MEMORY AND MOBILITIES IN COMICS: A STUDY OF FORM

Dissertation

submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts,

Jadavpur University

by

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2017

Certified that the thesis entitled

"**Memory and Mobilities in Comics: A Study of Form**" submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my work carried out under the supervision of **Professor Nilanjana Gupta.**

And that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere/elsewhere.

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CONTENTS

	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	**i**
	LIST OF IMAGES	**ii-vi**
	NOTE	**vii**
CHAPTER 1	**INTRODUCTION: 'GRAPHIC NOVEL' OR 'COMICS'?**	**1-34**
	Why Comics?	1
	Terminologies	17
	Growth of the Form	24
	Comics Studies	32
CHAPTER 2	**THE NEW MOBILITIES PARADIGM, MEMORY AND COMICS**	**35-57**
	Place and Home	35
	Place and Mobility	37
	The New Mobilities Paradigm	42
	Collective Memory	46
	Place and Memory	51
	Mobilities and Memory	52
	Mobilities, Memory and Comics	55
CHAPTER 3	***FOOTNOTES IN GAZA:* COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND JOURNALISTIC DETOURS**	**58-151**
	Memory and Footnotes	58
	Khan Younis Section	60
	Testimony and Sacco's Coda to Khan Younis Section	118
	The Interlude – Feast	122
	Rafah Section	130
	Coda to Rafah Section	146

CHAPTER 4 ***THE ARRIVAL:*** **THE MEMORY OF IMMIGRATION** **152-221**

Immigration: The Ambiguity of the Term 152

The Materiality of the Book 155

On Migration/Immigration 170

Decoding *The Arrival*: The Departure 173

The Journey 190

The Encounters 214

CHAPTER 5 ***THE CARDBOARD VALISE:*** **TOURIST DESTINATIONS AND MEMORY** **222-270**

Katchor's World 222

Travel Narratives 224

Travel as Tourist Mobilities 225

Emile Delilah and his Xenophilia 229

Island Experience 241

Elijah Salamis and his Supranationalist way 248

Travel, Tourism and Authenticity 251

The Materiality of *The Cardboard Valise* 253

Emile and Elijah – Convergence 263

CHAPTER 6 **MEMORY AND MOBILITIES AS METAPHORS OF THE COMICS FORM** **271-302**

Horizontal Mobilities 271

Vertical Mobilities 278

Memory and Mobilities in Comics 280

The Creative Self 281

The Medium and the Ideology of the 'Drawn' 288

Conclusion 299

WORKS CITED **303-318**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, **Professor Nilanjana Gupta**, for her excellent guidance, caring and patience. She has been a tremendous mentor for me, providing me with an excellent model for doing research with great enthusiasm and sharp insights. Her advice on both research as well as on my career has been priceless.

I also wish to thank **Professor Abhijit Gupta** (Tintin da) for introducing me to the amazing world of experimental comics.

There are no words to express the kind of happiness that I experience when I am with my “Longform” comrades – **Sarbajit Sen** (Sarba da), **Debkumar Mitra** (Debu da) **and Sekhar Mukherjee** (Sekhar da).

Also grateful to the staff of **National Library Kolkata**, **British Council Kolkata** and **American Library Kolkata** for their help. I want to specially mention **The Charles Wallace Trust** for providing grants which allowed me to travel to UK and get hold of the books from **British Library**, unavailable here.

Hugs to my super sister **Piyali** and her family – **Soovojit**, **Tonoya** and **Triyana**. My road trips through America to gather rare comics happened due to their unstinted enthusiasm and support.

I am grateful to ***Ma*** and ***Baba*** for the sacrifices that they make on my behalf. Their prayers for me are my greatest possession. My **in-laws’ family** has also been a pillar of support.

At the end, I would like express appreciation and love to my beloved wife **Sharmistha** (Rini) who is my rock in moments of happiness and crisis. The last word goes to my son, **Pramit** – ‘Zizou’ to me. You have given me wings to create.

LIST OF IMAGES

Fig. 1: Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, page 101 19

Fig. 2: *Understanding Comics*, page 103 19

Fig. 3: *Understanding Comics,* page 70 21

Fig. 4: *Understanding Comics,* page 72 22

Fig. 5: *Understanding Comics,* page 73 22

Fig. 6: Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, Page 60 59

Fig. 7: Joe Sacco's *Footnotes in Gaza*, Page 3 61

Fig. 8: *Footnotes in Gaza*, from Page 4 62

Fig. 9: *Footnotes in Gaza*, Page 5 63

Fig. 10: *Footnotes in Gaza*, Page 8 65

Fig. 11: *Footnotes in Gaza*, Page 9 66

Fig. 12: *Footnotes in Gaza*, from Page 10 67

Fig. 13: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 13 68

Fig. 14: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 15 70

Fig. 15: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 18 73

Fig. 16: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 19 74

Fig. 17: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 21 75

Fig. 18: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Pages 22 and 23.
Use of inset panels in the page layout. 76

Fig. 19: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 27 78

Fig. 20: *Footnotes in Gaza,* double spread,
Pages 28-29 79

Fig. 21: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 31 81

Fig. 22: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 32 82

Fig. 23: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 32.
Use of intense cross-hatching technique. 83

Fig. 24: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 39 85

Fig. 25: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 73 85

Fig. 26: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 42 86

Fig. 27: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 43
and Page 45 respectively 87

Fig. 28: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 49 89

Fig. 29: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 50 90

Fig. 30: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 51.
Shift in point of view 91

Fig. 31: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 178 94

Fig. 32: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 63 95

Fig. 33: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 68 97

Fig. 34: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 72 98

Fig. 35: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 77 100

Fig. 36: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 80 102

Fig. 37: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 85 104

Fig. 38: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 86 105

Fig. 39: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Pages 88 and 89.
Red lines show the balance of grid in the facing pages 107

Fig. 40: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 90 108

Fig. 41: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from page 97 111

Fig. 42: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 98 112

Fig. 43: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 99 113

Fig. 44: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 100 114

Fig. 45: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 112 116

Fig. 46: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 115 117

Fig. 47: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 128 124

Fig. 48: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 135 126

Fig. 49: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 136 126

Fig. 50: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 139 and Page 111 128

Fig. 51: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 158 131

Fig. 52: *Footnotes in Gaza,* double spread, Pages 180-181 133

Fig. 53: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 187 134

Fig. 54: *Footnotes in Gaza,* double spread, Pages 254-255 135

Fig. 55: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 205 136

Fig. 56: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 216 137

Fig. 57: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 217 138

Fig. 58: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 227 139

Fig. 59: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 265 140

Fig. 60: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 306 141

Fig. 61: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Pages 348-349 142

Fig. 62: From *Palestine* and
from Page 383, *Footnotes in Gaza* respectively 143

Fig. 63: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 384 145

Fig. 64: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 386 (unmarked) 147

Fig. 65: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 387 (unmarked) 149

Fig. 66: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 388 (unmarked) 150

Fig. 67: Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*, Cover 158

Fig. 68: *The Arrival*, Half-title Page 160

Fig. 69: *The Arrival*, Copyright Page 163

Fig. 70: *The Arrival*, Half-title page and
the Full title page respectively 164

Fig. 71: *The Arrival*, Endpapers 167

Fig. 72: Passport of Tan's Father 168

Fig. 73: A representative page from *The Arrival* 174

Fig. 74: *The Arrival,* Page 1, Section I 178

Fig. 75: *The Arrival,* From Page 1 and
Page 2, Section I, collated together 179

Fig. 76: *The Arrival,* Page 2, Section I 179

Fig. 77: *The Arrival,* Page 3, Section I 181

Fig. 78: *The Arrival,* Page 4, Section I 183

Fig. 79: *The Arrival,* Page 5, Section I 185

Fig. 80: *The Arrival,* Page 6-7, Section I 186

Fig. 81: Francisco Goya*, The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* 187

Fig. 82: *The Arrival,* Page 10, Section I 189

Fig. 83: *The Arrival,* Page 13, Section II 191

Fig. 84: *The Arrival,* Pages 14-15, Section II 192

Fig. 85: *The Arrival,* Pages 16-17, Section II.
The created palimpsest, combining the Endpapers
with the double spread, Pages 16-17, Section II 193

Fig. 86: *The Arrival,* Page 19, Section II and
Tom Roberts, *Coming South* respectively 195

Fig. 87: *The Arrival,* from Page 21, Section II 196

Fig. 88: *The Arrival,* Pages 22-23, Section II 197

Fig. 89: *The Arrival,* Page 26, Section II.
The archival photograph from the Registry Hall, Ellis Island 198

Fig. 90: *The Arrival,* Page 28, Section II 201

Fig. 91: *The Arrival,* From Page 30, Section II 202

Fig. 92: *The Arrival,* Pages 32-33, Section II 203

Fig. 93: *The Arrival,* Page 36 and Page 37,
seperated by red line, Section II 205

Fig. 94: *The Arrival,* Pages 58, Section III;
An early drawing featuring indecipherable maps (From *Sketches* 30).
Tan's creation of the 'new language' by rearrangement of
Roman letters and numbers (From *Sketches* 31) 206

Fig. 95: *The Arrival,* Page 87, Section IV 208

Fig. 96: *The Arrival,* Page 101, Section IV 209

Fig. 97: The companion animal in *The Arrival* 210

Fig. 98: From *The Arrival,* Section VI 211

Fig. 99: From *The Arrival,* Page 44, Section II 212

Fig. 100: *The Arrival,* Page 45, Section II 213

Fig. 101: *The Arrival,* Pages 46-47, Section II and
from Page 21, Section I 214

Fig. 102: *The Arrival,* Pages 66-67, Section III 215

Fig. 103: *The Arrival,* Pages 92-93, Section IV 216

Fig. 104: *The Arrival,* Pages 54-55, Section III 216

Fig. 105: From *The Arrival,* Page 65, Section III 217

Fig. 106: *The Arrival,* Pages 88-89, Section IV 218

Fig. 107: *The Arrival,* Page 1, Section I and
Page 117, Section VI respectively 219

Fig. 108: *The Arrival,* Page 3, Section I and
Page 118, Section VI respectively 220

Fig. 109: Ben Katchor's *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 15 229

Fig. 110: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 42 230

Fig. 111: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 30 231

Fig. 112: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 30 232

Fig. 113: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 31 233

Fig. 114: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 26 234

Fig. 115: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 26 234

Fig. 116: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 27 235

Fig. 117: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 27 235

Fig. 118: *The Cardboard Valise,* from page 28 236

Fig. 119: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 33 236

Fig. 120: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 33 237

Fig. 121: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 105 238

Fig. 122: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 36 239

Fig. 123: *The Cardboard Valise,* Pages 102-103 240

Fig. 124: *The Cardboard Valise,* separate panels from Page 4 242

Fig. 125: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 19 243

Fig. 126: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 5 243

Fig. 127: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 6 244

Fig. 128: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 6 245

Fig. 129: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 16 246

Fig. 130: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 22 246

Fig. 131: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 25 247

Fig. 132: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 43
and Page 47 respectively 248-249

Fig. 133: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 48 249

Fig. 134: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 61 250

Fig. 135: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 74 250

Fig. 136: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 39 252

Fig. 137: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 1 254

Fig. 138: *The Cardboard Valise,* front Endpapers 255-258

Fig. 139: *The Cardboard Valise,* back Endpapers 259

Fig. 140: *The Cardboard Valise,* the Book 262

Fig. 141: *The Cardboard Valise,* last front Endpaper
and Page 1 as a spread 263

Fig. 142: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 2 264

Fig. 143: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 3 265

Fig. 144: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 120 267

Fig. 145: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 125 268

Fig. 146: Sacco and his cartoon avatar 282

Fig. 147: The Protagonist's encounter with
self/family in *The Arrival* 284

Fig. 148: *Le Premier Cigar* 289

Fig. 149: *Footnotes in Gaza*, Pages 342-343 295

Fig. 150: Evolution of the drawing process in *The Arrival* 297

Fig. 151: *Footnotes in Gaza*, from Page 119 300

Fig. 152: Frederique Rusch's *Untitled (Comic Book)* (2013) 302

NOTE

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I have consistently followed MLA Handbook 8th edition for all the citations within the thesis.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: 'GRAPHIC NOVEL' OR 'COMICS'?

"I don't remember when exactly I read my first comic book, but I do remember exactly how liberated and subversive I felt as a result." — Edward Said, Introduction to *Palestine*[1]

"I always loved, most of all with doing comics, the fact that I knew I was in the gutter. I kind of miss that, even these days, whenever people come up and inform me, oh, you do graphic novels. No. I wrote comic books, for heaven's sake. They're creepy and I was down in the gutter and you despised me. 'No, no, we love you! We want to give you awards! You write graphic novels!' We like it *here* in the gutter!" — Neil Gaiman[2]

WHY COMICS?

Even before we begin our discussion regarding the problematic conceptualisation of the term 'comics' and its alternate epithets, there is a curious question that needs to be answered — is the word 'comics' plural or singular? We generally speak of a *comic* book (a singular totality composed of multiple pages, frames, panels, and images) but of a *comics* page (plural name for a singular element of a book). Following W.J.T. Mitchell, we will use the term *comics* here, as it depicts an idea of "singular plurality."[3]

Comics are considered as multi-modal[4] texts that use a combination of words, images and panel arrangements[5] in order to create a narrative. Scholarly debates pertaining to the definition of comics are generally concentrated on two seminal positions related to its 'form' — one looks at the combination of *word and*

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[1] Said, Edward. "Introduction." *Palestine* by Joe Sacco, Fantagraphics, 2001, p. i.
[2] Gaiman, Neil. Interview by Joss Whedon. *Time.com*, Sept. 25, 2005, http://content.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1109313-2,00.html. Accessed 16 Feb 2014.
[3] Mitchell, W.J.T. "Afterword." *Critical Enquiry*, Comics and Media issue, vol. 40, issue 3, spring 2014, p. 256. It is to be noted that Mitchell took this term from Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of self as a "singular plurality" in his book *Being Singular Plural*. [cf. Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Being Singular Plural*. Translated by Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Bryne, Stanford University Press, 2000.].
[4] Kress, Gunther R, and Leeuwen T. Van. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. Routledge, 2006, p. 20.
[5] Kukkonen, Karin. "Comics as a Test Case for Transmedial Narratology." *SubStance,* 40: 1, 2011, pp. 34-52.

image as a crucial defining feature[6] while the other privileges *sequence* as an essential element[7]. However, if we strictly adhere to the above positions, the former excludes wordless comics[8] and abstract comics[9], while the latter fails to account for the possibility of single panel comics' narratives such as *The Family Circus* and *The Far Side* which have been fully recognized as comics for decades.[10] Prominent critics who emphasize word-image relations include Carrier[11], Hatfield[12] and Versaci[13] while those whose works primarily concern narrative sequence and spatial relationships include McCloud, Groensteen[14] and Peeters.[15]

It is understandably difficult to think of comics without images. Considering that visual aspects of communication are intrinsic to comics, it seems remarkable that literary frameworks have always occupied an important position in the discussion and analysis of comics. Most of the scholars insist on the marriage of words and images as the touchstone of comics' criticism, probably drawing on the rich western aesthetic tradition of *ut picture poesis*. Even Will Eisner in *Comics and Sequential Art* argues likewise when he says that, "Comics deal with two fundamental communicating devices: words and images. Admittedly this is an arbitrary separation. But, since in the modern world of communication they are treated as independent disciplines, it seems valid. Actually, they are derivatives of a single origin and in the skillful employment of words and images lay the expressive potential of the medium."[16] There are counterpoints to this argument, notably of W.J.T. Mitchell who suggests that we might call the division between

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[6] Harvey, R. C. *The Art of the Funnies: An Aesthetic History*. University of Mississippi Press, 1994, p. 9.
[7] McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art.* HarperPerennial, 1994, p. 9.
[8] Kunzle, David. *The History of the Comic Strip: The Nineteenth Century*. University of California Press, 1990, p. 194.; Beronä, D. A. "Pictures Speak in Comics without Words: pictorial principles in the work of Milt Gross, Hendrik Dorgathen, Eric Drooker, and Peter Kuper." *The Language of Comics: Word and Image,* edited by R. Varnum and C. T. Gibbons, University of Mississippi Press, 2001, pp. 19-31.
[9] Molotiu, A. *Abstract Comics: The Anthology*. Fantagraphics, 2009. ; Baetens, J. "Abstraction in Comics", *SubStance,* 40: 1, 2011, pp. 94-113.
[10] Cohn, Neil. "Un-defining 'comics.'" *International Journal of Comic Art*, 7(2), 2005, p. 236.
[11] Carrier, D. *The Aesthetics of Comics*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.
[12] Hatfield, C. *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature*. University of Mississippi Press, 2005.
[13] Versaci, R. *This Book Contains Graphic Language: Comics as Literature.* Continuum, 2007.
[14] Groensteen, Thierry. *The System of Comics.* University of Mississippi Press, 2007.
[15] Peeters, Benoît. "Four Conceptions of the Page." Translated by Jesse Cohn, *ImageTexT,* 3: 3, 2007, http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v3_3/peeters/. Accessed 16 April 2015.
[16] Eisner, Will. *Comics & Sequential Art*. Poorhouse Press, 1985.

word and image "the division between the seeable and the sayable, display and discourse, showing and telling." According to him, no method is going to rescue us from the dilemma of the "contested border between words and images." Rather, the very phrase "word and image," is a way of signalling this contested border: it is "a pair of terms whose relation opens a space of intellectual struggle, historical investigation, and artistic/critical practice."[17]

In Eisner's words, comics are "sequential art", by which he means to pick out a distinctive "form of art, or method of expression" (Eisner 5). However, Scott McCloud points out in his brilliant comic book investigation on the nature of comics, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*[18], the term "sequential art" does not distinguish comics from animation or, for that matter, from any other sequentially ordered examples of art (McCloud 7-8). So he offers a more formal definition. According to him, comics are "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (McCloud 9). Despite his slightly different approach, McCloud's definition still insists on the sequential nature of comics' images, thus excluding single panel and text dominated works from the realm of comics. In fact, McCloud famously claimed that single panel cartoons such as *The Family Circus*, *The Far Side*, and *Dennis the Menace* are cartoons but not comics because they are not sequential (McCloud 20-21). Critic like Bart Beaty vehemently disagrees with McCloud on this point.[19]

There is also disagreement regarding the terminology assigned to the medium. McCloud uses the old-school label of "comic book", while Will Eisner prefers the term – "graphic novel". Eddie Campbell sarcastically refers to his work as "very long cartoon strips."[20] While creating *The Arrival*, Shaun Tan initially slots it as a "picture book", only to think of it as a "graphic novel" midway through production.[21] Daniel Clowes names his work, *Ice Haven* as a "comic strip novel"[22]

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[17] Mitchell, W.J.T. "Word and Image." *Critical Terms for Art History,* edited by Robert S. Nelson and Richard Schiff, University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp. 47, 56.
[18] McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art.* HarperPerennial, 1994, p. 9.
[19] Beaty, Bart. *Comics versus Art*. University of Toronto Press, 2012, p. 34.
[20] Campbell, Eddie. Web Blog post. 14 Nov., 2007, http://eddiecampbell.blogspot.in. Accessed 16 April 2012.
[21] Tan, Shaun. "Comments on *The Arrival*." *www.shauntan.net,* publication date unspecified, http://www.shauntan.net/books/the-arrival.html. Accessed 12 May 2012.

and the cover of Craig Thompson's *Blankets* announces it as an "illustrated novel".[23] Joe Sacco's *The Great War* has an innovative format (partly inspired by the Bayeux Tapestry) and is subtitled as "an illustrated panorama".[24] Thus there are potentially several terms available for describing these texts but since the act of naming carries ideological implications, the choice requires clear justification. The epithet "comics", originally applied to the early strips published in newspapers and periodicals, were sometimes also called "funnies".[25] The name reflects the form's legacy in early print culture in satirical prints and caricature. In 1845, Rodolphe Töpffer was already positioning his picture stories (*histoires en estampes*) as another form of literature. Harry Morgan makes this approach his own motto and speaks of '*les littératures dessinées*', 'drawn literatures', in the plural.[26] Comics are only a subset of this vast domain, together with satirical etchings, popular imagery and cartoons.

A term like "graphic narrative" offers an alternative, but it may also include moving image texts, which is clearly not the case here. Hillary Chute champions this particular term as she thinks that the "graphic narrative", while destabilizing standard narratives of history, also claims its own historicity.[27] The same criterion applies to its derivative term, "sequential graphic narrative". Both these terms make reference to the visual language that has developed in and through tradition that is generally referred to as comics. In fact, the use of the term "comics" can be seen to signal shared, albeit multifaceted, histories and traditions. In terms of such traditions, comics have a distinct historical connection to the emergence of popular print cultures and retain popularity as tactile material objects – whether printed in glued and stapled pamphlets, as part of newspapers or magazines or in hardback book-form or even in web and other digital platforms (using touch or mouse-clicks). It is a fact that comics as a form direct attention to the materiality

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[22] Clowes, Daniel. *Ice Haven*. Pantheon Books, 2001. Print.
[23] Thompson, Craig. *Blankets*. Drawn and Quarterly, 2015.
[24] Sacco, Joe. *The Great War: July 1, 1916: the First Day of the Battle of the Somme: an Illustrated Panorama*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2013.
[25] Harvey, R. C. *The Art of the Funnies: An Aesthetic History*. University of Mississippi Press, 1994.; Sabin, Roger. *Adult Comics*. Routledge, 2003, p. 134.
[26] Morgan, Harry. *Principes des littératures dessinées*. Angoulême: Editions de l'An, 2003.
[27] Chute, Hillary. "Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative." *PMLA*, vol. 123, no. 2, March, 2008, pp. 452-465.

of the book. Seth in his essay “Graphic Novel Forms Today” expresses it succinctly, “When you work on a comic it doesn’t feel that it truly exists until it is that final printed object. It is not the original art.”[28] From Joe Sacco’s accordion fold tome *The Great War* to Chris Ware’s eleven-by-seventeen inch *Building Stories*[29], from Art Spiegelman’s large newspaper format-sized *In the Shadows of No Towers*[30] to Charles Burns’ two-inch high accordion collectible *Cut Up*, comics have emerged as one of the key sites of cultural practice where various experiments in print formats occur. As Spiegelman puts it, “the history of comics has up to now been the history of printing.”[31]

The idea of comics can be realized through diverse media, so it is better to refer to comics as a form, rather than a medium. There are subtle counterpoints to this view as well. Spiegelman opines that comics have the capacity “to reflect on their own status as an infinitely flexible medium”[32] Chute, for instance, conceives of comics as a medium[33] determined by its visual-verbal hybridity and its spatial construction of time. She further discriminates among different comics format such as comic strips, comic books, graphic novels and different genres, such as superhero stories or nonfictional reportage or historical accounts. Finally, she underscores the significance of publication schedules and materiality when she mentions “serial forms and contexts from weekly or daily strips to monthly comic books” and refers to “the comics page itself [a]s a material register of seriality” (Chute 453–54). Effectively she ties the development of graphic narrative to the physical media through which individual forms of graphic storytelling emerge as prominent cultural artefacts and practices in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Later as one of the editors in a specific volume titled “Comics and

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[28] Seth et al. “Graphic Novel Forms Today”. *Critical Enquiry,* 40, spring, 2014, p.153.
[29] Ware, Chris. *Building Stories*. Pantheon Books, 2012.
[30] Spiegelman, Art. *In the Shadow of No Towers*. Pantheon Books, 2004.
[31] Spiegelman, Art and W.J.T. Mitchell. “What the %$#! Happened to Comics?” *Critical Enquiry*, 40, spring, 2014, p.20.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Chute, Hillary L. “Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative.” *PMLA*, vol. 123, no. 2, March, 2008, pp. 452-465.

Media" published in *Critical Enquiry* she refines her position and envisages comics "not a self-contained medium but a node within a constellation of media."[34]

It was only during the 1970s and 1980s that the usual definitions of comics were challenged by the emergence of new work that broke away radically from tradition. More recently, the rediscovery of comics from the 19th century, whose formats and formulas differ from modern comics, and the flood of comics from Asia, which follow different cultural codes, have made the act of defining comics all the more complicated and problematic. The most fashionable import has been, without doubt, "graphic novel", a term which has been embraced with much enthusiasm. Roger Sabin *in Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels*[35] acknowledges that the idea of the "graphic novel" is mainly the invention of publishers' public relation departments who were keen to sell adult comics to a wider public by disassociating them from the comics aimed at children and associating them with literature. Many writers and creators, for whom credibility and acknowledgement have immediate implications, considered the term 'comics' to be one of dubious merit. For some, terms such as 'graphic novel', 'graphic narrative' and 'sequential art' may well signal an opportunity to be taken seriously and to gain hitherto elusive respect. While this perception has indeed been helpful in gaining respectability for 'graphic novels', it is a distortion of the facts, as graphic novels were in existence long before the term was coined. For example, McCloud unites such disparate items as the Bayeux Tapestry, Egyptian wall-friezes, and Aztec manuscripts within the same category, claiming that they are all early examples of the same format (McCloud 10-13). He asserts that these are important historical precedents for the specific manifestation of today's book-length graphic narratives. He also assumes that the 'sister arts' tradition in the eighteenth century, builds on analogies and points of resemblance between word and image to lay the groundwork for investigations between word and image and their correlates, time and space. Here, the idea of comics as commodity plays a distinguishing role to create a line of separation. As Anne Elizabeth Moore claims,

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[34] Chute, Hillary L. and Patrick Jagoda. "Comics and Media." *Critical Enquiry*, a special issue on Comics and Media, edited by Hillary L. Chute and Patrick Jagoda, University of Chicago Press, Spring, 2014, p.7.
[35] Sabin, Roger. *Comics, Comix & Graphic Novels*. Phaidon Press, 1996, p. 165.

in her preface to *The Best American Comics 2006*, that comics are “created to be mechanically reproduced, either in print or on the Web.”[36] One apparent virtue of proposing such a condition is that it will preclude some of the difficult cases described above from counting as comics. Aztec picture manuscripts or the Bayeux Tapestry were not created to be mechanically reproduced. Seen in this context, the work of William Hogarth is fundamental in understanding how graphic narrative builds on a particular tradition. In *A Harlot's Progress* (1731), much like graphic narrative, Hogarth presents a sequential pictorial narrative in six paintings. Like much of Hogarth's later work, including *A Rake's Progress* (1735), *A Harlot's Progress* represents important interventional moments. As Sean Shesgreen writes, “every item in the series represents a dramatic moment chosen for its consequential nature”[37] Hogarth continues to inform debates about comics today. We may understand Hogarth’s influence by reading his work as extending *ut pictura poesis* from poetry to modern genres, like the novel. He introduced a sequential, novelistic structure to a pictorial form. Hogarth’s work is also relevant to comics because it was reproduced – first exhibited as paintings, his stories were later sold as portfolios of engravings. Other historical precedents include William Blake's illuminated poetry, in which the words and images are dependent on each other for full meaning. In addition, Goya’s *Disasters of War* series of reported images, made between 1810 and 1820, a numbered sequence of 83 etchings with captions, set an enormous precedent.[38] They also do not meet the criterion of being mass produced. Moreover, Eddie Campbell argues that since the term ‘graphic novel’ certainly was not yet been invented at the times when these works were created, such a title cannot be bestowed on them in retrospect.[39]

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[36] Moore, A. E. “Preface.” *The Best American Comics 2006*, edited by Harvey Pekar, Houghton Mifflin, 2006, p. x.

[37] Hogarth, William. *Engravings by Hogarth*. Edited by Sean Shesgreen, Dover Publications, 1973, p. xiv.

[38] For a detailed account cf. Smolderen, Thierry. *The Origins of Comics: From William Hogarth to Winsor McCay*. University Press of Mississippi, 2014.

[39] Campbell, Eddie. “Eddie Campbell’s Graphic Novel manifesto.” 10 Nov., 2010, http://donmacdonald.com/2010/11/eddie-campbells-graphic-novel-manifesto/. Accessed 16 April 2015.

The history of comics is also related to the histories of certain *packages* or publishing formats (Hatfield 4). Pascal Lefèvre is considered an authority on various comics formats and the role they play. According to him,

> "The format will eventually influence the total concept of the comic, not only the style, but also the content. The material aspects of the format will determine the page lay-out, the choice between monochrome or colour, the type of story, the way in which it will be told, etc. The readers know the format's advantages and disadvantages. When someone buys or reads a certain comic, he can detect from the format – even without knowing the characters or the author - what he can expect more or less from that particular comic. Different formats even stimulate different manners of consuming: a manga periodical is quickly read and thrown away after reading, while a European album will be kept and read several times. Yet while formats can share the same characteristics, they never share all of them: generally very different formats have some very different characteristics, both in style and content. The table below[40] compares some of the important current ways of comics publication: the American comic book series, the Japanese *tankōbon*[41], the European album series, the one shot. Of course, there are exceptions to each variable; moreover sometimes the lines between formats can become blurred."[42]

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[40] The table that Lefèvre gives is based on his random sampling and seems too rigid but it also gives an idea of the range of formatting that various works opt for. Here is the table from the essay.

