine one. This tendency towards an aestheticisation of documents can be illustrated through a comparison of two films by Errol Morris: his 1988 film *The Thin Blue Line* and the 2017 Netflix docuseries, *Wormwood*. In *The Thin Blue Line*, Morris' re-examination of the murder case of a Dallas police officer was so compelling that it ultimately became a factor in the overturning of the sentence of Randall Adams, the man convicted of the murder (Nichols 2017). The film has received much attention from critics for its extensive use of reenactments, but my interest lies in its treatment of archival material. It presents these in a fairly standard documentary format, illustrating various parts of the testimony given by various interviewees during their filmed conversations with Morris. We see newspaper articles in both wide shots and close-ups (to highlight relevant dates), photographs of persons related to the case and illustrations from forensic reports. The presentation of these materials is simple, clear and ordered, their volume is not overwhelming and they are on screen for a long enough period of time to be read and absorbed by the viewer. However, we do begin to see a foregrounding of the formal properties of some this material. Some photographs are shown extreme close-up, so that we see the dot screen-tone pattern of the print, to the point where these images almost become abstract. In one shot, the typewritten letters 'HC' are blown-up to the extent that they fill the screen and the texture and indents of the paper are clearly visible. We also see a repeated motif of a black and white illustration of a gun, slowly moving towards the viewer in a tilting motion. The image is clearly an illustration and is not photographic evidence of the actual murder weapon used to kill the Dallas police officer, so one can surmise that its function is evocative rather than evidentiary.

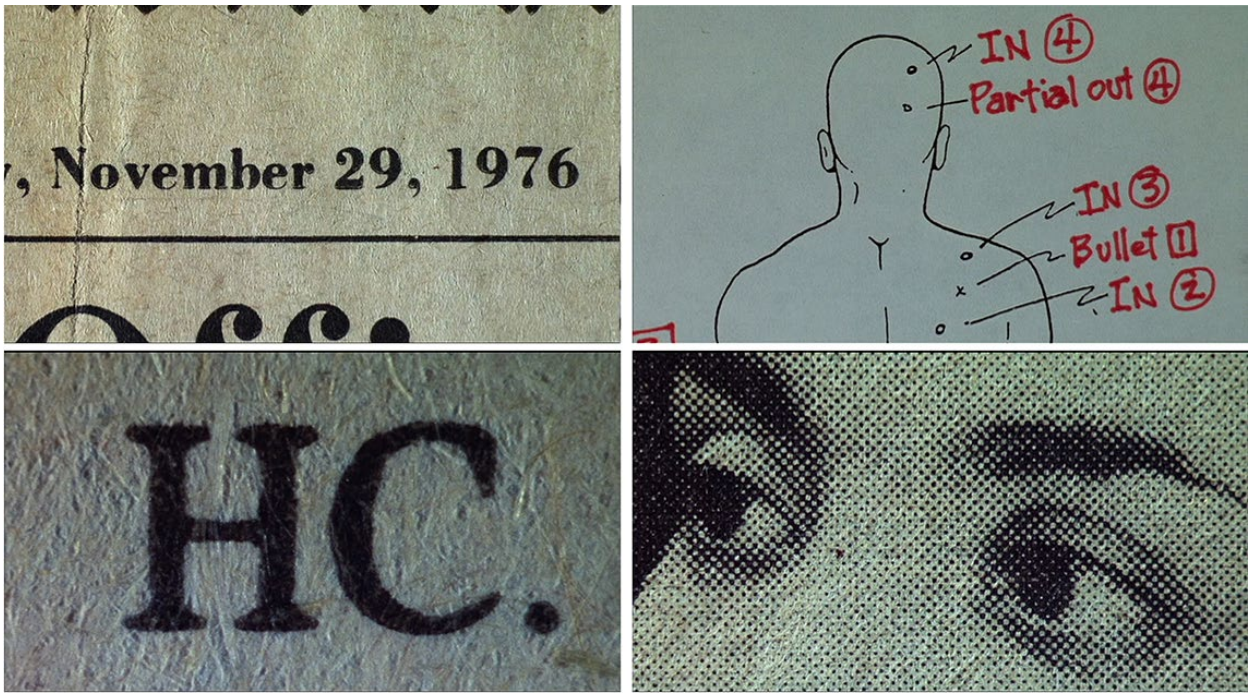


FIGURE 4.2. Some examples of how archival materials are presented in Errol Morris' *The Thin Blue Line*. The two images in the bottom row indicate a tendency towards aestheticisation and abstraction, where formal properties begin to outweigh a straightforward presentation of substantiating evidence.

These tendencies towards an aestheticisation of archival material are radically accelerated in the director's more recent work. In *Wormwood* (2017), the archival material is presented in the form of dense, layered collages comprising multiple categories of printed matter – documents, family photographs, newspaper cuttings, portrait photographs, advertising illustrations, pages from instructional manuals and handwritten letters, as well as footage from family films, old feature films and television broadcasts. The print materials are cut and reassembled, sometimes deconstructed to the point of illegibility. They are digitally manipulated so that individual words are isolated and inverted and, in some cases, become material for layered motion graphics. The editing of the shots showing this material is fast-paced, giving the viewer little time to absorb the content of what they are seeing.



FIGURE 4.3. These images represent only a fraction the range of archival materials used in Errol Morris' *Wormwood,* and shows the degree to which they were layered, deconstructed and abstracted.

While *Wormwood*'s use of archival material clearly demonstrates an aestheticisation of documents – the foregrounding of formal properties as a visual 'effect' over content – I would argue that this is justified. The series' investigation of the death of Frank Olson by apparent suicide in 1953 uncovers a complex web of potential government conspiracy that, together with the decades-long, obsessive quest by Olson's son Eric to uncover the truth behind the circumstances that led to his father's death, makes the treatment of the archival material resonate with the series' overall tone. The sensory assault of the archival material on the viewer is a perfect synecdoche for the tangle of documentation surrounding the case, a visual representation of Eric Olson's quest to uncover the truth behind the death of his father and a metaphor for the obfuscations, conflicting accounts and red tape that have thwarted him. While

given the context of the narrative, Morris' use of this technique is appropriate, at times he comes dangerously close to rendering the archival material in a purely superficial manner. He also begins to blur the distinction between the archival and the manufactured in another way, where certain figures that are central to the narrative are introduced within the framework of this 'aesthetic of documents' as photocollage 'portraits' that include the protagonists' names, signatures, their actual images, but also the images of the actors that portray them in the series' reenactments. This conflation of archival material with images of actors, in some instances colour-graded to fit seamlessly within the rest of the archival collage, seems to go a step too far, undermining the veracity of the evidence with which we are presented.

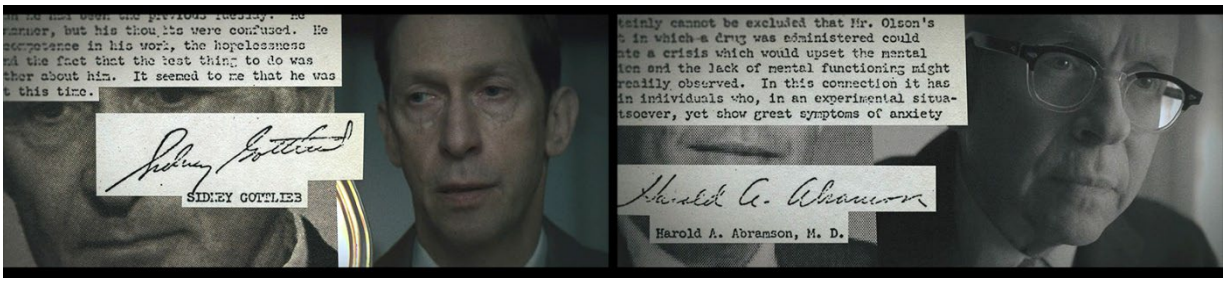


FIGURE 4.4. These character 'portraits' from *Wormwood* blend archival images of historical figures (image-left in both examples) with in-character photographs of the actors portraying them (image-right), blurring the boundaries between what is genuinely archival material and what is purely manufactured.

Morris has always had a strong graphic element in his films, with a demonstrable sensitivity to the formal elements of visual design in terms of colour tone, shape and typography. What we see in the comparison of *The Thin Blue Line* to *Wormwood* is not only a difference in emphases of form over content, but the differences between the affordances of analog film technology to that of digital cinema. The hyper-deconstruction of archival material in *Wormwood* would have been near-impossible to achieve using traditional celluloid film technology. *Wormwood* serves as an excellent example of how digital cinema turns *all* media into an endlessly manipulable 'elastic reality' (Manovich 2001:300) and perhaps also signals the temptation to use these capabilities to push form beyond the limits where it serves content and does not compromise or overwhelm it.

Polonia's treatment of archival materials aims for a balance of form and content, with an equal emphasis on both textual and textural properties. The materials are mostly clear in their formal presentation, arranged compositionally on screen in such a way that they can be identified, often shown whole, in wide shot, either before or after being shown in close-up as fragments. In

most instances, text is present on screen long enough to be read (the language-barrier notwithstanding). There is also, in most instances, a cogent link between the materials shown on screen and the audio narration. However, parts of the film shift the emphasis more heavily towards aestheticisation, using archival materials more for their textural properties and cinematic effect over their content. This is mostly evident in shots comprised of faster edits, where the materials are on screen only long enough to create a general aesthetic impression, rather than contributing meaningfully to the narrative through their content. Apart from these overt instances of aestheticisation, the film also contains elements that blur the line between that which is purely aesthetic and that which contextually contributes to the narrative. This is evident where materials have been included as background elements, located in the periphery of a composition, ostensibly to aesthetically 'fill-out' a particular shot, but also available to provide meaningful content, depending on how the film is viewed. This strategy was informed by an awareness of how spectatorship has changed in the era of digital cinema. In the pre-digital era, audiences were often limited to viewing a film in one continuous sitting, either in a cinema or on television. Although this changed with the introduction of home video formats such as the VHS tape in the 1980s, the shift from analog to digital video formats radically altered both the quality and access to content for home-viewing and granted viewers an unprecedented degree of control in how they could view this content. Today, digital video formats are available at high image resolutions, with high definition (1920x1080 pixels) being the standard and 4K (a horizontal screen resolution of 4000 pixels) the high-end option for home viewing. With some variability, depending on whether they are streamed online or downloaded onto a device, videos can be played back at varying speeds (including in reverse) or viewed frame-by-frame, with no loss of image quality and none of the resultant 'noise' that was endemic to home cassette tapes when they were sped up, slowed down or paused. Digital formats have altered the role of the spectator by granting them greater accessibility to and control over ways in which to consume media and, crucially for both the researcher and the invested viewer, they facilitate the viewing of films both as linear narrative and as an interactive document, able to be scrubbed through and studied piecemeal. While it is hardly assumed that everyone that watches *Polonia* will have this dedicated a level of interest to engage with the film's content to this degree, for those who do, the archival spaces in many instances are scattered with layers of detail that render the film's representation of the historical world deeper and more complex.

An example of this can be seen when Piotrek Strzelec describes the attitudes of refugee Poles in Bad Soden awaiting their new lives in the West. The visual accompaniment to his narration is

an assemblage of both genuine and 'fake' archival materials (see section 4.3.2), including public domain photographs of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island and a bridge in early 20th Century New York, a 'fake' road atlas with a title that puns on the notion of the Polish refugees leaving their European home from their waystation in Germany, a Solidarity badge, a Public Domain map of the USA and another 'fake' book titled (in Polish) *Adventures in Germany*, 'authored' by Piotrek Strzelec, the scene's narrator (discussed in greater detail in section 4.3.2). As the scene progresses, it reveals more documents from beneath the road atlas – copies of early 20th Century documents detailing procedures for acquiring US citizenship and 'naturalization [sic] of aliens'. Behind the photographs of Ellis Island and New York are a few sheets of paper torn from a notepad, covered in lines of neat handwriting. On a casual viewing of this scene, these papers would likely be 'read' texturally, as a background element, not worthy of much attention. However, a closer viewing will reveal that beneath the heading, 'Irregular Verbs', there are large English words with their Polish translations (in smaller letters) adjacent to them. These notes were made by one my family members (likely my father, as the handwriting appears to be his), either as a means to expand their English vocabulary or as an aid in helping another family member do so. It is uncertain when they were written, but the paper is aged and a reasonable assumption would be that they were written around the time my family emigrated to the US. As a stand-alone document, they are not particularly profound, but they add small, authentic, personal detail to the archival space that helps to enrich it.

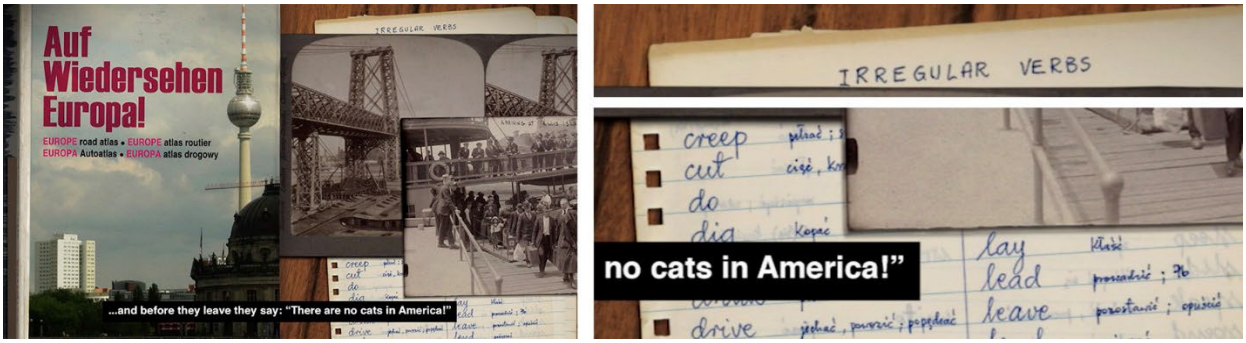


FIGURE 4.5. An assemblage of authentic and manufactured archival elements in *Polonia*, making reference to the history of emigration to the United States (left) and a detail of the assemblage (right).

4.3.2 Mimicry and Fakery

Morris' presentation of archival materials in a manner that begins to blur the distinction between the archival and the reenacted finds parallel in a category of artefacts included in *Polonia* that photo-realistically mimic period-specific printed matter. This category goes beyond mere stylistic

allusion – an example of which is the homage to the *Dallas* title sequence discussed in Chapter 3 – and includes artefacts that might at a glance be confused with genuine archival material. Each of these 'fakes' represents a liminal space that sits between the archival and cinematic spaces and can be understood to exist along a spectrum from 'photoreal' to 'transparently manufactured' (not unlike Furniss' animation spectrum). Their position along this spectrum is not fixed and is subject to individual viewers' perceptions, dependent on their knowledge of language, culture and digital image manipulation.

No doubt the question arises as to why one would include artefacts so ontologically indeterminate in a film committed to revealing its own constructedness and to not sowing confusion between the real and the manufactured? Creating these materials was partly intuitive and driven by a desire to merge the film's archival and cinematic spaces, but also in a spirit of experimentation with the possibilities of creating seamless facsimiles of archival materials and considering how these might fit into a reflexive aesthetic. To begin with, it is important to group them into two distinct categories:

a) *Designs that near-exactly mimic extant archival materials*. These were created in order to substitute genuine archival images that could not be used either due to copyright restrictions or a lack of availability of images in the public domain at a sufficiently high enough resolution. Examples of this are the German 'Fanta' print ads or the advert for the 'Commodore 64' computer (Figure 40). The inclusion of these images is analogous to that of a drawing or painting of a can of Coca Cola in a comic book, or perhaps a realistic prop in a live action film. Their purpose is to communicate iconically within the context of the film's narrative world and to help accurately recreate the visual tone and texture of an era. If they are mistaken for actual archival material, they do not carry enough weight as 'documents' or 'evidence' for this to have any ethical bearing on the film's documentary veracity. They also lack the literal, grain, texture and blemishes of genuine archival materials. As per Hannah Frank's close reading of decades-old animation celluloid, it is these fine and seemingly-incidental details that are the true markers of certain archival materials' authenticity, each detail a clue to unlocking that artifact's history.

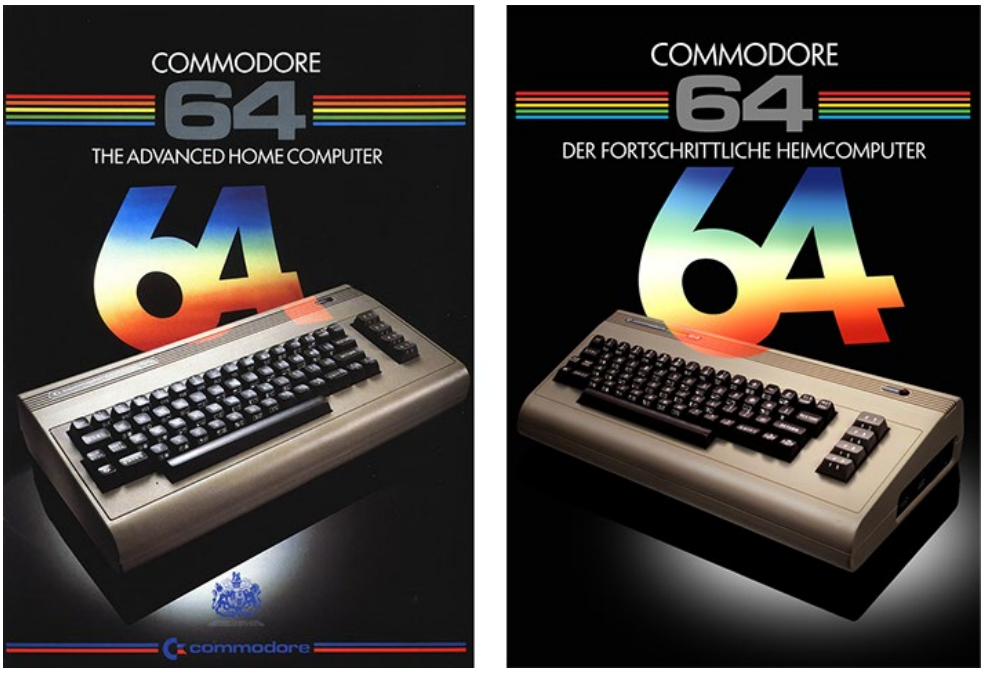


FIGURE 4.6. A side-by-side comparison of an original Commodore 64 print advert (left) and the wholly recreated version of the advert (right) used in *Polonia*.

b) *Artifacts that modify extant archival materials to alter their content.* These designs blur the distinction between the film's archival and cinematic spaces by taking existing archival materials and altering their content while maintaining their overall aesthetic and textural qualities. This change in content serves a narrative and/or semiotic function. For instance, Fig.41 shows a Polish-German phrasebook from 1959, a family heirloom, which, due to its weathered appearance and the episodic layout of its cartoon illustrations, was digitally altered to show various episodes from mine and the Strzelec families' stay in Vitagena. The 'fake' version of this archival book is now titled *Adventures in Germany* and its 'author' is Piotrek Strzelec, the narrator of the scene in which the book appears. Fig. 42 shows a 1961 Polish edition of a Sherlock Holmes novel was chosen for its prominent rendering of a pistol and altered so as to be 'authored' by the (ironically-named) Polish Ministry of Public Safety – the 'UB'. In both cases, the source materials were chosen both for their aged appearance and for their Polish People's Republic-era graphic design aesthetic. While I argue that this technique of altering existing archival materials is justified as form of iconography – the choice to use books as the artifacts being mimicked alludes to the notion of documentary as narrative and the narrativisation of memory referred to by the authors of *Animation and Memory* (Gageldonk, Munteán, Shobeiri 2020:1-2) – the seamlessness mimicking of the grain, texture and aesthetics of genuine archival materials presents a challenge to the film's ontology. If *Polonia* consistently attempts to

delineate the differences between the reconstructed and the constructed, the archival and the cinematic, the potential for deception or confusion sown by these artifacts needs to be addressed.

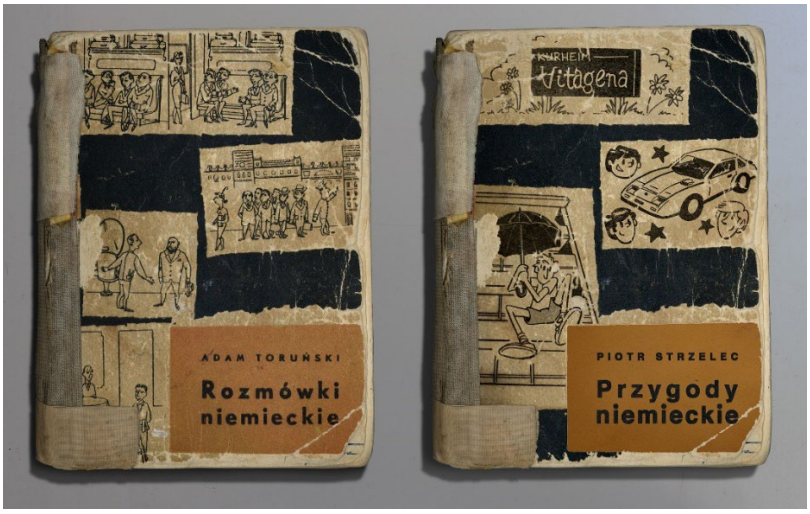


FIGURE 4.7. A side-by-side comparison of an original 1959 edition of a Polish-German phrasebook (left) and its altered version (right) used in *Polonia*.



FIGURE 4.8. A side-by-side comparison of an original 1961 Polish edition of a Sherlock Holmes novel (left) and its altered version (right and detail below) used in *Polonia*.

‘Fakery’ as a semiotic strategy has precedence in the documentary genre, albeit mostly in what are termed ‘mockumentaries’. In 1978, Eric Idle – a founding member of the Monty Python comedy group – wrote and co-directed *All You Need Is Cash*, a mockumentary that traced the fictional biography of ‘The Rutles’. It was an obvious spoof of The Beatles, but also of the documentary genre itself, particularly its expository mode. The film created an alternate world for this fictitious group that in minute detail paralleled that of the Beatles, with songs, album covers, memorabilia, newsreels and television interviews all presented as genuine archival material, each a comedically-intentioned simulacrum of a real-world referent from the Beatles archive. An example of how the film uses artifacts that mimic the form of specific archival materials but alter their content can be illustrated by a scene where the group announces the formation of ‘Rutle Corps’, an obvious analog for the Beatles’ ‘Apple Records’, with the Rutle Corps’ logo of a peeled banana on black ground a clear stylistic reference to the Apple Records’ logo (see Fig.). Besides creating this comedic version of the real world, the film blurred the line between reality and fantasy even further by conducting ‘serious’ interviews with Mick Jagger and Paul Simon about their experiences with The Rutles and included George Harrison – an actual member of the Beatles – in the role of a television reporter.