FORMAT	# of pages	page size height x width (all upright)	colour M = Monochrome FC= Full Colour	Soft or Hard Cover	speed and direction of reading
American comic book	32	26 x 17cm	FC (M)	SC	fast left to right
Japanese *tankōbon*	200 and more	18 x 11,5 cm	M	SC	fast right to left
French album	48 or (64) pages	30 x 22,5 cm	FC (M)	SC or HC	fast left to right
European one shot	Often > 48 pages	30 x 22,5 cm	FC or M	HC	moderate left to right

[41] A *tankōbon* ('independent/standalone book') is the Japanese term for a book that is complete in itself and is not part of a series or corpus. In modern Japan, though, it is most often used in reference to individual volumes of a single manga, as opposed to magazines, which feature multiple series.

[42] Lefèvre, Pascal. "The Importance of Being 'Published'. A Comparative Study of Different Comics Formats." *Comics & Culture*, edited by Anne Magnussen and Hans-Christian Christiansen, Museum Tusculanum at the University of Copenhagen, 2000, pp. 91-105.

In the United States, the most dominant of these packages have been the newspaper comics page and the 'comic book.' The former consists of a miscellany of features, bound by the rigid constraints of the daily strip. It appears within the newspaper and comics specifically produced for it are seen as secondary features at best. The 'comic book' (also known as a comic or floppy), on the other hand, is a small, self-contained periodical magazine or pamphlet, roughly half-tabloid in size. In the early days of the industry, this magazine incorporated a miscellany of features, both narrative and non-narrative. Later it concentrated on a single story which was typically between eighteen and thirty-two pages in length. Since the late 1980s, a third way of packaging comics has gained ground in American print culture – the 'graphic novel,' which in industry parlance means any book-length comics narrative or compendium of such narratives (excepting volumes reprinting newspaper strips). Beyond the publishing parlance regarding formats, Charles Hatfield also adds another parameter. He writes, "If we are to see comic art more clearly, we have to distinguish between these connotatively charged objects and the art form itself. To this end, it helps to distinguish broadly between *short-form* comics and *long-form* comics" (Hatfield 4-5). Under "short form" he includes panels and strips in newspapers and magazines, as well as a smattering of short features within comic books. Strips are small, formally rigid and ephemeral, though the more popular ones are routinely gathered into best-selling books. While they have recovered a degree of formal playfulness in recent years, thanks to the interventions of popular artists such as Bill Watterson (*Calvin & Hobbes*) or Garry Trudeau (*Doonesbury*) strips remain an editorially conservative medium, bound by inflexible formatting constraints. Comics in the *long form* have more graphic and thematic potential because of its length. Some long-form comics have emerged to draw critical attention as 'graphic novels'. Ironically, the most notable critical success among graphic novels – Art Spiegelman's Pulitzer-winning *Maus*[43] – appeared not in serial comic books per se, but in Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly's oversized art 'zine *Raw* (the seminal journal for the comics avant-garde, 1980– 91). Though *Raw* depended to an extent on the support of comic book fans,

[43] Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*. Pantheon Books, 1986.

its unusual origins, format, and attitude pushed it to the margins of the hobby.[44] So *Maus*, despite being called a 'graphic novel', did not have immediate roots in the periodical comic book. Since the turn of the century, the term 'graphic novel' has become common parlance and bookstores use it frequently as a label to create a bookshelf different from the comics section. A 'graphic novel' can be almost anything – a novel, a collection of interrelated or thematically similar stories, a memoir, a travelogue or journal, a history, a series of vignettes or lyrical observations, a political statement, a self-help manual, an environmental study or even a Ph.D thesis.[45] So a 'graphic novel' cannot be strictly called a genre. Hatfield surmises that "What might have seemed at first to denote a distinct genre has instead become an all-purpose tag for a vague new class of social object, one that, unlike the 'comic book,' need not be grounded in the exact specifications of a given physical format" (Hatfield 5). Presently the label, 'graphic novel' bids for acceptance within the wider field of literature and criticism. Conversely, the term 'comic book' is full of pejorative connotations and seems to undersell the extraordinary work that has been done, and is currently being done, in the long form.

The term 'graphic novel', in its current application, was popularised by artist Will Eisner, as it appeared on the cover the 1978 paperback edition of his *A Contract with God*, leading many sources to credit Eisner with the origin of the term.[46] However, in a rejoinder to Andrew D. Arnold's piece, "A Graphic Literature Library", R.C. Harvey writes, "I have no. 909 of the 1,500 copies of the first edition of Eisner's *A Contract with God*. It is a handsome hardback book. No dust jacket. And nowhere on the cover or title page or, even, in Will's introductory remarks does the term 'graphic novel' appear…so the first appearance of *A Contract with God* did not, ipso facto, inaugurate the use of the term 'graphic novel.'"[47] According to him, the term 'graphic novel,' as it applies to the 'long form comic book,' was originally coined in November 1964 by Richard Kyle in a newsletter

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[44] Spiegelman, Art, and Françoise Mouly. Interview with Joey Cavalieri, Gary Groth and Kim Thompson. *The New Comics*, edited by Gary Groth and Robert Fiore, Berkley, 1988, pp. 185–203.
[45] Sousanis, Nick. *Unflattening*. Harvard University Press, 2015.
[46] Gravett, Paul. *Graphic Novels: Everything You Need to Know*. Harper Design, 2005, p. 38.
[47] Arnold, Andrew D. "A Graphic Literature Library". *www.time.com*, Nov. 21, 2003, http://content.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,547796,00.html. Accessed 2 Feb. 2011.

circulated to all members of the Amateur Press Association. The term was subsequently modified and used by Bill Spicer in his *Graphic Story Magazine*. The first time that a 'long form comic book' was identified as a 'graphic novel' was in 1976 during publication of *Beyond Time and Again* by George Metzger where the term 'graphic novel' appeared on the title page and on the dust jacket flaps. As a riposte, Will Eisner confirmed that the words 'A Graphic Novel' appeared on the cover of the paperback edition of *A Contract with God*, but not the hardcover which had no dust jacket. The paperback was published in 1978 simultaneously with the hardcover, says Eisner, with a larger print run. In fact Eisner acknowledges that the term 'graphic novel' had been coined prior to his book. Eisner admits that, "I can't claim to have invented the wheel, but I felt I was in a position to change the direction of comics."[48]

Typically, a graphic novel is a single long-form story rather than a short publication and the book has higher production quality than a traditional comic book. James Bettley describes it as a "one-shot publication in book form with a continuous comic narrative."[49] Weiner offers the following description – "book-length comic books that are meant to be read as one story including collections of stories in genres such as mystery, superhero or supernatural that are meant to be read apart from their corresponding on-going comic book storyline…While the term itself extends a certain claim to recognition by association with a respected literary genre, the significance of this longer format for comics is to potentially offer more complex story-telling possibilities and sustained treatment of a topic than comic strips and shorter sequences."[50] In *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud elaborates on these assorted descriptions in a cogent manner, some of which can be summarised below along with their possible shortcomings.

Firstly, Scott McCloud assigns a vital characteristic that any proper specimen of the form *should* possess – a 'graphic novel' consists of multiple pages or is at least of a considerable length. There are exceptions to this rule as well. Digital comics that are published on the internet and viewed on computer screens

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Bettley, James. *The Art of the Book: From Medieval Manuscript to Graphic Novel*. V & A Publications, 2001, pp.122-135.
[50] Weiner, Stephen. *The Rise of the Graphic Novel: Faster Than a Speeding Bullet.* Nantier Beall Minoustchine Publishing, 2001, p. xi.

have made use of the webpage's versatile nature. They compress extensive layouts onto a single page and allow readers to scroll through its length, rather than having to turn a page. McCloud deals with these emerging technologies and tackles the idea of online comics in his sequel to *Understanding Comics* – *Reinventing Comics*.[51]

McCloud, like Eisner also seems to agree that graphic novels must consist of numerous images, not just one. However, this distinction is less about quantity, more about structure. The graphic novel uses multiple elements to create a more complex meaning – the fragmentary pieces are united in order to constitute the whole. McCloud tends to concentrate his definitions on the 'sequential art' layout i.e. panels of artwork arranged in strips or grids, following one after the other. However, this is only one possible configuration which a visual narrative may take. This chosen definition can also include 'picture book' or 'illustrated prose' as well. 'Picture books' have complex meanings that emerge from the interaction of their verbal/visual form and content along with the material signification of their trim sizes, typical page counts, and fabrication. According to Nathalie op de Beeck, "Picture books — ranging from tiny, didactic sets like Maurice Sendak's *Nutshell Library* to extra-large-format texts like Jean-Luc Fromental and Joëlle Jolivet's *365 Penguins* — are potent commodities as well as imaginative works of art, diverse in literary approaches and artistic styles."[52] Picture books do have in common a (usually) consistent blend of words and pictures across a multipage sequence, and this verbal-visual conjunction is a 'graphic novel' convention as well. However, there are many kinds of them and not all picture books fall within the ambit of the known format — yet all do more or less nod to the visual-verbal medium in their layouts and formatting. Works of 'illustrated prose' are predominantly text-based, yet feature intermittent illustrations on some of the pages. Various critics suggest, quite legitimately, that 'illustrated prose' should be classified as a literary format, since it contains far more text than image. However, it can be argued that when part of the storytelling process is delegated to the graphic content of such works, to the point that the tale's progression becomes dependant on imagery to convey

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[51] McCloud, Scott. *Reinventing Comics*. Paradox Press, 2000.
[52] Beeck, Nathalie op de. "On Comics-Style Picture Books and Picture-Bookish Comics." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly,* vol. 37, no. 4, winter, 2012, pp. 468-476.

part of its inherent meaning, then that work becomes a form of visual communication and thus approximates the idea of a 'graphic novel'. Here Hayman and Pratt chip in and distinguish comics[53] from "mere illustrated texts" through appeal to a further condition: "the sequence of images does not merely contribute to the narrative — it contributes necessarily. Without the image sequence, the narrative of a true comic cannot be understood."[54] This distinguishes comics from picture books such as Dr. Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham*, in which the pictures are not required for narrative comprehension. It is interesting to note in this context that Hayman and Pratt actually use the term 'comics' interchangeably with 'graphic novel'.

The dominant approach of this sort focuses on story or narrative as a necessary condition to be considered as comics. David Carrier expresses a similar commitment to the necessity of narrative in his account of the three putatively essential conditions of comics – "the speech balloon, the closely linked narrative, and the book-size scale."[55] Perhaps most problematic aspect about this account is his claim that the speech balloon is an essential feature of the comic. The simple fact shows that there are a range of comics that *do not* use the speech balloon.[56] Speech balloons are the most common way speech and thought are represented in the form, but captions are also used, and there are comics that do not have text altogether. The other prominent position in this debate comes from comics' historian Robert C. Harvey who insists that comics are the additive fusion of the text and image relationship to achieve a "narrative" end, with particular importance placed on the speech balloon. This "verbal-visual blending"[57] makes comics a hybrid form of two separate media. The definition proposed by Greg Hayman and Henry Pratt – "a sequence of discrete, juxtaposed pictures that comprise a narrative, either in their own right or when combined with text" (Hayman and Pratt 423), adds a narrative condition to something that sounds very

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[53] They use the word 'comics', rather than 'graphic novel.'

[54] Hayman, Greg, and Henry John Pratt. "What Are Comics?" *A Reader in Philosophy of the Arts*, edited by David Goldblatt and Lee Brown, Pearson Education Inc., 2005, pp. 419–424.

[55] Carrier, David. *The Aesthetics of Comics*. Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000, p. 74.

[56] Debeurme, Ludovic. *Lucille*. Translated by Edward Gauvin, Top Shelf Productions, 2011.

[57] Harvey, Robert C. *The Art of the Funnies: An Aesthetic History*. University of Mississippi Press, 1994, pp. 8-9.

much like McCloud's formalist account. Again, this can be a very narrow reference. There are comics that don't have *closely linked* narratives — at least not ones which are closely linked temporally. The best example is Richard McGuire's *Here*[58] which tells the disjointed story of a particular point in space across millennia.

There are other attempts at definitions. One of the most popular is by David Kunzle who defines the comic strip in the following way: "I would propose a definition in which a "comic strip" of any period, in any country, fulfils the following conditions: 1) There must be a sequence of separate images; 2) There must be a preponderance of image over text; 3) The medium in which the strip appears and for which it was originally intended must be reproductive, that is, in printed form, a mass medium; 4) The sequence must tell a story which is both moral and topical."[59] Here Kunzle is seen to offer a definition of comics. However, it is erroneous as "comic strips" only comprise a proper subset of comics. Hence, the critics of Kunzle who accuse him of not capturing the essential features of comics are misguided since he is only aiming at a definition of a narrower category.

The maverick comics artist Eddie Campbell in his post "What is a Graphic Novel?" explores the five major competing definitions of graphic novels: "it is variously and confusingly used to indicate 1) all comic books, 2) a specific format of comic books, 3) indeed the physical object itself (as opposed to the work it contains), 4) what would in prose be a novel but illustrated as a comic, 5) a new form of pictorial literature. Since it is not of much use for the purposes of communication, my feeling is that it's better to ditch the term altogether though of course it's much too late for that. However as an overview, I feel that posterity will come to see it as representative of a certain ambition to make something grand out of the elements of the strip cartoon. Its failure will be due to its inability to escape out of comic book culture."[60] Campbell contends that this focus on selecting one definition is unhelpful to fostering critical studies of graphic novels,

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[58] McGuire, Richard. *Here*. Pantheon Books, 2014.

[59] Kunzle, David. *The Early Comic Strip: Narrative Strips and Picture Stories in the European Broadsheet from c. 1450 to 1825*, vol. 1, *The History of the Comic Strip*. University of California Press, 1973, p. 2.

[60] Campbell, Eddie. Web Blog post. 14 Nov., 2007, http://eddiecampbell.blogspot.in. Accessed 16 April 2012.

arguing as Aaron Meskin does that the focus should be on developing strategies for reading "an emerging new literature of our times."[61] However, Eddie Campbell insightfully goes so far as to declare that the graphic novel "signifies a movement rather than a form" i.e. it is not a specific structure or visual composition, but an ideology carried forth by a conglomerate of likeminded individuals, all united by a singular mission to visually convey their stories.

In the realm of comics studies, a number of scholars have rejected the possibility of a traditional definition of comics.[62] Meskin argues against a wide variety of proposed definitions of comics but he does not argue that definition is impossible. Rather, he argues that a definition is not needed in order to identify, evaluate and interpret comics (Meskin 375-376). The restless character of the form allows for the continual rewriting of its idiom — the relationship between the various elements of comics (images, words, symbols) simply resists easy formulation. Comics are an unresolved, unstable and challenging form. This is what makes them interesting. According to Hatfield, "The fractured surface of the comics page, with its patchwork of different images, shapes, and symbols, presents the reader with a surfeit of interpretive options, creating an experience that is always decentred, unstable, and unfixable" (Hatfield xiii). Thierry Groensteen in his cult work *The System of Comics* gives reason about his own apprehension at a pigeon-holed definition —

> "The definitions of comics that can be found in dictionaries and encyclopaedias, and also in the more specialized literature, are, as a general rule, unsatisfactory. It is easy to understand the reasons. These definitions are of two sorts. The first, often concise, participates in an essentialist approach and looks to lock up some synthetic form of the 'essence' of comics. This enterprise is no doubt doomed to failure if one considers that, far from verifying the long assumed poverty of expression and intrinsic infantilism, comics rest on a group of coordinating mechanisms that participate in the representation and the language, and that these mechanisms govern in their movements numerous and disparate parameters, of which the dynamic interaction takes on extremely varied forms

[61] Meskin, Aaron. "Defining Comics?" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 65:4, Fall, 2007, p. 13.
[62] Varnum, R., and Gibbons, C.T. *The Language of Comics: Word and Image*. University Press of Mississippi, 2001. pp. xvi-xvii.

> from one comic to another. Whatever its successes on the plane of art, one must recognize that any comic: 1) is necessarily (constitutionally) a sophisticated structure 2) only actualizes certain potentialities of the medium, to the detriment of others that are reduced or excluded."[63]

He pointedly gives a heading to the chapter that expresses this idea in three words – "The Impossible Definition." Another critic, Thierry Smolderen also refuses the idea of an over-rigid definition that would confine the specificity of comics. According to Smolderen, comics is a complex object, at once real and imaginary, technical and artistic, and it is an object that has continuously undergone transformations. Every 'actor' implied in the field (historian, scholar, artist, writer, publisher, censor, adult reader or child) has its own definition of what comics are, even if this definition is not explicit and can only be inferred by the relation this person has built with comics, the way he uses and handles them.[64]

Each of these definitions is equally valuable – it is interesting to analyze them all and to establish a cartography of definitions. Saraceni in his *The Language of Comics* says as much, "The distinction is nothing more than a matter of labels, and has barely anything to do with content or with any other feature."[65] For all practical purpose, I will stick to the term 'comics' throughout this thesis due to two primary reasons. Firstly, the texts that I have chosen are mostly American[66] and so the term 'comics' seems most apt. It can be easily distinguished from Francophone *bande dessinée*[67], Italian *fumetti*, German *Bildergeschichten* or *grafische Literatur*, Asian *manga, manhua*, or *manhwa or chitrakatha* and the whole panoply of globally dispersed types of 'graphic narratives'. Secondly, the term 'comics' evokes the roots of the popular and reminds us of its origin. Despite the term 'graphic novel' becoming more acceptable, it seems to be a term that is imposed in order to gain more canonical prominence. Nate Powell sums up the spirit in a scathing interview:

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[63] Groensteen, Thierry. *The System of Comics*. Translated by Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen, University Press of Mississippi, 2007, p. 12.

[64] Quoted in Groensteen, Thierry. "The Current State of French Comics Theory." *Scandinavian Journal of Comic Art* (SJOCA), vol. 1:1, spring, 2012, pp. 113-114.

[65] Saraceni, Mario. *The Language of Comics*. Routledge, Intertext, 2003, p.4.

[66] *The Arrival* is referred to as a 'graphic novel' by the author and so I make an exception there, although I have taken care to talk about the terminology separately.

[67] In France, comics have been labelled the *9th art* (*neuvième art*) by critics such as Francis Lacassin in 1971.

> Comics aren't visual art, and they're not prose. They're a medium that exists in the *tension* between images and text. Talented creators can play with that tension in ways that are utterly unique to comics…it's a perfect time to retire terms like 'graphic novel' and 'sequential art', which piggyback on the language of other, wholly separate mediums. What's more, both terms have their roots in the need to dissemble and justify, thus both exude a sense of desperation, a gnawing hunger to be accepted. Forget *that*. Comics. Say it. Just call them comics. And by doing so, you'll be joining the ranks of creators like Neil Gaiman, who have always been amused by the pernicious desire on the part of book marketers and awards panels to dress comics up in pretentious language.[68]

TERMINOLOGIES

There are certain terminologies related to comics which I will use in the thesis. They are discussed in brief here. *Panels*, *frames (panel border)* and *gutter* are formal signs on the comics page, providing structure and order on the page in the form of *layout*.

The *panel* is the space contained by the *frame/panel border*. It can contain images, text, a combination of the two or they can even be empty. Between the panels, the frames establish *gutters*, essentially empty space or gaps on the page. The function of the gutters is to separate the panels and articulate them. As Barbara Postema elucidates, "the panels are set up as individual entities or syntagms, which are at the same time connected to the surrounding panels due to the power of the intervening gaps."[69] Thierry Groensteen in *The System of Comics* opines that the choice of the panel as a reference unit is particularly necessary since he is interested primarily in the mode of occupation of the specific space of comics.

> "In its habitual configuration, the panel is presented as a portion of space isolated by blank spaces and enclosed by a frame that insures its integrity. Thus, whatever its contents (iconic, plastic, verbal) and the complexity that it eventually shows,

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[68] Powell, Nate. Interview by Glen Weldon. National Public Radio: NPR, November 17, 2016, http://www.npr.org/sections/monkeysee/2016/11/17/502422829/the-term-graphic-novel-has-had-a-good-run-we-dont-need-it-anymore. Accessed 4 Dec. 2016.

[69] Postema, Barbara. *Narrative Structure in Comics: making sense of Fragments.* RIT Press, 2013, p. 28.

> the panel is an entity that leads to general manipulations. One can take it, for example, in order to enlarge it and create a seriegraph; one can also move it… I will note here that the comics panel is not the comics equivalent of the *shot* in the cinematographic language. With regard to the length of time that it 'represents' and condenses, its loose status is intermediate between that of the shot and that of the photogram, sometimes bringing together the one and the other according to what occurs" (Groensteen 24-25).

Panels, by means of frames and gutters, combine on the comics page to create a continuum that moves beyond the content of the single panel. Together these three elements signify that panels need to be considered not just by themselves but in relation to other panels. These elements together, through various possible cartographic combinations, make up the *layout* of the comics page. The variations in layout can effectively change what the contents of the panel signify; conversely, the panel contents can alter the signification of the layout. Postema in her book has given a list of the possible layout taxonomies which can look very reductive when one sees the intricate layout of artists like Chris Ware. Postema's formats include:

a. *Panels framed by frames, separated by blank space* which is sometimes also called "the basic grid"[70].

b. *One panel per page, with or without frame* which is anticipated in early twentieth century woodcut novels by Frans Masereel and Lynd Ward.[71]

c. Several panels per page.

d. Frameless panels.

e. Panels that are separated by lines only, not by gutter space between the lines. The lines dividing up the page form a *grid*.

f. *Inserts/insets* which consist of framed panels that exist within or overlap larger panels.[72]

Within this context, it is also important to consider the function of the panels. Panels act as a sort of general indicator that space and time is being

[70] Abel, Jessica, and Matt Madden. *Drawing Words & Writing Pictures: Making Comics: Manga, Graphic Novels, and Beyond*. First Second, 2008, p.7.
[71] Beronä, David A. *Wordless Books: The original Graphic Novels*. Abrams, 2008.
[72] The most innovative use of insets is done in *Here* by Richard McGuire where he uses a layout with numerous insets as a way to fragment time.

divided. Eisner says, "The act of panelling or boxing the action not only defines its perimeters but establishes the position of the reader in relation to the scene and indicates the duration of the event. Indeed, it 'tells' time…The act of framing separates the scenes and acts as a punctuator. Once established and set in sequence the box or panel becomes the criterion by which to judge the illusion of time" (Eisner 28). They, along with their varying shapes and sizes, convey space and time although, duration of time and dimension of space is defined more by the contents than by the panels per se. In that sense, the panels play a passive role in delineating time sequence. Postema says as much – "Generally they (panels) are unmarked[73]…and act only as carriers rather than as signifiers" (Postema 46). Scott McCloud has given certain formal illustrations of the fact that a longer panel insinuates a longer amount of time than a short one [Fig.1] and that a bleed (borderless panel) expresses a sense of timelessness [Fig.2] (McCloud 100-103).

Fig. 1: Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, page 101

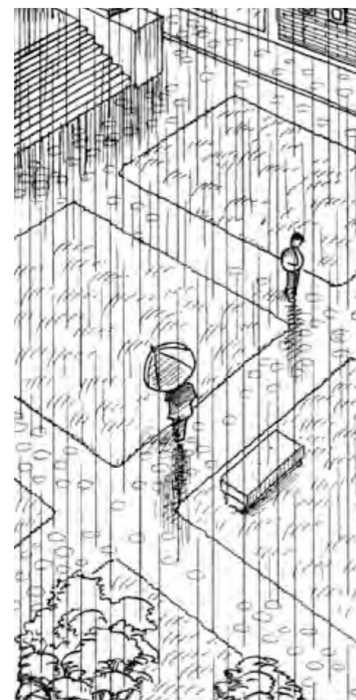

Fig. 2: *Understanding Comics*, page 103

The empty space between the panels on a comics page is called the *gutter*. The term seems simplistic at first glance, but it is, in fact, the most complex and elusive of all comic elements. This is where the reader must use his imagination to bind one panel to the next. This action of mentally filling the blank space is

[73] The term is from Drucker, Johanna. *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909-1923.* The University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 95-98.

labelled by McCloud as "closure" (McCloud 63). McCloud writes, "Despite its unceremonious title, the gutter plays host to much of the magic and mystery that are at the very heart of comics. Here in the limbo of the gutter, the human imagination takes two separate images and transform them into a single idea." Eric Berlatsky echoes McCloud when he notes that "it is thus in gutters that meaning is created."[74] Thus the gutter is not merely an empty, dead space which must be bypassed in order to reach the next panel. This space is filled by the reader's act of closure – not only applying the signs of one panel to the next but applying them to the space of the gutter itself. Even Groensteen points out a triple separation between panels: the closing frame of one panel, the blank space in between and the opening frame of the next panel (Groensteen 44). Postema takes a leap in terms of the theorisation of the gutter – She prefers "to view the gutter (and its application of the gap) as the operative principle in the creation of meaning out of sequences of panels" (Postema 48). It may so happen that the gutter may not always appear as an empty space, yet there will be always be a mental gap between fragmented moments. The space between panels, whether signalled by the presence or absence of a gutter or a line (grid) is never empty. The signifying function of the gutter in comics is so unique that it is ingrained in the reader's consciousness. It works even there is no visible gutter. The gutter facilitates the processing of the sequence. It acts as a metaphor of sequentiality rather than a real space. In this matter, the gutter is also closely related to the *margin*, with which they share the quality of being empty. Postema rightly points out –

> "The spaces between panels in comics are sites of elision and erasure. They are gaps that stand in for moments and events that go unrepresented in the comics sequence, moments that are not pictured but that are nevertheless evoked by the empty space….The gutter function does not even always involve a literal existence of gutters as blank spaces between the panels or frames…the gap that is signified by the gutter still functions when the material gutter is not there. The comics page has internalised the gutter function to the degree that it applies even when there

[74] Berlatsky, Eric. "Lost in the Gutter: Within and Between Frames in Narrative and Narrative Theory". *Narrative*, vol. 17, no. 2, May 2009, pp. 162-187, http://muse.jhu.edu/article/265829. Accessed 12 Feb. 2012.

is no empty space between panels, expanding the possibilities of the comics page" (Postema 50-51).

In the chapter 'Blood in the Gutter' in *Understanding Comics*, McCloud pinpoints the gutter as an essential element in depicting those unseen moments that provide meaning to seen moments, one of the reasons why he refers to comics as an "invisible art."

McCloud also formally organises the transitions from panel to panel and through the gutter into six categories – *moment-to-moment*, *action-to-action*, *subject-to-subject*, *scene-to-scene*, *aspect-to-aspect* and *non-sequitur* (McCloud 70-74). In moment-to-moment transition [Fig.3], the same character is displayed from panel to panel developing one action. Here little closure is needed since the action is continuous and not much is happening between panels. In action-to-action transition [Fig.3], the same character appears throughout the panels but with this method, two different actions are carried out. This requires more closure since there usually are gaps while illustrating the two actions. It is the most used transition type in Western comics.

Fig. 3: *Understanding Comics,* page 70

Subject-to-subject transitions [Fig. 4] require a high amount of closure and feature a transition from two separate subjects within a single scene or idea. Scene-to-scene transitions [Fig. 4] carry us across significant amounts of time and space and

require some deductive reasoning as to the way in which the two images tie into one another. Aspect-to-aspect transition [Fig. 5] requires high level of closure as it is like a wandering eye, moving the reader around a scene but not through time. In non-sequitur transition [Fig. 5], panels have no logical relationship. This requires the most active participation of the reader because it asks for a high level of closure.

Fig. 4: *Understanding Comics,* page 72

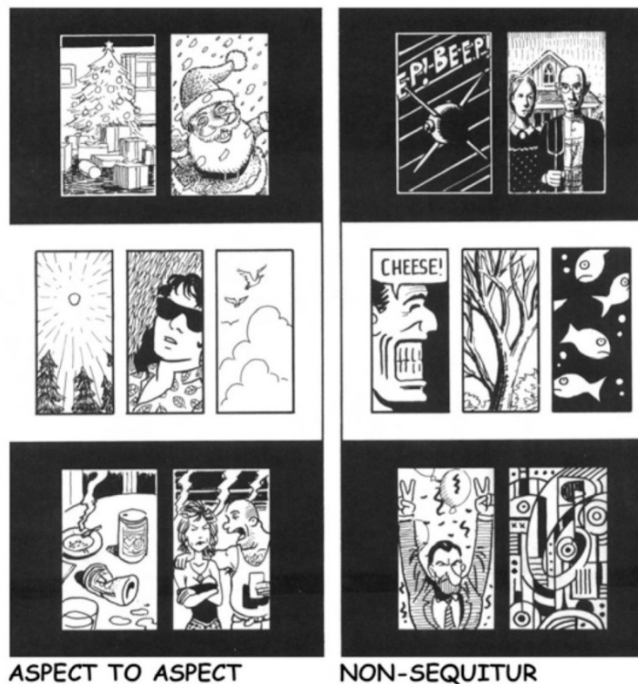

Fig. 5: *Understanding Comics,* page 73

Groensteen writes about the two registers of comics – “the iconic and the linguistic” or the visual and the verbal (Groensteen 128). In comics it is the visual that propels and creates the narrative. The verbal or the textual is only an optional tool. Scoot McCloud denies the existence of a conceptual gap between the two registers of comics. He calls comics as “the ‘bastard child’ of words and pictures” (McCloud 47). According to him, comics is one complete language or signifying system. Unlike McCloud, Jurij Lotman draws attention to the deep difference between the verbal and the pictorial[75]. The exceptions in various experimental comics show that a gap exists between verbal and visual as signifying systems. Comics as a hybrid form try to bridge the gap, perfectly knowing that it cannot be bridged completely.

Text appears in comics in a number of ways: as *captions* (external or internal to the panels), as an integral atmospheric part of the represented world (i.e. graffiti/newspaper reports etc.) and as *word balloons* (*speech balloons*/*thought bubbles*). David Carrier calls the word balloons as “a great philosophical discovery, a method of representing thoughts and words” (Carrier 4). Groensteen refers to them as the holders of the written information. The shapes of these speech balloons/thought bubbles can be altered to infer nuance to the words found within. For example, a spiky speech/thought balloon implies desperation or allied emotion. Speech balloons may also contain symbols that substitute for sound.

Comic art is growing more complex all the time. The form is in flux, becoming more self-conscious in its explorations. New terminologies are being constantly introduced as more theoretical positions develop. If any other terminology, other than the ones described above is used within the thesis, they will be suitably described.

[75] Lotman, Jurich. *Semiotics of Cinema*. Dept. of Slavic Languages and Literature, University of Michigan, 1976.

GROWTH OF THE FORM

A short description about the growth of the form in America and Europe[76] will be helpful to add to the idea of comics, as foregrounded in this thesis. Critics agree that comics in their modern incarnation were created in the mid-nineteenth century by the Swiss author and illustrator, Rudolphe Töpffer (1799-1846).[77] The father of the American comic tradition is Richard Outcault, the creator of *The Yellow Kid* which first appeared in Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* and later in William Randolph Hearst's *The New York Journal* at the end of the nineteenth century.[78] This character established the concept of comic strip in newspapers by convincingly demonstrating its commercial appeal, both for selling newspapers and for merchandising, thereby paving the way for the art form's future development. With the onset of the Great Depression, commercial considerations were of prime importance for newspaper publishers. As an aid to maintain and increase circulation, the newly minted adventure strip genre fit the bill. The newspaper reader of 1930s, seeking an escape from the Depression's hardships, turned to the adventure strip like Roy Crane's *Wash Tubbs* and Milton Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates.*[79] Robert C. Harvey, in *The Art of the Funnies: An Aesthetic History*[80] describes the adventure strip genre as a combination of the exotic and the realistic. Harvey notes that initially comic strips were of a humorous nature in the form of 'gag' strips, ending with a punch line each day. However, in the late 1920s, Roy Crane began to "heighten the drama of his stories with realistic detail and incorporated travelogue realism with almost photographically accurate renderings" (Harvey 79). The American creators of the adventure strip genre, Harold Foster *(Tarzan),* Alex Raymond *(Flash Gordon)* and Milton Caniff *(Terry and the Pirates)* followed Crane's lead. This new genre opened up the comics to highly

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[76] Since examples in my thesis are mainly from Western comics, I have confined the ambit of my discussion.

[77] Töpffer, Rodolphe, and David Kunzle. *Rodolphe Töpffer: The Complete Comic Strips*. University Press of Mississippi, 2007.

[78] McAllister, Matthew, Edward Sewell and Ian Gordon. *Comics and Ideology.* Peter Lang, 2001, p. 1.

[79] Horn, Maurice, editor. *The World Encyclopedia of Comics: Revised and Updated.* Chelsea House, 1976.

[80] Harvey, Robert C. *The Art of the Comic Book: An Aesthetic History*. University of Mississippi Press, 1996.

realistic, cinematic techniques that resonated with the equally contemporary adventure stories[81] (Young 424). These strips mostly featured a lone white male imposing order on a chaotic land and creating new stability. The adventure comic strips also fulfilled the Creator's need to escape the demoralizing Depression by looking nostalgically at their youthful daydreams. In the male world of adventure strip heroes, the majority are carefree adolescent adventurers who work outside of the law with no connection with institutional authority.

Comic books have their origins in the mid-1930s, in the heart of the great Depression, when Maxwell C. Gaines began reprinting and repackaging the prominent newspaper adventure comic strips of the day, such as *Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon,* and *Terry and the Pirates* in book form.[82] Gaines's success inspired imitators and soon comic book publishers began commissioning new material as the supply of reprint material diminished. The comic strip adventure genre provided the literary and visual models for those working in the nascent comic book industry. In 1933 two twenty-year old science fiction fans of Jewish descent, Jerry Siegel and Joseph Shuster created Superman. After being rejected by every major newspaper syndicate and publisher, Superman finally graced the first issue of National Periodical's *Action Comics* in June 1938 (Jones 122). Superman became an overnight success, spawning many colour costumed clones and giving birth to the superhero fantasy genre traditionally associated with comic books.[83] In the late 1940s and early 1950s, comic book readership was at its height and they were widely read by children and adults alike. The comic book industry was unregulated at this time and in the fierce competitive marketplace publishers increasingly resorted to more violent, misogynist and lurid content rendered in gory, graphic detail in order to attract readers. As a reaction, a moral panic swept the English-speaking world during the mid-1950s. Fredric Wertham, a New York psychologist was the intellectual spearhead of this anti-comics crusade, arguing in many articles

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[81] Young, William H. "The Serious Funnies: Adventure Comics during the Depression 1929-1938." *Journal of Popular Culture,* vol. 3, no.3, pp. 404 - 427.
[82] Jones, Gerard. M*en of Tomorrow: Geeks, Gangsters, and the Birth of the Comic Book*. Basic Books, 2004, p. 100.
[83] Wright, Bradford W. *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America.* Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, p. 31.

and his 1954 best-seller, *Seduction of the Innocent*[84] that comic books stultified the imagination of normal kids and severely damaged the socially vulnerable, contributing to juvenile delinquency. As David Hajdu reminds us in his new book, *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic-Book Scare and How It Changed America*[85], Wertham's ideas had remarkably wide currency in post-war America. Countless religious and patriotic organizations organized book burnings to set comics aflame and leading politicians held congressional hearings. As a result of this moral panic, the once-thriving comic-book industry went into a severe decline. After a public outcry and intense media scrutiny, a U.S. senate committee looked into the matter (Jones 274). It recommended the creation of a self-regulating body to monitor the content of comic books. The Comics Code Authority was formed in 1954 and suddenly the number of comics published plummeted and any suggestion of sex, moral deviance or gross violence disappeared from their pages. In the two years after Wertham's book came out, more than a dozen publishers and hundreds of cartoonists left the field. Those publishers that remained were severely restricted by the self-imposed code.

At the end of the 1960s, the vibrant youth counter-culture produced "uninhibited, raunchy and irreverent…underground comics devoted to social protest"[86] and aimed at an adult readership (Beauchamp, 1998: 18). The irreverent and deliberately provocative stance of 'underground comics' was foreshadowed by the magazine, *Mad* (1952 - till date) edited by Harvey Kurtzman and published by William Gaines. It deliberately adopted the magazine format in order to get around the restrictions of the Comics Code. The 'underground comics' were a direct reaction to the Comics Code and it deals with sex, drugs and radical politics. They were self-published, printed or photo-copied in small print runs and distributed in head-shops or on university campuses. They used unconventional distribution channels to circumvent the restrictions of the Comics Code Authority. Except for their covers, American underground comics were printed exclusively in black and white due to economic restraints. According to Charles Hatfield,

[84] Wertham, Fredric. *Seduction of the Innocent*. Rinehart, 1954.
[85] Hajdu, David. *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic-Book Scare and How It Changed America*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008.
[86] Beauchamp, Monte, editor. *The Life and Times of R. Crumb: Comments from Contemporaries.* St. Martin's Griffin, 1998, p. 18.

> "The singular genius of the underground comic books was the way they transformed an object that was jejune and mechanical in origin into a radically new kind of expressive object, a vehicle for the most personal and unguarded of revelations. While prior comic books had featured some work that, in hindsight, appears quite personal and idiosyncratic, underground comix conveyed an unprecedented sense of intimacy, rivalling the scandalizing disclosures of confessional poetry but shot through with fantasy, burlesque, and self-satire. Thus the underground worked an alchemical change on what was basically an infelicitous medium, making this familiar class of object into the carrier of a new kind of meaning. In short, underground comix ironized the comic book medium itself: the package was inherently at odds with the sort of material the artists wanted to handle, and this tension gave the comix books their unique edge" (Hatfield 7-8).

It is difficult to date the exact origins of underground comix, since they emerged from various undocumented sources like amateur 'zines, college humour magazines, underground newspapers, psychedelic rock poster art etc. The first underground *comic book is* R. Crumb's *Zap Comix* No. 1, printed and sold in early 1968.[87] There may be some odd-sized booklets later recognized as "comix" that had been produced before *Zap* in small print runs but it was not until Crumb's innovation that the idea of creating a sustainable underground comic book series took hold. Crumb would go on to create an anthology version of *Zap* featuring other artists, beginning with *Zap* No. 2 in mid-1968, and the series became the standard-bearer of the underground (Rosenkranz 87–88, 123). Robert Crumb's Mr. Natural soon became an icon of the counter culture. The underground movement collapsed in the mid-1970s as the counter culture waned and the authorities cracked down on head shops where these comics were sold (Hatfield ix). Many of the artists associated with the underground movement would re-emerge in the 1980s, forming the basis of the alternative comics scene that served as a counterpoint to the large commercial publishers (Hatfield ix).

In the late 1970s and 1980s mainstream comic books lost much of their mass audience and became the domain of a fan subculture. Hatfield traces the

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[87] Rosenkranz, Patrick. *Rebel Visions: The Underground Comix Revolution*, *1963–1975.* Fantagraphics, 2002, pp. 69-72.

origins of alternative comics to the 1970s underground 'comix' movement. He cites as precedents "iconoclast magazines such as Art Spiegelman's *Raw* (1980-'91) and Crumb's *Weirdo* (1981-'93), both rooted in the underground" (Hatfield x). Spiegelman and fellow underground cartoonist Bill Griffith explored comics' potential as art rather than commercial mass culture in *Arcade,* a comic book magazine. *Arcade* only lasted six issues. In 1980 Spiegelman began co-publishing *RAW,* with his French-born wife Francoise Mouly who introduced him to the French 'comics as art' tradition. It was in the pages of *RAW* that Spiegelman presented *Maus* in serialized form, documenting his parent's life and his troubled relationship with them. He gathered these tales into hardcover form in *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1986). This ground-breaking autobiographical graphic novel and its companion volume *Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began* (1991) won a Pulitzer Prize in 1992. In *Maus*, the hand-crafted aesthetic of the American underground comics scene combined with a representation that brought the personal and historical issues together. Joseph Witek believes Spiegelman's autobiographical work is important because it "explores the distinction between public and private history."[88] *Maus* reinvented and rejuvenated the form and created a paradigm shift in the way comics were perceived. Later in 1986-87, Alan Moore, Dave Gibbons and John Higgins produced *Watchmen* in serialized form and was published by DC Comics. It further expanded the narrative possibilities of the form through nuanced exploitation of the tensions inherent in the image-text and panel organisation. As other alternative comics continued to explore new subject matter they drew upon literary genres such as autobiography and journalism, incorporating their features and conventions. Alternative comics "have spawned the vital and often misunderstood genre of the graphic novel" (Hatfield ix).

The European comics tradition (specially the Francophone tradition) has developed in a manner separate yet parallel to its American counterpart. In Europe, the weekly comic magazines that were initially distributed as a newspaper supplement "later developed into independent magazines published weekly and

[88] Witek, Joseph. *Comic Books as History: The Narrative Art of Jack Jackson, Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar*. University Press of Mississippi, 1989, p. 152.

sold on newsstands for the entire week."[89] Unlike the American comic books, which share with the European weeklies the format of periodical magazines, the European comic weeklies never abandoned this continuing-story format. Comics strips (known as *bande dessinee or BD* in French which roughly translates as 'drawn strip') appeared in the magazines and then each story arc was collected in a book. In France these commercial mainstream books are called '*un album (de bande dessinée)*.'[90] They are mostly hardbound volumes and almost always in the European A-4 paper format, which is a bit taller and narrower than U.S. size letter paper.

During the Nazi occupation, American comics were banned and it ironically bolstered the struggling French comics industry. Following the liberation of France, American publishers poured into France and Europe. This flood of American comics was greeted with dismay by the French who were concerned about maintaining "France's cultural hegemony in the young's reading material"[91] (Jobs 693). A moral panic that equated American comics with juvenile delinquency swept France. Acting on these concerns, the National Assembly passed a law on 16 July 1949 to protect the "young from debauchery, delinquency, and corruption" (Jobs 690). This effectively barred the importation of American comic books and helped foster the growth of a home-grown industry. The extremely popular Belgian comics such as *Tintin* and *Spirou* were left untouched primarily due to their Francophone essence. During the 1950s the French audience were treated to innovative formal approaches to comics. The first was the Marcinelle School, located in a suburb of Charleroi, a French-speaking town in southern Belgium, associated with *Spirou. Spirou's* visionary editor Yves Delporte gave his artists great freedom and this allowed *Spirou* to flourish and become a touchstone of invention and superlative story telling. Stylistically, the Marcinelle School is also sometimes called *comic-dynamic*. Often cited in opposition to Herge's schematic

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[89] Couch, Chris. "The Publication and Formats of Comics, Graphic Novels, and Tankobon." *Image* & *Narrative.* Online magazine of the Visual Narrative, Issue 1, December, 2000, http://www.imageandnarrative.be/narratology/chriscouch.htm. Accessed June 20, 2012.

[90] McKinney, Mark. *History and Politics in French-Language Comics and Graphic Novels*. University Press of Mississippi, 2008, pp. xiii

[91] Jobs, Richard I. "'Tarzan under Attack: Youth, Comics, and Cultural Reconstruction in Post-war France." *French Historical Studies,* vol. 26, no. 4, 2003, pp. 687 - 725.

ligne claire style, the Marcinelle School is all about conveying the impression of movement.[92] The second important French comics style is associated with The Bruxelles School that was founded by the Brussels based Herge, the famous creator of *Tintin.* Herge was a pen name for the Belgian cartoonist Georges Remi (1907-1983). Herge called his unique style, 'la ligne claire' ('the clear line') in which artists "endeavour to draw just the right lines" which involves a huge amount of preparatory study (Pilcher and Brooks 150).

Another important European artist whose work reshaped the history of comics was Hugo Pratt (1927-1995), an Italian born artist who worked and lived in several countries, including Brazil, England and France. Paul Gravett notes that Pratt's life was almost as adventurous as that of his creation, Corto Maltese.[93] Corto Maltese is a seafaring traveller, the illegitimate son of a gypsy woman from Seville and an English Sailor. Corto travels the globe, in the first decades of the twentieth century, becoming part of history in the making (Gravett 156). Pratt's reworking of the adventure genre to express other voices and his critique of long-held Eurocentric views is part of the larger questioning that occurred during the 1960s. These affected the world of French BD, as many mainstream comics artists rejected the prevailing order and wished to be more experimental in their work. As a result a number of cartoonists working for the magazine *Pilote* broke away to form a new magazine *L 'Echo des Savanes.* The magazine commissioned and reprinted work by American artists such as Harvey Kurtzman, the creator of *MAD,* and by the father of the US underground comics scene Robert Crumb. Like its American counterparts, *L 'Echo des Savanes* courted its share of controversy with its use of satire, violence, weird sexual content, and scatological humour (Pilcher and Brooks 154). Many of these themes were carried over into *Metal Hurlant* where experimentation with the medium and adoption of non-linear storytelling were "massively influential and shaped the perception of adult comics for years to come" (Pilcher and Brooks 156). It became so popular that it spawned an English language avatar titled *Heavy Metal.* The creators of *Metal Hurlant* gave serious thought to the magazine's look and hired the graphic designer Etienne Robial, who

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[92] Pilcher, Tim, and Brad Brooks. *The Essential Guide to World Comics.* Collins & Brown, 2005, p. 149.

[93] Gravett, Paul. *Graphic Novels: Everything you need to Know.* Harper Design, 2005.

made a name for himself as a small press publisher. In 1972, Robial and his wife created a small publishing house titled Futuropolis which published a large number of monochrome books, undoubtedly influenced by the US underground comics, and thereby setting a precedent that questioned the mainstream publisher's conventional belief that comics could only be in colour. Robial left Futuropolis in 1994, but one of the last books he published was *Labo,* a black and white anthology of cartoons created by a small collective – *L' Association pour l'apologie du ge Art Libre.* Although *Labo* appeared for only one issue in 1990, the collective expanded and became a movement.

L'Association was founded as a non-profit organization in 1990 by David B., Patrice Killoffer, Mattt Konture, Jean-Christophe Menu, Stanislas Barthélemy, Lewis Trondheim, and Frédéric van Linden a.k.a. Mokeït. It was conceived as a platform to publish work that did not fit into the strictly circumscribed formats and genres represented by the mainstream publishers. This was a time when the comics avant-garde of the seventies had essentially dissipated, with the comics industry dominated by a number of big publishers specializing largely in humour and adventure material. In a parallel to the North American 'alternative comics' of the time, *L'Association* focused on reality-based work published exclusively in black-and-white. Initially they released primarily the founders' own books, but they quickly found that there was a market for this kind of comics and expanded their portfolio to include many of the best and brightest of European and North American cartoonists[94]. Their first major and defining success was Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*[95], which made *L'Association* a robust commercial publisher in European comics scene and helped secure its positioning in bookstores. Concurrently they produced some of the signature works of the new wave of European comics by such authors as David B., Julie Doucet, Dupuy and Berberian, Lewis Trondheim, Joann Sfar, Blutch, Anke Feuchtenberger, Emmanuel Guibert, François Ayroles, Jochen Gerner, Guy Delisle and others.

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[94] Wivel, Matthias. "A House Divided: The Crisis at *L'Association.*" *The Comics Journal*, Nov. 3, 2011, http://www.tcj.com/a-house-divided-the-crisis-at-l%E2%80%99association-part-1-of-2/. Accessed 20 March 2016.

[95] Satrapi, Marjane. *The Complete Persepolis*. Pantheon Books, 2007.

COMICS STUDIES

The inherent plurality of comic art makes it apt for critical study, as it promises to shed light on verbal-visual dynamics in different kinds of hybrid texts. Comics offer a form of reading that resists coherence, a form that is at once seductively visual and radically fragmented. Comic art is a mixed form and reading comics is a tension-filled experience. Academic interest in comics has emerged as part of a more wide-spanning project attending to previously neglected forms and practices of popular culture. Initially it aligned itself with a cultural studies approach that challenged high-low culture hierarchies but now with radical experimentation in comics' practices it has managed to stake claim in the discursive formulations of its own consumption and production methodology.

Scholars have argued that comics deserve study because they have historically been a complex and hitherto under-researched area of cultural production and consumption. They should also be recognised as an art form in their own right as argued by McCloud[96], Groensteen[97] and Sabin[98] among others. A key aspect of such recognition is constituted by formal and medium specific frameworks for analysis. Assertions that comics should be acknowledged as an independent form in its own right thus both challenge the notion of comics as a form of literature or the idea that comics are akin to film narratives.

McCloud's *Understanding Comics* (1993) and Thierry Groensteen's *The System of Comics* (2007) are, to date, the two most comprehensive attempts to account for the various theoretical elements and mechanisms that characterise comics. McCloud followed it up with two volumes: *Reinventing Comics: How Imagination and Technology Are Revolutionizing an Art Form* (2000)[99] and *Making Comics: Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels* (2006)[100]. They are testament of the form's gradual development with the incorporation of new

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[96] McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art.* HarperPerennial, 1994.
[97] Groensteen, Thierry. *The System of Comics.* University of Mississippi Press, 2007.
[98] Sabin, Roger. *Comics, Comix & Graphic Novels*. Phaidon, 1996.
[99] McCloud, Scott. *Reinventing Comics*. Paradox Press, 2000.
[100] McCloud, Scott. *Making Comics: Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels.* William Morrow Paperbacks, 2006.

technologies. Will Eisner's *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985)[101] is normally seen as the forerunner of McCloud's pioneering work. McCloud takes up Will Eisner's term 'sequential art' and goes on to address aspects such as temporality, line, iconicity and symbolic signification. McCloud's focus on sequence means that he pays little attention to other relationships (multi-directional rather than linear) between panels and elements within them. Such aspects of comics are more comprehensively dealt with by Groensteen. *The System of Comics* (2007) and later its sequel *Comics and Narration* (2013)[102] aim to provide a comics-specific framework for formal analysis. With these works Groensteen brings comics into the field of semiotics and creates a new analytical framework and vocabulary for the medium. Within each of the three chapters ('The Spatio-Topical System,' 'Restrained Arthrology: The Sequence' and 'General Arthrology: The Network') he articulates the formal elements comprising a "preponderantly visual language in which text plays a subordinate role."[103] He delineates two predominant forms of the comic structure. Firstly, the spatio-topical evaluation of comic systems stress the importance of space and place, determining how the aesthetic effects of panel, gutter, frame and margin location are central to the operative logic of comics. Secondly, he studies the relation between panels by creating a neologism from the Greek word *arthon* (articulation). Within this complex system, 'iconic solidarity' is the foundation upon which he structures an organic totality that associates a complex combination of all elements. Categorizing comics as a language, Groensteen rejects any attempts to reduce comics to groups of component elements. He also cites the juxtaposition of images within comics as the primary bearer of narrative signification. According to him, in the interpretation of a comic, each panel contains content therefore it *shows*, but it is the linkage of panels that *says*. By inventing new ways to talk about comics that do not recycle the lexicons of film and literary studies, Groensteen advances comics theory toward its independence.

There are other academics who have sought to address comics' formal

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[101] Eisner, Will. *Comics & Sequential Art*. Poorhouse Press, 1985.

[102] Groensteen, Thierry. *Comics and Narration*. Translated by Ann Miller, University Press of Mississippi, 2013.

[103] Groensteen, Thierry. *The System of Comics.* University of Mississippi Press, 2007, p. 7.

mechanisms and elements like Jan Baetens,[104] Pascal Lefèvre,[105] Charles Hatfield,[106] Benoit Peeters,[107] Karin Kukkonen[108] and Hannah Miodrag.[109] Some have attempted to trace the history of the form. Among them R.C. Harvey,[110] David Kunzle,[111] Martin Barker,[112] and Roger Sabin[113] deserve special mention. There are studies on specific contexts like comics fan culture (Matthew Puszt[114]) and its industrial contexts (Bradford Wright[115]). As Hatfield rightly contends, "the heterogeneous nature of comics means that, in practice, comics study...seriously questions the compartmentalizing of knowledge that takes place within the academe" (Hatfield 2).

Given the nature of its origin, specialist publishers continue to dominate the market for comics and graphic novels (for example, Marvel, DC and its imprint Vertigo aimed at adult readerships, Dark Horse Comics, Fantagraphics, FirstSecond, Drawn and Quarterly, Self-Made Hero and Titan Books). However, with the steady increase in readership, a growing number of established literary publishers (Like Pantheon Books, Random House, Jonathan Cape, Penguin and HarperCollins) have taken up the publication of (so called) 'graphic novels'. The marketing and circulation of these products have also noticeably shifted from previous marginalised consignment of comics shops and now have come to include mainstream book shops and web-portals. However, despite noticeable shifts in attitudes towards comics, it is important to remember the inherent ideology of comics – it has always questioned the moribund status quo.

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[104] Baetens, Jan, Ed. *The Graphic Novel*. Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the Graphic Novel, KU Leuven, Belgium, 12–13 May 2000, Leuven University Press, 2001.
[105] Lefèvre, Pascal. "The Importance of Being 'Published'. A Comparative Study of Different Comics Formats." *Comics & Culture*, edited by Anne Magnussen and Hans-Christian Christiansen, Museum Tusculanum at the University of Copenhagen, 2000, pp. 91-105.
[106] Hatfield, C. *Alternative Comics: an Emerging Literature*. University of Mississippi Press, 2005.
[107] Peeters, Benoît. "Four Conceptions of the Page." Translated by Jesse Cohn, *ImageTexT* 3: 3, 2007, http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v3_3/peeters/. Accessed 16 April 2015.
[108] Kukkonen, Karin. "Comics as a Test Case for Transmedial Narratology." *SubStance,* 40: 1, 2011.
[109] Miodrag, Hannah. *Comics and language: Reimagining Critical Discourse on the Form*. University of Mississippi Press, 2013.
[110] Harvey, R. C. *The Art of the Funnies: An Aesthetic History*. University of Mississippi Press. 1994.
[111] Kunzle, David. *The History of the Comic Strip: The Nineteenth Century*. University of California Press, 1990.
[112] Barker, Martin. *Comics: Ideology, Power, and the Critics*. Manchester University Press, 1989.
[113] Sabin, Roger. *Comics, Comix & Graphic Novels*. Phaidon Press, 1996.
[114] Pustz, Matthew J. *Comic Book Culture.* University Press of Mississippi, 1999.
[115] Wright, Bradford. *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America.* Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

CHAPTER 2

THE NEW MOBILITIES PARADIGM, MEMORY AND COMICS

PLACE AND HOME

'Place' cannot be construed as a mere spatial co-ordinate. As a concept, it also embraces subjectivity and experience. The above paradigm is popularised by 'humanistic geographers' like Yi-Fu Tuan[1], Anne Buttimer[2] and Edward Relph[3] who probes the idea of 'place' and its integral role in human experience. Edward Relph's seminal book *Place and Placelessness* is inspired by the work of Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. He emphasizes at the beginning of the book that his research method constitutes "a phenomenology of place" (Relph, *Place* 4) which gives ontological priority to the notion of human immersion in 'place'. Relph begins his book with a review of 'space' and its relationship to 'place'. He argues that space is not a void or an isometric plane or a kind of container that holds places. Instead, he argues that, to study the relationship of 'space' to a deeper understanding of 'place', space too must be explored in terms of how people experience it. Essentially, Relph sees 'space' and 'place' as dialectically structured in human environmental experience. Human understanding of space is related to the places they inhabit, which in turn derive meaning from their spatial context.

In the study, 'place' is seen as a root of human identity and experience: "The essence of place lies in the largely unself-conscious intentionality that defines places as profound centres of human existence" (Relph, *Place* 43). Relph also focuses on people's identity *of* and *with* place. By the identity *of* a place, he refers to its "persistent sameness and unity which allows that [place] to be differentiated

[1] Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perceptions, Attitudes, and Values*. Prentice-Hall, 1974.
[2] Buttimer, Anne. "Grasping the Dynamism of Lifeworld". *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *66*, 1976, pp. 277-92.
[3] Relph, Edward. *Place and Placelessness*. Pion, 1976.; Also see cf. Relph, Edward. *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography*. Barnes and Noble, 1981.

from others" (Relph, *Place* 45). However, the crux of this lived intensity is identity *with* place, which he defines through the concept of *insideness* — the degree of attachment or involvement that a person or group has for a particular place. He suggests that more profoundly a person feels inside a place, the stronger will be his or her identity with that place and contrasts this condition with the binary of *outsideness* in which a person can experience separation and alienation. In fact, Relph refers to the strongest sense of place experience as *existential insideness* — a situation of deep, un-self-conscious immersion in place and the experience most people know when they are at *home* in their own community and region.