FIGURE 4.9. Two members of the fictitious band The Rutles - ’Nasty’ and ’Dirk’ (analogs for John Lennon and Paul McCartney) - announce the formation of Rutle Crops (left), the logo of which stylistically mimics, but alters the content of the Beatles’ Apple Records logo.

It may seem superfluous to use mockumentary as a benchmark for what material can be included in a documentary, as the very name of this subgenre implies a falsification or distortion of fact, but I would argue that the subgenre is premised on being inherently reflexive. *All You Need Is Cash* is only effective as comedy if the audience is already familiar with the biography

of the Beatles. The deeper the knowledge of the referent, the more comedic details can be identified and enjoyed in its manufactured spoof. The more stylistically accurate and ‘texturally authentic’ the elements of the mockumentary are, the more humorous are the changes made to them in order to poke fun at the genuine article. The key is context. If a documentary provides the correct context for its use of simulacra of archival materials for the audience to understand that what they are seeing is not real, then meaning can be generated without sacrificing documentary veracity.

Including artifacts in *Polonia* that blur the boundaries between authentic and altered or manufactured archival materials was done in a spirit of play and experimentation, testing the limits of how blurry these boundaries could get while still maintaining documentary veracity through a highlighting of the film’s constructedness. I believe that in most instances, the 'fake’ archival materials in *Polonia* can be identified as being inauthentic. Each one, either on the face of it, or on closer inspection, has a ‘tell’, some detail that reveals it to be manufactured, a digital manipulation, part of *Polonia’s* fantasy element and not its actuality. More importantly, context often reveals that the item is a manufactured prop, as with the *Adventures in Germany* book shown in Figure 41, which in the film opens to reveal pages of text transcribing Piotrek Strzelec’s interview and a simple line illustration of Ellis Island that acts as the background for an animated sequence, relating directly to Piotrek’s narration. While a casual or inattentive viewing of the film may result in a mistaking of the manufactured items for genuine archival materials, closer inspection (which may admittedly be hampered for the English-speaking viewer) will reveal them to be constructed narrative devices.

According to Nichols, “documentaries are what the organizations [sic] and institutions that produce them make” (Nicols, 2017:19). He claims that by satirising the formal conventions of documentaries, mockumentaries can reveal how these institutional frameworks guide the production of documentaries and thus allow audiences “to gain new insight into taken-for-granted conventions” (Nichols 2017). In a similar way, including ‘falsified’ archival materials (that nevertheless can, in most cases, be spotted as manufactured through various ‘tells’) highlights the potential superficiality of archival material as evidence or proof, when used aesthetically rather than substantially and can, when executed correctly, act as a form of defamiliarisation, encouraging critical spectatorship (Ehrlich 2021).

4.3.3 Cinematic Space

As a counterpoint to *Polonia*'s archival space, its cinematic space is the site for the 124mphasizing124n of the events recounted by the narrators, providing a connecting tissue for the film's narrative. Where the archival space is mostly depicted as flat, the cinematic space is perspectival, simulating a world of three dimensions. It is, in part, hyperreal, that is, an internally cogent, self-contained world that acts as a representation of the historical world. However, this hyperreality is consistently undermined by the inclusion of materials and elements that emphasise its constructedness. The resulting tension between perspectival depth and flatness speaks to Frank's notion of the dynamic between a centripetal movement towards a self-contained filmic world and the centrifugal 'pointing out' towards the real world beyond the filmic frame. *Polonia'*s cinematic space creates a strong centrifugal force by 124mphasizing the materiality of surfaces, foregrounding textures, making paint strokes visible. Traces of the art-making process in the form of partly erased images, tape on board, are foregrounded in the composition as overt signals of constructedness. Hyperreality is further undermined through aesthetic incongruity: the children depicted in the film's narrative are stylistically different to the adults and photographic elements are juxtaposed against painted ones. The mixing and referencing of disparate art styles, combined with a handmade aesthetic is meant to evoke and resonate with the geo-temporal locations of the film's narrative and, by merging handmade and digital elements, foreground its constructedness.

The tension between hyperreal illusionism and the reality of the animation space as a construct was naturally articulated in the pre-digital era of animated film production, when – in the case of 2D animation – cells were inked, painted, then layered on top of painted backgrounds and photographed under the rostrum camera, resulting in what Manovich refers to as the "two-and-a-half dimensional space" of the cell animated cartoon (Manovich 2006). All of these component parts existed as physical objects that were directly acted upon by human hands and were in constant contact with their environment. This resulted in 'traces' of the physical world entering into the hyperreal world of the animated film, visible evidence of the materials that were components in that world's creation (Frank 2021). In the hyperreal world of the animation, the viewer's attention is diverted from this materiality by the performance of the characters, editing styles that mimic those of live action film, and in some cases, depth-of-field effects created using a multi-plane camera. When a viewer's attention is drawn back to the painted or drawn surface, the hyperreal illusion is broken and the constructedness of the animated space becomes apparent. I have a vague memory of watching a Warner Bothers *Road Runner*

cartoon as a child or teenager and becoming aware that the setting of Death Valley which I had previously read as part of the seamless cinematic image, was in fact a painting. While the animated figures of the Coyote and Road Runner remained intact within the illusion generated by frame rate and the consistency of their forms across time, the longer screen-time that was given to the still images of the backgrounds and their textural and stylistic contrast to the smooth, flat forms of the characters revealed their maker's hand and broke the cinematic illusion. I could now make out the chunky marks of the brush and the irregularities in the application of pigment onto the substrate. This resulted in a dual perception, a disjuncture between two orders of reality that were concurrently visible, where on the one hand, there was the cinematic illusion of the 'aliveness' of the Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote, behaving as if they were inhabiting a three-dimensional world and, on the other, the grain and texture of a visibly flat, painted background – the 'dead' space of what was clearly a physical object. What made it strange was not the combination of illusionistic 2D animation layered on top of a physical surface, but that that surface was clearly supposed to create the illusion of a hyperreal, three-dimensional space. By shifting one's focus, one could switch between the hyperreal and the reflexive view of the animation in much the same way as the perspective of a *trompe-l'eol* painting can be disrupted and reconstituted by shifting one's vantage point.



FIGURE 4.10. An example of the construction of *Polonia*'s cinematic space, which here includes a combination of drawings, scanned cardboard and book textures, photographs and toy cars.

As with the film's archival space, *Polonia*'s cinematic space is defined by its tactility, the sense that its surfaces are tangible and organically aged. The 'handmade' aesthetic signifies authenticity, as it iconically resembles physical materials and implies their origin in the real world, imported into the constructed world. But, as with the 'fakery' of some of the archival elements, there is artifice in the cinematic space, a digital/analog hybrid that attempts to appears authentically 'handmade'. As detailed in section Chapter 3, the cinematic space was created through a combination of the traditional paper-based 2D animation process, acrylic painted backgrounds that were scanned and digitally retouched and analog textures imported into the digital workspace that were then layered over flat digital colour. Its evocation of the world of the early 1980s, through a combination of physical materials, analog techniques and retro art styles, could only be facilitated by present-day digital software, and embodies what Lev Manovich refers to as *metamedia,* or "the remixing of working methods and techniques of different media within a single project" (Manovich 2006:6), combining multiple operations which previously only existed within distinct physical or computer media. *Polonia'*s visual design strategy of importing images of physical and handmade elements resists the genericness that can result when these workflows remain hermetically sealed within the digital workspace, cut-off from the physical world which offers infinite and varied surface textures, gradations of colour and tone and the imperfections, errors, unpredictability and extraneous variables of physical art techniques and processes. Images constructed purely within the digital space lack the spontaneity of physical materials colliding with one another. The defunct photographic cel animation technology that Frank describes allowed for a greater degree of the physical world to intrude into the animation process than is possible today: ink could be smudged, colours mixed incorrectly, cells could warp, dust and hair could enter the photographic lens. The digital environment is a sterile environment. This sterility has produced a palpable nostalgia for the handmade, evidenced by the artists' posting of 'natural' textures and thousands of 'brush' plugins, designed to mimic the marks made by various physical media.

4.3.4 Spatial Dynamics

As much as *Polonia'*s archival and cinematic spaces each foreground constructedness in distinct ways, the film's emphasis on space is in itself a reflexive strategy, facilitated by constantly shifting between and conflating the different categories of its spatial taxonomy. Citing Stephen Heath's observation that space is 'used up' in conventional cinema narrative, so as to draw focus to character and action, Aylish Wood notes that "space begins to gain meaning of its

own when it no longer solely serves a supporting role by giving meaning to the actions of characters" (Wood, 2006:137). Wood proposes that animation allows for a re-interrogation of space beyond the cinematic model, as a 'reverberating' space, capable of being fluid and mutable, unhampered by either physical or temporal consistency (Wood, 2006:136). Rather than merely acting as a container or backdrop for character action or narrative, animated space draws attention to itself through distortions and ruptures, appearing and behaving in ways that break with the hyperreal notion of spatial stability and continuity. What is implicit in Wood's analysis of 'reverberating' animated space is that by breaking with the hyperreal cinematic mode, it acts as a strong indicator of animation's reflexivity, something that has important implications in a documentary context. *Polonia* exploits this unique freedom that animation possesses to "challeng[e] the limits of the photographic and traditional filmic space" (Serrazina and Woolf, 2021:4) by juxtaposing and blending the archival and cinematic spaces in order to draw attention to the film as a construct.

At times the cinematic and the archival are directly compared and contrasted. In one of the film's early scenes, an animation of the 2D avatar of my father putting on his coat is followed immediately by a live action sequence of the actual coat, first presented as if being photographed in a quick succession of police 'mug shots', but in the final shot revealed to be located in the mundane setting of a photographer's studio. This sequence not only allows the viewer to see the connection between the archival item of clothing and its cartoon simulacrum but provides a clue to understanding the film's strategy and ontology as a whole – using the animation and archival material to both reconstruct and construct a historical narrative.

In other instances, elements from the archival and cinematic spaces are merged and demonstrate animation's ability to compress both space and time. Annabelle Honess Roe notes that animation, operating outside the indexical limitations of "conventional documentary, has the capacity to represent temporally, geographically and psychologically distal aspects of life beyond the reach of live action" (Honess Roe, 2013:22). Polish animator Zbigniew Rybczyński contends that *time compression* can be seen throughout the history of art, from Egyptian hieroglyphs to the Gothic period, where all the stages in the life of Christ were depicted in one image and is a visual representation of the "how the thought process works" (Rybczynski cited in Kremski, cited in Rogoff, 2021:101). Although he does not state this explicitly, I understand Rybczynski's notion of time compression as related to, though not necessarily reliant on, spatial deconstruction, compression, and distortion.

The use of temporal and spatial compression in *Polonia* are evident in the scene described in 3.3.3, where a postcard of Kurheim Vitagena from the early 1980s serves as an archival matrix, with each of its windows providing an entry into a cinematic space depicting an animated reconstruction of a historical event, as narrated by Piotrek Strzelec and my brother Dobek. The scene also acts as a 'call back' to an earlier point in the film, where the postcard was shown in its original, unadulterated form. Even though the two scenes are not directly juxtaposed, they are framed in a similar enough fashion so that one echoes the other, drawing parallels between indexical images of actual historical spaces and their reconstructed simulacra. A variation on this and an example of an even more direct merging of cinematic and archival elements is the scene described in 3.3.4, which traces my family's journey and the journeys of other members of the Bad Soden Polish refugee group from Germany to the USA. As with other archival spaces in the film, the 'set' for this scene is comprised of an assemblage of various archival materials – two Public Domain maps of the USA and California, an aerial illustration of Seattle, an English phrasebook and my father's 1960 Czech pocket atlas. Here, these items read simultaneously as physical objects and as the volumetric cinematic space of a self-contained 'world'. The pocket atlas lies open on a spread of the European continent, with the line denoting the border between East and West Germany having been extruded into a rendering of a literal 'Iron Curtain', modelled on similar depictions in Cold War-era political cartoons. The extruded wall and the 2D-animated version of my family walking across the atlas' flat surface result in a conflation of two perspectival views, which are top-down and orthographic. This conflation of perspectives and orders of space continues as the camera moves over the orthographic landscape to a surfer churning up the 'water' of the Pacific Ocean on a map of California. The discrepancy between spatial categories and perspectival views is resolved in the final shot of the scene, where the map of Seattle, which is both a drawing and an archival document, brings back a single perspective and stylistically matches the cartoon raincloud that erupts over it.

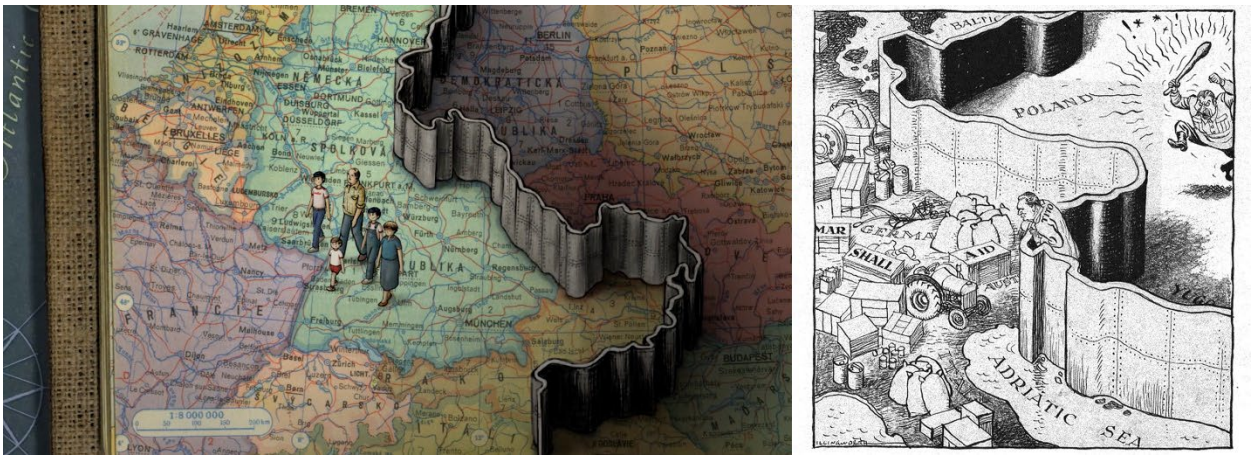


FIGURE 4.11. *Polonia*'s conflation of archival and cinematic space (left), inspired by depictions of geo-political events in Cold War-era newspaper cartoons, an example of which (right) shows Yugoslavia's leader, Marshal Tito, receiving Western aid under the Marshall Plan (by Leslie Illingworth, published on 30 June 1948 in the Daily Mail) (Althaus et al. 2012:56).

The merging of the archival and cinematic spaces also takes the form of a repeated motif of cartoon renderings of narrators' and non-speaking characters' hands appearing in frame to directly interact with archival materials. In those moments, as with the 3D avatar of Chris Landreth handing Ryan Larkin's avatar one of his old drawings in *Ryan*, the archival object simultaneously exists as an index of the real world and becomes part of the animated film space. These hands are part of a recurring motif of close-ups of hands that runs throughout the film and also a self-aware reference to Donald Crafton's notion of 'self-figuration'. Crafton defines self-figuration' as "the tendency of the filmmaker to interject himself into his film" and notes that this interjection can be both direct or indirect (Crafton, 1993:11). In tracing the early history of animation, he observes that self-figuration was at first "obvious and literal", but later developed into a phenomenon that "was subtle and cloaked in metaphors and symbolic imagery designed to facilitate the process and yet to keep the idea gratifying for the artist and the audience" (Crafton, 1993:11).

> This exhilarating sensation that life is somehow being created before the spectator's eyes arises to greater and lesser extents from all animation, and perhaps constitutes its cinematic reason for being. But a detailed survey will show that this perception does not arise from a mystical "something in the form itself" or from a vague "virtue" of the medium. On the contrary, this genesis theme is the result off the animator presenting himself in the role of life giver – not mysteriously, but deliberately and (as

> the history of the medium unfolds) with increasing subtlety and expertise until finally we take for granted that the animator can vivify things that could never otherwise have existed (Crafton, 1982:12).

While, as indicated in the quote above, self-figuration can be understood as having emerged from the novelty of the medium and the apparently magical power of the animator to 'create life' through motion, in the context of animated documentary it acts as a powerful means of foregrounding animation's constructedness by signaling the meta-presence of the filmmaker. This presence, even if manifested subtly, acts as a centrifugal force by calling viewers' attention to a world outside the frame of the screen.

In *Polonia,* various permutations of self-figuration are used as a reflexive strategy and are part of the broader dynamic between the archival and cinematic spaces, the indexical and the constructed. In instances where cartoon hands interact directly with archival materials, they can be understood literally as the intrusion of elements from the film's cinematic space into its archival space, but they also act as a proxy for the hands of the filmmaker and allude to the symbolism of hands as tools of industry and creation. At two other points in the film, the self-figuration is literal: when the film introduces Bad Soden and Vitagena, my own digitally-composited live-action hand enters the frame, placing one postcard over another; and in an earlier scene where Solidarity internees arrive outside the prison on the Moon, a photograph of my hand, using a digital version of the paper cut-out animation technique, reaches down and lifts up the roof of the prison and removes its inmates. In the first instance, the interjection signifies a literal 'breaking of the fourth wall'. In the second, the signification is more complex, as the hand is an animated element and, in the context of a fantastical scene, serves both as a means of self-figuration and as a symbol of the Polish Communist government manifesting as a god-like entity to literally reach down and grab its citizens.

Subtler instances of self-figuration occur when archival materials enter into the frame as if dropped or thrown down from an off-screen space. In some scenes, it is made clear that these objects originate from within the filmic world and represent a blending of archival and cinematic spaces. This is the case when a silhouette of Piotrek Strzelec's mother throws documents from her balcony and the scene cuts to Piotrek's father's Solidarity identity document landing on a photorealistic concrete texture background. At other times, it is not clear where the objects entering the frame originate from. The film seems to play with the notion of the off-screen space

representing the pro-filmic world, inhabited by the filmmaker, in which case it is as if the filmmaker himself were 'throwing' objects directly into the world of the film. The motif is complicated further, when at one point the character of the Crow exits the archival space by moving vertically up towards the viewer and off-screen, in a reversal of the trajectory followed by archival materials entering the frame.

Another instance of what may be considered a form of self-figuration and one which blurs the boundary between the ontology of the film's cinematic and archival spaces, is the seemingly autonomous movement of some of the film's archival materials. While for most of its duration, the film's archival materials remain inert, there are a few instances in which they spring to life and move of their own volition, interacting directly with one another and with the viewer, literally revealing new information. Similarly, at two points in the film, areas on the surfaces of documents are highlighted by lines that appear to draw themselves or be drawn by an invisible hand. The motivation behind these choices was, again, to highlight the film's constructedness and to do so in unpredictable ways, keeping viewers from espying a fixed set of 'rules' which might govern the film's world. It destabilises the notion of the archival space as a 'real': while it is comprised of indexical images in the form of both photographs and scans of real objects, the space itself is subject to the same limitations and possibilities as any other part of the filmic construct. By investing the materials with a self-propelling *animus*, the archival space ceases to be a mere display of evidentiary material and announces itself as a living, dynamic part of the broader filmic space.

4.3.5 Camera Motion and Self-figuration

One of the defining features of *Polonia'*s spatial dynamics is its near-constant motion and forwarded momentum both within and across spaces, afforded by the use of the virtual camera in Adobe After Effects. According to Mike Jones, the virtual camera heralded a major shift not only in its expansion of cinematography, but in a fundamental reassessment of how the camera is understood in relationship to filmic space. Jones conceives of the virtual camera as both *vehicle* and *entity,* as 'perspective embodiment' (Jones, 2007:226, 229). Untethered from the physical limitations of the traditional camera, the virtual camera is "omnipresent, ethereal, [and] non-physical [in] nature" and offers "unique language constructs of cinematic motion...defying physicality and spatiality" (Jones, 2007:229).

Jones observes that:

> ...the power and influence of the virtual camera...derive as much, if not more, from the construction of the virtual environments in which the camera will reside as from the traits, movements and composition of the camera itself....an evolution in cinematic form from a staging *for* the camera to a staging *of* the camera; from the composition of shot, frame and *mise-en-scène* to a more holistic, more flexible, composition of space itself; a composition that relies not on the framed perspective to construct meaning but on a composed perspective within space from which meaning is explored (2007:230).

Jones clarifies in his abstract that his observations apply to both a fully three-dimensional virtual space, as well as to "layer-based motion graphics" (2007:225), and I would add that the virtual camera's expansion of the cinematographic language is equally valid to representations of both 'flat' surfaces and two-dimensional space with perspectival and depth illusion. This approach to camera motion can be seen in Borowczyk's *Les Jeux de Anges*, where the mechanistic movement of the camera reveals different rooms within the film's Kafkaesque factory of death, and through this piecemeal revelation, keeps the viewer trapped within the space, creating the sense of a byzantine labyrinth from which escape seems impossible. The camera's movement emphasises the two-dimensionality of the surface and the substrate *as a painting*. This is evocative of the large landscape painting of Lubin (detailed in 3.2.3) in *Polonia*, wherein the camera motion and sequential framing of shots were decided *after* the completion of the background painting and discovered *within* the composition, reversing the traditional production flow of staging *for* the camera.

Although *Polonia* does employ continuity 'cut-scene' editing in many of its sequences, much of the film is connected through the motion of a freely roaming camera, providing not only a forward momentum for the narrative, but implicitly signaling an off-screen presence, an 'eye' that moves through the film's world, which can be interpreted as perhaps the most persistent and consistent instance of self-figuration, calling to mind Dziga Vertov's *Kino-Eye Manifesto* (1923), where the Russian filmmaker equates the camera and, by extension, the filmmaker, with an untethered, all-seeing eye:

> I am kino-eye. I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, show you the world as only I can see it. Now and forever, I free myself from human immobility, I am in constant motion, I draw near, then away from objects, I crawl under, I climb onto them. I move apace with the muzzle of a galloping horse, I plunge full speed into a crowd, I outstrip running soldiers, I fall on my back, I ascend with an airplane, I plunge and soar together with plunging and soaring bodies. Now I, a camera, fling myself along their resultant, maneuvering in the chaos of movement, recording movement, starting with movements composed of the most complex combinations (Vertov 1923 in Michelson, 1984:17).

Similarly, *Polonia*'s 'camera eye' moves across and through the filmic space, revealing the film as a construct. It is the eye of the filmmaker, guiding the audience through the construct of a historical narrative.

4.4 Performance

The introduction of animated characters into a documentary depiction of the historical world invariably complicates it. No matter how stylised these characterisations may be, on some level we are predisposed to regard them as seemingly autonomous subjects, imbued with life and personality. Our impulse is to enter into their world and believe in their reality. As Donald Crafton observes:

> ...animated beings such as Betty [Boop], Mickey, Popeye, and others are so easily rationalized [sic] as film performers. Admittedly this is counterintuitive. Although nothing is too outlandish, stunning, or hard to swallow for them, they still seem normal, like other screen actors. They just happen to be animated. Watching them, I enjoy a powerful sensation of recognition and a potent sense of their presence. They are drawings, but are they also movie stars? This dissonance is the most fundamental conundrum (Crafton, 2013:16-17).