Martin Heidegger's focus on 'dwelling' (*Dasein*) as well as the importance of house/home in Gaston Bachelard's work[4] has deeply influenced humanistic approaches of place around the centrality of 'home'. Yi Fu Tuan actually coined the term "topophilia" to refer to the affective bond between people and places. Tuan argues that place "is essentially a static concept. If we see the world as process, constantly changing, we would not be able to develop any sense of place."[5] According to him, modern mobility implies superficial bonds between humans and places — "A modern man might be so mobile that he can never establish roots and his experience of place may all be too superficial" (Tuan, *Space* 183). Similarly Relph believes that modern travel is another factor in creation of inauthentic, meaningless "placelessness". According to him, modern travel creates irrational and shallow landscapes, diluted from the authenticity — "Roads, railways, airports, cutting across or imposed on the landscape rather than developing with it, are not only features of placelessness in their own right, but, by making possible the mass movement of people with all their fashions and habits, have encouraged the spread of placelessness well beyond their immediate impacts" (Relph, *Place* 90). In these studies we can clearly see that mobility is looked upon with apprehension as it threatens to undo the sense of a stable order.

Since the 1980s and 1990s, contributions from other theoretical perspectives like cultural materialism, feminism, post structuralism,

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[4] Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Translated by M. Jolas, Beacon Press, 1969.
[5] Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. University of Minnesota Press, 1977, p. 179.

postmodernism and postcolonialism have added multiple viewpoints to the studies of place. The oppositional relationship between place and mobility prevalent in early 'humanistic geography' studies has since been challenged in multiple ways. Their notion of place as 'home' has since been critiqued as too essentialist and exclusionary. Critics like Richard Peet[6] and Tim Cresswell[7] say that the 'humanistic geographers' favour static ideas of *home*, *centre* and *dwelling* over corresponding mobile concepts like *horizon*, *periphery* and *journey*.

PLACE AND MOBILITY

In his influential essay "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination"[8], Arjun Appadurai describes the emergence of the present state of globalization as a shift from stability to motion. The globalized world is a world in motion, a world with different speeds and a world of disjunctive flows. To a large extent, it is the heir to older historical developments such as empires, colonialism and capitalism but in its present stage, it is energized by new forms of mobility. While global subjects such as nation states and industrial corporations deploy and activate the global infrastructures of information, traffic and commerce to extend their power and wealth in forms of 'predatory mobility', other movements have entered the global stage to counter globalization not only by protecting and reinforcing the local forms of subsistence, but also by organizing new forms of counter-globalization or alternative forms of globalization which has a direct bearing on the constitution of 'place' as a space for negotiation.

Postmodern philosophers like Deleuze and Guattari celebrates the "rhizomatic sense of place"[9] as a new mobile world of travellers. A rhizome is a paradigm of "becomings" since rhizomes proliferate through underground, multiplying *networks* rather than by rooted hierarchical structure associated with trees. It is useful to consider rhizomes in context of mobility. The development of

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[6] Peet, Richard. *Modern Geographic Thought*. Blackwell, 1998.

[7] Cresswell, Tim. *Place: A Short Introduction*. Blackwell, 2004.

[8] Appadurai, Arjun. "Grassroot Globalization and the Research Imagination." *Public Culture,* vol. 12, no. 1, winter, 2000, pp. 1-19, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/26176. Accessed 8 Feb. 2014.

[9] Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Continuum, 2004, pp. 7-21.

rhizomes depends upon the traversing of space and their applicability is travel-oriented. Deleuze and Guattari affiliate the rhizome with the map, rather than with the *traced* model — "Tracings are like the leaves on a tree. The rhizome is entirely other, *map and not tracing*. Make a map, not a tracing" (Deleuze and Guattari 20). They continue,

> "Unlike a structure, which is defined by a set of points and positions, the rhizome is made only of lines; lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature. These lines, or ligaments, should not be confused with lineages of the aborescent type, which are merely localizable linkages between points and positions… Unlike the graphic arts, drawing or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversable, modifiable and has multiple entranceways and exits and its own lines of flight" (Deleuze and Guattari 21).

Thus the very idea of rhizome is cartographic in the sense that it is not grounded in prefabricated genealogy or representation. Rhizomes and maps have multiple points of entry and do not offer mastery or competence but rather a range of performative possibilities — "It (the map) is itself a part of the rhizome. The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions… It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation" (Deleuze and Guattari 21). As such, movement happens not in punctual manner, from one point to another but along a continuum, with variations in speed and intensity. In this context, questions of origin and terminus are relegated into insignificance — "A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo (…). Where are you going? Where are you setting off from? Where do you want to end up? are completely useless questions" (Deleuze and Guattari 25, 36). Questions such as these "imply a false conception of travel and movement." (Deleuze and Guattari 36).

This idea of *intermezzo* echoes in the terminology of "nomadic/sedentary" — concepts employed by Deleuze and Guattari to consider the use of space and human relationship to the land they inhabit. Nomadism is a way of life that exists

outside of the organizational 'State'. The *nomadic* way of life is characterized by movement *across* space which exists in sharp contrast to the rigid and static boundaries imposed by the State. While sedentary people use roads to "parcel out a closed space to people," nomadic trajectories "distribute people in open space." (Deleuze and Guattari 380). Thus the nomadic paradigm is opposite to the sedentary model — land is not *marked* to be distributed to people; rather people are distributed on the land without borders and enclosures.[10] In a sense, Deleuze and Guattari trace the etymology of the word 'nomad' which came from Greek *nemo* ('I distribute') — the root of *nomás* meaning 'roaming, roving or wandering (in order to find pastures for flocks or herds).' The idea of ownership of land that the state encourages is not important or relevant to the nomad. When the nomad/State opposition is applied to space, the basic principle states that nomad space is "smooth" and heterogeneous while State space is "striated" and homogeneous. Deleuze illustrates these concepts by giving examples of literal spaces inhabited by nomads. Spaces like steppes, deserts, sea are "smooth". Deleuze keenly observes —

> "There is no line separating earth and sky; there is no intermediate distance, no perspective or contour; visibility is limited; and yet there is an extraordinarily fine topology that relies not on points or objects but rather on haecceities, on sets of relations (winds, undulations of snow or sand, the song of the sand or the creaking of ice, the tactile qualities of both). It is a tactile space, or rather 'haptic,' a sonorous much more than a visual space. The variability, the polyvocality of directions, is an essential feature of smooth spaces of the rhizome type, and it alters their cartography. The nomad, nomad space, is localized and not delimited" (Deleuze and Guattari 382).

"Smooth space" is the space of the nomad — a space that resists and threatens the striations of power. This "smooth space" is "sprawling temporary, shifting shantytowns of nomads and cave dwellers, scrap metal and fabric, patchwork, of which the striations of money, work, or housing are no longer even relevant"

[10] Aldea, Eva. "Nomads and migrants: Deleuze, Braidotti and the European Union in 2014." *www.opendemocracy.net,* 10 Sept. 2014, https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/eva-aldea/nomads-and-migrants-deleuze-braidotti-and-european-union-in-2014. Accessed 16 Dec. 2014.

(Deleuze and Guattari 481). In contrast to this fluid state, the spaces inhabited by sedentary peoples – which are State spaces – are "striated" with walls, enclosures and roads where power is realised.

The trajectory of movement in a nomad is also explained in detail by Deleuze and Guattari —

> "The nomad has a territory; he follows customary paths; he goes from one point to another; he is not ignorant of points (water points, dwelling points, assembly points, etc.). But the question is what in nomad life is a principle and what is only a consequence. To begin with, although the points determine paths, they are strictly subordinated to the paths they determine, the reverse of what happens with the sedentary. The water point is reached only in order to be left behind; every point is a relay and exists only as a relay. A path is always between two points, but the in-between has taken on all the consistency and enjoys both an autonomy and a direction of its own. The life of the nomad is the intermezzo. Even the elements of his dwelling are conceived in terms of the trajectory that is forever mobilizing them" (Deleuze and Guattari 380).

So the idea of the nomad as perceived by Deleuze and Guattari is not at all the same as the migrant. Under the sedentary model, the default relation to 'place' is a static one. Movement happens in between residing in specific places. *Those who move* (i.e. the migrants) under the sedentary order are different from the norm, engaged in an activity that is exceptional and expected to have a finite duration. In contrast, the nomadic distribution is in itself undertaken through movement. It implies that travelling is the default mode of relating to space. Under the nomadic order, everyone is a nomad, whether they move or not. A nomadic relationship to the place one inhabits is one that is shifting, multiple and overlapping. Everyone's attachment to place is contingent — they are able to shift, admit overlaps and even contradictions, engendered both by the movement of the subject itself and the movement of others around it. A nomadic subject's location is always partial, fuzzy but crucially, it is never static or exclusive. Thus the metaphor of the nomad exemplifies absolute deterritorialization. Nomads may follow customary paths, but the points along the way possess no intrinsic significance for them.

Underwritten within the idea of the nomad is the politics of resistance. Traditionally, history has been written from the point of view of the sedentary — the traditional repository of state apparatus. In contrast, nomadology creates an uninterrupted flow of deterritorialization which establishes a line of flight away from territories, grand designs and monolithic institutions. Like the rhizome, nomad is a metaphor for hybrid space peripheral to state control. It acts as an image of liberation/freedom and actively resists the sedimentation of life into taxonomic orders. Since it is a process which continually resists the single fixed perspective of the sedentary, any commitment to deterritorialization and the nomad is intrinsically political, always on the side of freedom, choice, becoming and directly opposed to power, territory and the fixing of identity. Even contemporary theorists like Rosi Braidotti[11] draws inspiration from Deleuze and Guattari to argue that in an age of global and differentiated mobility, a diffuse sort of nomadism defines the location of many subjects.

One of the recent theoretical works on mobility is that of anthropologist and ethnographer James Clifford's *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*[12] which is an extension of his influential essay, *Traveling Cultures*. In much of this book, Clifford's purpose is to broaden the scope of mobility to include "an increasingly complex range of experiences: practices of crossing and interaction that troubled the localism of many common assumptions about culture" (Clifford, *Routes* 3). Like most of the postmodernist critics he conjectures that terms and concepts like 'dwelling,' 'home,' 'the local,' 'the neighbourhood' cannot be viewed simply in opposition to 'travel'. Instead they express the very idea that makes the notion of travel possible. Clifford's idea of dwelling-in-travel or travel-in-dwelling complicates the relationship between the two – "Travel denotes more or less voluntary practices of leaving familiar ground of difference, wisdom, power, adventure, an altered perspective. These experiences and desires cannot be limited to privileged male Westerners — although that elite has powerfully defined the terms of travel orienting modern

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[11] Braidotti, Rosi. *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. Columbia University Press, 1994.
[12] Clifford, James. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Harvard University Press, 1997.

anthropology. Travel needs to be rethought in different traditions and historical predicaments" (Clifford, *Routes* 90-91).

This is in consonance with his earlier essay *Travelling Cultures*[13] where he similarly states, "if we rethink culture . . . in terms of travel, then the organic, naturalizing bias of the term culture…is questioned…and disputed historicities, sites of displacement, interference, and interaction, come more sharply into view" (Clifford "Travelling Cultures" 101). Clifford's hermeneutic shift from deep analysis of particular places to the *routes* (which playfully refers to the word, *roots*) connecting them is a forerunner of the new Mobilities theory developed by John Urry. Similarly, Doreen Massey[14] argues that in ever increasing conditions of mobility, places open up to a progressive (or global) sense of place. He coins the curiously relevant term "throwntogetherness" to denote place where things, bodies and flows combine together. Thus places become intersections of flows and movements, open and permeable, based on politics of inclusion rather than exclusion.

THE NEW MOBILITIES PARADIGM

> **"**All the world seems to be on the move. Asylum seekers, international students, terrorists, members of diasporas, holidaymakers, business people, sports stars, refugees, backpackers, commuters, the early retired, young mobile professionals, prostitutes, armed forces — these and many others fill the world's airports, buses, ships, and trains. The scale of this travelling is immense… These diverse yet intersecting mobilities have many consequences for different peoples and places that are located in the fast and slow lanes across the globe. There are new places and technologies that enhance the mobility of some peoples and places and heighten the immobility of others"[15]

[13] Clifford, James. "Travelling Cultures." *Cultural Studies*, edited by Grossberg *et al*, Routledge, 1992, pp. 96- 116, http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic206050.files/Cultural_Theory_and_Cultural_Studies/Clifford_-_Traveling_Cultures.pdf. Accessed 16 March 2014.

[14] Massey, Doreen B. *Space, Place, and Gender*. University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

[15] Sheller, Mimi, and John Urry. "The New Mobilities paradigm". *Environment and Planning A,* 38(2), 2006, pp. 207–226, http://www.researchgate.net/publication/23539640. Accessed 16 Dec. 2012.

Mobility is a central metaphor for the contemporary world, both in its physical form and in its imaginative implications. So contemporary research on mobilities encompasses not only corporeal travel of people and the physical movement of objects but also imaginative travel, virtual travel and communicative travel.[16] With the rapid intensification of travel – whether physical (people, goods, materials), imaginative (knowledge, ideas, images), or virtual (money, information, practices, e-mails) – the fact of movement, its meanings and its implications must be studied in their own right has led to the creation of a separate discipline. In fact, the construction of new, complex politics of location and travel can be attributed to this discipline of *mobility studies* which has really taken off in the recent past. As we are continually responding and negotiating with a more 'networked' world-order where speed, intensity and technical channelling of various flows are arguably greater than ever before, it is seen that irreversible forms of mobility (long-term migration, residential mobility) are increasingly supplanted by more reversible forms (daily mobility, trips, migratory circulation). By bringing together studies of migration, transportation, infrastructure, transnationalism, migration and border studies, cultural geography, mobile communications, imaginative travel and tourism, new approaches to mobility are able to highlight the power relations informing various processes of globalization. By putting the differential power relations at the heart of new mobilities theory, it also responds to several important feminist critiques of nomadic theory, which points out that it is grounded in masculine subjectivities, makes assumptions about freedom of movement and ignores the gendered production of space[17].

In his book, *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*, John Urry presents a "manifesto for a sociology that examines the diverse mobilities of peoples, objects, images, information and wastes; and of the complex interdependencies between, and social consequences of, these diverse mobilities."[18] Before delving deeper into this "mobility turn", Urry draws on the etymology of mobility and its multiple references, from simple movements of

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[16] Urry, John. *Mobilities*. Polity, 2007.

[17] Ang, I.M. "Together-in-difference: Beyond Diaspora, into Hybridity." *Asian Studies Review*, 27(2), 2003, pp. 141–54.

[18] Urry, John. *Sociology beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*. Routledge, 2000, p. 1.

things and people, to mobs and crowds, socioeconomic mobilities and migrations that can also include flows of information, images and ideas. He also explains that mobility has undergone some significant changes in history and argues that in the twenty-first century, interdependent digitized systems of mobility are at the very core of the mobile society. Urry creates a paradigm for mobilities from a very eclectic and diverse collection of materials ranging from German sociologist Georg Simmel's writings[19] on "paths" and metropolitan life's effect on sensibility, to Belgian chemist Illya Prigogine's ideas on complexity and non-linear systems, Martin Heidegger's meditations on technology and the phenomenology of time, Deleuze and Guattari's nomadism, contrasting theories of sedentarism, investigations of motility (defined as the 'potential' for mobility), complexity and catastrophe theories and so on. Urry introduces the five core dimensions of the mobilities paradigm, which are exemplified by different forms of 'travel'. Corporeal travel pertains to the movement of people "for work, leisure, family life, pleasure, migration and escape" (Urry, *Sociology* 47) and includes both daily and once-in-a-lifetime forms of displacement (e.g. commuting versus exile). The physical movement of objects is represented by the travel undertaken by goods within a variety of contexts such as industrial production and distribution or the exchange of gifts. Imaginative travel relates to the ways in which we move across time and space through print and visual media. Communicative travel is represented by the ability to exchange messages via various modes of communication technologies such as letters, telephones and computer-mediated messaging. Finally, virtual travel pertains to the "powerful, interdependent knowledge-based systems that through new software are increasingly organizing production, consumption, travel and communications around the world" (Urry, *Sociology* 159). The new mobilities paradigm emphasizes the "complex assemblage" (Urry, *Sociology* 48) of these five core mobilities, rather than the privileging of one of these dimensions over the others. Although Urry uses the word "assemblage" he clearly rejects the rhizomatic approach of Deleuze and Guattari in favour of a systematic approach to understand the multiplicity of

[19] John Urry considers Georg Simmel to be an important precursor of mobility studies and sees his legacy in the early work of the Chicago School on migrants, hobos, gangs, and prostitutes.

increasingly networked travels that connect individuals to each other today. His utterance of the word "assemblage" is more literal than metaphorical, as he consistently stresses on creating a network of systems. This accounts for his emphasis on the concept of "systems" of mobility throughout the book rather than "assemblages" (an idea closer to Deleuze) to account for the multiplicity of flows of people, objects, ideas and information across the planet. Thus the claim to a new mobilities paradigm is not simply based on an assertion of the novelty of mobility in the world today although the speed, intensity and technical channelling of various flows are arguably greater than ever before.

The new Mobilities paradigm formulates a forceful critique of the "a-mobile" (Urry's coinage) or sedentary premise on which social science theorization has been traditionally based. It also seeks to understand the ontology of mobility – to study the process of movement that constitutes the entities in circulation, whether they are people, objects, or ideas. The new paradigm moves beyond the obvious forms of mobilities to consider a vast array of crisscrossing mobilities, thereby shedding light on the complex interconnections and interdependencies between different networks and spaces. Such "new mobilities" include phenomena as varied as "the mobilities of money laundering, the drug trade, sewage and waste, infections, urban crime, asylum seeking, arms trading, people smuggling, slave trading, and urban terrorism" (Sheller and Uri 220). However, prime focus of new mobilities paradigm is on the pervasiveness of technology based upon timeframes transcending human consciousness – "Computers make decisions in nanosecond time, producing instantaneous and simultaneous effects. Pervasive computing produces a switching and mobility between different self-reproducing systems, such as the Internet with its massive search engines, databases of information storage and retrieval, world money flows (especially through the ubiquitous `spread sheet culture'), intelligent transport systems, robotic vision machines under the oceans, and vision machines more generally."[20] It opens up the politics of identity in ways, not conceived before. Today human beings leave traces of their selves in informational space, as they move through

[20] Kaplan, C. "Mobility and War: The Cosmic Views of US 'air power.'" *Environment and Planning A*, 38, 2006, pp. 395-407.

space because of automated retrieval at the other end of a network. The self is thus spread out or made mobile in a series of traces within cyberspace as computer software (re)writes the very idea of mobility.

It can be seen that research in this field is highly engaged with differentiated mobility, including debates over globalization, cosmopolitanism, post colonialism and emerging forms of urbanism, surveillance and global governance. The varied discussions of place and space in late modern society are intimately connected and related with notions of mobility. Thus contrary to long held views of earlier 'humanist geographers' who saw mobility taking away the very idea of identity in place, mobility has paradoxically found its solid ground in the theoretical dissemination of place and its identity.

COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Recent shift in research of relationship between identity, place and history draws more attention to the role of memory. As numerous social commentators have observed, we are in the midst of a 'memory boom'. Huyssen calls it a "hypertrophy" and "obsession" with memory.[21] Over the past two decades, the relationship between culture and memory has emerged in many parts of the world as a key issue of interdisciplinary research. The term 'cultural memory' is often ambiguous as it subsumes various media practices and structures as diverse as myth, monuments, historiography, ritual, conversational remembering, configurations of cultural knowledge and even neuronal networks. Contemporary use of the term collective memory is traceable largely to the work of sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs who published his landmark *Social Frameworks of Memory* (*Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*)[22] in 1925. At the foundation of Halbwachs' conception of collective memory is the argument that people acquire memories as part of a society. They recall, recognize and localize their memories within this society (Halbwachs 38). However, it is to be noted that the individual strands of

[21] Huyssen, Andreas. *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 3.
[22] Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. Translated by Lewis A. Coser, University of Chicago Press, 1992.

collective memory don't merely create group memory — they also create individual strands of identity. In some cases, they are the strands of identity where that identity cannot be expressed more easily in words or symbols. This is because we are what we remember ourselves to be. The collected traces of integrated (but separate) memory create feelings of individual identity that when shared in numbers creates feelings of group identity. This is the foundation for identity expression as culture. Thus remembering always takes place within social frameworks, and such frameworks are often connected to a specific group of people and work to create social cohesion. This assumes a geographically limited community with shared beliefs. While such an understanding of collective memory framework was valid during the Middle Ages and the nineteenth century, modernity and proliferation of mass media in 20th century challenge it by creating new social frameworks, bringing together communities that may not share the same geographical spaces or beliefs. Globalization, transnationalism, and postmodernism have made it less evident to think in terms of national boundaries. The global flows of media, capital, information and ideology pose a challenge to the earlier idea of stable shared frameworks. Technologies of mass culture now assume an important role in circulating memories of the past. This is what Alison Landsberg calls a "prosthetic" memory — a transportable, mass mediated memory transcending national and cultural boundaries.[23]

Halbwachs' theory of memory combined insights from two important figures in late nineteenth-century France — philosopher Henri Bergson and sociologist Emile Durkheim. He drew from Bergson's problematization of time and memory, but addressed the issue through Durkheim's sociological lens. Bergson undertook a radical philosophical analysis of the *experience* of time, highlighting memory as its central feature. He advocated remembering as an active, fluid and changing engagement, in contrast to prevailing accounts of memory as passive storage and mere objective reproduction of the past. Bergson also talked about the variable *experience* of memory which interested Halbwachs. Like Bergson, Durkheim rejected objectivist accounts of time and space. However, unlike

[23] Landsberg, Alison. *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture.* Columbia University Press, 2004, pp. 8-11.

Bergson, Durkheim located variation of perception not in the vagaries of subjective experience but in differences among forms of social organization. According to him, forms of time derive their significance neither from transcendental truths nor from material realities, but are social facts that vary according to the changing forms of social structure. Durkheim thus provided for Halbwachs a *sociological* framework for studying the variability of memory by connecting cognitive order (time perception) with social order.

Memory, for Halbwachs, is framed in the present as much as in the past, and is variable rather than constant. Studying memory is not a matter of reflecting philosophically on inherent properties of the subjective mind but of identifying its shifting social frames. Moreover for Halbwachs, memory is a matter of how minds work together in society, how their operations are not simply mediated but are structured by social arrangements — "[I]t is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (Halbwachs 38). There are, nevertheless, a number of distinct aspects of collective remembering in Halbwachs. Firstly, Halbwachs argued that it is impossible for individuals to remember in any coherent and persistent fashion outside of their *group contexts*; these are the necessary *social frameworks* of memory. His favourite examples include the impossibility of being certain of any particular childhood memory. As adults, it becomes impossible to say for certain whether the memory of a childhood experience is more the result of stored features of the original moment or some kind of compilation out of stored fragments, other people's retellings and intervening experiences. The social frameworks in which we are called on to recall are inevitably tied up with what and how we recall. Halbwachs argued, "There is no point, in seeking where (…) (memories) are preserved in my brain or in some nook of my mind to which I alone have access: for they are recalled to me externally, and the groups of which I am a part at any time give me the means to reconstruct them…" (Halbwachs 38). If all individual memory is socially framed by groups, however, groups themselves also share *publicly articulated images of collective pasts*. He characterizes collective memory as plural, showing that shared memories can be effective markers of social differentiation. Secondly, his study of family memory and other private

practices of remembering have been an important influence for oral history. And thirdly, with his research on the memory of religious communities (in *La topographie légendaire*), he accentuated topographical aspects of cultural memory, thus anticipating the notion of *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory), later developed by Pierre Nora[24]. Noted commentator, Jeffrey Olick while evaluating the contribution of Halbwachs raises pertinent questions about his real legacy —

> "But are individual memory, social and cultural frameworks, and collective representations really separate things? The term collective memory — with its sometimes more, sometimes less clear contrast to individual memory—seems to imply just that! But only if we forget that collective memory is merely a broad, sensitizing umbrella, and not a precise operational definition. For upon closer examination, collective memory really refers to a wide variety of *mnemonic products and practices*, often quite different from one another. The former (products) include stories, rituals, books, statues, presentations, speeches, images, pictures, records, historical studies, surveys, etc.; the latter (practices) include reminiscence, recall, representation, commemoration, celebration, regret, renunciation, disavowal, denial, rationalization, excuse, acknowledgment, and many others. Mnemonic practices—though occurring in an infinity of contexts and through a shifting multiplicity of media—are always simultaneously individual and social. And no matter how concrete mnemonic products may be, they gain their reality only by being used, interpreted, and reproduced or changed. To focus on collective memory as *a variety of products and practices* is thus to reframe the antagonism between individualist and collectivist approaches to memory more productively as a matter of moments in a dynamic process. This, to me, is the real message of Halbwachs' diverse insights."[25]

One of Halbwachs' enduring legacies is the opposition between history and memory. Halbwachs conceives of the former as abstract and "dead" while that of the latter as meaningful and "lived". Collective memory in contemporary writings has been actively used not only in distinction but in opposition to history. Peter

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[24] Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Le Lieux de Memoire." *Representations*, no. 26, special issue: Memory and Counter-Memory, spring, 1989, pp. 7-24, http://www.timeandspace.lviv.ua/files/session/Nora_105.pdf. Accessed 16 Dec. 2012.

[25] Olick, Jeffrey K. "From Collective Memory to the Sociology of Mnemonic Practices and Products." *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, Walter de Gruyter, 2008, p. 158.

Novick claims that collective memory is "in crucial senses ahistorical, even anti-historical"[26], since historical consciousness, by its nature, focuses on the historicity of events that took place then and now. "They grew out of circumstances different from those that now obtain. Memory, by contrast, has no sense of the passage of time; it denies the 'pastness' of its objects and insists on their continuing presence" (Novick 4). David Lowenthal also questions the objectivity of 'history' —

> "The past is not a fixed or immutable series of events; our interpretations of it are in constant flux. What previous groups identify and sanctify as their pasts become historical evidence about themselves. Today's past is as accumulation of mankind's memories, seen through our own generation's particular perspectives. What we know of history differs from what actually happened not merely because evidence of past events has been lost or tampered with, or because the task of shifting through it is unending, but also because the changing present continually requires new interpretations of what has taken place."[27]

Studies on 'history vs. memory' debate are usually loaded with emotionally charged binary oppositions. Instead it is better to focus on different *modes of remembering* in culture — the past is not given but must instead continually be *re*-constructed and *re*-presented. Thus, our memories (individual and collective) of past events can vary to a great degree. This holds true not only for *what* is remembered (facts, data) but also for *how* it is remembered. As a result, there are different modes of remembering identical past events. A war, for example, can be remembered as a mythic, apocalyptic event, as part of political history, as a traumatic experience, as a part of family history or as a focus of bitter contestation. Myth, religious memory, political history, trauma, family remembrance or generational memories are different modes of referring to the past. Seen in this way, history is recast as another mode of cultural memory. However, there is a caveat. Collective memory is far from monolithic. Collective remembering is a highly complex process, involving numerous different people, practices, materials, and themes. One needs be careful, not to presume at the

[26] Novick, Peter. *The Holocaust in American Life*. Houghton Mifflin, 1999, p. 3.
[27] Lowenthal, David. "Age and Artifact: Dilemmas of Appreciation." *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, edited by D.S. Meinig, Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 109.

outset that every society has one collective memory or that production of public memories is unproblematic in nature.

PLACE AND MEMORY

Space is necessary to anchor memory for it to be preserved, for example, through monuments, artefacts and texts. One particularly influential theory on memory's relationship to space is French historian Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory, which is published as *Les Lieux de mémoire* (1984-92), a series of seven volumes. There he describes the French 'sites' of memory that defines French national consciousness. Making a distinction between history and memory, Nora argues that whereas history attaches itself to events, memory attaches itself to sites. It is to be noted that the French word 'lieux' literally translates into 'places'. These sites embody traces of the past and contribute to define memory itself.[28] Nora distinguishes three elements of *lieux de mémoire* — material, symbolic and functional. *Lieux de mémoire* are created when these aspects co-exist and merge. For Nora, memory is attached to 'sites' (places) that are concrete and physical — the burial places, cathedrals, battlefields, prisons which embody tangible notions of the past — as well as to 'sites' that are non-material — the celebrations, spectacles and rituals that provide an aura of the past. Sites of memory therefore encompass geographical places, monuments and buildings, historical figures, public displays and commemorations. Such sites of memory validate and authenticate consensual notions of the past where "memory crystallizes and secretes itself" (Nora 7).

Especially monuments, memorials and museums are considered as fertile grounds for investigating places of memory. One of the most intriguing avenues to explore the means by which memory and place are woven into the fabric of everyday life follows the widespread commemorative practice of street naming. While the constitutive relationship between memory and place is most obvious in the realm of material culture, it is also performative. Through bodily repetition and

[28] Barbie, Zelizer. "Reading the Past Against the Grain: the Shape of Memory Studies." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication,* 12.2, 1995, p. 232.

the intensification of everyday acts that otherwise remain submerged in the mundane order of things, performances like rituals, festivals, pageants, public dramas and civic ceremonies serve as a chief way in which societies remember. Sites of memory are subject to remembering and forgetting but it is also vulnerable to appropriation and manipulation. They also display the exciting quality of being able to change, that is, to resurrect old meanings and generate new ones. For example, Nora uses different terminologies which can be "intellectually elaborate" like portable *lieux*, such as Jewish Tablets of Law; dominant *lieux* that are imposed from above, such as official ceremonies; pure *sites* that only have a commemorative function, such as funeral eulogies; and composite *sites*, in which the commemorative function is only one among others, such as national flags (Nora 23). This wide range of possible *lieux* suggests a flexibility of the notion, proved by the many adaptations of the concept in different contexts.

MOBILITIES AND MEMORY

The "mobility turn" has exerted a major influence on the idea of collective memory. The control of the nation-state over collective memory, as well as Nora's nationally focused "sites of memory" is now challenged by globalization and its evolving mobilities paradigm. The changing dynamics of the nation-state itself necessitates the discussion on collective memory to take place on a more transnational level. Rather than understanding national memory as stable and fixed, there has been a shift to understand transnational memory as mobile and non-linear. In her article *Travelling Memory*[29], Astrid Erll proposes an adjustment of Halbwachs' original conception of collective memory. She demonstrates how Halbwachs' understanding of collective memory does not accommodate a transcultural approach to memory. Interestingly, Halbwachs recognizes the transculturality of memory on an individual level in his acknowledgment of the way people base themselves on several different frameworks when they

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[29] Astrid, Erll. "Travelling Memory." *Parallax* 17.4, 2011, p. 10, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13534645.2011.605570. Accessed 16 Dec. 2014.

remember. However, in terms of the collective, Halbwachs considered collective memory to be non-transcultural and culturally contained. He described the collective memory of social communities as self-centred and solely interested in similarity and identity. To overcome this limitation, Erll draws inspiration from Aby Warburg's exhibition of the *Mnemosyne*-atlas[30], in which Warburg looked at the movement and migration of symbols across time and space for the development of a concept of transcultural memory that fits our age. Based on this mammoth project Erll conceives of transcultural memory as "the incessant wandering of carriers, media, contents, forms and practices, their continual 'travels' and ongoing transformations through time and space, across social, linguistic and political borders" (Erll 11). Erll deems "travels" of memory to be an improvement of Nora's static "sites of memory" as it captures the mobilities paradigm of the current age more accurately. Erll's transcultural memory, as well as Landsberg's prosthetic memory, provides useful frameworks to consider the unstable and mediated nature of collective memory in a global era.

The other force changing collective memory is digitization. Andrew Hoskins' concept of digital network memory is useful to consider the new memory created by contemporary digital technologies. He argues that communications such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr "dynamically add to, alter, and erase, a kind of living archival memory and transform the temporality, spatiality and mobility of memories" (Hoskins 92).[31] While the *lieux de mémoire* provide a valuable understanding of the site-specificity of memory, its implications of materiality, symbolism and functionality is quickly disappearing as a site of memory. For example, the emergence of virtual archives that are not necessarily tied to a physical place, transform the materiality of the archive as a site of memory. In further discussions on memory, I take into account these undeniable forces of globalization and digitization and seek to understand collective memory as transcultural, mobile, fluid, unstable, transferable and mediated.

This thesis also focuses on various experiences of place as shaped by mobilities while exploring the problematic role of memory in their constructions

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[30] To know more, please see https://warburg.library.cornell.edu/.

[31] Hoskins, Andrew. "Digital Network Memory." *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory,* edited by Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, Walter de Gruyter, 2009, pp. 92-106.

and their interrelatedness. Changing speed in postmodern age impacts spatial experience and as noted by Paul Virilio, it also alters political and cultural boundaries laid out by conventional history. New experiences of space, formed by new methods of mobilities, also create new patterns of action exploding limits and patterns of identity formation.[32] Accelerated speed of communication and interaction enable spatial reconfigurations. Virilio opines that acceleration recognizes the balances of power and politics but also creates confusion. "With acceleration there is no more here and there, only the mental confusion of near and far, present and future, real and unreal — a mix of history, stories, and the hallucinatory utopia of communication technologies."[33]

Places as sites of swift encounters and various flows of mobility are also construed as the place of "the Other" – other bodies, other spaces and other times. Thus, the "existing spatialities and temporalities — embodiments, emotions, narratives and memories — are translated into every encounter as formative layers of hybridity" (Simonsen 23),[34] opening opportunities for a heterotopic sense of place. Various kinds of mobilities like migrations, physical dislocations of people raise questions related to their self-identity, construction of collective memory and the engagement with the term, 'place' in general. In today's mobility-driven world, cultural identification with a place does not express a pure unalloyed feeling of belongingness but creates a constant flux through the ongoing narrative of differences. It is impossible to promise a single, fixed point of origin for a cultural identification. Identities lie 'in- between' without a single reference point in time-space to return to. Ideas such as from "roots" to "routes"[35] try to provide identity a new perspective — to locate them in different imaginary geographies at the same time, tying many places together, having multiple 'homes' to return to. Identity associated with place which are in turn construed within various mobilities are created by different people, at different times, for

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[32] Virilio, Paul. *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology.* Semiotext(e), 1986.
[33] Virilio, Paul. *The Art of the Motor*. University of Minnesota Press, 1995, p. 35.
[34] Simonsen, K. "Place as encounters: Practice, conjunction and co-existence." *Mobility and place: Enacting Northern European peripheries*, edited by J. Bærenholdt and B. Granås, Ashgate, 2008, pp. 13-25.
[35] Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Continuum, 2004.

different reasons, creating different narratives, each dissolving and changing at every moment. It is important to look at how cultural memory gets written and inscribed within those mobilities. It is a complex process as the past itself is always problematic and often contradictory in its symbiosis of memory and forgetting. There is no fixed meaning in the past as with each new (re)telling, the context and/or audience varies and stories are modified.

MOBILITIES, MEMORY AND COMICS

Comics on mobilities and memory can encompass a wide range of possibilities. It can range from intimate travelogues in a journal format like Craig Thompson's *Carnet de Voyage* (2004), Lucy Knisley's *French Milk* (2000), *An Age of Licence* (2014)*, Displacement* (2015), Aimee Major-Steinberger's *Japan Ai: A Tall Girl's Adventures in Japan* (2007), Julie Douchet's *My New York Diaries* (1999), *365 Days* (2007), Enrico Casaroso's *The Venice Chronicles* (2008), Bharath Murthy's *The Vanished Path: A Graphic Travelogue* (2015), Peter Kuper's Ruins (2015); travel journalism comics like Guy Delisle's *Shenzhen* (2000), *Pyongyang* (2003), *Burma Chronicles* (2007), *Jerusalem* (2011); journalistic dispatches from conflict zones like Joe Sacco's *Palestine* (2001) *Safe Area Goražde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992–1995* (2000), *The Fixer: A Story from Sarajevo*. (2003), *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009), *Journalism* (2012), Emmanuel Guibert, Didier Lefèvre and Frederic Lemercier's *The Photographer: Into War-torn Afghanistan with Doctors Without Borders* (2009), Sarah Glidden's *Rolling Blackouts* (2016); comics on memory tourism like Jeremie Dres' *We Won't See Auschwitz* (2012), Sarah Glidden's *How to Understand Israel in 60 days or Less* (2011), Rutu Modan's *The Property* (2013); personal memoirs like Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (2000), Riad Sattouf's *The Arab of the Future* (2016); even complicated science-fiction works on time travel like Fábio Moon and Gabriel Bá's *Daytripper* (2011), Jason Shiga's M*eanwhile* (2010), Alex Robinson's *Too Cool To Be Forgotten* (2008), Jeff Lemire's *Trillium* (2013), Daniel Clowes' *Patience* (2016), and the list is practically endless.

In fact, comics about mobilities will also include the iconic Milton Caniff and the cult Tintin series[36] as well. Many critics like Edward Bader opines that the publication of Peter Kuper's *Comic Trips: A Journal of Travels Through Africa and Southeast Asia* (1992)[37] marks the emergence of a new type of comics' genre known as 'comics carnet'. *Comic Trips* contains photographs, illustrations and short tales told in comics form that record the New York illustrator's travels in Africa and Asia. The name of this new genre — "comics carnet" — is a combination of the word 'comics' and the French term for a notebook: 'carnet'. The word 'carnet' also means an official pass or permit for crossing national boundaries. In 'comics carnet' the author/artist use the comics medium to reflect on how one culture views another and represents it in verbal and visual terms.[38] In addition to these, some works like Richard McGuire's *Here*[39] defies any kind of slotting at all and turns out to be a true palimpsest of space and time.

So I had to exclude much more than I can include. It is like a never-ending feast where I can only eat a few things properly. The buffet metaphor is not misplaced because I consume a lot as a comics fanatic but when it comes to close reading, I love to cling to a few that absolutely tickles my palette.

For my thesis, I narrowed down my choices to three comics with a specific purpose in mind. Firstly, I haven't segregated fiction and non-fiction primarily due to the fact that the fine line between the two gets blurred in most of the cases. An extended quote from Yann Martel's *Beatrice and Virgil*[40] elucidates the problem:

> "[The historian] tilted his head and peered at Henry over his glasses. "What's your book about?"
> Henry was thrown into confusion. An obvious question, perhaps, but not one that he could answer so easily….But his answer came out in stammers and meanders. "My book is about representations of the Holocaust. The event is gone; we are left with stories about it. My book is about a new choice of stories. With a

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[36] McCarthy, Tom. *Tintin and the Secret of Literature*. Granta Books, 2007.
[37] Kuper, Peter. *Comic Trips: A Journal of Travels Through Africa and Southeast Asia.* NBM Publishing, 1992.
[38] Bader, Edward. *Comics Carnet: The Graphic Novelist as Global Nomad*. Dissertation, Brock University, Ontario, 2006, http://dr.library.brocku.ca/bitstream/handle/10464/2837/Brock_Bader_Edward_2007.pdf?sequence=1. Accessed 12 April 2012.
[39] McGuire, Richard. *Here.* Pantheon Books, 2014.

historical event, we not only have to bear witness, that is, tell what happened and address the needs of ghosts. We also have to interpret and conclude, so that the needs of people *today*, the children of ghosts, can be addressed….Fiction and nonfiction are not so easily divided. Fiction may not be real, but it's true; it goes beyond the garland of facts to get to emotional and psychological truths. As for nonfiction, for history, it may be real, but its truth is slippery, hard to access, with no fixed meaning bolted to it. If history doesn't become story, it dies to everyone except the historian."[41]

So comics like *The Property* by Rutu Modan[42] may be touted as 'fiction' about the Holocaust but it is not so different from Jeremie Dres' so called 'non-fictional' road-trip account, *We Won't See Auschwitz.*[43]

Secondly, my choices are also guided by the way I wish to respond to the form in general. The three comics — *Footnotes in Gaza* by Joe Sacco[44], *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan[45] and *The Cardboard Valise* by Ben Katchor[46] are all radically different in terms of subject matter. *The Footnotes in Gaza* is an account of Sacco's visit to the war-torn West Bank and Gaza during the early 1990s. Built around two forgotten incidents — the 1956 mass killings of Palestinians in Rafah and Khan Younis — the book digs deep, exploring the relationship of past and present, memory and experience. *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan is a fictional allegory which talks about a certain kind of mobility (immigration) and the way it *re*-creates the identity of a migrant. *The Cardboard Valise* by Ben Katchor is about the dissemination of a tourist who is frequently referred to as a "modern exile."[47] The mobility of a tourist is a complex phenomenon as the role of memory disrupts easy dichotomies between 'home' and 'elsewhere'.

Through a rigorous formal and critical analysis of these comics, I reflect on how mobility and memory together create a paradigm of their own which can be extrapolated to comment on the politics of the comics' form itself.

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[41] Martel, Yann. *Beatrice & Virgil*. A.A. Knopf Canada, 2010.
[42] Modan, Rutu. *The Property*. Drawn and Quarterly, 2013.
[43] Dres, Jeremie. *We Won't See Auschwitz*. SelfMadeHero, 2012.
[44] Sacco, Joe. *Footnotes in Gaza*. Metropolitan Books, 2009.
[45] Tan, Shaun. *The Arrival*. Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007.
[46] Katchor, Ben. *The Cardboard Valise.* Pantheon Books, 2011.
[47] Kaplan, C. *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*. Duke University Press, 1996.

CHAPTER 3

FOOTNOTES IN GAZA: COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND JOURNALISTIC DETOURS

"For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably." – Walter Benjamin [1]

MEMORY AND FOOTNOTES

Borges' short story *Funes the Memorious* (1942) centres on a dialogue, presented through indirect discourse, between the author-narrator and Ireneo Funes. It dwells on the theme of excess of remembering. As a result of an injury sustained by falling from his horse, Ireneo Funes develops an incredible capacity to remember every detail of past experiences as well as all the sensorial perceptions which accompanied them. The narrator describes Funes' infallible memory in the following terms:

> "We in a glance perceive three wine glasses on the table; Funes saw all the shoots, clusters, and grapes of the vine. He remembered the shape of the clouds in the south at dawn on the 30th of April of 1882, and he could compare them in his recollection with the marbled grain in the design of a leather-bound book which he had seen only once, and with the lines in the spray which an oar raised in the Rio Negro on the eve of the battle of the Quebracho [...]. He told me: I have more memories in myself alone than all men have had since the world was a world."[2]

Readers can imagine Funes' mind as a horizontal plane where each memory is broken into an infinite number of details, without being connected to any other memories. Funes doesn't *remember* through the association of ideas, but only by providing each single perception with its exact temporal origin in the past. This exactitude of memory paradoxically makes Funes an incapable thinker because "to think is to forget a difference, to generalize, to abstract" (Borges 115).

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[1] Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968, p.247.
[2] Borges, Jorge L. *Ficciones*. Translated by Gordon Brotherston and Peter Hulme, Bristol Classical Press, 1999, p. 112.

Borges' utopic construction of the character that exists merely in his memory can be seen as a contrasting paradigm within which real-time memory works. Unlike Funes in Borges' story, the mind cannot separate, disconnect or un-entangle different strands of memory of the past from the present. In *Footnotes in Gaza*[3], Joe Sacco reconstructs two traumatic incidents that happened in Khan Younis and Rafah in Gaza from the narration of myriad eye-witnesses who are literally and metaphorically overwhelmed by a burden of trauma associated with their memory of those two particular events.

In an introduction to the famous work, *Persepolis* (2002), the author Marjane Satrapi says, "One can forgive but should never forget".[4] It is reiterated within the work itself by Marji's uncle, Anoosh, one of the characters who had a profound influence on her childhood. Marji's uncle Anoosh tells her the story of his exile, his return and imprisonment.

Fig. 6: Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, Page 60

Anoosh informs Marji: "I tell you all this because it's important that you know. Our family memory must not be lost. Even if it's not easy for you, even if you don't understand it all" to which Marji answers: "Don't worry, I'll never forget" (Satrapi 60). Sacco's work is a similar testament of not forgetting the past but Sacco calibrates the question in a different vein: How do the victims remember?

In the foreword, Sacco talks about the creative trigger that led him to draw

[3] Sacco, Joe. *Footnotes in Gaza*. Metropolitan Books, 2009.
[4] Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis*. Pantheon Books, 2000.

and write *Footnotes in Gaza*. On one hand there was a planned trip to Khan Younis with journalist Chris Hedges to look at the implications of the Second Intifada on the town and on the other hand there was Noam Chomsky's book *The Fateful Triangle* in which he refers to the large-scale killings of civilians in 1956 (Sacco, *Footnotes* ix). During his preparatory research around the subject, he found a similar incident which took place almost at the same time, several kilometres from Khan Younis in Rafah, on the border with Egypt. Although piqued by this startling discovery of a little known event, he chose not to dispose of his starting point – the Second Intifada – but to use it as an overall framework. *Footnotes in Gaza* begins with the 116-page section 'Khan Younis', then moves on to a short 27-page interlude 'Feast' (set mostly in the present, around the annual feast Eid-al-Adha), and ends with the 236 pages of the section 'Rafah' before moving into its four appendices and bibliography.

KHAN YOUNIS SECTION

The first chapter "Glimmer of Hope" in the section "Khan Younis" opens in the balcony of a luxurious West Jerusalem apartment with a bleed panel of the author/journalist Joe Sacco[5] turned backwards raising a toast to Mark, one of the many foreign journalists on the beat in the troubled area. This panel, viewed singularly, has a tinge of irony as it stands in complete isolation to the bloodshed, trauma and the agony that follow in the next 387 pages. The first caption (far left) which contains the words "I've gotta say, my pal Mark has got it made" (repeated within speech balloon in first person by the narrator) foregrounds a momentary sense of calm, reinforced by the slightly pleased look on Mark's face. Then when the narrator is about to embark on a paen about the magnificient view from the balcony, he is abruptly cut short by the ringing of Mark's mobile phone [Fig. 7].

[5] Like his other works, Sacco always presents himself in a professional capacity (as a journalist) within the narrative. In order to differentiate between Sacco, the creator of the work and Sacco, the journalist-protagonist within the narrative, I shall consistently use Sacco within inverted commas ('Sacco') to indicate his diegetic representation. This is done primarily for the sake of convenience. The issue of Sacco's "autobiographical avatar" is an important facet of his work and will be discussed later in Chapter 6.

Fig. 7: Joe Sacco's *Footnotes in Gaza*, Page 3

The hyphen used within the narrative in the right hand corner of the top panel breaks the lull as Sacco compresses the panels into an unequal triptych without bleed to ring in the change of narrative tone, both literally and metaphorically. The tight low angle drawing registers a sense of foreboding in Mark's face as the music of the ringtone billows out in smoke like speech-balloons.

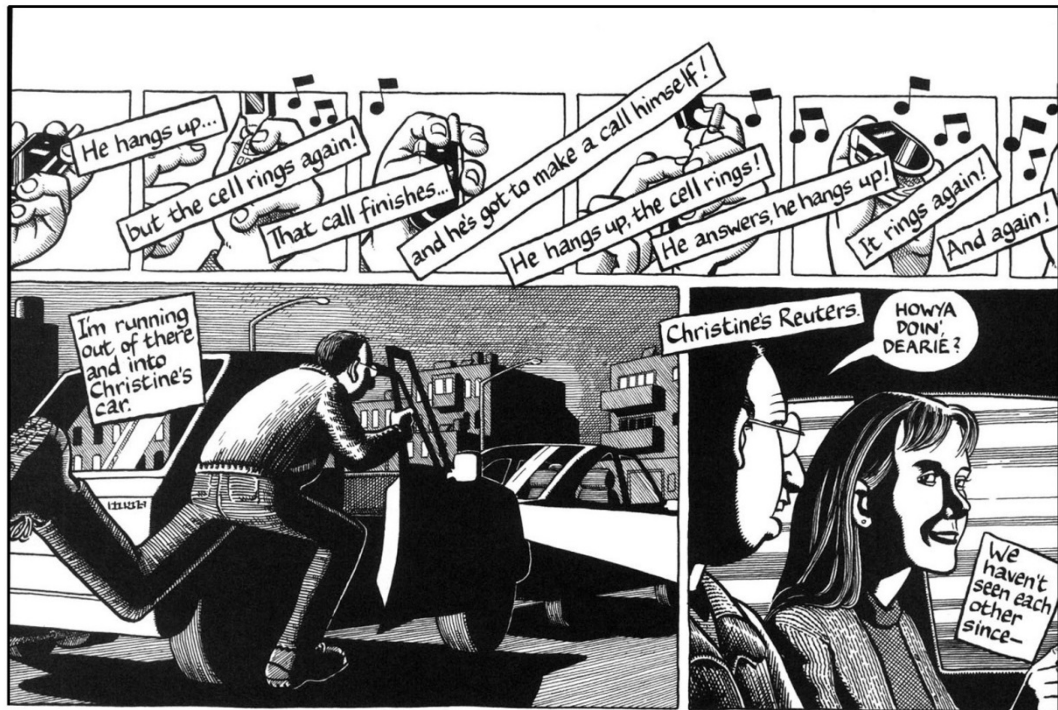

Fig. 8: *Footnotes in Gaza*, from Page 4

Mark's words over telephone scatters and spills over to the next page [Fig. 8] where the upper most panels introduces the audience to the break-neck speed of journalism in conflict zones. Mark's phone rings constantly and Sacco takes the cue to cut-off to a different scene where the narrator is seen to make a dash to the car of another journalist – Reuters' Christine, an old acquaintance.

As the foreign correspondences meet and have their smoke, they discuss the same things over and over again – "They shake their heads/They roll their eyes/It does get old" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 5). Sacco masterfully employs close-up of mouths and faces until in page 5, someone calls out for the waitress. The menu that is handed over 'unfolds' drawings of a bombed bus, a car on fire and a tank smoking out a settlement with the corresponding captions – "Bombings", Assassinations", "Incursions". The busy panels below are representations of familiar media footages that are transmitted from the region. The menu as contiguous panels also serves a formal purpose. Here, in a subtle interplay of time and space, Sacco telescopes and compresses fifty years of unending conflict. He maps the sameness of the incidents that recycle itself "a week ago/A month ago/A year ago…/50 years ago" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 5). Sacco in his foreword mentions it as much: "As someone in Gaza told me, 'events are continuous.' Palestinians never

seem to have the luxury of digesting one tragedy before the next one is upon them (Sacco, *Footnotes in Gaza* xiii).

Fig. 9: *Footnotes in Gaza*, Page 5

The melee of foreign correspondents in Jerusalem as they jostle together to unwind in a party also ironically reflects on the narrator's own status as an investigative journalist. In a caption he mentions — "Everyone's here" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 6). In contrast to everyone with official credentials – diplomats, U.N. Officials, World Bankers, journalists from *Newsweek*, CNN, *The Financial Times* – Sacco is different. He is singled out as someone who doesn't fit into the category of 'real-time news', thereby calling into question the unconventional methods he uses to achieve his journalistic goals. The chapter ends with Sacco entering Gaza through Erez crossing without a press pass.

Sacco begins the second chapter aptly titled "Footnotes" with a different play of perspective. The layout of page 8 [Fig. 10] is a full-page drawing with two insets arranged spatially in consonance with the narrative within the captions. The structural order of the captions can be split into 'story', 'sideshow' and 'footnote'. The 'story' occupies bulk of page, almost two-third of the whole layout. Drawn from the point of view of a soldier in the war between Egypt and the 'strange' alliance of Britain, France and Israel in 1956, it bears an uncanny resemblance to first-person video-game. The 'sideshow' panel (featuring raids and counter-raids across Gaza between Palestinian guerrillas and Israeli soldiers) is consigned to the lower side of the page, strategically rotated to make its frame touch the edge of the page-bleed. The 'footnotes' of human suffering dropped to the bottom of the layout, cut-off intentionally to denote its effacement from mainstream history.

Page 9 and 10 are stylistic *tour de force* where Sacco experiments with a vertical layout, used sparingly in the entire book. The page is split into two equal halves vertically – a single bleed panel in the left, set up against four small framed panels in the right-hand side of the page. The thin gutter around those four small panels acts as a narrative device that allows the readers to zoom on to its subject/subjects. First of all, there is a conscious disjunction between the visual and the textual index. The captions and the panels in these frames do not match until the readers arrive at the lower right-hand bottom corner of the page. Here, the captions are more like voiceovers in films, seemingly segregated from the trajectory of immediate visual depiction, while nonetheless reflecting on them.

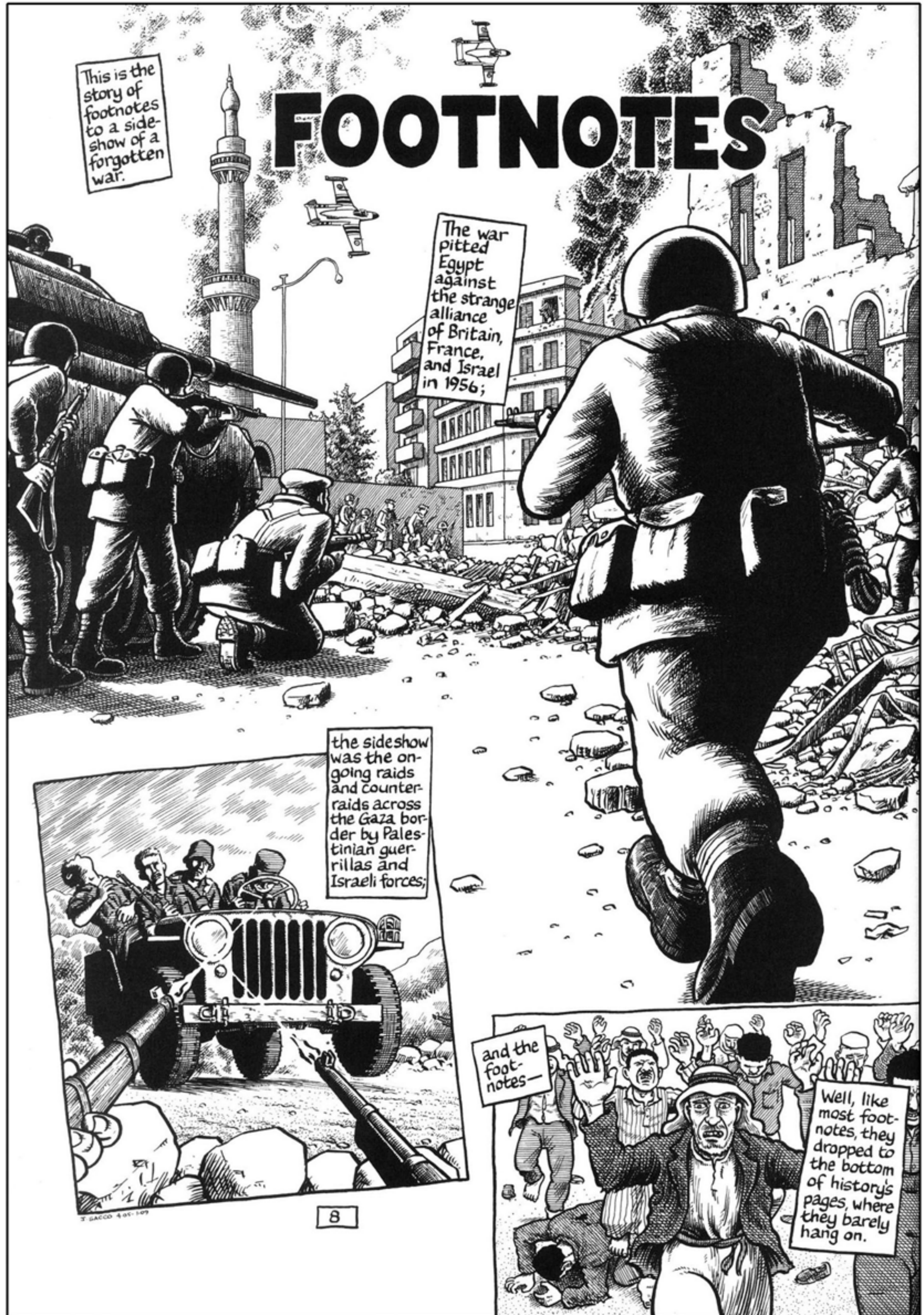

Fig. 10: *Footnotes in Gaza*, Page 8

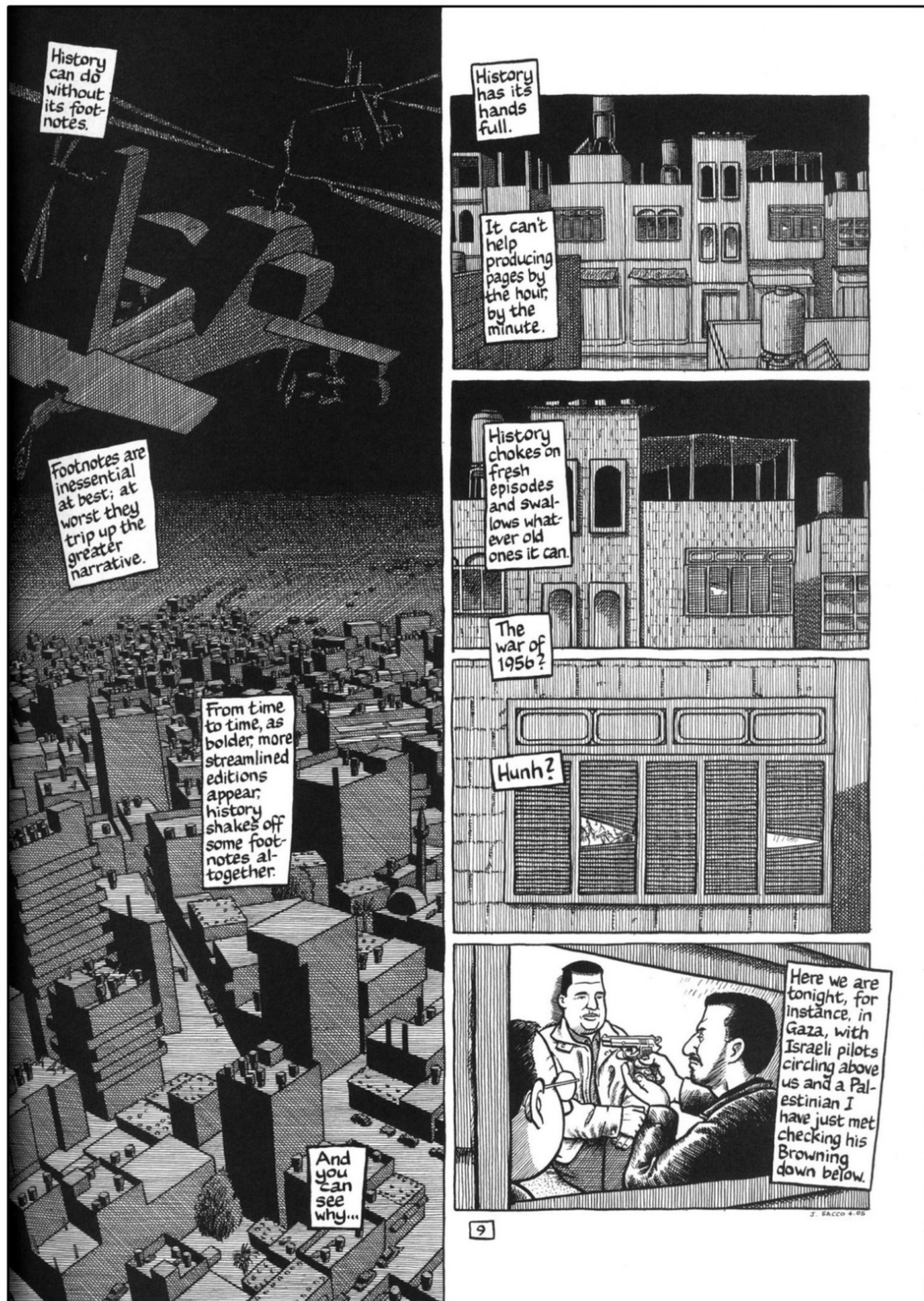

Fig. 11: *Footnotes in Gaza*, Page 9

The visuals start sequentially with a birds' eye panorama of houses in Gaza as Israeli military helicopters (Apaches) make sorties over the settlements at night. Slowly, Sacco lets the readers to zoom in on to one house in particular with its miniscule windows. As those windows grow larger in subsequent panels, the readers notice an engaging detail. One of the windows has a small split in the blind drawn over them. Through the split, 'Sacco' can be seen with two men – one

passively sitting, another checking out a gun. The captions, arranged diagonally across the page, essentially express the philosophy that is behind the making of the book. History cannot accommodate footnotes but memory can.