Hyperrealism facilitates this process, by smoothing out disjunctures and creating a seamless illusion of an internally consistent world which the viewer can uncritically inhabit. When using animated characters as part of its vocabulary, an animated documentary must reckon with and resist this tendency. If, as Crafton notes, in traditional theories of performance, the audience is expected to forget the actor and to only see their role (2013:19), animated documentary calls on

viewers to actively *remember* that the performance they witness is a construct. Understanding how characters may be effectively integrated into a documentary context necessitates an analysis of what Crafton terms 'performance *in* animation', as well as considering the second part of his formulation, 'the performance *of* animation' and how it relates to spectatorship (2013:17).

4.4.1 Performance in Animation

Crafton has identified two dominant animation performance modes in animation – the *figurative* and the *embodied* (2013:5). The embodied mode, exemplified by the Disney 'imitation of life' approach, was developed during the so-called Golden Age of animation in the 1930s and 40s and can be seen in Disney features like *Pinocchio* (1940) and *Bambi* (1942). Contemporary examples would include aspects of the performances seen in big budget 3D animated films like Disney's *Moana* (2016) and Pixar's *Coco* (2017). According to Crafton, the embodied mode is something akin to Stanislavsky's 'Method' approach to acting, where "actors...look within themselves and use their own intense feelings to engender dramatic bodies for their audience" (2013:23). It is "introverted...creating imaginatively realised beings with individuality, depth, and internal complexity" (Crafton, 2013:36), based on both close observation and physical re-enactment of bodies in motion in the physical world and notable for its nuance, subtlety and complexity. Crafton observes that it was Disney's conviction that only through this method could an audience buy in to the belief that the characters on screen were imbued with autonomy, agency and interiority and could be received as fully formed personalities (2013:37).

The figurative mode of animation challenges these suppositions. As an approach to animated performance, it both predates and supersedes Disney's development of the embodied method, first pioneered by the likes of Fleischer Studios in the 1920s and 30s and later adopted by Warner Brothers in their Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and Road Runner cartoons of the 1940s and 50s (Crafton, 2013:23-24). Today one can see contemporary versions of the figurative mode in shows like *South Park* and much of Japanese anime. Where Disney sought to foster audience engagement by presenting characters that appeared as 'real' beings with a complex interiority, the figurative mode does not allow one to be lulled into a suspension of disbelief engendered by hyperrealism and instead emphasises animation's constructedness (Crafton, 2013:24). Characters overtly perform for the audience, at times even breaking the fourth wall to address the viewer directly (Crafton, 2013:23). Their cartoon bodies refuse to adhere to any illusory physics and can contract, distend, squash, stretch and distort, engaging audiences not through

an embodied interiority, but through broad acting, using formulaic poses and "vocabularies of mask-like signs and gestures"(Crafton, 2013:24).

I argue for a corollary between these two modes and the different technical approaches used to create animation, where broadly speaking, the embodied mode is more closely associated with what has been called 'full animation'. Historically, this meant animation that was shot 'on 1's', meaning that each sequential drawing inhabited only one frame on a strip of film. This resulted in a very smooth motion that was conducive to greater realism and nuance. Conversely, the figurative mode fits within what has been termed 'limited animation', where drawings would be shot on 2s or on 3s, with the same drawing photographed repeatedly so that it occupied either two or three frames on a filmstrip, resulting in a more staccato style of movement, better suited to broader, faster, more exaggerated action. Besides the higher number of frames per drawing, limited animation places more emphasis on keyframes with fewer inbetweens, uses 'cycles' or 'looped' actions – where sequences of drawings are re-used for repetitive actions like walking and running – as well as still shots (referred to as 'holds') and camera movement as a means to circumnavigate the extremely labour-intensive and time-consuming process of animation, resulting in a more stylised, graphic, broader type of performance (Furniss, 1999:135-38). Crafton refers to the schematic poses and actions we see used in limited animation as *re-performance* – "engineered into the technical basis of the medium" (Crafton, 2013:34) – and possessed of an arbitrariness that is inimical to the nuance based of embodied performance, which is based on the close observation and careful mimicking of form and motion in the real world. For instance, the technique of 'looping' actions results in the exact action being repeated several times in an identical formulation, so that "it's subject is itself" (Crafton, 2013:34). Crafton considers rotoscoping to be a form of re-performance, as it is always merely the reconstituting of an existing performance (2013:34).

There also seem to be corollaries between the two modes and visual design or style. The broad acting and schematic techniques characteristic of the figurative mode lend themselves to simplified forms and highly stylised characters. In the obverse, the subtlety and implied interiority of embodied performance connotes a higher degree of realism in the visual design of a character, though this is not an absolute rule. It is also important to note that, while each of these two modes is clearly defined by a set of criteria, it is not the case that any particular animated performance ought to fall exclusively within either. An animator may use a blend of the

two modes in order to generate a particular performance, using both 'broad' elements and more subtle forms of 'acting' that signal interiority in a character.

4.4.2 Minimalism and Performance in the Films of Mickey Duzyj

In March 2019, Netflix released an eight-part documentary series entitled *Losers*. The series garnered positive reviews from critics, who highlighted its unconventional subject matter, namely the failures rather than the successes of athletes (Crouch 2019), as well as its striking visual design and extensive use of animation (Heritage 2019). As unique as the series appeared, it was in fact a culmination of its creator's previous work. Before his success with *Losers,* Duzyj had begun his career as an illustrator in the early 2000s and later branched out into film work with animated sequences for sports channel ESPN's documentary *You Don't Know Bo: The Legend of Bo Jackson* (Holmes 2019), followed by two short animated documentaries: *The Perfect 18* (2014) and *The Shining Star of Losers Everywhere* (2016). While finding Duzyj's work occurred several years into the production of *Polonia*, I saw many resonances between his treatment of animated characters in a documentary context and my own work. Analysing his films helped me to understand and distil what I was technically doing in my animation practice and to theorise *Polonia*'s approach to animated performance. Duzyj's films exist at the confluence of illustration, animation and documentary realism. In the emerging field of animated documentary, they provide valuable case studies for the way in which a highly stylised, minimalist animation technique can function within a documentary context and how, within this context, the ways in which animated performance can be understood is distinct from that seen in other, purely fictional, animated content.

To understand the nature of Duzyj's animation style and technique and how it contributes to his documentaries, it is necessary to give a brief account of his illustration work, which preceded and has continued to develop alongside his film projects. Duzyj's illustrations most often take as their subject individual personalities, usually from the world of professional sports, including iconic figures such as Mohammed Ali and Mike Tyson, as well as lesser-known players, coaches, managers and team owners. His rendering style consists of black ink drawings with layered, flat colour and occasional use of textures, reminiscent of comic art. Much of his illustration work is sequential and narrative-based, presenting biographical scenes, sometimes in the form of a tableau or more 'filmic' compositions. His renderings bear a high degree of verisimilitude to their subjects but are not stiff or tethered to any photographic reference material. His faces are expressive and his bodies dynamic, conveying motion. Several elements

of Duzyj's illustrations are central to understanding the mechanics that drive his animation: their basis in narrative, the accuracy and expressiveness of his portraiture and the implicit motion in his renderings of bodies. In addition, their similarities to comic art align with the latter's established links to 2D animation, a fact acknowledged by animation historians Bruno Bendazzi (2015:38) and Maureen Furniss (1999:137). While keeping these elements in mind, it would be useful to also consider Duzyj's work through the lens of animated performance.



FIGURE 4.12. Duzyj's portrait of American Football coach, team owner and commissioner Al Davis (left) and one of his illustration's for Tom Wolfe's *The Marvelous Mouth*, on Cassius Clay in New York City.

The animation and live action in Duzyj's documentaries exist in a symbiotic relationship: the interviews and location footage shot with the real-world protagonists of each film lend credibility and authority to his minimalist animation, while the latter in turn extends, dramatises and reflects on the narrative, visualising events that were previously undocumented and even delving into realms of fantasy as metaphor for inner states of being. All of this is in line with what Annabelle Honess Roe has posited as the functions of animation in a documentary context (Honess Roe, 2013:23-25). Where Duzyj's films are of particular interest is the extent to which an animation style can adhere to such limited treatment of motion while still eliciting empathy and engagement from an audience and retaining documentary veracity.

My use of the term 'minimalism' to describe Duzyj's animation style denotes an extreme form of the figurative mode of animated performance. His sequences exist at the far end of the limited animation spectrum, where there is little to no attempt at realistic motion. It is comprised of a very low number of images per second, often using 'holds' – still images totally devoid of motion – for several seconds at a time. These sequences are, in fact, more akin to an animatic – a screen-based storyboard – than to what audiences may expect of 'properly' animated

sequences. The pacing is slow, not only in terms of character motion, but also in the editing of shots. Despite this, these sequences are immersive and help drive the narrative. Duzyj's characters have presence and we relate to them as living personalities. All of this is due to a number of factors.

From a technical perspective, the high degree of expressiveness and nuance in Duzyj's drawings allows him to convey a lot of information through very limited means. A change of facial expression or shift in body posture can signal an emotional state or indicate a narrative turn. Combined with clever editing, rhythmic timing and sound effects, a small number of drawings with very limited motion can prove to be highly effective in eliciting any number of reactions from an audience. An example of this – done to humorous effect – is shown in Figure 4.13: a two-drawing sequence that introduces Haru Urara, the protagonist of *The Shining Star of Losers Everywhere,* to the audience. The sequence begins with an infographic-like display of Haru, accompanied by voice-over and cutaways to various live action talking heads reflecting on Haru's story, including her trainer, who notes that she was a timid horse, easily frightened by small sounds. At this point the sequence cuts back to the opening shot of Haru, where a bell-like sound triggers a hard cut to a second drawing of her, mid-air in a comical pose, disrupting the frame's carefully arranged composition. Comprised of a mere two drawings, the sequence barely qualifies as animation, but in its dynamic sequential rendering, kinetic quality and perfectly synchronised timing, it reads as a distilled essence of motion, rather than a succession of still images. Despite its extreme economy, the sequence perfectly fulfils its purpose: it introduces the character by providing an insight into her personality and elicits the audience's empathy through a combination of pathos and humour.



FIGURE 4.13. Haru Urara, the protagonist of *The Shining Stars of Losers Everywhere* is introduced to the audience.

As important as these technical aspects are, they are not the determining factor in the success of Duzyj's animation. Taken in isolation, his technique would be too limited to sustain an extended narrative. But technique is not the only factor that affects an audience's reading of a given performance. Crafton provides a good lead-in to this point when he takes Walt Disney to task for the insistence on his own version of embodiment as the pinnacle to which all animation should aspire:

> He [Disney] did not seem to grasp that embodiment did not take place by funneling resources into the most skilled animated acting possible, or that personality could not be created on-screen by skilled drawing alone. Whether identification and engagement took place was ultimately something that happened with the movie watcher – or not…. The reason stems from the ability and propensity of humans to embody anything they want: imagine kids playing with sticks and dolls, Brer Rabbit fooling Brers Fox and Bear with a tar baby, or the Tom Hanks character in Cast Away…. befriending the volleyball he named Wilson (Crafton, 2013:56).

Crafton's argument is that audience members fulfil the role of 'co-animators' in that they can project interiority and complexity onto the most limited of figurative performances (2013:56), imbuing a figurative performance with the interiority of an embodied one. This is part of what Crafton terms 'the performance *of* animation', which he conceptualises as "the encompassing context" of animation that exists beyond the screen and includes both the 'performance' of the animator that projects their own ideas and emotions into the work its reception by audiences (2013:18).

The conceptualisation of animation as a process that is 'completed' by the viewer is crucial in animated documentary, where the animation is experienced in relationship to a real-world referent, either directly in the form of sound, image or, in the case of a film like Joe Sheehan's *the ten mark* (2010), through an assertion of facts based on extensive historical research (Ward, 2011:294). Here, the viewer is called upon to both believe in the performance of the animated character and to remain aware of its constructedness, understanding that character as representing a real-world personage. In the case of Duzyj's films, the audience are the ones that activate the minimalist animation style, both fleshing out and 'completing' the visual aesthetic as well as investing its protagonists with authority, presence and emotional depth. They do this by reading the animated sequences as an extension of the live action, real world narrative,

associating the drawn characters with the live action indexical representations of each film's protagonists. In this way, the animated characters are granted the status of avatars. The use of the term 'avatar' here denotes a 'stand-in' or representative of its referent, where an animated character appears as a stylised but faithful rendering of both a real person, a body inhabiting the physical world, as well as that body's indexical representation in live action media[13].

These avatars, or the animated protagonists of animated documentary, function in ways that are analogous to the role fulfilled by their counterparts in purely fictional animated films but are also distinct. The avatar occupies a unique position in the sense that it is a pure construct called upon to serve within a documentary context. Its primary role, I would argue, is to elicit the empathy of the audience, serving as their focal point and guide within the narrative, but never to the extent that viewers cease to be aware of its constructed nature and its status as a representative or placeholder for the real-world counterpart it represents. If, as Crafton posits, the animated character can be understood as a performer, in the context of documentary it is called upon to fulfill a dual and contradictory role: embody and channel its living subject, while simultaneously signaling its status as a construct, resisting the audience's tendency towards a suspension of disbelief and not allowing them to be swept away by the illusion that it may possess autonomy. In this sense, these avatars are representative of the role that animation plays in a documentary context: to embody and serve the historical narrative and to forever 'point back' to the reality which it represents and interprets but can never supplant.

4.4.3 *Polonia*'s Avatars

As in Duzyj's films, the avatars in *Polonia* function as legitimate representations of their referents through a combination of visual design, the foregrounding of their relationship to the film's indexical elements, whether these are archival photographs and audio narration, and through the audience's projection. They serve as focal points in the narrative by acting as visual representations of various people from the historical world and performing their actions and behaviours as recounted by the narrators.

[13] While the term 'avatar' is commonly used to refer to either to an "incarnation…or embodiment" of a deity or "an electronic image that represents and may be manipulated by a computer user" (Merriam-Webster 2022), I believe my use of the term in the context of animated characters in non-fiction animation is justified, as it aligns with its established uses and meaning.

In some ways, the characters in *Polonia* differ substantively from those in Duzyj's films. Duzyj's style of illustration places great emphasis on realistic portraiture and is used to good effect in allowing audiences to identify a particular interview subject or other live action protagonist in the animated sequences. The sensitivity of the rendering of each likeness imbues the characters with a certain depth and seeming autonomy and avoids relegating them to the role of mere marionettes performing the actions that the narrative requires of them. It facilitates the audience's projection of interiority onto them. *Polonia*'s characters are generally rendered less realistically than those of Duzyj and are also more stylistically diverse. Character design is used to signal different worldviews and character traits, where the realism of the protagonist adults in both families implies seriousness and maturity, as compared with the broader stylisation of the children, connoting innocence and fun. In some aspects, they can be considered hyperreal, in the sense that they adhere to the rules of the cinematic space they inhabit. While their bodies may stretch and squash when in motion, this technique approximates motion blur and when they are still, their bodies conform to a consistent morphology throughout the film. In other aspects, their constructedness is highlighted through the disjuncture between the visual design of the various characters and shifts from grayscale, to line art, to colour. When Piotrek Strzelec's experiences in the USA show him moving through successive panels of a Herriman-style comic strip, he goes from full colour in one panel to line art in the next.

The motion of *Polonia*'s avatars is generally smoother than what we see in Duzyj's films, but the overall approach to their animation can be considered minimalist, adhering to a limited animation technique that uses looped actions, extended holds, small movements and a partial animation of the body. Their performances are broad, based on schematic facial expressions and only occasionally expressive body postures. There is a great reliance on the audience to imbue each avatar with greater depth and interiority than is visibly evident in their portrayal. This is done by projecting onto them the narrative content and vocal affect of the narration and by connecting each avatar to their real-world referent, depicted in the archival photographs. The extent to which this occurs depends on where each character sits in the film's hierarchy of characters.

At the top of this hierarchy are the film's narrators, that is my mother and father, my brothers Dobek and Ziemek, and Piotrek Strzelec. These five are clearly the film's protagonists, as it is their testimony that directs the narrative. The film makes clear the connection between each of the five narrators and their avatars when each first begins their narration. The 'second-tier'

avatars are those that have substantive roles in the narrative and whose connection to their real-world referents is foregrounded through archival photographs, but who are not narrators. This would include Piotrek's father, Zdzisław Strzelec, his mother and sister and General Wojciech Jaruzelski. I do not include myself in this category, as my role in the film is a unique one: while I appear as an avatar of my younger self throughout the film, I am not a narrator (though my voice can be heard on the soundtrack, asking interview questions and reacting to the interviewees' responses). As I am the filmmaker who is creating the images on screen, my cartoon depiction can be considered as both avatar and an instance of self-figuration.



FIGURE 4.14. Differences in the visual design of *Polonia's* child (left) and adult characters (right).

The third category in this hierarchy is comprised of figures in supporting roles, who are mentioned in the narration – sometimes by name – but who cannot be 'verified' through an indexical referent. Their depiction ranges from naturalistic to stereotypical: my aunt Renia is rendered fairly realistically; the militia officer at the station where the patriarchs of both families are surreptitiously detained after their arrests is designed to look haughty; the boorish man that complains about the food in Vitagena plays to the stereotype of the working-class Pole abroad: a cartoonish fool, overweight, with a large moustache. The next group in the hierarchy are characters depicting historical figures. These are people whose indexical images can be accessed in the public sphere and includes the leaders and other members of Solidarity (among them Wałęsa, Kuroń and Michnik). This category also includes several of the passengers on the Vitagena bus, whose presence is unobtrusive and who function as proverbial 'Easter Eggs', intentional messages or jokes hidden inside media (Bradley 2018). The personalities shown are Polish poster artist Waldemar Swierzy (who's work influenced *Polonia's* depiction of General Jaruzelski in his television address to the nation), animator Lotte Reiniger, film director Werner Herzog, German politician Willy Brandt, Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius and actress Jessica Tandy, embodying her role from the 1987 film, *Driving Miss Daisy.* The final category in the hierarchy includes characters that are entirely fabricated and who have a role that is equivalent

to that of ‘extras’ on a live-action film set: the crowds on the Lubin bridge, various militiamen and UB agents, some of the Solidarity members in the Siberian prison, the old folks staying in Vitagena, and some of the passengers on the bus.

Identifying the various strata in *Polonia*’s character hierarchy is important, as each character's position determines the degree to which they can be considered an avatar, based on the strength or weakness of their connection to an indexical referent. Only the characters in the upper strata of the hierarchy can be considered *true* avatars, as their prominence in the narrative results in a high frequency of juxtaposition against their real-world referents, in the form of indexical media, whether recorded audio or archival photographs. For this reason, the viewer is kept aware of their constructedness. This gives them a high degree of ‘documentary value’, because no matter how convincing their performance or what degree of autonomy they appear to possess, the viewer understands them to be merely a stand-in for a real person from the historical world. The further down the hierarchy one goes, the fewer and more distant are the indexical links that the characters have, which makes them less ‘reliable’ in a documentary context. The viewer cannot easily verify them as a construct because their indexical referents are either ‘weak’ (few in number or not prominent in the narrative) or not present. The weaker a character's link to their real-world referent, the less they can be considered an avatar and increasingly resemble a character in the order of one we would see in a fictional animated film.

4.5 Sound

4.5.1 Narration

At *Polonia*’s core are the voices of its five narrators, viz. my parents, Kazimierz and Zofia, my brothers Dobek and Ziemek and our family friend, Piotrek Strzelec, edited from the interviews that I conducted with each of them and the field recording I made of my mother in conversation. Their voices constitute one of the primary indexical links to the historical world and their recollection and narration of events comprise the basis for the film’s narrative. Moreover, the presence of the human voice in an animated film means that it becomes the primary element to which audiences can relate. Even in such a case where the language in which that voice is speaking cannot be understood by an audience, the tone, intonation, timbre and meter of the voice remains relatably human in its sonic textures. Thus, non-Polish speakers watching *Polonia* will still be able to respond to the sound of the narrator’s voices as sound, despite not being to understand the language being used.

Polonia's narration, to some extent, complicates the film's schema of cinematic and archival space. While both its music and sound effects, both diegetic and non-diegetic, fall comfortably within these two spaces, in some cases, the narrators' voices seem to sit outside of them. The film has five narrators, but six narrations. My mother's narration is split across two different recordings, namely the field recording of her conversation with a taxi driver in Poland, August 2015 and a brief interview I conducted with her in May 2016. The two are quite different and occupy two different spaces within the film, providing an understanding of two different kinds of voice in a documentary context. Her field recording is an example of what Chris Cagle refers to as a 'spatialised voice'[14], one where the voice is situated within the film's spatial environment (Cagle, 2018:189). It was recorded on an old Blackberry cellphone and the audio quality reflects this, where my mother's and the taxi driver's voices sound brittle and slightly muffled and compete with various ambient sounds of the moving car in which the recording was made, as well as exterior traffic and faint music emanating from the car's radio. Despite extensive wok to digitally 'clean up' the recording, the voices and environmental sounds commingle and blend. The field recording exists as part of the film's archival space, as it was clearly captured at a particular time and place and its poor audio quality indicates that it is located further in the past than it in fact is.

The remaining five narrations were recorded using hand-held digital voice recorders, resulting in much clearer voices. Each was also captured in an interior, relatively quiet environment. Where ambient sounds are present, they are infrequent and do not substantively interfere with the voice as the dominant sonic element. Each of these recordings has a varying degree of resonance, resulting in an either more or less acoustic quality. My father's recording is frequently punctuated with the sound of birds, heard through the glass sliding doors of the room where the recording took place, expanding the space within which his voice is perceived to be located. Piotrek Strzelec's interview was conducted via Skype, with the recorder place beneath the computer's speaker, limiting the amount of ambient noise and isolating his voice. As a result of these disparate qualities, all of these recordings exist somewhere between a spatialised voice and what Cagle terms the 'spectral voice', which he describes as "a haunting presence in its recounting of a historical event, a disembodied 'ghost'" (2018:194). The spectral voice no longer sounds as if it is within the film space, but outside of it. Where the taxi field recording's grainy quality and capturing of a spontaneous conversation make it sound like it is located within the

[14] Cagle uses the American spelling of the word in his essay - 'spatialized'. I will use the British and South African spelling.

film, the other five recordings occupy a third, meta space, both outside the archival and cinematic spaces, speaking *to* the events of film, rather than being located within them.

Beyond their relationship to the film's spatial construct, all six narrational recordings act as the film's primary index, its connection to the historical world. They do this in two different ways. The grainy quality of the field recording and its embeddedness within what is clearly a physical space give it a certain authenticity, commensurate with Ehrlich's observation of how what she terms 'precarious aesthetics' – low resolution or blurriness – that impart images with a higher truth-value in the public's perception (2021:38). The remaining five narrational recordings highlight the film's constructedness not only through the juxtaposition of their indexical quality against those elements of the film that have been clearly manufactured, but also in their varying 'spectral' quality, by which they:

> ...stand outside the space of the image while making the image seem to emerge from the voice, as if the manifestation of a dream. The spectral voice invokes the real and suggests its haunting elusiveness (Cagle, 2018:197).

Rick Altman asserts that there is a "fundamental lie" in sound film: "the implication that sound is produced by the image when in fact it remains independent of it" (Altman, 1980:6 in Sjöberg, 2018:45). This artifice goes back to the earliest days of sound in film, with the overdubbing of voices (Sjöberg, 2018:48) and the addition of foley sound effects to a film's soundtrack to enhance the diegesis. Cagle observes that, as a result of the technical possibilities afforded by digital technologies, "over the past two decades documentary sound design has converged with fiction film sound design in its production practices and sonic aesthetics" (Cagle, 2018:188). In contrast to both fiction film and live action documentaries, animated documentary breaks this illusion through the stark contrast between use of images that are clearly manufactured and audio that we recognise as being indexical. Nowhere is this disjunct more evident than when an animated characters appear to speak with the voice of a narrator. This technique is used regularly in animated documentaries, notably in *Waltz with Bashir*, which uses animation to re-enact Folman's interviews with his subjects, rendered in a simplified but realistic style and framed either as if we were observing an informal conversation, or using a more formal framing of the interviewee. Throughout these reenactments, we see the animated characters 'speak' in the voices of their real-world referents. However, the reality is even more complicated than what we observe on screen. Folman had initially met and spoken to all the people that appear in the

film's interviews (though this point is not clear, as he mentions a researcher being the one that met with one of the people interviewed). These conversations were then re-recorded in a sound studio, because Folman thought that "the human ear is totally non-tolerant to location [sound] in terms of animation" (Guerrasio 2009). Folman admits that two of the voices were recorded by actors and not by the original interviewees:

> ...we had two actors in the film too because the guy from Holland had cold feet a few days before shooting. He didn't mind [being in] the story so we took his monologue and we gave it to an actor and we invented a new face. It's one of the things you can do when you have the freedom of animation. Basically, we were having the same discussion as he had twice before, first with the researcher and the second time with me (Guerrasio 2009).

This example highlights the fact that even though indexical audio is considered one of the key authenticating elements in an animated documentary, directly connecting it to the real world and highlighting its constructedness, it is complicated by the some of the same factors that we find in live-action audio. In his assertion that animation grants a filmmaker certain freedoms, Folman implies that he felt the authenticity of his interview subjects' stories was sufficient in itself and didn't need to be substantiated through field-recordings and even allowed for the re-recording of an interview with an actor. In some sense, the contrast of the indexical voice with the animated construct imparts immediate authority to the voice in animated documentary. We immediately assume that the voices in Bashir are 'authentic', though in some sense, at least two of them are not.

In *Polonia*, those scenes in which narrators speak directly through characters on screen provide an interesting study for how the narrators relate to their on-screen avatars and to the character hierarchy. They further complicate the spatial relationship between narration and on-screen image by introducing what Cagle refers to as 'the uncanny voice', which foregrounds a film's artifice by intentionally creating a disjunct between voice and image (2018:198). An instance of this is the sequence where my mother goes to her neighbourhood Militia Station to enquire about my father's whereabouts, following his arrest. In her narration of this episode, my mother uses direct speech to 'act out' her recollection of the exchange between her and the officer on duty. On-screen, her direct speech is matched using the technique of 'lip-sync', animating the shape of a character's mouth to match the sound of the words being spoken in the audio track,

which makes it appear as if my mother is literally speaking *through* her avatar. While the viewer will have, by this point in the film, formed an association between my mother's narration and her on-screen avatar, to see a sync between her voice and the performance of a cartoon rendering of her younger self possesses an uncanny quality, a near-merging of two orders of reality, the real and the constructed. In that same scene, the militia officer's responses, as recounted in my mother's narration, are also animated using lip-sync, so that he too appears to 'speak' with her voice. This increases the sense of the uncanny and evokes what Patrik Sjöberg refers to as a 'Frankensteinian' impulse, a type of ventriloquism where one body's voice is transplanted onto another, resulting in a clear mismatch (2018:58). This scene provides a clue to understanding the ontology of *Polonia*'s animation and the hierarchy of its avatars: as the narrator of the scene, it is my mother's recollection that is being visualised and it is that which determines the actions of characters. While her own avatar appears to act with some degree of autonomy, the supporting character seems to lack that autonomy and behaves like a marionette, fulfilling the dictates of her narration. Ultimately, what we see on screen is a recreation of the narrator's memory of events that took place in the historical world, but from their perspective.



FIGURE 4.15. An instance where a narrator speaks directly 'through' *Polonia*'s characters.

4.5.2 Music and Foley

James Wierzbicki, citing Renė Clair, draws a distinction between films' use of realistic sound (*film parlant*) and the "creative use of sound effects not for the sake of realism but for the sake of adding extra layers of meaning to a film's narrative" (*film sonore*) (2012:10). Wierzbicki's reference to 'sound' here indicates both music and foley (2012:9). This distinction between realistic and non-realistic, expressive use of sound seems to align with the notion of diegetic sound, made to seem as if emanating from within the world of the film, and non-diegetic sound that exists as a 'meta' element beyond the filmic world. This distinction also seems to imply that diegetic sound, whether music or foley, adds to a film's realism (or hyperrealism) and non-

diegetic sound draws attention to its constructedness. This seems true even in the case of a science-fantasy film like *Star Wars* (1976), where the sound designer has to manufacture foley effects for phenomena that have no corollary in the real world (speaking robots, laser guns, alien creatures), but due to their inclusion in the film's diegesis, make its hyperreal fantasy world even more immersive.

However, this relationship is more complex than this clear delineation between diegetic and non-diegetic would make it appear. As Andrew Ford points out, there is a strange paradox in how audiences respond to non-diegetic music in films: where it is evident that the music is not emanating from within the film's cinematic space, it ought to break the illusion of realism, but instead immerses audiences deeper within the 'reality' of the film's world (Ford, 2010:10). While Ford goes on to comment on the way in which film music functions, indicating to an audience what they should be feeling, he fails to account for why what ought to be a self-evident marker of a film's constructedness fails to function reflexively, and instead adding to its realism. One can only surmise that this is due to music's affective power and the long-established convention of the inclusion of a score in both fictional films and in some documentaries. Both the filmmakers of the 1960s 'observational' documentaries and the directors belonging to the Danish Dogme 95 group recognised this paradox and banned musical underscores from their films in an attempt at a greater sense of realism (Nichols 2017; Ford 2010). The relationship between film music and audience response is complex, where, while its affective qualities do have a strong centripetal force, they can concomitantly act centrifugally if the music is used to make an overt comment on screen action, as when it is used ironically. If the disjunct between image and sound is obvious enough, or if an audio element draws attention to itself by making reference to an established trope (such as the 'Wilhelm Scream'[15] used in many Hollywood action films) and is recognised by an audience, then I would argue that that element is no longer immersive and functions centrifugally, highlighting the film's constructedness.

Polonia's music and foley effects can be categorised as diegetic and non-diegetic and, as with its visual elements, belonging to either the film's cinematic or archival spaces. *Polonia*'s cinematic music functions like a conventional film score, setting an emotional tone for the scenes it accompanies. Its archival music acts reflexively as a meta-commentary on the on-

[15] The foley effect known as 'The Wilhelm Scream' is a foley effect of a man's scream, first used in the 1953 film *The Charge at Feather River*. The foley effect began to be used by film sound designers, becoming an "industry joke", frequently used in Hollywood films (Cavna, 2021).

screen action, denoting historical time period and location. In the scene where Piotrek Strzelec describes the Polish refugees' fantasies about their future lives in the USA, the music – Irving Berlin's *The International Rag* – works in tandem with the on-screen archival images to illustrate the parallel that Piotrek Strzelec draws between the experiences of refugee Poles in the 1980s and early 20th Century American immigrants. The photos and music make explicit what Piotrek states implicitly, when he makes reference to Don Bluth's *An American Tale*, a cartoon anthropomorphism of early 20th Russian Jewish immigrants. *Polonia* also makes use of archival recordings as expressive foley effects. An example of this is the audio recording of General Jaruzelski's address to the nation on 13 December, 1981. This archival foley grounds the on-screen action in specific historical time periods and locations and also serves as a means of indexical authentication. *Polonia*'s cinematic foley adds greater realism to some sequences, but in others, it acts reflexively. In these instances, the disjunct between non-realist foley effects with the action on screen allows audiences to understand the sound effects to carry intentional signification, in accordance with Alfred Hitchock's idea (paraphrased by Wierzbicki) that "...sound effects should be the equivalent to dialogue, [in] that they should 'say' something relevant to the drama" (Wierzbicki, 2012:11). An example of this is the foley that accompanies the character of the Crow which, when taking flight, is scored with the sound of a helicopter and, when swooping, with archival audio of dive bombers from the battle of Iwo Jima, along with the sound of other military jets. Its shriek is a mix of a bird's cry and a siren, making reference to the curfew that was in place during Poland's period of martial law. All of these sounds combine into a music concrete collage of militaristic sounds, adding an indexical but non-realist 'weight' to the animation.

Conclusion

As noted by Nea Ehrlich, animation finds itself in a unique position, due to the conditions of our current media climate, with audiences willing to consider it as a legitimate documentary medium (2021). This openness towards animation is predicated both on animation's ability to clarify complex information and on the medium's self-reflexive highlighting of its own constructedness (Ehlrich:2021). Implicit in this self-reflexivity is animation's admission of its limitations in representing objective truth. The trust that audiences place in non-fiction animation challenges filmmakers to respond both creatively and responsibly in the ways they use this medium to represent and speak about our world. This practice-led research project has sought to achieve a better understanding of the ways in which animated documentary can be conceptualised, by exploring ways in which the expressive range of animation may be expanded in the context of a non-fiction historical narrative.

The first key theoretical insight that emerged from this practice-led research process was that an animated documentary might be structured according to a spatial taxonomy, comprised of distinct archival and cinematic spaces. This taxonomy assists in identifying how the historical world is represented within an animated documentary and how archival and wholly manufactured elements combine in communicating a non-fiction narrative, reflecting John Grierson's notion of documentary as "the creative treatment of actuality" (1933:8). Here, archival elements are the basis for a historical animated documentary's credibility, serving as indexical evidence of events that occurred in the historical world, while its cinematic elements are those that are manufactured expressly in order to narrativise these events – drawings, paintings, puppets, animation and camera movement. Conceptualising a film's archival and cinematic elements as 'spaces' both acknowledges that the film creates a virtual world into which audiences enter and which they then inhabit, while emphasising the film's materiality and constructedness. A clearly-defined taxonomy allows the filmmaker to maintain boundaries between those elements of the film that are evidentiary and those that are interpretative. By establishing these boundaries, the filmmaker is granted creative freedom and the ability to experiment along the spectrum between fantasy and actuality, while maintaining documentary integrity. Self-reflexive strategies employed by the filmmaker in regard to the film's visual design, sound design, motion and structure, allow audiences to remain alert to the film's constructedness and its status as an interpretation of historical events.

This spatial taxonomy grew directly out of *Polonia*'s production process. This began with the piecing together of the historical narrative through the gathering of archival material, conducting interviews and engaging in image-and-text-based historical research. The artifacts that comprise *Polonia*'s archival materials, namely my father's coat, his radio, slides from Poland and from my family's stay in Germany, printed documents, photographs, badges and pins, archival audio recordings, grounded the film in their material qualities. The sensory experience of these materials, their tactility, the quality of printing, grain, texture and colour, directly influenced the aesthetic of the film and led to a desire to create elements that emulated and complemented these materials. This material-centric approach led to the conception of the film as a construct, reflexively emphasising its own material properties, resisting hyperreal immersion and thus facilitating a documentary credibility.

This research also explored the significance of including 'fakes' within the film's archival which, while seeming to undermine the truth claims of the animated documentary, can act as metacommentary – echoing similar strategies used in mockumentary – both critiquing the superficial use of archival materials as signifiers of authenticity and serving to highlight a film's constructedness. This exploration of different categories of faked archival materials, their uses and significance – specifically in relation to notions of archival aestheticisation, reflexivity and constructedness – is something that has hitherto been overlooked in discussions of animated documentary and will hopefully spark further debate on the topic and open up new avenues for creative practice.

Another key outcome was the re-conceptualisation of how animated characters can be understood in a documentary context. Central to this conception is the notion of the avatar as an animated representation of a real-world referent. Understood within the context of animated performance, the avatar seems anachronistic in the sense that it conveys interiority, a feature of what Donald Crafton terms the embodied mode, while embracing a minimalist form of Crafton's figurative mode (characterised by a broader, more schematic performance style) (2013). The avatar is as if a blank slate onto which audiences' project interiority, based on their association of the character with its indexical referent. The notion that a character could be highly stylised in its visual design and extremely limited and formulaic in its motion yet be endowed with personality was something that I discovered during the making of *Polonia* and that was confirmed and clarified when I analysed Mickey Duzyj's animated documentaries. The avatar

appears to be a unique mode of character, one that can only exist within animated documentary.

The mechanism that drives the avatar is that audiences endow it with depth and interiority by connecting it to its indexical referent and projecting the qualities they perceive in that referent on to the avatar. In some sense, this mechanism by accounts for how audiences 'read' or experience animated documentaries more generally, projecting their sense of the truth-value and authenticity of the historical world onto the filmic construct and thereby granting or withholding it documentary veracity. This mechanism also holds the potential for a range of possibilities for creative expression and abstraction within animated documentary aesthetics. One can see parallels here with Ehrlich's insights into the 'post photographic logic' of the deictic index as an alternative to the iconicity and indexicality of the photographic image (2021:66-68). Both the avatar and Elrich's notion of deixis as index point to the possibility of animated documentaries becoming even further untethered from a reliance on mimetic depictions of external reality, free to experiment with form, expanding their scope of creative expression as a means to comment on, interrogate, clarify and preserve non-fiction narratives. As long as audiences trust that the indexical elements present in a film – whether visual, auditory, kinetic or informational – as in the case of what Ehrlich terms the "non-physical" realities of mathematics and code (2021:74) – are a bridge between the real world and the manufactured cinematic reality, they will be willing to accept that they are engaging with actuality.

Apart from leading to these novel theoretical insights, the creation of *Polonia* achieved several other outcomes that I had hoped it might. It fittingly documented my family's and the Strzelec family's emigration histories, acting as a catalyst for renewing and deepening discussions among family members and keeping alive and renewing memories from that time. On a creative and formal level, it allowed me to expand my technical knowledge of image-making, animation and filmmaking, particularly in a longer-form narrative. I believe that both in terms of its aesthetics and its visualization of the historical narrative, the film is innovative and offers a dense, layered presentation, interpretation and commentary on the events that it depicts. With my background being in design, illustration, videography and animation and this being the first documentary project that I had undertaken, it is perhaps unsurprising that the film lays so much emphasis on its visual and cinematic aspects. It is difficult to see through my bias in this regard and my hope is that the richness of these elements in the film does not at times overwhelm the historical narrative at its core and the testimony of the interviewees. However, I hold that the

film's visual design choices, aesthetic and use of space all evidence innovative strategies for how animation can be used as a legitimate and credible documentary medium, fully employing the medium's ability for creative expression while reflexively revealing its constructedness and pointing back to the historical world which it represents and interprets.

Animated documentary continues to be an exciting and expanding genre, stretching beyond film into gaming and virtual reality (Ehrlich, 2021). Used ethically and creatively, it can continue to allow audiences to productively engage with various facets of our world and to provide distinctive, meaningful experiences of spectatorship in a media environment saturated with disposable 'content'. My own interest lies in animation's ability to revivify audiences' engagement with historical narratives, using animation's broad visual language and the complex interrelationship of form and narrative to spark audience interest in histories they might otherwise have overlooked. On two occasions when *Polonia* was previewed for audiences in Poland, once at a seminar at the Szczecin Academy of Art in 2017 and the second time at my cousin's home in 2021, I received similar responses to it from a young liberal student and from my much older, more conservative uncle, who had been a member of Solidarity in the 1980s and had experienced the State of War firsthand. Both were enthusiastic in their feedback and remarked on the innovative way in which a historical narrative with which they were both intimately familiar received approach. It was heartening to hear the similarity of this response from two different generations of Poles, separated by age and political outlook. This anecdotal evidence resonates with what Sheila Sofian articulates, namely that:

> […] the use of iconographic images impact the viewer in a way in which live-action cannot. The images are personal and 'friendly'. We are willing to receive animated images without putting up any barriers, opening ourselves up for a powerful and potentially emotional experience. The simplicity of the images relieves some of the harshness of the topic being described (2005:7).

While not all animated documentaries are 'simple' or 'friendly' in their aesthetic, their novelty value and association with fantasy and children's entertainment (keeping in mind that not all children's entertainment subscribes to the Disney model) seem to encourage audiences to let down their guard. My intention is to continue this line of practice-based research, extending the language of animation in non-fiction narrative, responding to audiences' openness to experiencing history with fresh eyes.

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Appendix A

Transcript of Zofia Pater Field Recording and Interview

Zofia Pater – Car Recording, 30 August 2015 *(ZP –Zofia Pater / TD – Taxi Driver)*

ZP: (*inaudible beginning)*… I came out, the children woke up. My husband went to the bathroom and was quite befuddled, because the whole thing came out of nowhere. He put on his shoes. It was the worst winter we'd had in a hundred years. It was so cold that I think Lubin had never seen as much snow as it did that winter. He put on a pair of thin moccasins and, luckily, a thick coat. I said...I looked out the window and there was a Militia car waiting outside....*(inaudible)…"...where are you taking him?"* - *"You'll find out in good time."* And that was it. What the hell was going on? I had no idea what was happening. The children and I sat up until morning, we turned on the television and there was Jaruzelski saying, *"We are standing on the edge of a precipice.."* in that voice of his...

TD: He was announcing Martial Law?

ZP: Yes, Martial Law. We just found out about it then. My cousin Renia came – she lived on Sokola Street. We didn't really know what to do. Everyone went out on the bridge and there was saw the tanks...coming...coming...people were counting them: 200, 300... And those crafty buggers were going around the block to create the impression...

TD: That there were so many of them!

ZP: Maybe there were forty or fifty of them. They had their muzzles pointed at the people. We were standing on the bridge and *(inaudible)* war. And everyone was saying *"War! It's war!"*. They took people. We had these friends, Strzelec was his name. They lived near us. He was a *(inaudible)* at the mine. There was another man, his first name was Szymon, he was a high school teacher – they took him too. All three of them at once. Oh, and there was a medical lab technician that worked with me whose husband was a miner. They took him too. And all of them at once. So, I went. I took little Łukasz - this one *(indicating Łukasz Pater, sitting in the back of the car)* - who was four years old then. Renia said, *"Take the child, or they might lock you up too".* I went to the Police station – they were called 'Militia' then – and told them that a Militia car had taken my husband that morning. And the officer said, *"Really? We know nothing about it."* I thought, you can't talk to these people. And they were shameless: *"We don't know anything about that."*

TD: They were playing dumb.

ZP: Yes! *"Your husband hasn't been here."* I said, *"How can he not have been here when you took him from our home?"* So, he took out the log book and said, *"Look here ma'am, there's no record of it. Here we have a drunkard, here we have someone else and there's no other record".* Meanwhile, my husband was sitting there...

TD: Below.

ZP: Below.

TD: In the common room (*large holding cell)*.

ZP: Yes! They were all there. And they were waiting to see what to do with them, because they'd been eager to get them and then didn't know what to do with them once they had them. Then they took them to Głogów. But it turned out that while they were waiting, they *(the authorities)* had to transport all the prisoners out of Głogów and the whole thing wasn't very well coordinated. They didn't want the prisoners mixing with them, because they were classed as 'interned' and not in prison as criminals. So, they drove the prisoners out somewhere, put all our guys into one room, a toilet in the corner...*(inaudible)*...It was quite chaotic. You weren't allowed to drive anywhere outside of Lubin. Some taxi drivers told me later that they took someone to *(inaudible)* and couldn't come back because the roads were blocked and you couldn't get through. In any case...

TD: They were controlling the roads outside the city.

ZP: You needed a pass to get through. I wanted to go to Legnica to see the Commandant. I eventually got a pass and I went. I waited an hour until some prosecutor kindly deigned to see me. He was sitting on his desk and said, *"So, what can I assist you with my dear lady?"* One sits because...

TD: I know, I know...

ZP: I wanted to strangle him! The little shit.... In any case, he told me...No, not him, it was...what was his name...Rydzak. Our acquaintance, Mr Rydzak. And it turned out that Mr Rydzak had some friends in the Militia and he said, *"I'll find out. Meet me here and when I'm coming off my morning shift, I'll find out".* And he told me that he was in Głogów. After two weeks I managed to get a pass to go to Głogów...

TD: A visit?

ZP: Yes, a visit. And my husband told me that the bishop had been to see them, this and that...But people went into a real panic. They were saying, *"They're going to deport them Siberia! We have to get them onions or they'll get scurvy!"* It was...

TD: It gives you goosebumps...

ZP: When one looks at it today it seems like a comedy...