> "History can do without footnotes / Footnotes are inessential at best; at worst they trip up the greater narrative. / 'From time to time, as bolder, more streamlined editions appear, history shakes off some footnotes altogether. / History has its hands full / It can't help producing pages by the hour, by the minute. / History chokes o fresh episodes and swallows whatever old ones it can. / The war of 1956? / Hunh" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 9).

It is also Sacco's way of telling that this book is everything that history doesn't stand for or care to appropriate. The lower panel introduces another persistent theme in the book – the juxtaposition of the present and the past. The narrator mentions the war of 1956, and in the same breath he also locates himself with respect to the present reality of 'here'.

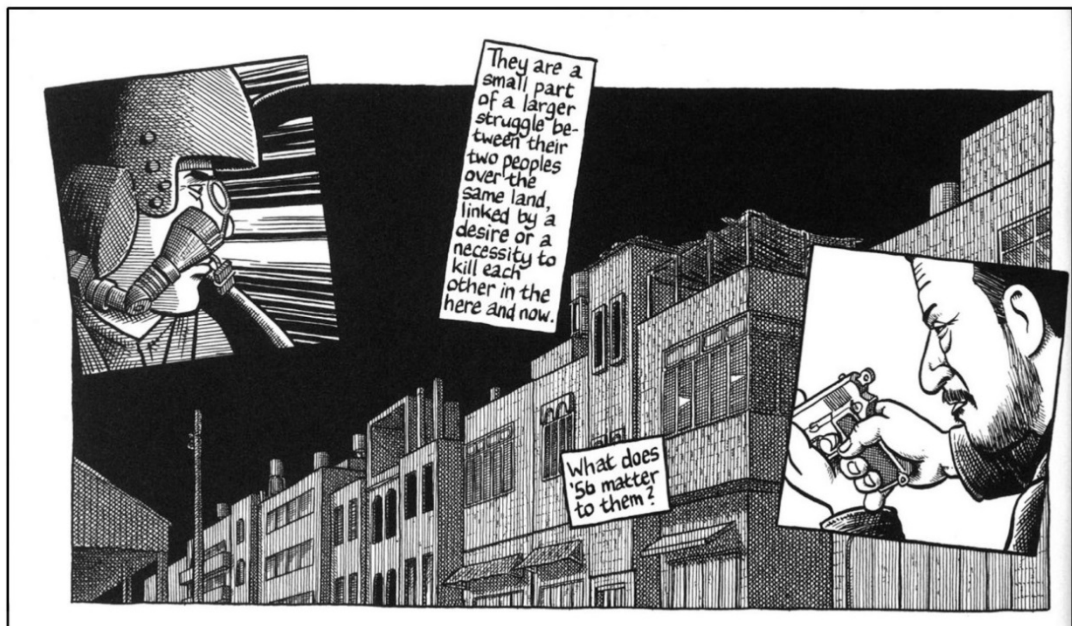

Fig. 12: *Footnotes in Gaza*, from Page 10

In the first panel of Page 10 [Fig. 12], the perspective of the house, where the authors and his friends are holed in, is taken from the ground level – a departure from the birds' eye view in the previous page. Within the panel, in two opposite corners are small square insets of the Israeli pilot whom the narrator cannot see (in the helicopter making the survillence) and the Palestinian guerilla whom the narrator can see (my underline). Strategically placed in-between is a caption which

acts as a bridge between the two sworn enemies – separated by their respective duty and commitment, yet bound together by the fate of being in war with each other. Being an outsider, Sacco can extricate himself from the personal and collective tragedies that he sees all around and for a moment, can conjure up the image of the Israeli pilot and align it to that of Khaled – "they are a small part of a larger struggle between their two peoples over the same land linked by a desire or a necessity to kill each other in the here and now…What does '56 matter to them?" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 10)

The third chapter, "Abed" has a subtle nod to Sacco's earlier work, *Palestine*[6] as it opens with the familiar drawing of the narrator being followed by a group of children in the streets of Southern Gaza. The chapter is crucial as it introduces Abed, the local man who will guide Sacco in his attempt to uncover the events of 1956. The first page of this chapter (Sacco, *Footnotes* 13) tries to locate the narrator within the Gaza landscape.

Fig. 13: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 13

[6] Sacco, Joe. *Palestine*. Seattle, Fantagraphics, 2001.

In the space of few panels, Sacco depicts the way he is viewed by the local population. He is an object of ridicule (the children repeatedly asking his name), deference (the taxi-driver refusing to take in an extra local passenger), suspicion (the old lady in the bazaar casting aspersion on his real motives) or fear (the be-spectacled man fearing retribution). It is to be noted that the words within speech balloons of the local charaters are in capital letters, thereby drawing a subtle line of difference between the outsider-journalist and the victims. Sacco acknowledges it when a caption in the lower panel effectively reflects his self-awareness: "Who am I, after all, snooping around, taking photos, wanting names?" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 13)

Sacco introduces Abed as an educated man with respectable family background. He is also a patriot who took in a bullet as a 13-14 year old boy while stoning an Israeli soldier during the first Intifada in late 80s. Abed ruminates about those old days and tells the narrator that the first Intifada was a "truly popular uprising" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 13). As an afternote, the readers also come to know that he is angered by the Oslo Accord (1993) signed by Palestine Liberation front (PLO) and Israel which ended the first Intifada. Here, there is a sudden stylistic leap from the author as he sketches a popular picture, circulated widely in the western media, of Yasser Arafat shaking hands with his Israeli counterpart Yitzak Rabin in the smug presence of the American President, Bill Clinton [Fig. 14]. The placement of popular images within the narrative are scattered althoughout the book. They serve as an implicit critique of superficial news coverage by the western media. Sacco's journalistic ethic demands that he eschews the spectacular while seeking the depth of truth. While discussing the rationale of war-reporting in the era of internet-instantaneous deadline culture, Nicholas Mirzoeff talks about "present-tense only mode of watching." He argues that the contemporary condition is in fact a state where there is "nothing to see and one must keep moving, keep circulating, and keep consuming."[7] The narrative of the popular images construed as 'history' by the western media is constantly questioned by the 'memory' of the common people.

[7] Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *Watching Babylon: The War in Iraq and Golbal Visual Culture*. Routledge, 2005, p. 27.

Fig. 14: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 15

Moreover, there is a sense of distrust and even disconnection between the people and high-ranking politicians like Arafat. The smiling Yarafat and other leaders of PLO are regarded as a beacon of hope in the west while Abed expresses his disdain for them and questions their commitment to the Palestinian cause. For the first time, we see a Palestinian taking a walk down the memory lane, an act which will

become the leitmotif of the book. Sacco chose to represent this visually on page 15, where we see the famous photograph of the protagonists of the Oslo Accords reproduced in drawing, but placed high above the heads of ordinary Palestinians' homes – a strong symbol of this disconnection. Abed insists that "the people are the ones who sacrificed, and what they care about is going to Tel Aviv for a glass of wine and travelling around freely" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 15). Seen in this light, 'memory' is resistance. Hilary Chute rightly points out: "In his investigation of brutal and often genocidal systematic political oppression, Sacco is riveted by the complexities of particular, war-torn ordinary people, examining and presenting details of their lives that are elided in mainstream media and journalistic enterprises … Sacco's works are resolute in their slowness – for the creator, in terms of his production time, and for the reader, in terms of navigating dense narrative structures."[8]

Sacco uses the term 'slow journalism' to describe his journalistic practice in one of the interviews – "I mean, it's one of the slowest art forms or media there is. You know, there's fast food and there's the slow food movement; I guess this is slow journalism."[9] Even Edward Said concurs with this vision of Sacco and praises it in his introduction to *Palestine:* "…the unhurried pace and absence of a goal in wanderings…is perhaps the greatest of (Sacco's) achievements"[10] The dense visual-verbal form in Sacco's work resists easy consumption and forces the reader to slow down in order to delve deeper.

While drawing Abed's nostalgic journey to the past, Sacco uses a familiar technique of focusing on the intense faces of the persons trying to piece together their memories of conflict [Fig. 14]. The sequence of drawings divided into three equal panels are identical (all with frontal depiction of Abed's face drawn from the same angle), except for minor additions in action movements of the mouth and the hand holding the cigar to signify the passage of time. As Abed continues to speak, the speech balloons in the three panels override the gutters to form a

[8] Chute, Hillary L. *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form*. Harvard University Press, 2016, p. 201.

[9] Sacco, Joe. Interview by Sam Adams. *A.V. Club*, June 10, 2011, http://www.avclub.com/article/joe-sacco-57360. Accessed Dec. 18 2012.

[10] Said, Edward. "Homage to Joe Sacco." *Palestine*, by Joe Sacco, Fantagraphics, 2001, p. v.

continuous string of sentences. Abed talks of the 2nd Intifada when the real control slipped into the hands of militant groups armed with infantry weapons and explosive belts. The words of Abed seamlessly melt into the ground reality of Toufieh neighbourhood razed to ground by Israeli crackdown featuring tanks, helicopters, gunships, jet-bombers and bull-dozers. The drawing of ruins by Sacco is painstakingly detailed, done with a lot of empathy. The carcasses of the destroyed houses are sketched with finer penstrokes, frequently drawn in a panoramic perspective. As the narrator and Abed walks through the ruins, Abed confesses that he wants to "see something else of the world, to get different perspectives" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 17).

The insertion of a short chapter called "The Gaza Strip" in page 18 and 19 shows another facet of Sacco's technique. The captions in these pages are mostly official data mined from United Nations archives. They are placed strategically across various observational drawings of life in general of Gaza. The detailed map of the Gaza strip [Fig. 15] recreated by Sacco in a vertical panel painstakingly seperates Palestinian towns/built-up areas, Palestinian refugee camps/housing, Israeli settlement areas and Israeli-controlled areas and military security zones, demarcated by the main road that cut across the zones.

On a little extra map [Fig. 16], he even zooms on the separated road system that connects the settlements but that also causes large traffic jams when the Palestinian roads are closed in order to let the Israelis use their roads. (Sacco, *Footnotes* 19). The caption in page 18 says more than a thousand photographs – "This is the Gaza Strip, 40 km long by no more than 12 km wide, one of the most densely populated places on the planet. In 2002-3, when I visited, 1.3 million Palestinians lived on about 70 percent of the land. The rest was the domain of the 7,500 Jewish settlers, who set up their enclaves after Israel seized Gaza in 1967" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 18).

Sacco also focusses on figures of unemployment and poverty, as well as the fact that about two-thirds of Palestinians are officially registered as refugees who live in 8 camps administered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency popularly called UNRWA. However, the most important fact stressed here is the issue of control and restricted movement that the Palestinians are subjected to by the

Israeli soldiers, effectively curbing their physical freedom. The IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) checkpoint at Abu Houli which cuts off South Gaza from the rest of the strip is cursorily mentioned here but its implications will be given in details later in the interlude section, “The Feast”. Another recurring theme to be noted in these drawings is the formal density of the panels, filled up with people, cars, large badly maintained apartment buildings and traffic jams, all contributing to the overall feeling of claustrophobia.

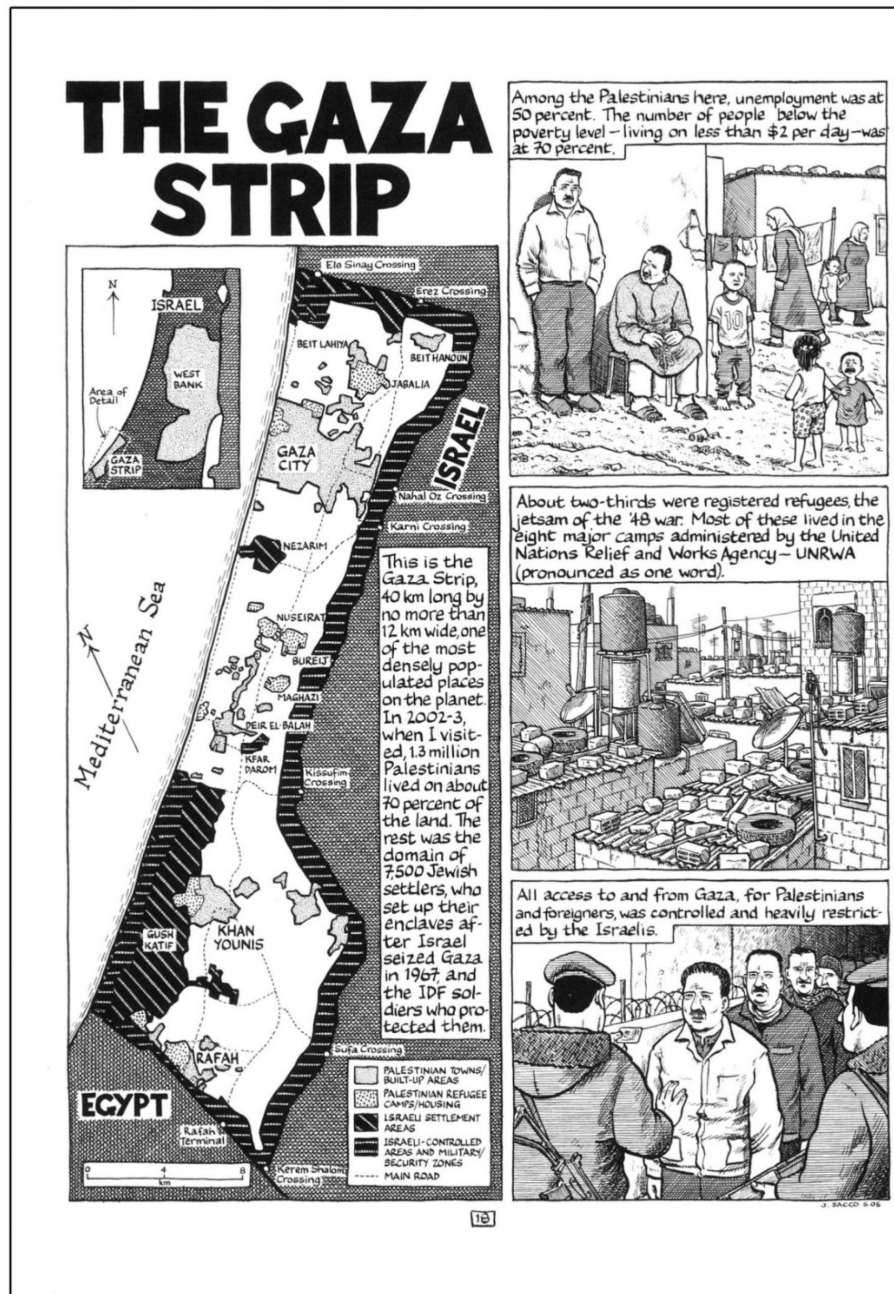

Fig. 15: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 18

Fig. 16: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 19

The chapter "Mud, Tents, Bricks" looks at the origin of the Palestinian refugee crisis as history books mention it and as Sacco reconstructs it through the prism of collective memory of the survivors. Through the conflicting interjections of Ossam, Abed's brother, Sacco retraces back to the year which can be seen as a starting point of the Palestinian crisis. In 1948 Israel declared independence and the nascent state was attacked by armies of Arab states spearhearded by Egypt. The bruished Egyptian army could only latch on to the Gaza strip which was soon swamped by hundreds of thousands of Palestininian refugees displaced by the Israeli forces. In page 21, Sacco assumes the voice of a historical narrator who talks about the tumultous times. The accompanying drawings are mostly generic, variously depicting soldiers attacking, getting defeated while the stream of refugees pour into Gaza. The lowermost panel [Fig. 17] is interesting as it specifies a group of dispossessed common people, all looking (except for one man whose head is turned backwards) towards an arid desert of nothingness. Here Sacco, the artist is subtle and suggestive. The narrow arc of perspective opens out towards a bare desert but the readers cannot make out the expressions of the people looking at it as they are drawn from behind. However, Sacco sums up the mood of utter despair through the distraught face of one man looking diagonally backwards towards the readers. In a floating caption placed strategically in the left side of the man's face, the narrator suddenly shifts from generalized historical narration to a new mode of representation while capturing the reality of the crisis – "Abed and I collect some stories about the time when the dispossessed came here with

nothing and found – what?" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 21). The stories that follow talk about the human tragedy of displacement which is sadly mere footnotes in history.

Fig. 17: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 21

Sacco uses inset panels in regular intervals from page 21 to 26 until the full page panel of page 27 opens dramatically into a centrefold spread of page 28-29. It is important to understand the spatial arrangement of these pages to fully gauge the narrative-visual technique used by the author to draw out the memories from various set of people, each unique yet so repetitive in suffering collectively. The narrator is almost like a voyeur here. In these pages his ubiquitous presence is not seen, but implied, listening to the harrowing experiences of the survivors. The seven persons being interviewed are all identified by their full names – Mohammed Yousef Shaker Mousa, Mahmoud Mohammed, Ra'esa salim Hassan Kaloob, Omm Awad El-Najeeli, Mariam El-Najeeli, Mohammed Atwa El-Najeeli, Fuad Faqawi. They appear in small inset text boxes with the person's face [Fig. 18]. A recurring characteristic in the entire *Footnotes in Gaza* is the meticulous detailing that Sacco does while drawing the faces of all those he interviews during various phases of his stay at Gaza. For the common readers, they seem all the same yet Sacco's insistence on their specificity shows a hard-working, conscientious journalist at work.

Fig. 18: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Pages 22 and 23. Use of inset panels in the page layout.

The assiduous identification of the refugees/witnesses by full name also recalls Sacco's own proclamation – "Faces are what it's all about" (Sacco, *Palestine* 71). The narrative here runs counter to the western media's steadfast refusal to give faces to the victims of the Middle East crisis. It also bears testament to Sacco's approach in visually rendering the trauma of the people. Citing Judith Butler's "frames that foreclose responsiveness"[11], Hillary L. Chute suggests that Sacco's work foregrounds "an alternative practice of framing here, explicitly aimed at acknowledging the particularity of the other, at giving face through drawing – making a picture as oppose to 'taking' it." She adds that,

> "Sacco, as with Siegelman, often uses the verb *inhabit* to describe his experience of drawing. Drawing someone carefully is a form of *dwelling* (to invoke inhabit's Latin root) in the space of that person's body, taking on their range of postures that themselves reflect experience…the bodily inhabitation of social forms – features that can be expressed in posture, gait, the animation of limbs: the aspects of a person a cartoonist needs to study to express visual essence….Cartoonists who distill essence with their drawn lines…inhabit these bodily attitudes in order to materialize specifics persons" (Chute 249).

[11] Butler, Judith. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* Verso, 2010.

Chute is essentially reflecting on what Sacco himself confessed in a recent interview where he says that while drawing: "You have to inhabit other peoples' pain or other peoples' aggression."[12] Sacco, while depicting the memory of these grown-up persons, let them slip into their childhood and then imaginatively 'recreates' the scenario as they describe them in detail. Sacco himself cannot be privy to these mental images. These are the images that float in the consciousness of the survivors. Moreover, there is almost zero photographic depiction of life in a Palestinian refugee camp back in 1948. So Sacco creatively conjures up these images of life in refugee camp, positing the survivors as children, referring to their real self during that time of past. In every panel they are part of the scene, sometimes featuring prominently in the foreground, sometimes tucked away in the background, but nonetheless there. In one interesting panel in the topmost corner of page 24, Ra'esa Salim Hassan Kaloom gives a personal anecdote to the utter desperation of the situation when she says: "Once when I was a child there was a donkey walking the streets, and I jumped on the donkey. I found the donkey full of fleas. And my mother took off all my clothes and burned them. There was a shortage of water, a shortage of soap" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 24). Soon the panel melts into the narrative of another survivor, Mariam El-Najeeli whose narration continues the imagery related to shortage of water and space. Everyone's personal memory elides into that of the other, thereby helping Sacco to impart a personal touch to the sordid living condition of the camps. The personal becomes collective yet those intimate moments of mining the memory give the readers an idea of a living picture, in stark contrast to the official UN documents that are mostly statistical accounts. In one such incursion to an intimate moment, Ra'esa Salim Hassan Kaloob confesses of not attending the tent schools. Instead, she "used to wear my hair back and run like a horse. And run, run!" The accompanying picture in the panel shows a little girl drawn from a slight low angle running in the sand with merry abandon. The human element in the panel is unmissable. Despite all the sense of claustrophobia associated with the atrocious living conditions of the cramped spaces in the tents or the small brick blocks built afterwards, these children enjoyed their moments of independence. The children stuck in the

[12] Groth, Gary. "Joe Sacco on *Footnotes in Gaza*." *Comics Journal*, 301, 2011, pp. 401-402.

refugee camp are suddenly pitch-forked into a life of uncertainty but their understanding of the situation is unlike that of the adults. So micro-narratives about fleas, open toilets, hair-cutting emerge and enmesh with the larger reality of being homeless in one's own land. It gives a poignant sense of life slowly going on in the refugee camps as they evolve into their present day reality.

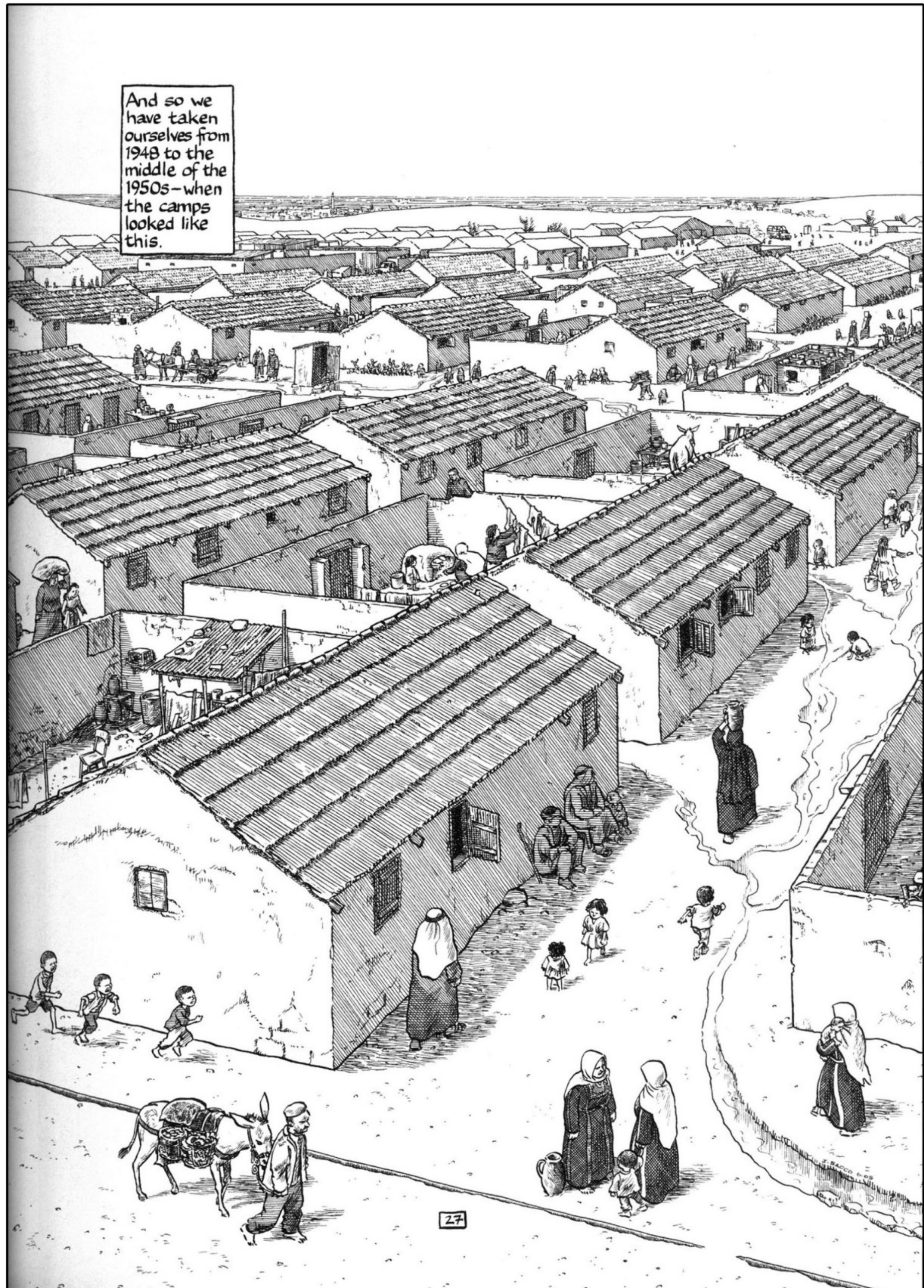

Fig. 19: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 27

In page 27, Sacco cuts off from the personal micronarratives and dedicates a whole page to the view of Khan Younis refugee camp in the fifties, suggesting a well-organised but already slightly crowded camp with no sanitation [Fig. 19]. The overview of the refugee camp built after 1948, shows rows of brick houses with walled backyards in a uniform grid formation, among which children play, women carry water and a man leading a donkey wanders past. However, we can still see the horizon in birds'-eye perspective, which suggests there are still open spaces beyond the camp. The transformation one notices in terms of visual orientation of the layout as the reader flips from page 27 to spread 28-29 is the vertical filling up of space with concrete structures, some even threatening to move out of the page bleed.