TD: But we didn't know what they could do! They could have done anything!
ZP: That's it. I told my neighbour that I was going to see my husband and she said, *"Onions! Onions! Take him onions!"* I said, *"Hang on, he's only been isolated for a week or two, so nothing's happened to him yet".* My husband told me that they were receiving packages with onions, vitamins...In any case, things went on. My husband, as usual, spoke his mind, so they punitively moved him to Ostrowo Wielkopolskie.
TD: *(inaudible question)*
ZP: Yes! They wanted them to sign agreements, collaborate. And my husband said, *"I'm too old for your games"* and gave them a piece of his mind – in front of the bishop – and said: *"Alright. Charge us. What did we do? I was the Chairman of the Worker's Union at the hospital. I never went on strike..."* - because medical workers are not permitted to strike - *"...neither did I go out on any big actions...What's going on here? What are you up to?"* And they had arrested all the chairmen of the unions.
TD: So that they wouldn't make trouble? *(inaudible, gist)*
ZP: That's what they said: *"We did it just in case."* And he said, *"Sure, just in case..."* So anyway, it was difficult to get to Ostrowo because it was far. My sons were at school with a girl whose father had a car and a large delivery vehicle and because of that had special coupons for petrol and he said, *"I'll take you."* But I have to say that people were really...
TD: They helped one another.
ZP: Yes. We were all in it together.
TD: One family.
ZP: Yes, yes. There *(in the prison at Ostrowo Wielkopolskie)* they again tried to get my husband to collaborate: *"We'll let you out, but you'll do this for us..."* He said: *"I won't do anything for you and you can keep me locked up"* and that was that. In the meantime, I found out that Jaruzelski had again started making proclamations: "If anyone is not satisfied living in the People's Republic of Poland, they are free to leave at any time and we won't put any obstacles in their way". I thought to myself: *"Too bad. I'd never planned to leave Poland, but if this is how it's going to be...".* If I'd known how things were going to turn out in the end, we'd probably never have left. But he was talking like that...the kids were still young...Oh, and the militiaman had come to my husband and said: "You sir, have three children. You'd probably like for them to complete their studies, to have careers..."
TD: They could cause problems.
ZP: Yes, yes! *"Forget about it. You sir, can forget about it".* They were saying things like that. And, because America was always the first...*(inaudible)*...we'll go to the American embassy and

speak to them. The restrictions were relaxed a little then. There was a train from here to Warsaw. The people at the embassy were very nice, they spoke with us and said that they'd heard what the First Secretary *(Jaruzelski)* had said, but that they hadn't put anything in place yet for people wanting to emigrate. They told us to leave our address with them and as soon as they'd heard anything they would contact us. A week later they sent us some forms to fill in by courier and we were asked to go for an interview. My husband also had to be at the interview, so I quickly called Ostrowo and they let him out on a pass. It turned out that things were a bit complicated, because one couldn't apply for political asylum from one's own country – one had to do it from outside the country. They arranged for us to go to West Germany. But you should have seen how they greeted us there! They made available two large *pensionats (hotels)* - there must have been about 200 people there - for the Solidarity families. Full board, a daily allowance – 5 Deutschmarks per person daily, which was a lot back then. The food was so good that I put on about four kilograms there.

TD: How long were you there?

ZP: We were there five weeks. The length of our stay there depended on how quickly we could find a sponsor in America. You needed a sponsor that would take responsibility for you. Some people left after five days, some left after two and we... *(inaudible)*...rested there. It was also the school holidays, so it suited us to stay as long as we did. In America, we were taken in by a doctor, who had a large house, for six weeks and after that we went onto social welfare. I can't say that I particularly liked America, but it was alright. The problem we had was with our careers: we had to redo all our exams...

TD: But you knew the language?

ZP: I didn't. My husband spoke it fluently. I went to Community College and learned some of the fundamentals. We made friends and found out that in South Africa we wouldn't have to write the medical exams. This was the main thing that motivated us. Writing an exam, not knowing the language...We actually did write the exams once, a lot of the terminology is in Latin, but they disqualified all the results because the Americans were buying copies of a stolen test. It was the first time that the results were disqualified. In the meantime, we had already gone to Los Angeles, where they had opened a new African consulate. We were told we could go there and would be given work right away. The process took 22 months, but...*(inaudible)...*as soon as I got off the plane I liked South Africa. It's something between Europe and America.

TD: Is there no fascism there?

ZP: No.

TD: Do the Blacks not like the Whites?

ZP: I wouldn't say that the Blacks like the Whites very much because in the past the Whites oppressed them, but generally it's slowly fading away...

Zofia Pater Interview, 2 April 2016 *(ZP –Zofia Pater / ŁP – Łukasz Pater)*

ZP: So, what do you want to know?

ŁP: Impressions...I've put together the narrative...

ZP: But who's told you about Bad Soden? Dad, yes?

ŁP: Dad, Dobek, Ziemek...Do you want to add anything? I don't have anything about America from you.

ZP: Regarding Bad Soden, I'd like to add that it was like a holiday, after all the stress associated with dad's imprisonment, with us leaving, having to organise everything...In Bad Soden we rested and it was very pleasant and I have very fond memories of it. Then when we went to America it was a bit of a shock because apart from the fact that the flight took so long to get there, crossing time zones so we landed at night...We got there at night and you all thought we'd arrived at a hotel, our sponsors' house was so big. It turned out that they were doctor's, very nice people. And, I have to say that I also have fond memories of our stay in America and the people were nice and the Polish community took good care of us, but there was no chance of us staying on account of our profession. Even if we'd passed the qualifying exams to work in the US, we probably wouldn't have both found the same place for our residencies. You three were young, and the possibility of one us in different parts of the States doing our internships wasn't something we could consider. We found out from a Polish psychiatrist living in Seattle with a friend in Kimberley, also practicing as a psychiatrist, that there was a possibility of working in South Africa. There were some difficulties with applying for work there because the SA government wasn't keen on taking people, taking Catholics and they definitely didn't want anyone from a communist country, thinking that we might import communism into their country. We had to go to the consulate for an interview. Luckily there was a new one in Los Angeles, otherwise we'd have had to have gone to New York. So, the two of us went to Los Angeles and it was a long trip, but we got the chance to see Santa Monica and Los Angeles and it turned out that after a year and a half of waiting they accepted us to work in South Africa and we went. If it hadn't been for all the difficulties associated with having to qualify to practice medicine again, writing the exams, learning the language it was very possible that we'd have stayed in the US, because I basically liked it there. Besides, it's such a big country that one could have always found a good place to live there. But, as I say, because of our profession it was almost impossible and so we had to find another place and we were luckily in that Africa accepted

doctors without them having to pass an entrance exam., which soon after our arrival there they made a requirement.

Appendix B

Transcript of Kazimierz Pater Interview, 22 January 2016

(KP – Kazimierz Pater / ŁP – Łukasz Pater)

ŁP: The narrative begins more or less with your arrest in 1981.

KP: Oh, *that* arrest.

ŁP: Then more or less that time and then our leaving for Bad Soden and the early part of our stay in America. You don't have to cover all the details, but at least in part. My first specific question to you is, when you were arrested, was it the ZOMO who came?

KP: It was the Militia. And an officer of the UB.

ŁP: And what were the ZOMO?

KP: They were barracked paramilitary branches, armed with anti-riot gear.

ŁP: And were they only formed in '81?

KP: No, they'd existed for some time. I don't know exactly when they were first formed. But they existed and were used to disperse demonstrations, quelling public protests.

ŁP: They weren't militia? They were separate?

KP: Yes. They were barracked, usually recruited from the army. They would offer it to men that were finishing their military service and were keen to serve in those branches.

ŁP: So, there were no police, but militia? The militia came for you in the morning?

KP: At about three, four in the morning.

ŁP: Out of nowhere?

KP: With a knock at the door. I opened the door and there were three of them, one in uniform – or two in uniform – and one in a coat: he was a member of the UB, the Ministry for Public Security, a kind of Polish Gestapo.

ŁP: And they took you to the station?

KP: To the militia station in Lubin. I was in a single-person cell. It was almost six o'clock in the morning. And there I heard a voice, which I recognised as that of Genral Jaruzelski, through the door. The militiamen had the radio on. And I figured out the narrative of the whole thing because he began with something about the nation standing on the edge of a precipice... I figured out what was going on, because there had been rumours of preparations for a State of War. They were circulating among people, of course. And that was confirmed. They were broadcasting that same speech every hour or so on the radio...and on television, but of course we couldn't see that. Later that same day we were loaded into prison transports and we were taken to Głogów.

It's a town on the Odra River, about 40km north of Lubin. The prison was for people that had committed less serious crimes and had been given light sentences. They were made to work on construction. They were cleared out the prison that week in order to make room for the 'interned', which is how we were referred to.

ŁP: There were enough of you to fill the prison?

KP: Well, in Poland about 8 000 people were arrested. In Głogów the conditions were quite light. There was no forced labour or confessions – we were left in peace. Well, apart from...there *were* some mean wardens. The Commandant of the prison, in particular, was a nasty piece of work. We spent the night there and in the morning that commandant and his entourage visited specific cells - were in six-person cells - he came to my surname, looked at me and said: *"Ah, little doctor – so that's how it is"*. I replied, *"Yes, little commandant"*. He must have read my file and knew who he was dealing with.

ŁP: But why did they arrest you in the first place?

KP: Because I'd been the Vice Chairman of the Lubin Solidarity Medical Workers Union. But, during that Summer, I think it was in July or August, the Chairman of the Union who was Mrs Grażyna - I think 'Leżynska' was her surname – had gone to Austria and forgot to come back.

ŁP: I see.

KP: So, I automatically became Chairman. It was a position that came with many responsibilities. There were about 1 500 medical workers in Lubin. There was a large new City Hospital, about six stories high, also a smaller one and then a separate Miners' Hospital.... a lot of medical workers. Lubin had a population of close to 100 000. It was a mining center. And so, it had a concomitantly large Health Service.

ŁP: Mom worked in the Miners' Hospital?

KP: No. Mom was a radiologist at the City Hospital, the new one. I worked in the Miners' Hospital but after passing my second exam as an ENT I also moved to the City Hospital and worked there. After becoming Chairman, I more or less gave up working as a doctor. One couldn't manage both.

ŁP: You had that many duties?

KP: Well, I did have many duties, interventions.

ŁP: For how long? 1980?

KP: No, I was in Głogów for about a month and a half, the whole of January and in February a group of about eight of us were selected – the so-called 'defiant' ones – and I, for my past deeds, was chosen to be in that group and we were taken to Ostrowo Wielkopolskie. I was trying to contribute in prison...trying to teach English to whoever wanted to learn.

ŁP: You'd already had English lessons?

KP: I was interested in English and could hold a conversation to some extent. I mostly taught myself. I never took any formal English lessons anywhere. In high school – and which I gloriously never completed – I had French as a foreign language for one year. So, in February they took us to Ostrowo Wielkopolskie, where conditions were markedly better. The commandant of that prison told us openly that we were there just for the time being, we had our rights. He said: *"I hold to the principle that whatever is not expressly forbidden is allowed"*. Meanwhile, the previous commandant had had the opposite attitude, that everything that was not forbidden was allowed. We had a whole floor of the prison assigned for us. Forty-seven interned persons were brought there. The regimen was quite free. For several hours a day the cells were open and we could visit with one another. There was a library. Hour-long walks, or longer if one wanted. The wardens expressed full sympathy with the interned. Once, I was a witness to an event: there was an officer with a rank of Lieutenant or Second Lieutenant, who's surname I don't remember. Once we were on our way to the bathrooms and he turned to one of the prisoners and said: *"Listen. There are rumours going around that you're going to be deported to Siberia, but please don't be scared. We've resolved that we won't let them take you"*. And there, at the beginning of February, we were watching television – you could watch television in the common room – Jaruzelski announced that *"Those persons..."* - meaning the interned – I have it written down in a notebook...I can recreate it here, *"...will be permitted to emigrate to countries of their choosing"*. The sub-text was, "without the right of return". In other words, that we qualified for long-term emigration, most likely without the option of ever returning to Poland. This turned out to not be so cut-and-dry, as there were a few of the interned who were very unhappy in America, for instance, and were allowed to come back.

ŁP: This was before 1990?

KP: Yes, even that same year. I remember a surname, Dr Zając, from Oświęcim or thereabouts, was talking some nonsense saying that he didn't like America because he was working in car factory where was instructed to 'destroy' new cars by cutting holes in their roofs. For clients that wanted an open roof.

ŁP: A skylight. Sunroof.

KP: It was nonsense. And there, after two or three months, they began to release some of the prisoners. I was in an unfavourable situation because...the prison in Ostrowo Wielkopolskie wasn't far from Lubin, but...Can we take a break?

Interview resumes after a short break

KP: We paused at the year 1982, February.

ŁP: You were in prison for two or three months...
KP: In Głogów and then in Ostrowo Wielkopolskie. So, they were releasing many of the interned and sending them home. I waited, but somehow my turn didn't come. March came, then April and I was still there, even though a large number of those interned had been released. They were releasing or three of them a day. I couldn't wait for my turn, so I began to think about what could be the cause of my continued internment. The thing was that each of the interned had been assigned a member of the UB as their overseer. I had a local one, who lived in Lubin, whose name was Kleban. He was...getting to Ostrowo was very difficult. That was the problem. It wasn't far, maybe about 170km from Lubin, but one had to take a train to Głogów and then a bus and the connection was very poor. It was very difficult to get there in the course of a day. So, when my wife left at around 7 o'clock in the morning, she would only arrive at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, at which point it was too late and she had to return home with nothing. She just didn't dare such a journey. But there turned up and accommodating member of Solidarity, Mr Lipiński, who's children went to school together with our children. He had a car. He would take my wife to Ostrowo Wielkopolskie in that car. I advised her to go to her colleagues and obtain a diagnoses that I was suffering from a digestive ailment. In fact, I did end up in hospital. A commission from the International Red Cross had visited *(the prison)*. A member of that commission was a Swiss gentleman, a very polite and open person, whose name was, I think, 'Franc'. He was originally from Poland and spoke beautiful Polish, without a trace of an accent. He worked for the International Red Cross. I complained to him about this and that and suggested that this could serve as grounds for release. So, I was admitted to a hospital and I was there for a week, or perhaps more and was diagnosed with a peptic ulcer and was sent back to the prison. And there I asked the commandant, who as I said was sympathetic to the interned, if I could call my wife. We didn't have a telephone *(at home)* but we arranged for me to call the neighbours. So, I called and explained to my wife that I'd been sitting in prison too long and was tired of it, she should arrange with her friends that I was sick. So, my wife went to Wrocław and did just that. She brought back a medical certificate. And, I think on the 20th of May, I was not released but was let out on a pass. I had to report back at the prison a month later. I got the pass, I went out and began...we had decided that given the circumstances we were going to emigrate, mainly because of our children, whom the UB had already threatened that apart form a Trade School they would never be permitted to access higher education. They'd have work, but in a mine, underground. That is also a profession fit for people, but not one I considered the best option for my children.

I presented myself at the American embassy, because the news had got out that the Americans were accepting internees. Other European countries weren't yet doing so, but a few months later that year I was a witness to internees emigrating to France, two or three people from our group. They were Poles who had been living in France just before and after the war *(WW2).* They were fierce communists, returning to Poland *(after the war).* Sweden also started taking people, but at the time I was under the impression that only America was offering asylum. In order to be granted asylum, one had to apply for it in a country other one's own, to be physically outside of one's country of residence, a refugee. One can't be a refugee if one's sitting at home. So, I began to make arrangements. I went to the American embassy once, twice, three times. They wanted certifications, a certificate of health. There was lady there, an associate professor, working as a doctor at the American consulate in Warsaw. She would perform a medical exam on the doctors that were applying for asylum, for a steep cash sum – above inflation. It took me a few visits – I was moving between Lubin and Warsaw. The Americans, after accepting applications, would then send the applicants to Saska Kępa *(a neighbourhood)* in Warsaw to the German consulate and the Germans would issue them with a three-month visa. We were issued with one for my wife, the children and for me. We had to get photos taken and the like. And they asked us to call the German consulate once we'd booked a plan or train ticket to Frankfurt on Main, which was in West Germany at the time. We decided to take the train. We sold some of our furniture and gave most of it to family members. I arranged with the American...or perhaps the German embassy...the German. They gave us a date when we had to be in Frankfurt, 31 July. Someone would be waiting for us there. One couldn't leave the country until one had handed over their home, if it was a 'communal' home, which ours was. We had to take out the furniture and coordinate the whole thing, clear the place and hand over the keys. We then got a certification from the housing commune and the road was clear. We spent the night at my brother Andrzej's house and on the evening of 31 July we left for Germany. It was the Kraków-Frankfurt train. At the border we got a bit of a surprise, because after crossing the border, the train was covered in some kind of 'tunnel' with plastic walls which stopped us from seeing outside. I think this happened on the Poland/East German border. And in this odd train we arrived the *(West)* German border, where the Germans gave us our own compartment and didn't let any Germans in. I just heard the conductors whispering, *"Solidariteit...Solidariteit"*. So, we entered West Germany. In the morning we arrived at Frankfurt on Main. The remember that the station was covered in fog. We disembarked and were looking around seeing what would happen next and I heard someone calling: *"Pater family! Pater family!".* It was Mr Adamus, a Pole from Silesia, who had emigrated to West Germany a few years earlier. He worked there as

a driver and translator. He was waiting there in a van. We climbed in and drove 60km North East of Frankfurt to small place called Bad-Soden....what was it?

ŁP: Salmünster.

KP: Salmünster! Bad Soden Salmünster. It's located between Frankfurt and Fulda. There we were once again pleasantly surprised because it was a *pensionat*, where older German people stayed. It was a spa - 'bad'. There we were given wonderful living arrangements. Excellent food. The understanding of Mr...I don't remember his surname.

ŁP: The owner?

KP: yes, the owner of the pensionat.

ŁP: Joachim.

KP: That was his first name... I'll remember it one day. And we were waiting there in what I would call luxurious living conditions and, on the 8th of September, or maybe it was the 7th, we got our turn – news came from America that a sponsor had been found in the state of Washington, on the Pacific. That family had agreed to adopt one of the refugee families. We flew there on a Boeing 747 – it was my first time in a plane. I think none of us had up until then.

ŁP: I definitely hadn't.

KP: You were four-and-half years old. There was a small delegation, it turned out that our sponsor was Mr Lesley...

ŁP: Nelson.

KP: Yes, Nelson. He was a pediatrician, living just outside the city of Everett, 27 miles north of Seattle, directly on the highway that links Seattle and Vancouver. Everett. It's a city with about 40-60 000 residents. The children went to school. We stayed with our sponsors for about six weeks. Later, we rented our own place for about 270 dollars per month, on Vesper Drive. *(Dog interrupts)*

KP: My wife and I didn't work. We lived on welfare. My wife took some English courses because she didn't know the language at all. Dobek and Ziemek went to school – one was 11 and the other 12 – near where our sponsor stayed. They didn't speak the language either. In Poland they'd had German as a subject in school, which they also didn't know much of. I realised that as a doctor, I had no future. First, one had to pass the American exams. Second, one had to do a residency, which took two years and only then repeat our specialisations. It all looked like it would take far too long a time, considering our age. I was almost 47 and my wife a few years younger. We tried to pass the exams in 1983 in Seattle. The exams were difficult. I passed English and I don't want to brag, but I was quite close to the 70% required on the clinical exam, I got 73% or something like that. But, because I didn't pass English *(please see below)*, I wouldn't

have a qualified, even if I passed the second exam. Because, that year all the exam results across the US were disqualified. There were too many leaks and exam papers sold on the side. Poles are capable of that. So, we were told we could write the exams again the following year, without having to pay the fees again.

We led quite an active social life. Some of it involved organisational work for Solidarity. One time, we happened to be at some friends, Poles that we'd met in Seattle. Mrs Barbara Pietrzak and her husband, who was an engineer lecturing at the university in Seattle. She was a psychiatrist, working in the US. They were childless, which was an ideal solution. She opened my eyes. She said, this is whole process will, in theory take six years, but in fact even ten years may not be enough. You'll be near retirement age by then. She said, *"I have a psychiatrist friend living in Potchefstroom, South Africa. Why don't you try there?".* I read up a bit about South Africa and wrote there. We got a reply, saying that we'd have right of residence and but we'd need to pass an exam at the consulate in New York. Rather, it was an interview, not an exam, in order to get a visa that would allow us to enter South Africa in order to stay there permanently. New York was 5000km away from us – a few months later they were to open a new consulate in Los Angeles. So, we decided to wait a little and instead go to Los Angeles. I think it was in June when everything was arranged, we went there, the consulate was all-White, almost entirely blondes and a gentleman who was no doubt from intelligence, middle-aged, on the younger side and a lady, who's function I wasn't sure of, carried out the interview and said, *"Okay, you can go to Africa"*. The South African government, apart from giving us right of entry offered us 5000 dollars to pay for the flight from South Africa to America *(sic)*. We paid an additional small sum, 2- or 300 dollars, and that was sufficient for a flight to Johannesburg. It was 10 July, dusk when we arrived in Johannesburg. The Secretary of the Kempton Park city hospital was waiting for us – 'Secretary' is the equivalent of an Administrative Director – as well as the Director of the hospital A Dutch man. We were driven to a private hospital in a suburb of the great metropolis of Johannesburg, Kempton Park, near the airport. At the hospital we were given three rooms. There a place there for the workers, in fact a house for nurses. We stayed there about a month. The morning after our arrival, at 7 o'clock, we were woken to be told that a driver was waiting downstairs for us. We were going to work.

ŁP: The very next morning?

KP: Yes. We'd only been in the country a few hours. So, we went. It was a state hospital. People without money were treated there. It was for Non-Whites. A 'Hospital for Non-Whites'. Not 'for Blacks', but for the category of Blacks, Coloureds and Indians. The hospital for Whites was the one we were staying in which was priv...it was a*lso* a state hospital. It's a private

hospital now, after having been closed for a few years. But things were moving forward, because now we were employed as doctors and were being paid as doctors. The salaries weren't high. South Africa was going through a crisis and inflation was high, the Rand was falling. But, in the hospital where we were staying, we were given full board at no cost. We were guests of the Afrikaaners. I was given the position in the surgical department and my wife in the Department of Internal Medicine, even though my specialisation was as an ENT and hers as a radiologist. I didn't have many difficulties – I was more or less fluent in the language, I could communicate at work without any great difficulties, apart from the fact that most of the doctors in that hospital were Afrikaaners, Nationalists, who didn't acknowledge any language other than Afrikaans. But they tolerated English for our sake. It would go like this: on the morning rounds, the Head of the Ward would say: *"Let's talk English"* at the start of the visit, speak two lines in English and then go back to Afrikaans! I'd stand there not knowing what to do. I had two others with me: a Belgian, who spoke no Afrikaans and A Pole, who'd finished matric there and had been there some time – his parents were surveyors that had come South Africa – so Piotrek could speak Afrikaans. We worked in that hospital until the end of the year and then we were transferred to Hillbrow Hospital in Johannesburg. My wife was moved to the Radiology department, in line with her specialisation and I went to ENT. And from that time we've lived in Johannesburg. We stayed on in Pretoria for a few months because the South African government assigned us an empty government house...

(Dog interrupts)

KP: Until the end of June '84...'85. We left that house in 1985. The cost of that house was very low then, just electricity...the house was free and we only had to cover lights and water, but that was a nominal cost. At first, we'd travel 50km to Johannesburg from that place. In Johannesburg we bought a house from a Swede that was returning to Sweden. His had a beautiful Swedish name, Andrzej Jedlinski *(an obvious Polish name)*. So, we lived in that house. Four years ago my wife and I moved into a house that our son built – he built two houses on an enormous plot, 8600 square meters, almost a hectare. There's a big house, where my son lives as a hermit *(another joke)* and we live in the cottage, a small house that's 100 meters squared, a few meters from the big house. My wife still works. She's retired, but she signed a contract one year and the next and now works so-called 'sessions' - a certain number of hours per month. I have time for myself, for television, many channels. We live tolerably. When we came here, our children... Ziemek still a year-and-a half until matric. He was at an Afrikaans high school, with an option for English. Łukasz was six-and-a-half years old, unable to speak Afrikaans, with poor English, but he was accepted after an intervention into Grade 1 at an

English-speaking school. He finished the year quite well. After two years, here our eldest son Dobek returned to the States where he was given the offer to complete his matric. So, he completed matric there, though he lost half a year. The school year goes from January to December, so when one goes from South Africa to America they either lose or gain half a year, depending on their arrangements. Did you want to know anything else?