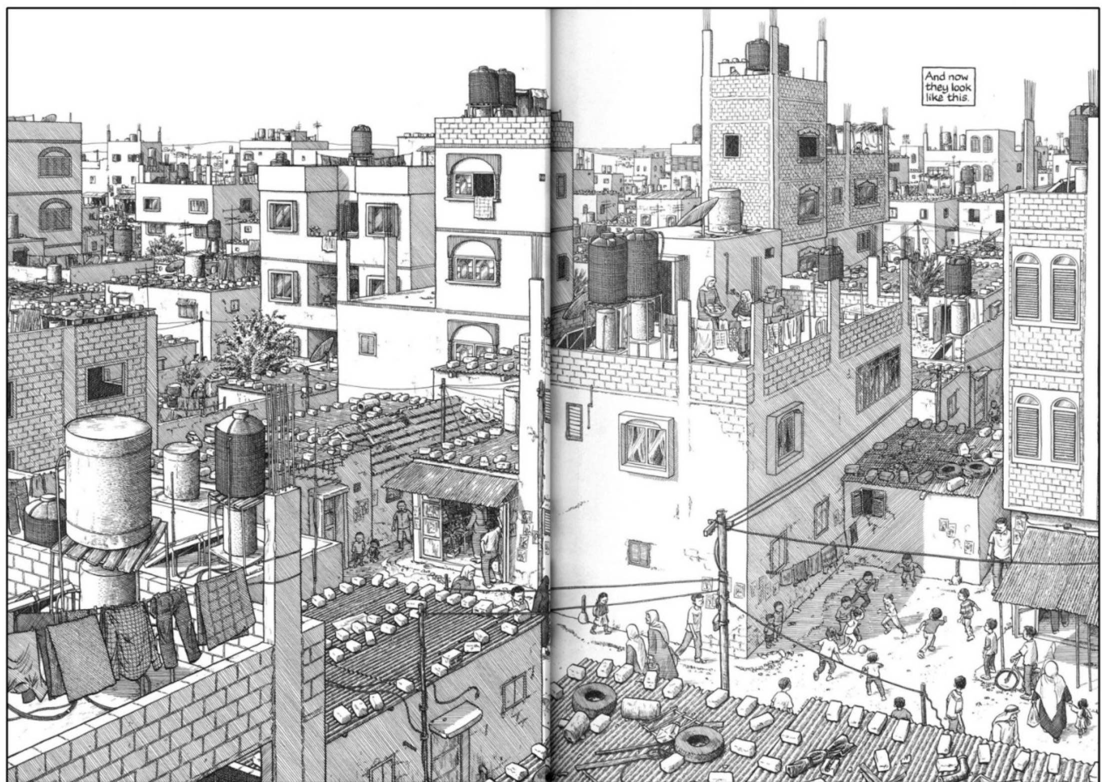

Fig. 20: *Footnotes in Gaza,* double spread, Pages 28-29

Turning the page, the view of Gaza from what appears to be the same vantage point sprawls across the entire double page spread, a densely built-up townscape of corrugated iron roofs held down by bricks, flat roofs housing water storage cylinders and washing-lines, and narrow alleyways bustling with people between the houses. The transformation is amplified both by the contrast generated in the shift from a one page panel size to a double spread and the move

between them constituted by the actual act of turning a (material) page. Sacco ostensively maps the same area, but in a different time which conflates the past and the present into a triptych of sequentiality. He also suggests that the literal space of a single page that the drawing of the camp in its early days occupies is simply not enough to fit in.

There is a sense of horizontal expansion which cannot be accommodated within a single page and thus requires two pages, forming a spread. The single image in the spread represents the camp as it looks like in the present. There is 'development' with rudimentary sanitation and electricity but the space is over-crowded to the extent that the only feasible way to expand is upwards. The badly maintained roofs are drawn with a lot of detail giving a sense of makeshift and transient nature of the settlements despite their concrete structures. As shadows of these overarching buildings loom over children playing and people jostling their way through labyrinthine lanes within the camp area, the lack of a proper drainage system for rain water is almost palpable, although it is not mentioned in any caption.

The title of the following page immediately wipes out all objections – "The Only Option". Sacco climbs down from his vantage birds' eye point of view to zoom into the camps at Khan Younis. Again we get a dim picture of everyday life in the camps, even the children seem tired and walk with heads bowed. The caption of the third panel captures the reality of the camps – "Palestinian camps all over the Gaza strip have taken on a look of densely packed permanence, at some places indistinguishable from the towns they abut, with schools, workshops, mosques and marketplaces" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 24). Even within the camp, there is great economic disparity with the poorest of the poor designated as "hardship cases" by UNRWA. Sacco takes the closer peek at one of poorest homes within the camp guided by a local UNRWA official – "a sample tour of these unfortunates" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 31). Thus from page 27 to 31, Sacco draws a series of panels that follows the trajectory of the observer from sweeping birds' eye view to the narrator clicking the objects inside the camp homes from close quarters. It is akin to the shift in narrative mode from the omniscient to a subjective plane. The little house that Sacco visits with the UNRWA official has only two rooms and one bed, where

a family of eleven jostle to reside. The second panel in the far left corner of page 31 [Fig. 21] is without any words except for the caption that overlaps the gutter, separating it from the first panel. It shows the distressed family framed against the backdrop of lone underwear hooked in a clothesline and a clock in the middle. The mid-panel of page 31 shows a woman (the mother of the family) repeatedly and enthusiastically encouraging 'Sacco' to take pictures, an invitation he gladly accepts at first.

Fig. 21: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 31

The panels in the bottom corners show Sacco's narrative sleight. As the narrator clicks various objects within the dilapidated room, the panels are drawn slightly

rotated to give the impression of them being clicked photographs [Fig. 22]. Here Sacco is not only a photographer but also a voyeur-narrator who is intruding into the space as an outsider. The plethora of domestic objects like the blankets on the single bed, the pile of clothes hung in plastic bags, the broken appliances in the kitchen, the sink used for bathing and the curtain which ensures privacy for toilet and "most private of human functions" are all indicative of the horrible living conditions within the camp-houses. After a while, the narrator cracks under the pressure – "I had to get out of there, to swim up to the surface and gasp for air" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 32).

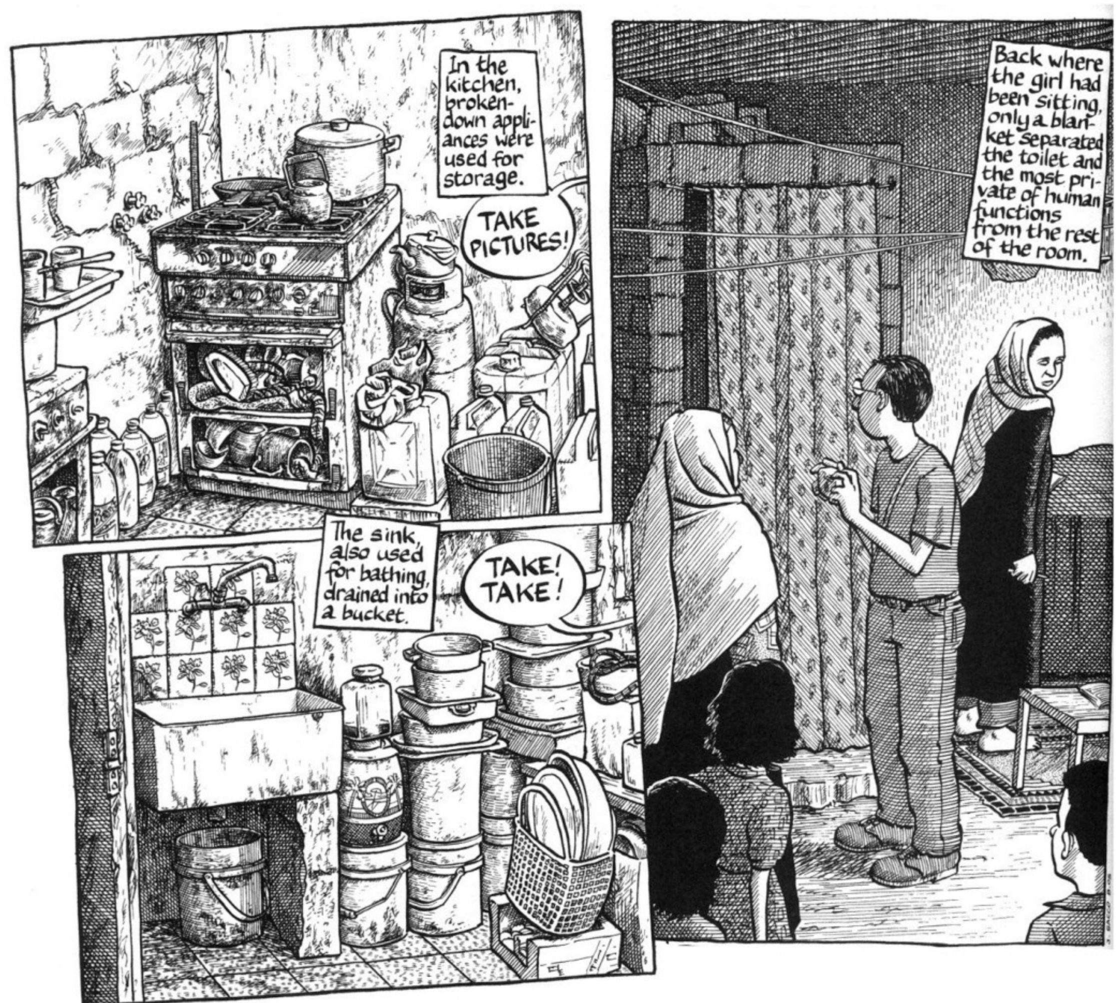

Fig. 22: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 32

One can wonder what is meant by the surface. "Is it simply outside of the house, away from the pressure and expectations of Palestinians who see a Westerner as a possibility for change? The relative comfort of Abed's house? Or maybe it is the utter desperateness of the situation and his own impotence that suddenly struck

him and suck him down."[13] The use of intense crosshatching technique in the last two panels of page 32 is haunting. It shows the mother talking about the pills taken by her husband to overcome an acute clinical depression. It also doesn't allow him to seek any work. In a way, the silent husband is symbolic of the sterile life within the camps where there is not even a glimmer of hope.

Fig. 23: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 32. Use of intense cross-hatching technique.

The mention of 'work' by the mother also allows the author to take a detour about the ground reality faced by the Palestinians in Gaza. There is very little in term of real economic subsistence except for small-time low-wage jobs as a shopkeeper, a farmer or a scrapseller. There are some specific jobs, highly valued in such circumstance, like being a teacher for UNRWA or being part of the Sulta – the policeman employed by the Palestinian authority. Otherwise the situation is grim. In this context, Abed takes the narrator to an old friend who works for an American Government Aid Agency in spite of the skepticism associated with its real motive. For Abed it is a betrayal of sorts – trading national convictions for foreign currency. An interesting point to be noted in this short episode is that the

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[13] Kerckem, Debbie Van. *Colliding Memories: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in the Graphic Novels of Joe Sacco.* Thesis, University of Gent, 2013, p.37, http://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/002/060/430/RUG01-002060430_2013_0001_AC.pdf. Accessed 16 Dec. 2015.

narrator doesn't mention the name of Abed's friend, in complete contrast to the meticulous archiving of the full names of the eyewitnesses in the previous pages. The narrator ends the chapter with the mention of Mahmoud, Abed's brother-in-law who has a permit to work in Israel. However, in the literal footnote of the chapter, Sacco adds that post 2007 Israel sealed its border with Gaza completely thereby foreclosing 'the only option' that people like Mamoud had.

The next chapter "Sideshow" continues the narrative strand of the chapter "Mud, Tents, Bricks". It begins with the caption that quotes an Israeli Foreign ministry report in 1949 but soon slips on to the mode of narration perfected by Sacco in *Footnotes in Gaza*. His depiction of the historical events is based more on imaginative recreation of the memories narrated by eyewitnesses rather than official archival records. However, in this chapter, the narrator listens to a different perspective – Mordechai Bar-On, an ex-chef de bureau to Major General Moshe Dayan, the Israeli army's chief of staff in 1950s. There is almost a sarcastic nod to Bar-On's present status as a 'historian' (mentioned in the caption of the second panel in page 38) who tries to painfully explain the rationale behind the retaliatory action taken by the Israeli forces against the Palestinian civilians. There is also a mention of the Qibya massacre carried out under the orders of the notorious Ariel Sharon. During the conversation, the name of President Jemal Adbel Nasser crops up frequently. Bar-On insists that the Egyptian President didn't really care about the Palestinians although he is revered across the Arab world for his idea of pan-Arab nationalism. For the first time in the book, Sacco also draws the close-up face of a historical political figure. The strategic placement of a diagonal caption which gives a short introduction about him splits open the middle panel into two without any visible gutter. The broad shoulders of the man looking straight at the readers also frame a popular image of him within his followers. The tight close-up of the leader without any visible facial expression and his image from a distant vantage point opens the dichotomy between the face and the façade. His self-projected image as the messiah of the Arabs is critically dismantled by both sides – Bar-On and later the old Fedayeen.

Fig. 24: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 39

Later in Page 73, the old Fedayeen guerilla accuses Nasser as a “black” man who “brightened his face” with the Arab people by strategically using the limited attacks of the Palestinian Fedayeen for his own ends. In the page (the last panel), the portrait of the Egyptian President is further microscoped in the foreground and the crosshatching is intermittently thrown into relief by deep black shadows [Fig. 25].

Fig. 25: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 73

In the background, the old Fedayeen guerilla confesses, “Jemal Abdel Nasser exploited us; He used us for his own popularity.” (Sacco, *Footnotes* 73). The entire panel is crucial in understanding the way memory and history overlap with each other. Nasser and the old Fedayeen occupy the foreground and the background of the same frame respectively. The direction of the light in the panel cast a similar pattern of shadow on the two men. The old Fedayeen whose voice is ‘lost’ in the melee of history literally casts aspersion on the popular ‘face’ of a world leader known all over for his statesmanship. Sacco’s drawing unravels a different Nasser – a petty leader who is too full of himself.

The chapter “The Fedayeen” meaning armed resistance starts with a sensational headpiece of a truck blowing apart. As the narrator locates a “the Real Thing” – an old guerilla who was with the Fedayeen – there is an initial sense of awe, aptly described in the caption. “And thus begins the aggravating mismatch pitting the hapless cartoonist against the wily ex-guerilla.” (Sacco, *Footnotes* 41) One of the abiding visual representations of the physical mismatch is in the upper panel of page 42. The guerilla and the narrator are drawn with the same posture, holding a cigarette in their respective hands. As the ex-guerilla (drawn from the narrator’s point of view) imposingly occupies the left hand side of the panel, the physically short narrator, drawn from a slight lower angle is seen sweating, trying to steer the wily man towards his own timeline of inquiry [Fig. 26].

Fig. 26: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 42

The Fedayee (not given a name as he prefers anonymity) is part of the older generation of rebels and has taken part in numerous conflicts that took place in the area: the ’48 war, Suez Crisis, ’67 war. Sacco actually dedicates two chapters to the personal experiences of this man, aptly titled “The Fedayeen” and “The Fedayeen Pt. 2”. The fedayee is also a man with a strong will, as he talks imperturbable about the most gruesome scenes. To Sacco’s frustration, it is impossible to lead the conversation in the favoured direction, so the narrator and Abed in four separate meetings get to hear stories about all the wars the man has lived through.

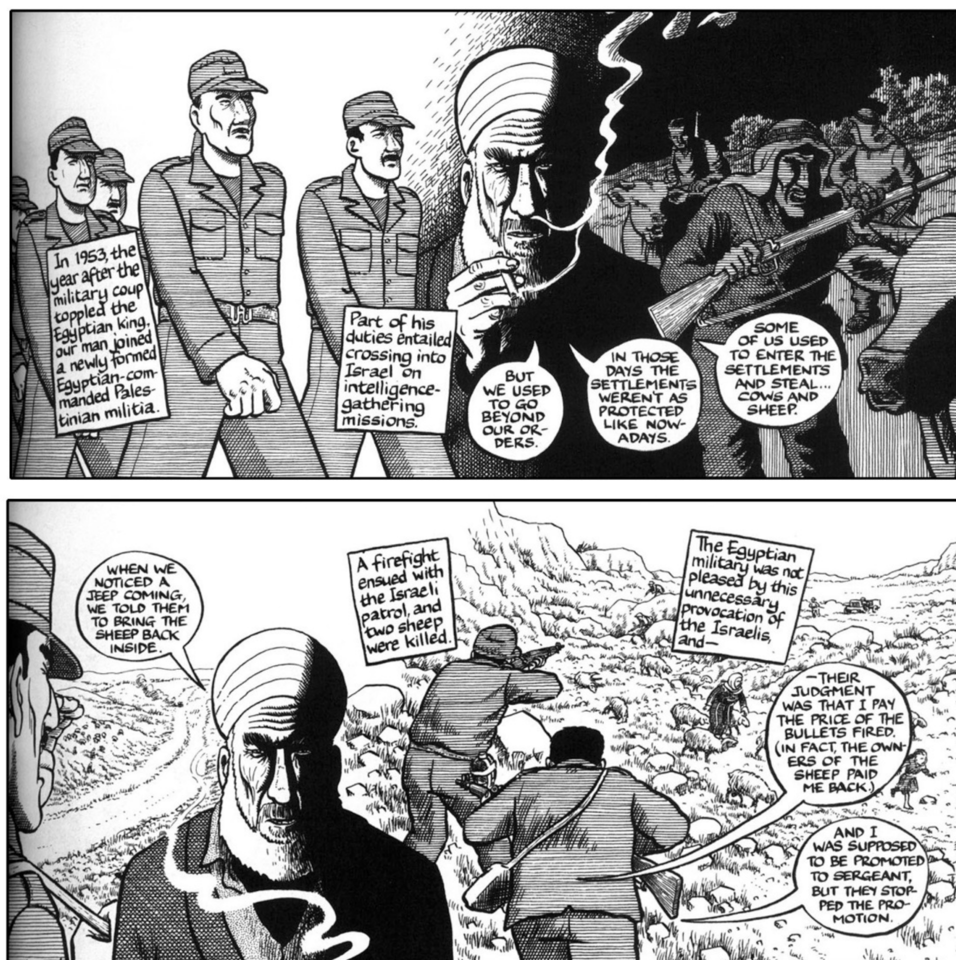

Fig. 27: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Pages 43 and 45 respectively

‘Sacco’ nonetheless manages to get some stories from the crucial period out of him. What immediately catches the eye is the omnipresence of the fedayeen’s image in several panels. Here Sacco has not chosen to adjoin a little panel at the side of panels depicting scenes from the past with the portrait of the

interviewee and the name, like he did with memories of the refugees. Instead he has drawn the fedayeen's portrait on top of these scenes in such a way as if these scenes are happening in the background at this very moment and the man is giving a live commentary. These in-scene portraits vary in size and also alternate with the scenes of the interview with Sacco and Abed, but with the old fedayee as the centre of attention [ref. Fig. 27].

These formal adaptions make it very clear Sacco sees the man as a star witness, despite the difficulties to obtain a coherent testimony on the events of 1956. What we get from him is a sequence of loosely connected scenes depicting soldiers fighting, parading, giving or taking orders, so that the scenes look more like anecdotes than a logically constructed story. It presumably follows a similar disjointed logic as Sacco's real life conversation with the fedayee. The old guerilla talks to 'Sacco' about his own involvement in various skirmishes with the Israeli army and the Egyptian forces (who are responsible in setting up the Palestinian militia in the first place). In 1950s he was entrusted with the responsibility of guarding the armistice demarcation line that separated Gaza from Israel. However, he has secrets up his sleeve and those lacunae in his narratives are countered by Sacco through other sources like photographic proof of incursion into Israeli soil by the Palestinian troops under Egyptian control provided by UNTSO (the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization) who were entrusted with the task of monitoring cease-fire violations on both sides. Sacco then introduces the real historical character portraits of David Ben-Gurion, the then Israeli Defense Minister, Moshe Dayan (the Army Chief of Staff) and the Prime Minister Moshe Sharett. Their drawn figures conform to the standard representations as seen in various archival photographs. These figures are mostly drawn without a back-story except that of Moshe Dayan whose motives are dissected in detail through the eyes of Bar-on, his close aide. The Fedayee narrates the raising of the Palestinian guerilla group (which also included hardcore criminals) by the Egyptian army. The last strip of the chapter consisting of 3 panels makes up a sequence that progressively pans and zooms in on the fedayee's eyes [Fig. 28]. It represents his reaction to other so called soldiers who were actually no more than criminals themselves. In the last panel we get a frightening look of the man who declares he

"absorbed their madness", and indeed his eyes reflect the hollow look of a man affected by a difficult past.

Fig. 28: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 49

Another aspect that underlines the importance of the Fedayeen chapters is the opposition that Sacco creates with the testimony of Bar-On, the then right-hand of Moshe Dayan, thereby giving us the two sides of the same story.

One of the most striking diptyches is present in the beginning of the chapter "The Wanted" [Fig. 29] where two panels are proportionally split into half horizontally. Inside the panels are detailed drawn bust portraits of the old Fedayee and Khaled, another wanted fedayee whom Sacco encountered during his visit to Gaza. Khaled represents the present while the old fedayee symbolizes the past of Palestinian armed resistance. The portraits are drawn against an intensely cross-hatched black background. The frontal view of the portraits looking straight into the eyes of the readers imitates the 'most wanted' posters or search warrants so frequently put out by the Israeli authoritites in the Gaza territory. The inheritance of the legacy of resistance is not only clearly visible through the similar gesture of the two persons, but also by the uncanny resemblance of various traits in their faces despite their age difference – the sharp piercing eyes, the wrinkled foreheads and high skinny cheekbones. Sacco even let the shadows fall in the same area on both the faces. There is a sense of premonition in the drawing that Khaled can end up like the old Fedayee after a few more years of struggle. In the caption of the upper panel Sacco introduces the old Fedayee in unequivocal terms: "That old fedayee, he's a piece of work. He's marinated in ruminations of political

betrayals and stewed for decades in remembrances of military ineptitudes" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 50).

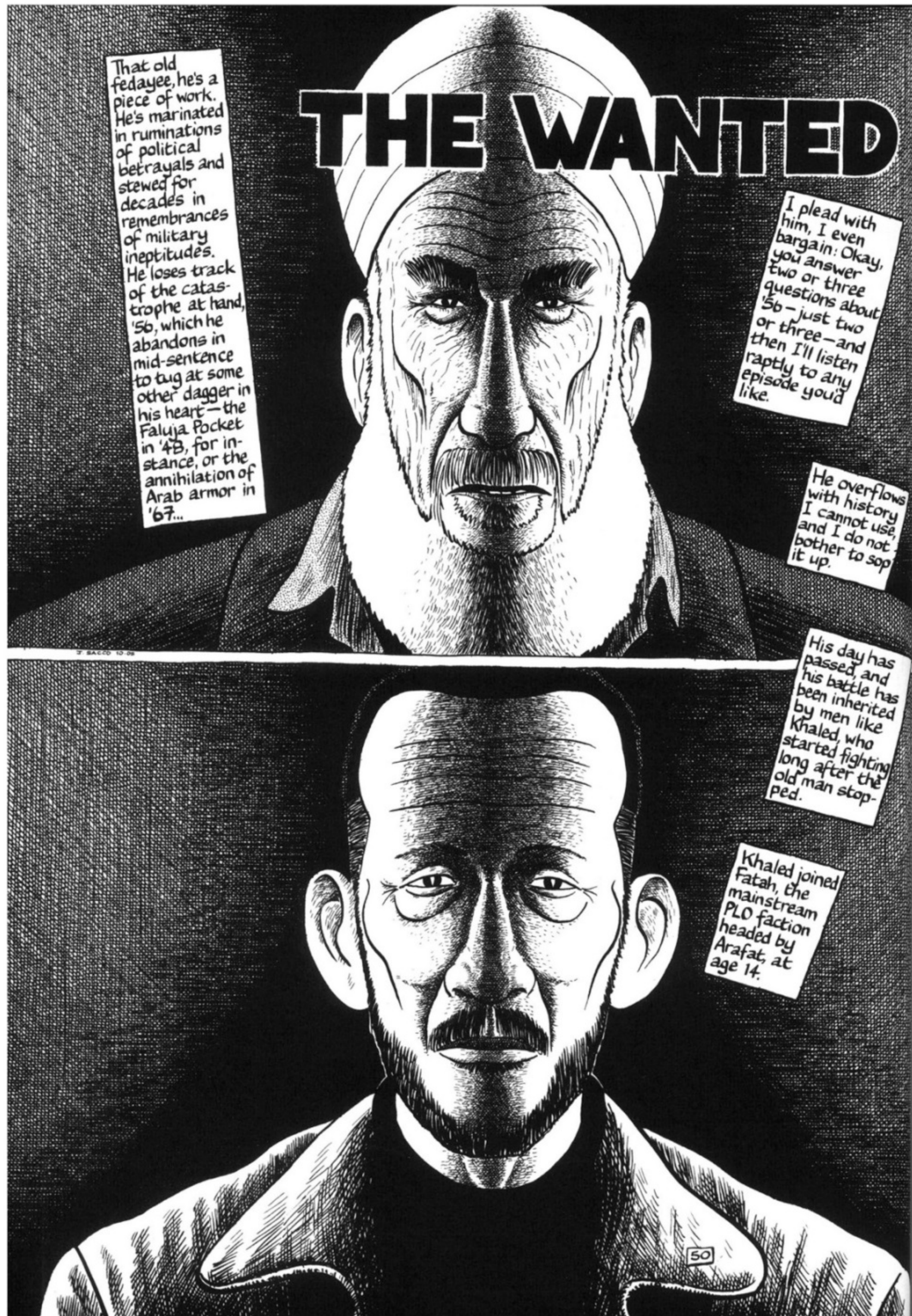

Fig. 29: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 50

The digression to Khaled's story in the chapter "The Wanted" shows Sacco's methods in a more well-defined perspective. The past of the old Fedayee's

story melts into a continuity that is carried over into the present of Khaled's reality. The methods have changed with times, so too have the weapons and the strategies but essentially nothing have changed much.

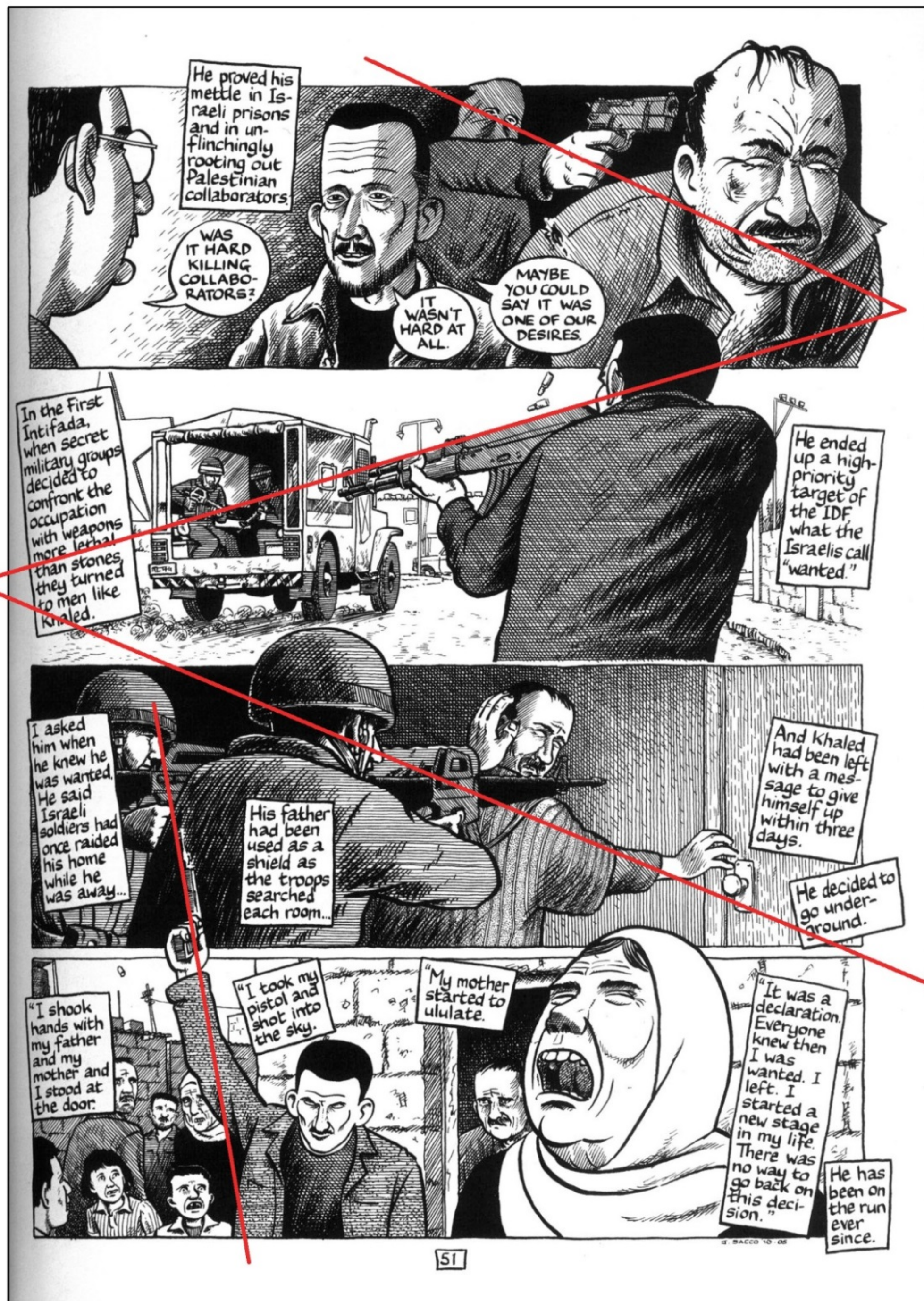

Fig. 30: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 51. Shift in point of view

In page 51, Sacco directs the readers' vision to moments of violence from both perspectives. In the upper panel, Khaled tells Sacco of being unrepentant while "rooting out the Palestinian collaborators" (Sacco, Footnotes 51). Here Khaled in mask is seen to point his gun towards a supposed collaborator waiting to

die. In the second panel, Khaled is shown to point a gun towards the Israeli army soldiers during the First Intifada. The third panel shows the Israeli soldiers pinning Khaled's father to the wall with their guns. The swift shift of the point of view from left to right – right to left and again, left to right in these three panels creates a tunnel vision among the readers [Fig. 30].[14] The targets change with each shift but the omnipotent presence of firearms foregrounds an atmosphere of terror where both sides can become victims of violence that essentially feeds on the motif of revenge. The lowermost panel shows Khaled firing his pistol in the air to emerge as a guerilla but in the layout, the arms outstretch the limits of the gutter to enter into the panel above. The streak of fire emanating from his pistol enters the body of the Israeli soldiers in the third panel. Khaled crossed over to Egypt and continues his cladestine journey through other countries like Libya, Sweden and Hungary before he returns home to a hero's welcome. Khaled is one of the characters who reappear periodically in *Footnotes in Gaza*. 'Sacco' actually meets him by chance at the start of his quest in Gaza, as he hangs around with Abed.