ŁP: I wanted to know about Bad Soden – how many Polish families were there?

KP: In Washington?

ŁP: In Bad Soden.

KP: In Bad Soden, the length of one's stay depended on finding a sponsor. I knew families that after eight days packed their bags, got in the car, drove to Frankfurt airport and flew to the States. We stayed there thirty-seven days. In any case, my wife put on two or three kilos. It was wonderful, the food was wonderful. The children were happy because they could finally buy new shoes. The old ones were falling off their feet and new ones hadn't been available in Poland at that time of martial law. Beautiful surrounds, long walks...we could go anywhere, no one restricted our movements. German Intelligence took some interest in us – in co-operation with American Intelligence. I remember a man that was staying at the pensionat – which was inhabited by Germans who were then replaced by Poles, so that there were more and more Poles and fewer and fewer Germans. But this man spoke beautiful Polish. One batch of Germans left, new ones came and the man was still there! On one occasion we were coming out of the supermarket – we had full board, but there were curiosities: bananas, cold drinks in cans and many interesting things. What I haven't mentioned yet was that apart from good food and lodgings we were also given 12.5 Deutschmarks per person, as pocket money. 12.5 marks per day. It was enough for the children, to make life more pleasant, and for beer – although I didn't drink beer, truth be told. They had to know what was going in Poland, perhaps even discover...because it was an ideal opportunity for the communist authorities to send sleeper agents, to spy on the Poles and in a broader sense – it was easy to get across to the West. Like today we have refugees, or so-called refugees, from Syria or North Africa moving across in their thousands, but tens of them are terrorists who then wait for an opportunity. They've already attacked and they'll attack with increasing frequency. They can be called to action after many years from those sleeper cells. The man who spoke to us was intelligent. He didn't ask us about anything related to espionage, but spoke generally. He encouraged us and gave us hope and, at the same time, checked *us* out. There was nothing to find there. My biography was rosy, wonderful as far as they were concerned. My wife had spent her entire life in at school, at university and at work. Another question?

ŁP: Were the people staying at Bad Soden all from Solidarity?
KP: Yes, only from Solidarity. It was a pensionat set aside for the interned. 'Helvik' was his name.
ŁP: Joachim Helvik?
KP: I think so. He was born...the children were unbearable at times. They had too much energy. So, in addition to what they got from their parents, Mr Helvik would chip in for them to play Mini Golf, which was across the road from the pensionat. There was also a beautiful large covered pool at the pensionat that one could use freely – which the Poles did and perhaps a little too much. So, when spots opened up, people were directed to that pensionat. Several tens of them. I don't know how many in fact. Several hundred people definitely passed through there.
ŁP: It was open for a few months?
KP: A few months, at least until the following year, perhaps.
ŁP: I even saw an article in the Washington Times...The Washington Post, where there was interview with a Pole in 1983 in Bad Soden.
KP: They still must have been there. Late arrivals who had been let out later. The Polish authorities offered many different kinds of deals. They offered a so-called 'loyalty oath', where one signed an agreement promising to not take part in so-called anti-state activity. I was never offered that. I think that after reading my files, they were keen to offer me emigration. They suggested that even before I applied for it.
ŁP: You caused too much trouble?
KP: Yes, somewhat. In Everett, I never went for English lessons. They were at a very level. My wife completed the language course twice. She did it until the end of the school year and then the following year did the same course, because it was offered for free. It was designed for refugees from Asia – Vietnamese, Lao, people from Cambodia – they didn't know a single word *(in English).* Due to how their own languages are spoken, they had real problems with English diction, speaking the words correctly. They couldn't pronounce the letter 'R', 'S'.
The first visit back to our country was something you experienced. When we heard about the change of government in 1989, when Mazowiecki's Solidarity government came into power, the following year in 1990 *(sic)*, in August, my wife and youngest son who was already twelve years old...how old were you when you went?
ŁP: Eleven. I was eleven in 1989.
KP: Almost twelve, eleven-and-a-half...And he couldn't believe that there was a language like Polish spoken in Poland. He asked how he could by a newspaper. It turned out that the lady at the kiosk spoke the same language he did! I have to say that in that regard things have gone

very well for us. My eldest son, after completing matric, went on to study Political Science and International Relations. While studying in America he was given the opportunity to study for two years in Germany. What was the name of that place?

ŁP: Tübingen.

KP: Yes. He studied there for two years. He learnt German. In total, he spent ten years away from the family. After he returned, he got a job at the Polish Trade Mission in Johannesburg and later in the private sector where an associate of his - André - formed a company offering analysis of markets, mainly for mobile networks. Now our son manages that company. He earns well – how much, I don't know, I don't ask. It's not a secret, but in the West the custom is to not ask about another's earnings. Our middle son completed a year of Psychology and then Fashion Design. The youngest completed an Arts matric and then studied Fine Art, painting...

ŁP: Graphic Design.

KP: Graphics. After a few years break in Cape Town he returned to Johannesburg and lived with us. Now, for the past...almost nine years you work...

ŁP: Almost thirteen.

KP: But, at the university...

ŁP: Yes, it was a Technikon that was changed to a university, but it's the same...

KP: He says almost thirteen years. Recently he got a full-time post and is a lecturer. The Poles would say 'professor', because they're a bit obsessed with titles. Nobody pays too much heed to that here. That's a private thing. What else?

ŁP: I think that's all.

KP: Alright. If I remember anything else...

ŁP: We can add it.

Appendix C

Transcript of Ziemek Pater Interview, 4 February 2016

(ZP – Ziemek Pater / ŁP – Łukasz Pater)

ŁP: The story begins with Dad's arrest. I'm not sure where it ends. Maybe with us leaving for America or maybe a bit of America, but no, that would make it too long. Mainly that transition phase...

ZP: Leaving Poland and arriving at the next place.

ŁP: Maybe this could be a Part 1. It's been difficult to contact other people that were also going through this.

ZP: Through the same process?

ŁP: People that were in Bad Soden. I have a list of Solidarity members who lived in Seattle, in Washington state but, nothing so far. I'll keep trying. So, this will either end up being specifically about our family or a bit broader. So, what I'd need from you is...an open conversation, about anything. Any recollections, observations.

ZP: How you kept cutting open your knees in Vitagena.

ŁP: That I have a memory of!

ZP: So often, almost every second day. So much so that Dad said if you did it again, he'd have to cut your leg off.

ŁP: I remember, *"Oh my God! What's going to happen now!".*

ZP: So, maybe let's discuss what mom spoke about, because in her conversation with the taxi driver she touched on the point that people were like one tight family and were all united in Poland during martial law, but that wasn't the full story. She told me that – I don't remember when, years ago – she'd asked everyone at the hospital to sign a petition on dad's behalf. He was only the ENT in, let's say, a 90km area. People declined from signing the petition because they said they families, children, those sorts of excuses. I don't know if this is accurate, but apparently dad found out about this, and it was one of the things that factored into his deciding to leave Poland. He was bored, or rather, disgusted by the fact that Poles couldn't stand together and fight against Communism. Everyone complained at home behind closed doors, but when it came to presenting a united front...of course Solidarity was the first movement of that kind, but it was extinguished by the government, after a year or two, I can't remember how long it took...So, "one family" for sure, but a very quiet family – as if they were hiding, with a secret. One can't look at this two-dimensionally, but from multiple perspectives.

Apart from that, as a small boy it was quite an interesting experience. At that age I didn't know exactly what was going on, but it was all rather exciting. Dobek would take me – you were too young – Dobek had these posters, I don't know if he made them himself or where he got them from. They were Solidarity and opposition posters. After sunset we'd run around in these cages and passages and stick them. Dobek took up those kinds of activities – maybe that's why he later wanted to get into politics. There were also activities that were, not exactly communal, but church-oriented – that was also a form of opposition. When there were problems with Communism and with the government, people would go to church to organise themselves under the banner of religion and in that way show their opposition to what was happening politically. They were building a new church in Lubin and Dobek would take me to help out there. We were both altar boys – not in that church, but in another one – but he heard that people were signing up there to help with the construction, so he took me there a couple of times and we moved some sand. At first the priest protested, saying we were too young, but Dobek dug in his heels and once or twice we went there on a Saturday.

Apart from that, when I found out about our going to the States it was quite interesting because it was the first time that I discovered that the world, geographically, looked the way they said it did in school. We had American films, 'The Streets of San Francisco' and 'Kojak' and things like that, but I didn't connect the fact that America was a country that actually existed. It was more like some kind of mystical place or something from television rather than being a real country. So, when we heard that we going to the States, I realised that it was real, and one could get there in some way. That was maybe the most interesting point of my maturation, in some sense.

ŁP: You were how old?

ZP: I turned twelve when we were in Vitagena, I think.

ŁP: That was in August.

ZP: Yes. August and the beginning of September, if I'm not mistaken. So, I had my birthday there...You know, after we left, it was like a big party. If one remembers it from my point of view, Poland really was grey and dour and once we arrived in Germany it was like someone removing the covers from a kaleidoscope: everything was colourful...I think these were the typical impressions of every person that left a country in the communist bloc and came West. Everything was more colourful, there was prosperity, the amount of goods in stores, everywhere you looked there were plenty of products and so on. In Vitagena, Dobek and I would get a five-mark allowance from our parents – which we could spend or save – Dobek mostly saved his and he was the 'chief' who decided what we'd do with our money. It was also nice in that it wasn't like here – we could walk anywhere we liked. So Dobek and I would walk around town.

Bad Soden Salmünster was quite a small town, if I'm correct. Through the eyes of a child everything seems much bigger and your sense of proportion and scale changes somewhat. So, we'd walk around town by ourselves and Dobek decided it would be best if we bought these containers of soda cans, with about two dozen in each. We had Fanta and Pepsi and we kept them under our beds in our room. We must have thought that our parents wouldn't be too happy about it – to drink that much Fanta or Pepsi or Cola isn't healthy. But Dobek would measure out one can per day. We maybe got about five marks per week, I don't remember. We'd go to the store, buy our drinks, then in our room we'd perform this ritual: once a day, we'd open a can! We'd each sit on our beds, talking about something and relish our drinks! *"Fanta, Cola...",* you know – luxury. So, our stay in Vitagena was a holiday.

I also remember that young Czeczot hit me twice in the nose with a golf club. We'd gone to play mini golf. I had something going on with my nose anyway, because we'd jump – there was a covered pool at Vitagena and we'd swim there, of course. Anything to have some kind of activity. It wasn't a very big pool, but we'd jump in 'penguin style', head-first. I jumped 'penguin style' across the pool and of course smashed my face against the opposite side. Blood everywhere. I was a bit overwhelmed, my nose swelled up but it probably wasn't broken. A few days later, the owners of Vitagena paid for us to go play mini golf, to get rid of us during lunch hours because the Germans and other residents of Vitagena were complaining that there were too many children. So, they sent us across the street from the pensionat to play golf. It was there that Czeczot, somehow, hit me in the face twice with his club. I don't know if he was the idiot or if I was, because after the first time he did it I should have walked away, but instead I just moved to a different spot and – like in some comedy – he whacked me from the other side. He then threw down his club, jumped over the fence and ran away. Well, if you ever hear this Mr Czeczot, know that I don't carry any antagonistic feelings towards you.

After we arrived in the States, everything was very interesting. These were great experiences. We didn't speak English, even though dad had sent us for lessons for two years...

ŁP: In Poland?

ZP: Yes, in Poland. I never could learn to speak languages from a book, so it was useless for me to try. Anyway *(in America)* we had English lessons and very people could understand us, so it was good to have a brother because at least during breaks we could meet and share our immediate impressions. I remember that in Poland there was very little in the way of clothing that one could buy – or anything else for that matter. In Germany mom had bought us these jackets, identical ones of course, made from a strange silver fabric, like something from outer space. They were Adidas jackets. Great. We had very similar haircuts and then wore these

identical jackets so, when we went to school In the States, we hardly had any clothes that were at an acceptable American standard, mom must have been embarrassed, so for the first two or three weeks we went to school in those jackets. We must have looked like something out of *Borat.*

ŁP: I found a newspaper clipping, you're both standing there with the same haircuts. You might have something different on, or maybe the same. Dobek -

ZP: Dobek was probably wearing a Solidarity t-shirt, or one with a White Eagle with a crown, something like that, but it was funny...

ŁP: Dobek's wearing that silver Adidas jacket.

ZP: A pair of typical refugees...political refugees...in little Adidas uniforms! The Romanians and the Bulgarians went back to that later, with 'Balkan Beatbox'. So, we walked like that around school and of course the Americans probably laughed at us behind our backs, but generally they were quite nice and so on. And another experience where a light went on for me was in the Staes. I thought that once we'd arrived in the States, it would be like the land we'd seen in films. Maybe not an ideal country, but everything would be quite wonderful. I didn't know what I thought the people would be like, but I came to realise that wherever you look in the world, people are the same, the same types of people, let's say. I'd made friends with a boy and would sit together with him at lunch. One day he came and was crying, or sniveling or sullen and he somehow managed to communicate to me what the problem was. He told me that – at least I think I understood him correctly – that he'd been hit by another boy and pointed that boy out to me. I don't know what the other boy's name was, it doesn't matter - 'Johnson' or something like that – he said that Johnson didn't like him and had punched him. Suddenly it became clear to me that assholes are assholes, it didn't matter what language you spoke – that the same kind of situations occurred all over the world and you get the same types of people. In some sense, that insight has given me a good perspective right up till today. It was one of the fundamental principles of life. I had a few more insights like that, typical of someone passing from childhood into adolescence. All these experiences happened in a relatively short period of time. It was 1982, right? So, during my year as a twelve-year old I realised some of the more important things.

The next twenty-two months were fairly easy. I learned the language quite quickly, being among my peers. All of it made a big impression on me. Maturing as a boy, entering teenage-hood and a complete change of environment, so there was a lot to understand and work through and adapt to.

School was okay. I got into a few fights with some boys because they'd throw around slurs like 'stupid Polak' and the like. So, I had a few talks with the principal and the school would call dad. On the days I'd get into fights, he'd say: *"So, you were fighting at school?"* and I thought, *"Now I'm going to get it"*, but he just smiled under his nose and didn't make a big deal out of it. He took some satisfaction from the fact that I wouldn't just roll over for the Americans. In our first year, Dobek was still in middle school. We in a class called 'ESL' - English as a Second Language. In it, there were a lot of emigres from Vietnam, Cambodia and the Asian countries. It was quite funny, because of course they have a different alphabet and for them it was a complete culture shock and so they stayed in those classes much longer than we did. I was there for a year and after that was sent to a regular English class – we had a good teacher in that class...One thing I remember in one of the ESL classes, we had to give our first impressions of our stay in America and a Vietnamese girl said that: *"Everybody had a big nose"*. 'Everyone had giant noses' - one doesn't think of such things until you hear them from someone coming from a completely different cultural background. I had that kind of experience when we landed in South Africa. One of my first impressions was being surprised that there were so many Black people around us. Even though one could logically assume this, I wasn't ready for it. I thought: *"Wow. Where are all the White people?"*. These are quite superficial things, but I remember them to this day.

Apart from that, my experiences were those of every teenager. I made friends quite quickly – back then, it came easily to me. I began to establish myself a bit at school. Dobek went to High School. And later on – quite soon after arriving in the States actually – that our parents were making plans to move to South Africa and I was a bit sad about that because I'd already begun to make friends and put down roots in Everett, at school and socially but, well...everything works out in time.

ŁP: That's life.

ZP: That's right.

ŁP: You were in New York with dad?

ZP: Yes, I was in New York with dad. I don't know how it turned out that I was the one who went with him. It was cool. We only went for two days. I think we had to go to New York to collect our visas from the South African consulate. We all went across the country by bus, I don't know if you remember?

ŁP: Yes. On the Greyhound.

ZP: Yes, exactly. It took about three days and three days, or three nights and four days. The one thing I remember is that we got stuck in a traffic jam, coming into Chicago and seeing the

tall buildings and things and the wide freeway and so on. Seattle was a big city, but definitely not as big as Chicago. That was one impression. There, at the station, dad also pointed out some Quakers to me.

ŁP: No Amish?

ZP: Yes, Amish! From Pennsylvania. There was a whole family of them. They looked like they'd stepped out of -

ŁP: The Middle Ages.

ZP: Maybe not the Middle Ages, but from the 18th Century let's say. We got to Boston and stayed with John (*Kazimierz Pater's American cousin)* for...I don't know, a week? He then drove us from Boston to New York and we stayed there overnight. He has a daughter that lived there, and I think still lives there, somewhere in the outlying areas of New York. Dad and I then went to the consulate for one day -

ŁP: Oh, from Boston?

ZP: Yes. So, we spent the night at John's daughter's house. Then dad and I went to the consulate to get our visas or whatever had to be done there. I also remember that while walking down the street I looked down a smaller side street. This was in Manhattan. I don't know if the guy was a drug addict or what, but a Black guy was thrashing on a car. I don't know if it was just my impression, but he looked like was foaming at the mouth. He was kicking and waving his arms around. Dad said, *"Look! New York is full of crazy people! Look at that and remember!"*. I thought it was an interesting sight, I quite liked it. I thought, *"It's cool here. There are some far-out people"*. Life there seemed to be moving at some strange pace. That was a nice trip and I got to see New York. Back then we'd keep count of how many cities we'd seen and in which ocean one had swam in, or at least dipped their feet into. When we lived in Everett, it's situated next to a calm ocean and there's a bay there, the Pugent Sound. Despite it being far north and the ocean really was cold, Dobek and I went in on two or three occasions. I don't know if you remember, but the Summers there weren't too warm or too long in Washington State -

ŁP: I remember that it rained.

ZP: Yes, 200 or 300 days out of a year. Something like 280 days average of rainfall per year. Anyway, I could then brag that I'd been to New York. Only for one day, but I'd been there. Then we came back from New York to Boston, spent a few more days there and then, I can't remember...went by bus to New York and there were direct flights from JFK to Johannesburg that stopped on the Cape Verde islands. The Canary Islands.

ŁP: I remember that.

ZP: I remember that during our stop there we went to the bathroom and dad told me,*" Have a drink of water from the tap. You'll see what comes out of there."* It was salt water. That was an interesting thing. But, apart from the small airport, I didn't see anything else there. The flight to Johannesburg was...we arrived late in the evening or at night. I can't remember what time it was, but one couldn't see much, but while circling Johannesburg I saw that there were many lights. I was expecting complete darkness -

ŁP: A jungle. Or a desert.

ZP: Exactly. I had no idea what kind of school we'd go to and so on. I probably imagined what most people would have, that school would be under a palm tree and that we'd write in the sand with a stick, with some children from a nearby village. With the natives. Which, of course, was *absolutely* not how it was, but that is a different experience.

ŁP: I remember that. We got out in Kempton Park, which weas a bit of a letdown. I expected some kind of safari, an adventure.

ZP: Yes, not concrete buildings. And as far as America is concerned, it was cool. One could wear whatever one wanted to school. There were a lot of colourful personalities. It was like what you see in American films – they're quite a good representation of what was the reality of an American school. One didn't have to study too hard. For instance, I got through two years of Maths in the States without studying at all. Everything we covered was based on what I'd already learned at school in Poland. So, I didn't gain any new knowledge in Maths. I learned the language and a bit of Biology, but apart from that...On Fridays everyone would put their books away in their school lockers and went home free for the weekends. Dad started getting a bit upset and told us that we had to bring our school books home with us on Fridays. He'd then give us homework to do on Saturdays so that, in his words: *"We wouldn't become totally stupid"*. So, it was the language and getting to know my peers at school. As you know, America is...*completely* a different country from Poland at that time. I remember that dad once taking a photo of a guy with long hair.

ŁP: I'm in that photo. He positioned me so that he could get a shot of that guy.

ZP: Yes, because there was a Black guy and a hippie loading something onto a truck.

ŁP: It was exotic.

ZP: Yes, those were experiences. Now of course it's the most normal thing, but a person for a person in those times, who had just left Poland and had had no contact with the West, it was a complete culture shock. America has such strange, deep and wide social layers that that was the most interesting thing in America. That and the huge shopping malls, and the giant chewing gum. For kids it's those things that count. Different kinds of people, hippies, not-hippies, big

cars, the fact that one couldn't get anywhere on foot – almost nowhere. Those kinds of things remain in one's memory, the everyday things.

ŁP: Those are the most important things in a way. They form the backdrop of one's life.

ZP: Exactly. I also remember that I had an awakening with regard to music. I'd listen to Casey Kasem on dad's Grundig radio on Friday evenings, 'Top 40 with Casey Kasem'. I didn't know who they were then, but I'd listen to David Bowie, Queen and different bands like that. In Poland, just before we left, for the first time I bought myself a disc. It was a Blondie disc. I didn't take it with me. It was a very small disc with a song on either side.

ŁP: A single?

ZP: Yes. For many years I thought she was Black. Eventually one day, entirely by chance, I saw that Debbie Harry was a blonde. I was very surprised.

ŁP: There was no picture on the disc?

ZP: No, it was a graphic. At the Town Hall in Lubin there was a record shop. I can't remember if I had my allowance or if I'd gotten the money somewhere else. Dobek always saved his money, but I went and bought the record. I'd heard a couple of Blondie songs on the radio and liked them. It was, as I said, a time of awakening, moving from being a kid to a teenager. Music and strange Americans. Sport, girls. *"Geeks, dweebs, dickheads – they all adore him. They think he's a righteous dude." (quoting 'Ferris Bueller's Day Off')*. Those are my impressions from the States.

Appendix D

Transcript of Dobek Pater Interview, 6 March 2016

(DP – Dobek Pater / ŁP – Łukasz Pater)

ŁP: Okay. You can say as much as you want. When I interviewed Dad and Ziemek it was from the time of Dad's arrest, more or less -

DP: They've covered it all?

ŁP: Well, it's good to hear...

DP: Another point of view.

ŁP: Another point of view, a different opinion. What I covered with them was from the time of the arrest all the way up to America. I'm not even sure if I'll be able to fit America. The things I've put together from Mom and from them already run to half an hour.

DP: How much do you need?

ŁP: I wanted it to run about half an hour, but the story's too long. Maybe I'll make a Part 2 about America. So, we can cover America too. So, from the arrest up to leaving of America.

DP: Up to the end of our stay in the States?

ŁP: Yes, that would be ideal. But cover the things you want to cover.

DP: Have you got specific questions?

ŁP: Not really. Ziemek had a lot of details he went over and led the conversation. Dad spoke about his experiences in the different prisons he was in. I specifically wanted to know about Bad Soden. But I didn't ask them specific questions. They just spoke. Ziemek told me things I hadn't known about, like when you posted Solidarity posters. Under your direction.

DP: They weren't posters. We used to paint signs in passageways. There were these passageways that went through apartment blocks. Mainly on Pawia Street, which was near our house. A couple of times we painted the slogan *WRONA SKONA.* 'WRON' was The Military Council for National Defence. It was a government organisation, a committee formed by the government, by the Polish Communist Party, during the period of martial law. It served as a supervisory board which was tasked with defending Poland against 'invasion by undesirable elements'. That was shortened to WRON *('The Crow')*, and people came up with the slogan *WRONA SKONA ('The Crow will fall')*, which meant that the entire system would one day collapse. There was even a song about a crow and Solidarity...People wrote WRONA SKONA. The next day all the slogans had been painted over by state municipal workers. But there was a curfew from about nine in the evening, I can't exactly remember, so we couldn't run around too

late. We had to go home. Mom would usually get upset and get consecutive 'heart attacks' when we weren't home. Well, it was just fun and games – what can children really do? We'd also go out, as altar boys, with the priest 'po kolędzie' *(when priests visit and bless homes after Christmas).* This customarilly happens in January of each year. We'd go out with the priest from our local parish.

ŁP: From the church they were building?

DP: Yes, they were building it then. There were some barracks made out of wagons that had been welded together. We'd go to different homes and the priest would tell people, *"These poor boys here, their father has been arrested."* And people would generously give bigger donations.

ŁP: For the Church?

DP: For the Church, but specifically for the the altar boys. Altar boys would go around with a can and collect money for their various expenses. A couple of times we'd come across some drunk that would try stick the money directly in your pocket. I'd say: *"No sir, the money has to go in the can."* And he'd reply, *"Not in the can! In your pocket! You can buy yourself something."* We'd have to try wrap those visits up before 9 o'clock too. By 9 o'clock the priest would usually be back at the church and we'd be at home. He'd usually walk us home, up to the gate.

We observed the tanks going through the city. The State of War *(another name for martial law)* was declared on the 13th, from Saturday night to Sunday morning. We went to Lubin's town centre to see what was happening -

ŁP: To the bridge?

DP: Yes and further into the centre. To see what was happening. There were tanks and army trucks moving around, coming from the local army bases, which were located in Żagan, Żary, all way up to Legnica. They were sending them out across the country. People thought that war had brocken out.

ŁP: Mom said that there were about forty tanks, but they were going round to create the impression that -

DP: That there was so many of them! Yes, the Great Army has come! They only let the Polish army out. They must have told the Russian troops to stay in their barracks because then people would have panicked and thought that there really was a war. Invasion by the Soviets. So it was only the Polish troops.

ŁP: Jaruzelski claimed that the Soviets were threatening an invasion and he had to declare a State of War in oder to get a grip on the situation.

DP: The Soviets told the Polish communist government that either they needed to stop Solidarity, the 'rampant democracy', or rather – the embryo of an undesirable democracy –

either they ended it themselves or the Soviets would be forced to do it for them. An invasion, the way they did in '68 on Prague and in '56 on Budapest. So later, Jaruzelski explained – talked nonsense – about how he'd saved the country from bloodshed because he himself had declared the State of War. He didn't allow the Soviets to come in.

ŁP: Were there any incidents in Lubin?

DP: No, only after we'd already emigrated.

ŁP: I think it happened in August. When I was in Poland recently, there were posters up.

DP: We left on the 1st of August and there were some riots later. The ZOMO shot maybe four people then. The ZOMO were the riot police, there to put down any civil unrest. *(ZOMO is an acronym for)* Motorised Squads of the Citizens' Militia. Before an action they would usually give them drugs, they would then walk around in helmets and riot gear. Helmets with plastic visors, bullet-proof vests, shields, batons – squads meant to put down any uprisings. Someone once told me an anecdote: the ZOMO had come in ready for action but realised that there was no protest happening. They were hyped-up on drugs, so they burst into a pharmacy and the one guy started smashing the parquet flooring, just to get his energy out, hitting the parquet, smashing it until splinters were flying – he had to expel the adrenaline from himself. There were no civilian heads to smash, so he hit the counter and the floor. But apart from that, Lubin was peaceful. It's not a big city known for its protest actions. Then, life carried on over three weeks of uncertainty, until we found out where dad was. Neighbours helped us by taking Mom and sometimes us to see Dad where he was interned, once a month or so.

ŁP: Did we all go?

DP: The first time Mom went alone. The we all went, though you may have stayed home with Aunt Renia. So, it would have just been Mom, Ziemek and I. Mr Lipinski used to take us. First to Głogów and later to Ostrowo Wielkopolskie, once they'd transferred Dad there. The Priest would come over sometimes with aid packages from the West – Germany, Holland. The French would send trucks with food and clothing.

ŁP: From Amnesty International?

DP: Yes, and from other aid agencies. Those things would often then make their way to the parish. The priest would then distribute the goods. He'd put together packets with hot chocolate, a few other things...chocolates, other food items, some handy items. A few oranges. He'd come over to the house, looking around, with his official briefcase with some documents in it, he'd burst into the kitchen and would start unpacking *(the food items)*, as if he were being surveilled. He thought he was being monitored as he distributed food items to the parishioners.

Then Dad was released. He'd declared that we'd be emigrating. We got a visa. We packed up and we went. We left Poland on 31 July and arrived in Germany on 1 August, or something like that. When we were crossing the Poland-East German border, it was heavily guarded. The train tracks went through a deep trench with high embankments on either side, with barbed wire and guard towers and the train went through this channel. What for, I don't know - it was idiocy, I mean, who'd want to escape from Poland into East Germany? It would have more sense to have that kind of border between East and West Germany. I think they did have one there.

ŁP: Dad said there was some kind of plastic tunnel?

DP: I don't remember a plastic tunnel.

ŁP: He said they covered the train in a plastic sleeve so that one couldn't see out the windows.

DP: Really? It's possible. Paranoia reigned. There was another thing...In Poland one had to take Russian at school. I was compulsory from, I think, the fifth grade. I was in the seventh grade just before we left. Something happened in my Russian classes...I can't recall it...I hadn't done my homework, or didn't want to learn. We this imbecile teacher, this dedicated communist, whose husband was in local Party circles, so she felt important. She started speaking some nonsense about me not being up to standard when some other teacher explained to her that the communists had just arrested my father, so she shouldn't be surprised if the son didn't want to do his Russian homework. So, she let it be.

Every year there was a procession on the 1st of May. They gave us red banners which we threw into a basement somewhere...no, that year we didn't go. It was usually compulsory for the entire class to go. Mom told my and Ziemek's teachers that we weren't going that year, for obvious reasons. They said that there was no problem and that they understood. Those processions were a joke anyway.

Then we went to Germany. This Silesian Pole – a drunk – collected us at Frankfurt station. We stayed six weeks – something like that. Maybe five weeks. When we got to the States it was the beginning of the school year. We didn't miss much. So, we must have gotten there at the beginning of September.

ŁP: You'd get an allowance of five deutschmarks a day?

DP: I think we got a weekly allowance and it was per family. The adults got a certain amount and the kids half of that, from the International Organisation for Migration, one of the United Nations agencies, they handled all that. In any case, Dad handled all the money. He'd save it all and give us some change once in a while, to buy some Cokes.

ŁP: Ziemek said that you'd buy some containers and keep the cans under your beds.

DP: I think we once bought a tray of soda cans, at some kind of wholesalers, like a Macro. We'd keep them under our bed – the ration was one can a day. You could enjoy yourself. We once bought something really disgusting, like Cream Soda, terribly sweet. But, because it was in a can and because it was Western, we considered it a treat.
ŁP: Everything Western was great.
DP: Yes. Everything you couldn't get in Poland. You buy yourself a can of soda at the Pewex store.
ŁP: For dollars?
DP: Yes, for dollars. Well, for cents – they cost a few dozen cents – but you had to have the dollars. You needed the right currency to shop at Pewex.
ŁP: There was also mini-golf?
DP: There was mini-golf. There was a small group of us: the Strzelec family, also from Lubin – Piotrek Strzelec was two years older than me and had an older sister, Justyna, I think, who a year or two older than him. We'd hang out with Piotrek and a few others and his sister ran with an older group, older teenagers. Maybe up to twenty-year-olds. They'd use their allowance to buy cheap apple wine, five marks for one-and-a-half liters of the stuff, then get drunk on it and cause a commotion at the pool. The owner of Vitagena would then run around and ask everyone to please settle down, that it wasn't appropriate to behave that way. There were still the Germans there who wanted to maintain some kind of standard and wanted to have their afternoon siesta. So, the owner began to come up with schemes of how to get rid of the Polish kids and teenagers during the after-lunch hours, so that there'd be some quiet. He'd buy up coupons for mini-golf, so we could go there and play for a few hours. That's where Ziemek got hit with a golf club by the son of Czeczot, a famous Polish satirical cartoonist. I think his son was a bit mentally challenged, so when he began swinging the golf club, he hit Ziemek twice.
The representative of the migration agency who was assisting us with getting US visas and finding sponsors was a Dane, and I think his wife was Scottish, a petit lady. They were in the habit of going nude to the sauna – there was a sauna next to the pool. When they'd be coming back from the sauna late at night, just covered with their towels, some drunk Poles saw them and began yelling that there was a pornographic display running about.
ŁP: A good 'advert' for the Poles.
DP: Yes, as usual, the Poles showed what they're capable of. The owner tried coming up with some dishes to vary the diet. He'd serve ham with pineapple – pretty typical in the US, on pizza. Some Poles commented: "What is this shit? Ham with pineapple – who's heard of such a thing? How can you even serve something like this! No, we protest! We want normal food!"

ŁP: Lower class Poles.

DP: Yes, the so-called dregs of society - “bottom feeders”. They’d got together and decided to emigrate.

ŁP: Were they all Solidarity?

DP: Yes, they were all Solidarity members and they’d all been interned for a period of time. The US was the first country to announce that it would be accepting political refugees from Poland. When one got clearance from the US government through their consulate in Warsaw, saying that they’d issue you with a visa, then you’d be released from internment. The internee would have one month to collect the visa and leave the country. So, everyone that went through Vitagena was from Solidarity, but there were many types. Some, like Strzelec, a miner from Lubin, were of a decent class, but there were many others that - while the happened to be Solidarity members – were, let’s say, ‘lower class’, with the attendant characteristics. They liked to drink a lot, eat well and occasionally cause a bit of a commotion, or party loudly. The older Germans didn’t understand this – they had a different way of enjoying themselves: taking walks and resting.

ŁP: Vitagena was a pensionat *(rest home/spa)*?

DP: Yes, a pensionat. Bad Soden was a small town – not entirely a spa town – near Frankfurt, on the Main River. Every year, older people would come there to rest, relax in peace for a few weeks near the hills. They’d take walks in the hills. There was a complex nearby with pools and showers where they’d go. The owner of Vitagena had signed an agreement with the UN, maybe to get some extra income. For over a year he received a steady stream of Polish families, so it was good business.

ŁP: The UN paid him?

DP: Certainly, the UN paid for it. He may have given them lower group rates, but his rooms were always full. There was a wave of Polish emigres going to the US for about a year. We were one of the first families to arrive, but we ended up waiting for five weeks. Some arrived and left again within two weeks. They’d find a sponsor in the States, would buy a ticket and go. One guy flew to New York – I'm not sure if he was alone or with a family...

ŁP: I think Czeczot went to New York?

DP: He did, but I’m not sure if this was him or someone else. In any case, some organisation had brought him out – it was either individual families or organisations that acted as sponsors – and they put him up in some cheap hotel in the Bronx. He wrote back a letter, saying that he had a small room in this filthy, run-down hotel, with a communal bathroom at the end of the passage, which he was scared to use because he had to run a gauntlet of prostitutes – who

were very pushy - to get there. His room was full roaches ‘the size of a small turtle’ and he was considering whether to go back to Poland, or jump out his fourth-story window. He’d gone to Paradise and instead found “disease, muck and death” *(direct translation of a Polish saying)*. Not what he’d imagined. The Mormons sponsored the Strzelec family to go to Salt Lake City, Utah. As soon as they’d arrived, they were visited by some representatives in their home and given The Book of Mormon, thinking they might convert. They used that book to prop up the door on hot Summer days. It varied. Some went to California and boasted that they were celebrating New Year’s on the beach in Los Angeles, with glass of champagne. Some had it better and some worse. We ended up in the rain, in the state with highest suicide rate in the US. At least, Seattle has the highest rate among US cities.

What else happened in Germany...We’d walk around the town, go to the pool, where Ziemek broke his nose. He jumped head-first across the width of the pool and hit the opposite end. The pool was maybe three or four meters wide, but if you jump head first you can clear that distance. He miscalculated.

ŁP: He had bad luck.

DP: The Dane who was the representative of the aid agency had a son, Morton, who was younger than us by a few years and a bit wild. So, we hung out with Morton a bit too. He had an aversion to learning Polish – when we tried to teach him a Polish tongue twister, he began pelting us with ping-pong pallets. One time he tried jumping from the first-story using an umbrella, thinking it would carry him like a parachute. The Pole whose job it was to collect arriving families at the airport or train station in Frankfurt, caught him at the last minute. He was about to jump and had one foot on the door below the terrace. Another time he leapt a few meters down from a bridge into a stream, because he saw a fish and thought he could catch it if he surprised it. It wasn’t too high – maybe two meters – and the stream wasn’t too shallow. In any case, he landed on some rocks and nothing happened to him. He didn’t catch the fish.

ŁP: A real stunt man.

DP: We also had to learn English. Every day, Dad would give us five words that we had memorise, or there’d be some penalty – we wouldn’t be allowed out to play or be allowed to drink a can of Coke.

So, we stayed the five weeks and then flew out. Every day after breakfast there’d be an announcement – either by that Pole or by the Dane – which families had tickets, which ones had confirmed sponsors and where and then it took about a week to organise a plane ticket and leave. So, when he read out our surname and said that were going to Washington, we all thought he meant Washington DC – that was the only one that Poles knew! The East Coast,

from New York to Chicago. It was as if the rest of America was in fog – we knew that 'something' was there, in the direction of Alaska.

ŁP: Like the 1800s...

DP: Yes! When it turned out that we were going to Washington state, to some 'hole' by the name of Everett, Mom panicked a bit, thinking that no one would ever reach there and we'd never get out of there. Once we'd get stuck there it would be for life.

So, we flew to the far end of the States, with suitcases I think, because everyone was allowed one suitcase. You maybe had half a suitcase. And we stayed with our sponsors, the Nelsons, for the first month, maybe a bit longer. It was until they could organise us a home and government welfare cheques.

ŁP: Do you know how much it was?

DP: I think we got eight-hundred dollars for the family...maybe not that much...maybe eight-hundred in cash and a few hundred more in food stamps. You could exchange them for food in some of the larger supermarkets.

ŁP: Mom said you'd also go to the Salvation Army for cheese?

DP: Yes, cheese and basic foodstuffs – flour, I think. Later, when I was a student at the University of Washington, the Salvation Army had an office on campus. At the start of every month there was queue, mainly consisting of Russians, because whether they worked or not, they always tried to slip in for some free cheese, whatever they could get from the government!

ŁP: Old habits.

DP: As the Americans who were studying Russian and got to know them a bit would say, they were very good at playing the system. So, they'd try all sorts of schemes. In any case, yes, we'd get Salvation Army cheese....and clothes, new cheap ones or second-hand ones, from Poles. One Pole came by with a boot full of 'rags' – slightly worn, old clothes.

ŁP: Ziemek said that Mom bought you both matching silver Adidas tracksuits. You can see them in the photos.

DP: Silver tracksuits! Like in Star Trek. Like that film, 'The Royal Tenenbaums', matching tracksuits, matching haircuts.

ŁP: There's a newspaper clipping of an article where you're both wearing them.

DP: It was our only new item of clothing – you had to show it off. So, when we moved into the new house, life carried on. We went to school, Mom went to community college to learn English. We moved within an environment that was part-American and part-Polish. With the Poles it was among those of the newer generation, that had arrived at more in more or less the same time as

we had, and also some of the older Polish diaspora, who'd been there for years and had arrived over a few decades.

ŁP: Like Dad's family. I think they'd been there for around a century?

DP: Not that old. Dad's grandfather had gone to the US before the Forst World War, so his daughter stayed there, Uncle John's mother, that was around 1910...or maybe after the First World War...it was the 1920s when Dad's om came back to Poland with her father, she must have still been a teenager.

ŁP: Dad said she'd spoken English but had subsequently forgotten it.

DP: She must have. In the area where we were, between Everett and Seattle, there may have been a few Poles from before the Second World War, but the first wave came in the 1960s. There were some like Mr and Mrs Gołubiec that ended up in the Staes after World War Two, because they'd been in Great Britain and at the end of the War were transferred to the States. At first they lived in Chicago and only later moved to Seattle because of work.

Break in the recording.

DP: Is it recording? So, the first month we lived with the Nelsons. Mrs Nelson would drive us to school with her son, who was my age, in her bathrobe. She'd get out of bed, put on her bathrobe, get in the car and drive us to school. Mom used to wonder what would happen if her car ever broke down, she'd get out the car in that bathrobe? Curlers in her hair...it mystified our parents. A small culture shock. The realisation that things are different, different customs, people approach things in a different way. In Poland, driving in your bathrobe was unthinkable, at least back then it was. Curlers in your hair...how can you leave the house without your hair made up – in the States it was a normal thing, We'd get the standard school sandwiches – peanut butter and jelly. If the jam was the watery kind, then when you'd take out the plastic bag or serviette it would 'well soaked', like a sponge. There were many things. Toast, for instance. We'd never seen toast before. Mom would read in her Agatha Christie novels that someone had made toast, but she never knew what it was. So, when she arrived in the States, she finally got to see what toast looked like!

ŁP: No toast in Poland?

DP: Not toast from a toaster. You'd warm bread up in the fire or on a pan.

ŁP: The Russians didn't manufacture toasters?

DP: The didn't manufacture them because there was no need to, because no one ate toast! The Americans also didn't seem too sure what the immigrants from Eastern Europe would be like, so they approached them in the same way as they did the refugees from Indochina – Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos who, coming out of the jungle, didn't know anything. They would explain that

the tap with the red mark had hot water in it, you must be careful not to get scalded, very dangerous; the blue one was for cold water...and the functioning of various things, which were all commonly used in Poland, but we apparently needed to learn them again. The behaviour of the kids was also a lot more relaxed than in Poland. It wasn't exactly a culture shock, but there was a very different approach to kids, especially in Middle School. They didn't hit kids, unlike in Poland, where it was pretty common. Instead, they would try to explain to the kids that their behaviour was wrong – a pedagogical approach. Tom shot his dad in the arse for fun with a pellet gun and instead giving him a hiding, his dad wagged a finger at him that it wasn't right to hurt others for fun and took his gun away for two days, at which point he gave him back the gun and Tom carried on shooting whatever he felt like. He ended up in the army.

We sort of vegetated for two years. It was interesting...

ŁP: Ziemek said that the standard at school was quite low.

DP: It was, especially in the public schools, but I suspect it's not much better in the private schools. too. At an American school, if someone wants to study, they can get all distinctions. In Poland, we were doing Physics from Grade 5 and Chemistry from Grade 7, Mathematics was more advanced. In the States, they don't really have a subject like Chemistry, you only start Physics in Middle School, Grade 9. In Primary School they have a more general subject like 'Science', nothing too substantive. It was easy. I had one class in Grade 8, Social Sciences. For extra credit, one time we could learn the names of all the states and their capitals and another time the names of all the Presidents. Reagan was the 40th, I believe. So, all the Presidents and their party affiliations, Democrat or Republican. I was the only one in my class that did those two extra assignments. No one else bothered to do it. So, I got the extra credit. The Americans looked at me and said, "Gee, you're smart". You just have read and memorise – it has nothing to do with whether one is intelligent or not! But that required some effort. If it wasn't a requirement then why bother. In the States they have lockers in school. Each student has their own locker in the passage and keeps their things in there, sports kit and so on. As a regular thing every weekend – and some would even do it daily after class – students would leave all their school books in their locker and go home. They might only take a basketball home with them. Why take your school books home. So, they didn't study too much, but somehow, they'd get promoted from class to class.

The Poles were interesting, varied.

ŁP: Part of the Church community? Or the Polish the Polish Home Association?

DP: No, the Polish Home Association was in Seattle. We didn't go there too often. We went a few times, but not regularly. Every Friday they'd have dinners there, people would come...There

were also bigger events, Polish National Holidays – we'd go then. In Everett we'd meet informally, there was no formal Polish Association. They'd just get together in groups. The Polish Church was also in Seattle, but later. Once more poles arrived, the Society of Christ bought a church, or it was Polish Association that bought it. There were no Polish priests...we'd go to American churches.

Some of the Solidarity Poles that arrived had a very high opinion of themselves, so if they'd been a nurse in Poland, they'd refer to themselves as 'doctor' once they arrived in the States. Some were also the dregs, missing their teeth...One of those families lived near us. They'd ask: "Do bugs also crawl out of your arse? Because they do out of ours'. We were given this pill and afterwards bugs crawled out of our arses". There were four or five in that family, dressed in rags, half of them without teeth, or with teeth that were rotten from too many sweets and neglect. The mother also didn't have teeth. They'd speak in 'Pinglish' *(a conflation of Polish and English).* They'd just vegetate and watch for what else they could get out of the Americans for free.

ŁP: When we were going across the States by Greyhound, we heard some Polish being spoken and Mom told me to be quiet and not speak Polish or they'd leech onto us.

DP: A few months after moving into our home...It was a typical American home. We couldn't afford anything else. We were able to rent it for 300, 400 dollars a month, so a substantial portion of the money we got from the government went towards rental. We lived on the first floor, in a two-story townhouse on a side street, one down from a busy road that went through the whole city. One wall in the living room was all glass, the walls covered in cheap wallpaper, with damp coming through when it rained, which is when it would also start to stink. The western state of Washington has two seasons – cold rain and in Summer, warm rain. There are few months out of the year when it's sunny and nice, but besides that it usually rains. Cold rain, warm rain, rain with snow...it drizzles over several days or there's heavy rain.

ŁP: Do you have a memory of something that happened in Winter...We were playing in the snow...We'd made a fort and there was an American wearing a cowboy hat...

DP: Oh, yes. He came and wanted to play with us.

ŁP: He began pelting us with snowballs!

DP: It was some guy in his twenties or thirties who thought he'd found some friends, ten-year-old kids, and started a snowball fight with them! He was making these hard snowballs and lobbing them at us.

ŁP: I remember you saying: "Get away! This is some crazy person!"

DP: There are plenty of crazies there. Not sure if he had all his marbles under that hat. They walk around and talk to themselves, or ride the bus back and forth all day.
ŁP: Mom said that they closed down all the mental asylum under Reagan.
DP: Yes, they closed them all down to save funds during Reagan's presidency and let all the crazies out. They'd buy a 'Big Gulp' - which has free refills – at MacDonalds in the morning and then ride the bus, finish the route, get out and get his refill, get back on the bus, do another round and so on. Talking to himself or trying to start conversations with others. Americans have the quality of being very friendly and talkative. These days hardly anyone uses the Post Office, but in those days, you'd stand in line for ten or fifteen minutes for a letter, you'd run into a person like that who would tell you their entire family history.
So, after a few months, two doctors arrived, one from Hungary and one from Czechoslovakia, both immigrants, but they'd arrived earlier. They sold us a car for maybe 800 dollars, a Dodge Dart. An American car, not the biggest, but still quite large – a big square thing with a bench inside. So, we got around in that. Petrol was quite cheap, though Dad still saved where he could. Big cars like that were accessible – they used up a lot petrol, but didn't cost a fortune. Ziemek and I were in the Scouts. A few streets up from us there was a Lutheran church. There was an American scout group attached to that church. Their Scout Master came to see us. He must have heard about us through the priest. He suggested that Ziemek and I join them, as they needed more members. They paid for our uniforms. We went on one of their camps. We used to do weekend activities with them. I broke a kid's thumb.
ŁP: Accidentally?
DP: Well...accidentally on purpose. We were going to the Boeing factory on a tour. There was a boy behind me who didn't want to shut up, he kept going on, speaking crap. This began to bother me, so I grabbed his thumb and bent it back and then it popped. I thought: "This isn't good". He cried, but he didn't say a word about it. I think I dislocated it. He must have gone to a doctor and got it put back and his thumb was okay.
ŁP: Then our parents decided to move to South Africa?
DP: They must have been planning on going to South Africa almost from the time we came to the US, after they realised that they weren't going to advance very quickly in their careers, as they had to pass all those exams. Mom was still learning English. Dad didn't want to work as a nurse or in any other profession. Both of them wanted to work as doctors. The Americans suggested that they should forget about being doctors and instead just get whatever work they could, slinging bags of potatoes or concrete, just to earn something. Our parents had different ideas. They hadn't left Poland just to become factory workers. If they'd wanted that, they could

have stayed in Poland. South Africa was accepting professionals back then. They got in touch with the consulate in Los Angeles. It took about half a year, sorting out all the documents and permissions before they were offered positions here (in SA) and could come here and begin working. That was when we travelled by Greyhound Bus over four days across the United States, from the West to the East, to Boston, to (Dad's cousin) John. Some people were critical when they heard we were going to South Africa, that we were emigrating to a country that was abusing and discriminating against Black people. They forgot that the US had only granted Civil Rights twenty years earlier, in '64, to Blacks and Coloureds, so they could vote and take part in the processes of a democratic country. They now considered themselves enlightened and thought that was all behind them. Australia only brought in equal rights in the 70s. In Switzerland, women were given equal rights only in the 1970s. Of course, they weren't abusing women in the same way over there as Blacks were being abused here, but they didn't have equal rights. Only the men could decide that, as they were only ones with the right to vote. There's a famous photograph: every canton – it's a Federation, so the cantons have a lot of autonomy, so each canton has many of its own laws, but they have Federal laws too. The US is a Federation and Switzerland is a Confederation, an even looser system than in the States. So, in the canton of Apenzell, in its more conservative half, Innerrhoden, there's a 1976 photograph of the men in the market square voting for women's equal rights and the old men in the front row are visibly against it. They'd thought that in their lifetimes a 'travesty' such as this wouldn't come about! All the cantons had to agree to it for women to be able to vote in the national elections. Or, it may have been that they could vote in the national elections, but not in the local ones, if their canton hadn't given them those rights yet. So, some people criticised us for going to South Africa - "How can you go there?" But, ten years later, those same people were saying, "You know, maybe Africa isn't ready for Democracy yet..."

ŁP: In any case, it all fell apart a few years later.

DP: Yes, the Apartheid system.

So, that's how it was in the States. In the beginning, a person always felt like a bit of a second-class citizen. You had to learn the language. Most of the American students kept away from the new kids, until one had become more integrated. Ziemek made friends quickly, as he's very sociable and more of an extrovert. He made friends with Ken, who lived across the street from us. We'd go play at Ken's house. Ken had a water bed and when you lay down on it, it would move you from side to side. Ziemek once asked Ken what he wanted to do when he grew up, and he replied: "I wanna be a lawyer, if I get a chance". But, seeing as how he didn't do too well at school, he probably never got that "chance". Although, who knows, maybe he is a lawyer. I

remember that his mother once asked us, as immigrants who'd already been there a year, how to spell 'unique', because she couldn't remember; Ken jumped up and said: "U-N-I-T – it's a silent T, ma!"

In the beginning, Ziemek and had three or four hours of English 'for immigrants', so called. The basics. After six months we had to write a language exam. After that we did two hours of those classes. We had about six classes every day. We always had Physical Education, English and Maths, then we got to choose the other three: History, Civics and so on...and Home Economics. Learning how to sew and wash clothes. Very important. Later we on we had normal English classes. Ewa Studenna was with us, at the same school, in the beginning. Grzesiek Szwed was another one. He had a hard time with attending to his studies, as he had other interests, something he carried over from Poland, though he was still smarter than most of the American students. His brother Arek – Arkadiusz – was few years older, in middle school, dropped out. Grzesiek hadn't learned to speak English properly, but he knew a few slurs very well. He was walking in town and called a Black guy "chocolate" and the guys got upset and shaved all his hair off. Apart from us few Poles in that Immigrant English group, the rest of the kids, about thirty of them, were from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia – Asians from Indochina. They had a hard time in that class. The Vietnamese and Laotians did alright, but the Cambodians had to learn a new alphabet and then learn to read, so it took them longer. They'd stay in that class for three years, some of them. Our teacher's name was Ms A-, from Welsh or Irish extraction, so it was a Celtic name, and those students would struggle to pronounce it. That was also when I learned how to use chopsticks from a Vietnamese friend. He taught me using two pencils and an eraser. A very useful skill in life! So, they stayed in that class for a long time, but they were very good at mathematics.

So, that's it about the States.

Appendix E

Transcript of Piotrek Strzelec Interview, 29 May 2016

(PS – Piotrek Strzelec / ŁP – Łukasz Pater)

ŁP: I had a few questions... this film that I'm making.... I wanted to contact several of the people that had been in Vitagena, but that turned out to be difficult. Apart from my family, you're the only person whom I've managed to contact till now.
PS: I hardly even remember anyone that was there, just a few people. I wouldn't even know their email addresses.
ŁP: GS was one.
PS: MS was one too and she had a daughter with an interesting name. I know that she and her mother are now both professors. She was fifteen then, my sister's age, and her parents let her smoke. She smoked together with her parents. Her father, also a professor, was already quite old and I'm sure he's passed on. MS is probably in her 70s or 80s. What was their daughter's name...She's also a professor somewhere, maybe even the Jagiellonian University, because they were from Kraków. I remember that they came to Vitagena with their dog. We gave our dog away and later wondered if that had been a smart decision, as it turned out that people could travel with their dogs. I think they went to Los Angeles and apparently returned to Poland after some time. Who else was there...There was a boy that stayed with me.... they were from Szczecin. His mother was a dentist. He lived with me. You're too young to remember, Dobek knows this story: one time this boy pressed the fire alarm and his mother came and knew he was the one who'd done it - " I knew it was you!" - and he admitted to it and got a hiding for it. She knew what he was like and was sure it was him. I remember there was a girl. I think of her sometimes because...Have you heard the story of '*mama boje*"? There was a girl who was unattractive – she had this long nose – and we were giving her grief, calling her *mama boje.* The term *mama boje* came from my mother, because from her childhood she remembered that when a child was afraid, they'd say *mama boje* ('mother, I'm afraid'). So, my mother from that time used the expression when referring to someone who was unattractive that they were a *mama boje*. I told Dobek this and he started calling this girl *mama boje.* Z was her father's name. He came to Dobek and threatened him, told him to stop calling his daughter that and called Dobek 'Pateżyk' *(a derogatory form of the surname 'Pater')*, and Dobek answered back and called him___ (a derogatory version of the man's surname). Thinking back on it, the man was right. We were hurting that girl's feelings calling her that and I don't even know if she understood what that nickname meant and I think back on that to this day, wondering how her

life unfolded. I don't know where her family went, but I suspect it was also somewhere in California. Maybe Las Vegas – someone went to Las Vegas, but I don't remember who that was.

What else do I remember from that time? … Her name was B! B____S. That was the name of the fifteen-year-old daughter, B.

ŁP: Can I return to the subject of Poland? To the conditions of your leaving? Your father was a member of Solidarity, right?

PS: He never wanted to go back to Poland.

ŁP: He was arrested the same night that my father was arrested? On the 13th of December?

PS: Yes. They came in the morning. My room was right by the front door. I woke up when my father was already arguing with them through the door. I could hear voices. He hadn't opened the door and was speaking with them and I think he was delaying while my mom threw some documents from the balcony. But we were on the ground floor and the militia were there waiting and caught those documents. He was the media spokesman for the County of Legnica Solidarity and he'd had some documents in his possession. He also had some money from collections. So, my mother was doing something while he argued with the militia. They were showing him some kind of arrest warrant through the peephole and he used a word that I'd never heard before. He said, "That's a forgery". Of course, the militiaman said: "Sir, this is not a forgery". And I was wondering, "What's a forgery?". I didn't understand. I just remembered that I was afraid to leave my room. I listened to everything, up until the point when he got dressed and went with them. He just came into my room and said goodbye to me.

We didn't know where he was for the first month. My mother cried and that same day she went looking for him, trying to find out where he was. Of course, no one knew anything. Only a month later, we received a letter from my father, censored, of course. We didn't know where he was. After some time, we found out that he was in Głogów. Our visit with him was some time after that, I can't remember when, but we visited him two or three times. He agreed to leave Poland and they let him out in June, I think – the end of June – so that he could settle his affairs. So, he was interned for about six months. And of course, our fathers met there in prison, because despite the fact that [our families] lived close to one another, we hadn't known one another. I also remember that they both went on a hunger strike. My father didn't eat for nine days and yours's for, I think, fifteen. That's stood out in my memory.

We hadn't known each other at all in Lubin. We'd met Dobek and Ziemek, but only became friends in Germany. We spent a lot of time in Vitagena at the pool, which had so much chlorine, that I cried from it every day. You could smell the chlorine through the entire building. It made

my eyes water terribly. But, despite that, we couldn't resist horsing around at the pool every day. We'd jump from the railing into the pool. We'd jump off a high wall into the pool and to clear quite a distance so as not to hit the pool's edge. Crazy stuff. Boy's that age don't think about their safety, but just say. "I wonder if we'll make it?" So, we spent a lot of time there.
I remember that they also had a sauna. There was an older Czech lady there on holiday. I didn't witness this, but heard that some Poles saw here going naked into the sauna and afterwards there was discussion about it among them. We never sat there naked, but in our swimming trunks and I remember that there was a Polish lady who looked in on us and said something like: "What are you doing sitting here in your underwear?" Maybe she'd hoped to see some naked boys, I don't know. In any case, our reaction was, "Why should we get undressed? We're Poles, not Germans". I have those kinds of memories from that time.
I remember that we felt so free, that we went for a beer. 13, 14, 15-year-old boys would walk the streets with a beer and pretend to be drunks. I could never drink more than one-and-a-half cans of beer. I just couldn't get more than that down, so I was never drunk. To this day I've never been drunk. I was just fun and games. The had Playboy magazines in the stores and we'd look at them because, you know, "It's a free country!" I remember that I went with Dobek and Ziemek to religious education classes. There was a Polish priest there. I hadn't been to religious classes since my second communion. That's how it was in my family – we weren't very religious. Dobek and Ziemek laughed at me because I didn't know any of the prayers. I didn't know anything because I hadn't been to religious classes for so long. What else...Have you got any specific questions?
ŁP: Just your general impressions and recollections. Dobek and Ziemek and my father, in their interviews, we had general discussions about it all and I've pieced together a narrative, which I'll send to you, of course. Once I've added your bits, I'll send it to you, so have an idea of how it will look. I've completed some of the animation – it's a long process, very slow. They described their journey from Poland, to Germany to America and shared their general impressions. Dobek and Ziemek told me that when our father was interned, they'd paint slogans on walls, 'Wrona Skona', and things like that. Dobek had the idea that he'd do his as a form of protest against the government. They also took part in Church activities as a form of protest. They both mentioned you from their time in Vitagena. They described some of the culture shock, for the Poles going to Germany and perhaps for the Germans themselves in suddenly being surrounded by Poles.
PS: I have a few things to say on that subject. I remember that one time we were going to the embassy by bus. German music was playing all the time and was getting sick of it. The Poles were smoking and the non-smokers complained about it. The Poles' answer to this was, "I'm in

a free country". Of course, this was a very naïve and primitive approach to freedom, but that's how it was. And I think that this attitude of the Poles was evident to the Germans, that they weren't behaving in cultured manner. The children would make a lot of noise. Vitagena was a place for retired folk, where they wanted to spend a quiet holiday and we'd make a lot noise. For us it was something new: a holiday. For the children a holiday, for the adults, freedom. From what I heard, Vitagena later went bankrupt. He was a Dane – we called him 'The Dane'. He was the owner of Vitagena and he drove a Toyota Supra. It had those headlights that opened. We liked all that so much – "What a car!" Apparently, he'd paid 30 000DM for it, or something like that. So, we'd speak about the car, "Yes, he's rich. The Dane...that's how it is. We'll also be rich someday". There were also some rumours going around that we were waiting so long because they were building homes for us in America. It was so naive! Have you ever watched Spielberg's animated film, *American Tale*?

ŁP: I have, but long ago.

PS: There was a song in it. They were Russian-Jewish mice – something in the style of *Fiddler on the Roof* – Russian-Jewish mice travelling to America and during their voyage they said, "And you know the most important thing in America? That there's no cats! There are no cats in America!" And there was a song: *There are no cats in America*...and we were the same! "Yes, of course, they're building us houses!" It was the same approach, a kind of naïve optimism. That America is...there's even a joke: a Pole arrives in America and sees a dollar lying in the street: "Ah, what the hell – I'll start tomorrow!" Right?

I don't know when Vitagena went bankrupt - in any case, we heard about it later. Do you know about DK? He was a friend of my father's from the mine. No wait, I think he was also from Głogów. I'm not sure, my father would know. DK came here to Utah with his wife. They divorced after a while, but I don't want to gossip about that. We were friends with him when he was here. He was very entrepreneurial, he wanted to start various businesses. An ambitious young man, he was maybe 24 or 25 years old. He bought a condominium and drove a used Mercedes. He wanted to be somebody. But they had problems and separated, and apparently she returned to Poland. We lost touch with him and didn't know what was happening with him. My dad tried to find some information on him, because they were putting together a database of people that had been interned and he came across DK's name on that database. It said something like: "DK, emigrated to America, where he died in a car accident." We don't know how or when it happened, but we suspect that it must have been in the 1980s, which is why we lost touch with him. He would have contacted us if he were alive. I don't remember his ex-wife's name, but they

were a young, childless couple. We have his photo. We used to spend time with them. The one time we went South with them, to see some rock formations in some National Park.
ŁP: As far as I know, people didn't have a choice as to where they'd be located in America...
PS: We did. There was an American lady interpreter at the embassy who spoke excellent Polish. We were surprised that she didn't have an accent. They asked us if we had a place in America that we'd like to go to. We said "Utah". Why? My father had a friend in Poland who worked at the mine and he managed to escape via Austria. He somehow landed up in Utah and sent us a postcard. We liked this postcard so much. It was an aerial view of Salt Lake and the beautiful mountains and we said: "A salt lake - can you imagine? A salt lake and mountains, it's like being by the ocean, you can swim..." I was a keen cyclist then and I thought to myself, "It would be so great to cycle there". So, we got it in our heads that it was a beautiful place. This was during the time of Solidarity, before the State of War. So we told them, "We'd like to go to Utah, to Salt Lake City". So, they found a sponsor and they sent us. We landed in New York on the 1st of September, and on the very next day we were in Salt Lake City, 2nd September. Here, I also have some recollections. First of all, from the air, the lake looked like a swamp. It still looks like a swamp, which it is! It is, in fact, a swamp. It's too salty for any fish to live in it, but it does have something called Brine Shrimp and plenty of flies. A stinking swamp. You could swim in it once, but you can't now. It's much smaller than it once was, as if it were drying up. There's plenty of salty desert around it. In any case, we arrived dressed in leathers, quite elegant. Everything we owned, we had on us. Gold things...we'd sold things and bought gold with them. We were met by a couple, or sponsors, dressed in jeans and t-shirts, not like one would expect, according to Polish custom, people to be dressed that had come to greet you. I understand this better now than I did then. I think they were expecting us to look like poor refugees and didn't want to embarrass us, but maybe it was just their style. We stayed with them for a month and eventually had enough. They weren't welcoming in the way Poles would understand being welcoming. They'd go to work and tell us that there was food in the fridge and we could help ourselves. We were shy, because we were guests, how could we go through their fridge? So, it was a collision of cultures. That was the hardest. My mother cried for the longest time: "Where have you brought me?", and such things. We weren't going to school. It was the end of September, we had to go to school. So, eventually, they wrote to the school. They helped dad to find work. After he found work, he lost his elegibility for government welfare. Both my parents worked hard, from that time on, from 1982. We were very poor. We'd collect cans so we could sell them for scrap and earn a few extra dollars. It turned out that one doesn't find dollars in the street after all. Later on, things stabilised. My mother began working for the company that

I work for now. My dad found employment at an ironworks and earned a much better salary. We bought an old house where Dobek visited us in 1986. I have a photo with him there, in front of our second car, a Camaro, an old 'muscle car'. By then things had begun to stabilise. I was finishing school, it was my last year. Irena [sister] was still studying. After that, I moved from job to job, until the present day. My parents retired early. My dad had a Union job, so he could afford to do it. Both of them retired ten years ago.

What else is interesting from those times... My first year in America was terrible. They sent me to Junior High. At that age, Americans are at their most animalistic, at 14, 15. I had two or three friends, my English was broken, but it was hard. You always think people are talking about you, and I was shy. I think that first year there was my formation as a young man and for many years I didn't have too many friends, just a few foreigners. Grzesiek was my best friend, he unfortunately died a few years ago. I also had a friend from Laos, who always wanted to get me involved in bands. I found him in Minnesota. It was hard. I didn't assimilate in the culture and so I didn't have a girlfriend, I didn't develop in the normal way that boys do at that age. I think that's why I got married so late. I never learnt normal interactions with people. Maybe that's why I never liked school. To this day, I don't want to study. I don't want to return to negative things. It wasn't all bad. I wanted to be a Rock Star, be famous, make millions and so on. It was a folly of mine, because the chances of that happening were very slim, but if I hadn't been concerned with that, I'd probably have completed my studies.

ŁP: You played in bands?

PS: Yes, but it was nothing serious. At first I played in a band that was more New Wave and later a Hard Rock band. Since then I've destroyed all those old recordings, because they're so terrible that I don't want them to get into anyone's hands. Later on, I had a personal revelation and returned to the Church and began reading about the lives of the Saints. I began to think I might have a calling to the clergy, or to the spiritual life and tried to enter the Order of the Discalced Carmelites. For a few months I thought I would enter the order, I gave notice at work, I sold a few things, destroyed my old tapes. My parents were very opposed to it. Two weeks before I was to enter, they called me and said that they would take me. It was my greatest heartbreak. A big shock. That was almost twenty years ago. I don't think I had a calling because I stopped searching and began to take more of an interest in finding a partner. I had a few girlfriends and the third one became my wife. I realised that I wanted to marry a Polish girl. American girls are too different culturally, they think entirely differently, they're just raised differently.

What else? I keep wanting to return to the subject of Vitagena and Lubin. I remember there was one boy there who we gave a hard time to, RC. We'd show him naked girls in magazines. We'd record his reaction and then blackmail him and he'd beg us not to tell his father. Thinking back now, we were really terrible. It may have been him or another boy. In any case, he was six or seven years old. I don't know why, but we didn't like him,and that's why we gave him a hard time. The Dane also had a son. You must have heard this story. We taught him to say "dobra dobra" [okay, okay].

ŁP: Dobek told me that boy tried to jump off the balcony using an umbrella?

PS: I have a vague recollection of that. Maybe Dobek told me about it. He was also an odd kid, so we'd tease him a bit.

ŁP: They also spoke a lot about mini golf.

PS: Yes! That was very pleasant. I remember P. She may have been the Dane's daughter, 19 year old. What was that Dane's name?

ŁP: Mr Helvic.

PS: Maybe she wasn't his daughter, I can't remember. In any case, a lot of the men liked playing table tennis with her. There was some guy there who was supposed to be the National Table Tennis Champion. It's all just flashes of memory. It would be fun to get a group together and visit there again, to have a reunion. I have a few photos from that time.

ŁP: I'd be grateful if you could send them to me.

PS: They're Polaroids. I remember that we took a photo there and there was a mouse having a fit, biting the asphalt, and you can see that mouse in the photo. We have some photos in front of Vitagena, but I think that's it. American planes would fly there. There was a military base there... I just remember that those were the best holidays I ever had. You didn't have to work or study. They were just holidays, filled with hope, that a better life was waiting for us. A wait for freedom. But later, it turned out that life wasn't so easy.

ŁP: Ziemek mentioned that he had the impression that it was like being in a film, going from grey Poland to a colourful Germany.

PS: Yes. I remember the stores. It was an unbelievable experience. Colour, everywhere. Coca-Cola, the sodas, all different colours, orange, green, so many kinds. Packaging, adverts - magazines! It all made an impression on us. Everything was suddenly colourful. Poland was so grey, maybe it's because we see it through grey photographs, but not necessarily. The neglected concrete buildings. Who had any desire to make it beautiful? What for? Only the churches were beautiful. Apart from that, life was grey. The posters were colourful, but what was on those posters, maybe one didn't even want to look.

I'll admit that, to this day, I wonder: I was born in Poland, in a small town, I lived there, I read books about the Wild West, I watched Westerns. Did I ever think that I would live here in the Wild West? For so many years. who knows for how much longer, maybe for my entire life, maybe I'll be buried here in the Wild West. You know that most Westerns were filmed here in Utah? I know real Indians! They're my friends. It's somehow unbelievable. Despite the fact that this is my country, I'm a citizen, I'll die here, I still think, "Pinch me". And, being a philosopher, I think maybe I'll still spend the major part of my life in New Zealand? Who knows. I still have forty years ahead of me, maybe we'll leave here in five years because of some political reasons and it turns out that I end up in New Zealand. One never knows. But It's strange, no? I have some sentiment towards Poland from my childhood, but to live there now would be a shock. I feel that Poland is now more of an alien culture to me than America. I don't know how people think there now. It's a completely different generation.