In the narrative, it becomes immediately clear he is a mysterious man and when compared to others, less talkative. He first appears in page 8 of the chapter "Footnotes" as a man checking his Browning pistol. In the next page he is seen cleaning a Kalashinov. Thus he is always presented as a man with a gun making him a *mutarad* (wanted) in the eyes of the Israeli authorities. However, it is also immediately clear that Sacco does not want to present the readers with an image of a conventional terrorist, but merely as a Palestinian who has taken up arms against the Israelis. Sacco invests a deep sense of humanity within the rebels who are torn apart after flinging themselves within a constant spiral of cyclical violence. Khaled's uncle, for example, is apprehensive of the violent tactics employed by the guerillas to inflict maximum damage upon the Israeli civilian population, specially women and children. In page 54, he says with a rare sense of insight and empathy: "I'm never happy when I hear that Israeli women or children are killed. Let them live" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 54). Being a *mutarad*, Khaled is always under Israeli radar, waiting to be arrested or killed. Deprived of sleep, security, his family and friends,

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[14] A more detailed formal discussion of this page can be found cf. Mickwitz, Nina. "*Footnotes in Gaza*, by Joe Sacco." *The Comics Grid*. Journal of Comics Scholarship, 2011, pp. 36-37, http://www.comicsgrid.com/. 16 June 2014.

he is almost on the verge of physical and mental breakdown. Sacco also meets his comrades in the chapter "Resistance and the Sulta" and although "they have the same red eyes as Khaled" they are not given the same importance. However, in their conversation it is apparent that all of them are fighting a losing battle against a more technologically suave opposition. There is also the enemy within to contend with. The Sulta from which they still draw salary have high-ranking officials who according to Atlee, Khaled's comrade-in-arms, "took the Coca-Cola company … have breakfast in Tel Aviv, Dinner in Haifa and…dance in Jerusalem." He, however, qualifies it by saying that "the resistance always starts with the simple, poor people" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 61).

Sacco dedicates a whole chapter to Khaled, later in the book, aptly titled "Taking Too Long" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 175-178). Khaled has got universal acceptance among the Palestinians who admire his dogged resistance. He exerts his moral authority in disputes, mainly due to his incorruptible nature. Women (specially the older women who had once hidden him from the Israelis) welcome him at every step in Gaza. He is assigned the status of a savior as explained by Susan Sontag in her book *Regarding the Pain of Others* – "those who in a given situation see no alternative to armed struggle, violence can exalt someone subjected to it into a martyr or a hero."[15] However, Khaled himself seems to enjoy his status rather passively because after all these years he wants peace more than anything. He favours a two-state solution ("I hate the Jews, but I could live with them") but sees the unwillingness in both Israelis and Palestinians to curb aggression. Chastened, he now wants to plan his future together with his family.

The last page of the chapter shows an intensely troubled Khaled, represented in nine panels of the same size[16], of which the first three show Khaled lying in bed and the next six shows close-up portraits of the man. This nine-panel layout with even gutters around them and static speech-balloons (in opposition to the slightly rotated floating captions) is a stylistic departure from the layout that we see throughout the book. Sacco masterfully brings out the pathos of his character through the flicker of sharp pen-strokes. They convey the deep wrinkles

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[15] Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003, p. 11.

[16] Frequently referred to as the "democratic" panel. Explanation of this formal technique is in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

on his forehead, skinny cheekbones and puffy eyes – all indicative of his inner turmoil. His last utterance on the page is poignant and fatalistic, at odds with the image of a seasoned warrior: “I expect to be killed, I expect to be assassinated, but now it’s taking too long” (Sacco, *Footnotes* 178). It reads like an epitaph of a tired man who is waiting for his end [Fig. 31].

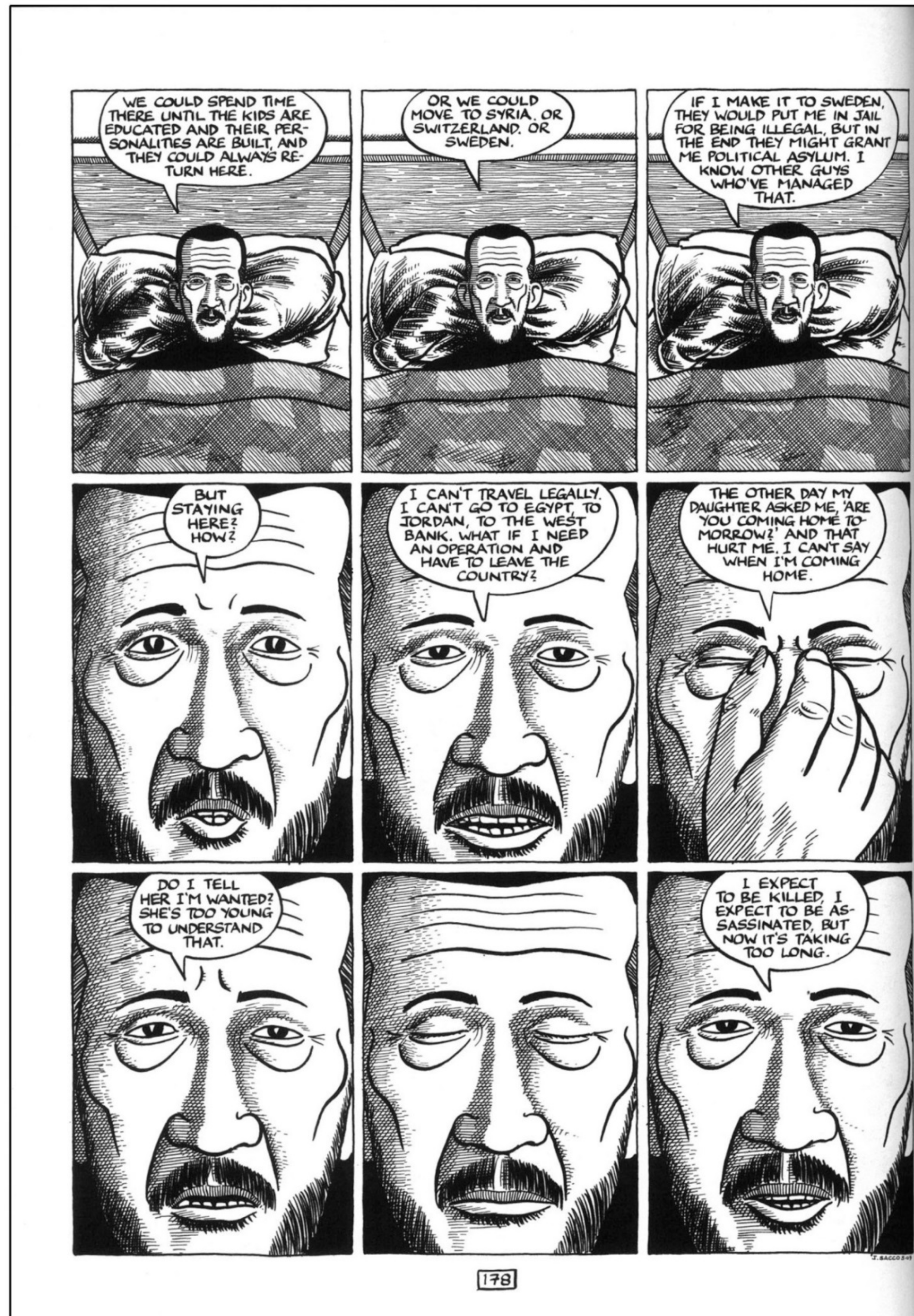

Fig. 31: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 178

There is continuity between “Fedayeen”, “The Wanted” and “Fedayeen Pt. 2” in this section of the book as Sacco builds a formal bridge through the similar arrangement of page layout. Like the previous chapter (“The Wanted”), the first panel of the chapter “Fedayeen Pt. 2” has the portrait of the ex-guerilla, only slightly enlarged, thereby cutting off the entire face to concentrate more on his eyes. Moreover, Sacco also secures another visual continuity by inserting the second strip consisting of three panels [Fig. 32]. It uncannily recalls the sequence of three panels in the lower part of page 49. Although this time, Sacco does not zoom in on a particular facial expression and the readers get to see only the man’s mouth, beard and nose. However, the similarity between the parts is quite obvious. It is as if the narrator has grown a bit more accustomed with the speaker and is looking at him with closer attention.

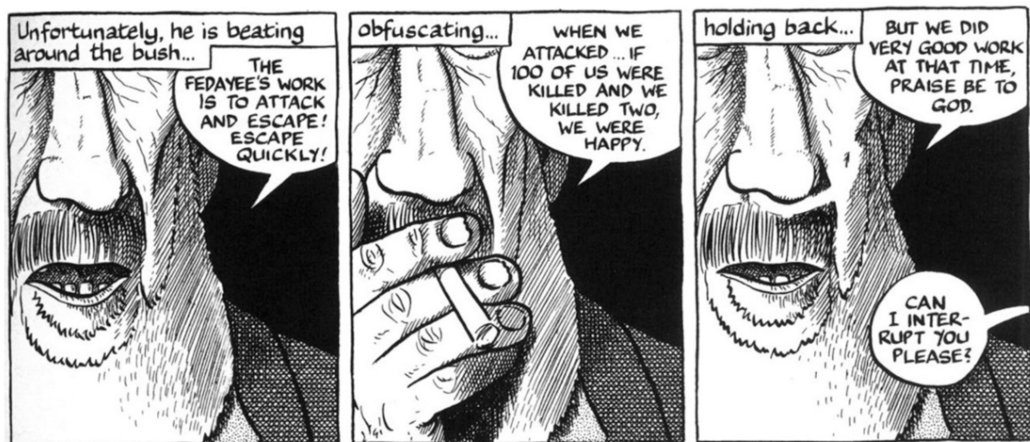

Fig. 32: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 63

In the conversation that follows, the cruelty of the stories is particularly striking as the scenes are far bloodier than in the first. One panel explicitly depicts the fedayeen cutting off the ear of Israeli workers, but we also see the litter of dead children and massive bombings by the Israelis. The second aspect that stands out is the less visible presence of the fedayeen in the panels. He occupies a place in every one of 6 panels of page 63. On page 64 this presence is already decreasing and in page 65 he only just appears once. The builtup towards the Suez Crisis is alternatively narrated through other voices like Mordechai Bar-On or Hassan Hammad Abu Sitta, who was a policeman on duty during the run-up of events. In page 66, Sitta is introduced in the lower left-hand panel, as an old man with visible wrinkles on his face. His eyes show a state of horror in the next panel as he rejogs

his memory about a particular date (31st August) in 1955 when Israeli retaliation reached unprecedented escalation with heavy shelling of the Khan Younis Police Station. Abu Sitta is drawn as a young man in the episode, as it is narrated by his present-day older self. The old man wears a cape now and counts his beads, while the younger self can be seen escaping from the building under siege. However, both the avataars (his younger and older selves) are similar in the drawn representation of the eyes full of horror. 'They' are separated by time but umbilically united in present and remembered experience of horror. Time has passed but somehow Abu Sitta can still relive his agony in a death-like situation. His eyes tell the story more than anything else. This kind of visual continuity in the past and the present is a frequent motif in Sacco's drawings as it also reaffirms how traumatic memory can be easily inscribed in our consciousness. As Chute writes:

> "*Footnotes* often merges – within the panelized space traditionally meant to chart one's temporal moment – a younger self with an older self who is testifying in the present tense of the book: it graphically places the witnessing self in the past with his or her younger body … *Footnotes* makes legible the continuosness of past and present, however, not only in overlaying temporalities, but also by directly juxtaposing them on the page" (Chute 236).

In Pages 68 and 69, Sacco uses swirling dots as a drawing technique to depict explosions. In his later book *The Great War*[17], Sacco re-usues this technique in a more elaborate way. Words almost fail Sitta when he describes the obliteration of the building. In the second and fourth panel of page 68, Sacco does a reverse zoom. Abu Sitta sits out the building with his hands covering his ear, a natural reaction to the deafening explosions all around. In the fourth panel, he is seen in the same posture but Sacco has made him miniscule among the swirls of dust and smoke. The intensity of the explosion has almost consumed the man [Fig. 33]. In page 69, Sacco uses a full-page bleed to show the massacre, interjected by floating captions and two inset pictures of a horrified Abu Sitta and a scheming Nasser.

[17] Sacco, Joe. *The Great War: July 1, 1916: the First Day of the Battle of the Somme: An Illustrated Panorama*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2013.

Fig. 33: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 68

The captions on the upper part of the page, placed just below Abu Sitta's traumatized face are within inverted commas. Thus these are part of his remisniscence while the caption below gives a different point of view with contradictory facts gleaned from Egyptian authorities and UN observers. This alterity of fact and memory increases as the readers move towards the mass massacres at Khan Younis town centre and later at Rafah. Pages 70 to 72 turn its

focus to military tactics and movements as ‘decided’ from top by people like Ben Gurion and Moshe El Dayan. The ‘return’ to the old Fedayee’s narrative establishes the link between the individual militant and the bigger picture as controlled from above by politicians and generals.

Fig. 34: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 72

Page 72 [Fig. 34] is a tour de force – in the way Sacco arranges the images with the floating captions. The bleed image is that of suffering Palestinians, lost in the eddies of dust and smoke of an explosion. It is a collage of suffering men and women – the human 'cost' of war.

On the same page but with alternating inset panels, Sacco draws the two leaders, Moshe Dayan and Nasser aggressively addressing a crowd or giving orders. He also adds a remarkable detail – standing behind each of them is a military officer (the one behind Moshe Dayan is Bar-on) who is visibly surprised and even scared by what their leaders are supposedly saying. Sacco inscribes his own thoughts on the crisis by shaping the caption in the middle and lower part of the page (marked in yellow in the adjoining figure) like a slightly twisted exclamation mark disintegrated by a violent explosion. The whole page is a like of floatsam of images and words within captions that are moving in different directions lacking the fixed layout of the other pages. It mimics the real disintegration experienced due to the impact of an explosion.

As the old Fedayee narrates the events that lead to the weakening of the Fedayeen unit, one sequence of two panels in the middle of page 74 catches special attention. It concerns the Egyptian handler, Mustafa Hafez who is seen instructing the younger self of the old fedayee in the left side. On the right side of the panel, he is reduced to a spectre, being assassinated by the Israeli forces. The effacement of the physical body of Mustafa, disintegrating due to an explosion is a rare occurrence in *Footnotes*. Indeed, the physicality of numerous dead bodies fills up the frames, as the narrative climaxes towards the mass massacres at Khan Younis and Rafah. It is as if Sacco intentionally wants to exert burden on the readers with the dead weight of the bodies piling over one another.

Starting from page 76, Sacco dedicates a chapter titled "Collusion" which narrates the real start of the famous Suez Crisis at the international level. Here the old Fedayee is the narrator no more. Sacco shifts his attention to the workings of international politics and the domino effect it has on the common people. The first panel of the chapter is a highly detailed front view portrait of Moshe Dayan, mirroring the portrait of the Fedayee at the start of the previous chapter, and the

portraits of the Fedayee and Khaled at the start of the chapter "The Wanted". Mordechai Bar-On plays an important role again when he testifies about an Israeli family and how their death fuelled Dayan's infamous speech of hatred directed towards the Arab world.

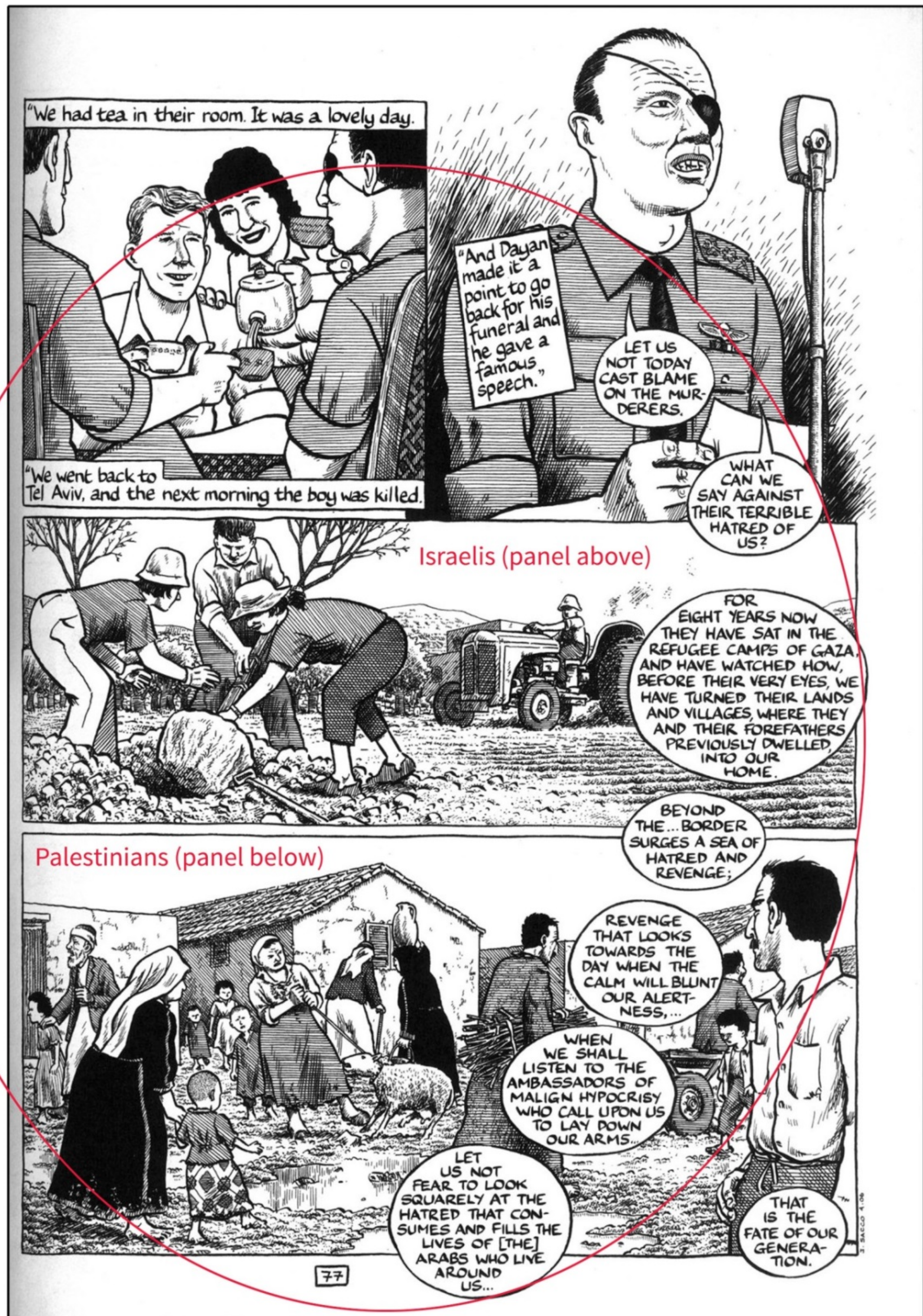

Fig. 35: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 77

Page 77 [Fig. 35] has an interesting layout, as Dayan's speech is overlaid with alternating images of life at a Kibbutz near Gaza border and a Palestinian camp at Gaza. Dayan is seen towering over the entire page (at the top-hand hand corner) as he delivers the speech. There is no formal frame there and the drawing of Dayan's figure extends towards the white space near the bleed. The speech is initially represented by two formal speech balloons but gradually arranges itself in oval-shaped captions forming a trajectory of semi-circular arc [marked in red in Fig. 36] as it winds down to the bottom of the page. The captions overlap two continuous rectangular panels – the happy fulfilling agricultural life of the Israeli settlers near Gaza border contrasting with abject poverty of the Palestinian refugees at Gaza. The two panels are not indicative of Dayan's speech and thus it can be safely assumed that they are Sacco's own imaginative insertions. The speech captions (of Dayan) sound ironical when read visually with respect to the two panels. They also act as reminders to the real reasons of the conflict – the Israelis, *placed in the panel above*, have usurped the Palestinian lands *(placed below)* and appropriated them as their own [Fig. 35]. Effectively Sacco delivers his own commentary and critique through spatial manipulation of visual images and captions, something he can do with relative ease, unlike the reporters who practice conventional journalism.

From page 78 to 80, the author foregrounds a very general and swift summary of the events leading to the Suez Crisis. The pace of the narrative suddenly quickens as various world leaders like Ben Gurion, Golda Meir, Anthony Eden, Guy Mollet and Dwight Eisenhower all appear in *Footnotes in Gaza* as having a part in the way the historic events gradually unfolded. Despite their undeniable influence, they are seldom given a literal voice. Sacco's real interest lies with the footnotes, the insignificant people who suffer in silence in the margins of history. In his own words: "We've got our 'human debris and social outcasts' to attend to" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 80).

Fig. 36: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 80

The page itself [Fig. 36] consists of 7 rectangular and square panels along with the captions and a footnote in form of one bleed panel in its right lower end. The visible tilt [marked in red in Fig. 36] in the framing of seven panels and their accompanying captions signifies the breakneck pace at which the events collide over one another. It also denotes a visual paradigm shift for the author who takes

the detour towards the chronology of seminal historical events. The big events and their images are a necessary cog to make the narrative move forward. However, they pass on, leaving behind a sordid tale of human misery. As the author drags back the readers to his human story, it is noticeable that the lowermost bleed panel of refugee men, women and children and its accompanying caption is *not* tilted (also similarly marked in red). All of them are curiously carrying a burden of dead weight – sacks, jugs. The author seems to imply that their material burden is less imposing than the burden that the great political leaders force on them.

Sacco reconstructs the infamous Khan Younis massacre through testimonies of various eyewitnesses in two chapters, ominously titled "Nov. 3. 1956, Pt. I: Khan Younis Town Centre" and "Nov. 3. 1956 Pt. II: Khan Younis Refugee Camp" respectively. The titles are conspicuous by the specific mention of date and place. The narrator presents the events chronologically through the eyes of various eyewitnesses, many of whom were not there simultaneously at every moment of time during the day. Their testimonies are collated to create a tapestry of moments that not only recreate the events but also foegrounds the trauma and pain associated with the dastardly act. More often than not, individual memory is subsumed by collective memory of experienced pain yet those individual forays into the unconscious unravel the scars that each individual will carry with them till their death. These words from *Palestine* sum it up: "... we want faces, we want pain, we want to rub up against people who've had the shit kicked out of them" (Sacco, *Palestine* 59).

Sacco begins the first part of the chapter (page 84) with the testimony of Saleh Shiblaq who appeared briefly in page 82, visualized as sitting before the narrator telling his story. He was a Palestinian in the Egyptian army who got rid of his battle fatigues and came back home at Khan Younis after being instructed to do so. Soon, the Israeli armed forces began to barge into individual houses and separate the men from other members of the family. Sacco divides page 86 into four-tiers – the first two at the top are singular reactangular panels with no background. Sacco has always painstakingly drawn every minutae of details. So the effacement of background is notable here, as elsewhere in the book. The image in the uppermost panel seems to spill out and embrace the bleed of the page while

the one below has a distinct frame line. The black background, with white halo behind the four persons standing with raised hands, lets the reader travel to the fear laden mindscape of the victims. The artist in Sacco has not only depicted the external signs of fear in the four figures but has also somehow unravelled the blank void of a foreboding signalling closure or death.

Fig. 37: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 85

The sharp reversal of the point of view from the lower panel of page 85 [Fig. 37] to the uppermost panel of page 86 [Fig. 38] also points out the plurality of perspectives that Sacco wants to convey, even though the testimonies are given by the victims only.

The uppermost panel in page 86 cannot be the perspective of Saleh. It is simply the point of view of the gun-totting perpetrators. Sacco's drawing shows only the barrels of the guns in the foreground of the image. It will be a recurrent motif in the entire chapter where the direction towards which the gun-barrels point will alter the perspective of the pages. The short intervening panel of Saleh is cropped to focus on his eyes. The mouth cannot be seen, although the speech balloon within the panel demonstrates that he is talking. The bare white background is a complete inversion of the black background in the panel above. It helps the readers to concentrate on the eyes of the survivor only. This formal

device of cropped rectangular panels containing only eyes of the narrators against a blank background run like a motif in this chapter and the next. Sacco seems to imply that what the survivors tell can be truly gauged only through the pain reflected in their eyes.

Fig. 38: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 86

The next tier of panel shows the men to be dead except for Saleh who survives miraculously. In between the second and the third tier, the gutter compresses the passage of time and the sound of gunfire. The actual act of people being hit by bullets is not drawn at all. The lowermost tier of the page has three panels, beginning with a macro of Saleh's static hand and ending with the drawing of four dead persons shot against a wall. Sacco, in a narrative sleight, will later reveal the entire picture in page 98 where Saleh's cousin will be one of the numerous Palestinians slaughtered before the walls of Mamluk Castle. The pyramid-like arrangement of the number of panels also shows a progression in each tier: one-one-two and three. It formally signals the gradual unfolding of the narrative as the survivors relive their memories of the day. As dead bodies crowd the pages of the chapters, the readers are sucked into the agony of the narrators.

In the same chapter, the testimony of Misbah Ashour Abu Sadoni, a married handyman who lived in the centre of the town, is represented in a series of multivalent pages where "Sacco visualizes both the substance of oral testimony, materializing the past, and visualizing the situation of testimonial exchange in the present" (Chute 237). One reason comics can address itself powerfully to historical narrative is because of its ability to use the space of the page to interlace or overlay different temporalities, to place pressure on linearity and conventional notions of sequence, causality and progression. "Every day here is '56!" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 253), a disgruntled son of a survivor of Rafah massacre chides 'Sacco'. Sacco begins Misbah's testimony by picking up a strand of their conversation while talking at his home. The positioning of Misbah's speech balloon shows how Sacco blends the present with the past formally in a page. As Misbah begins his narrative, the initial speech balloon is placed in the domestic space of the present (i.e. 2003, when Sacco was interviewing him). However, the second speech balloon sits in the gutter between the two panels. Within the balloon, the sentence is marked by an ellipsis which not only carries over the flow of the narrative to the next panel but it also pitchforks the readers to the past of 1956 where the drawing captures Misbah's story, as imagined by the author. Misbah is visualized being led away by the Israeli soldiers in a group to 'the bank'. He corrects himself immediately by saying that there was no bank at that place in 1956. Instead there

was a dentist. Misbah's confusion regarding the landmark of the place shows how the man cannot simply separate the present from the past.

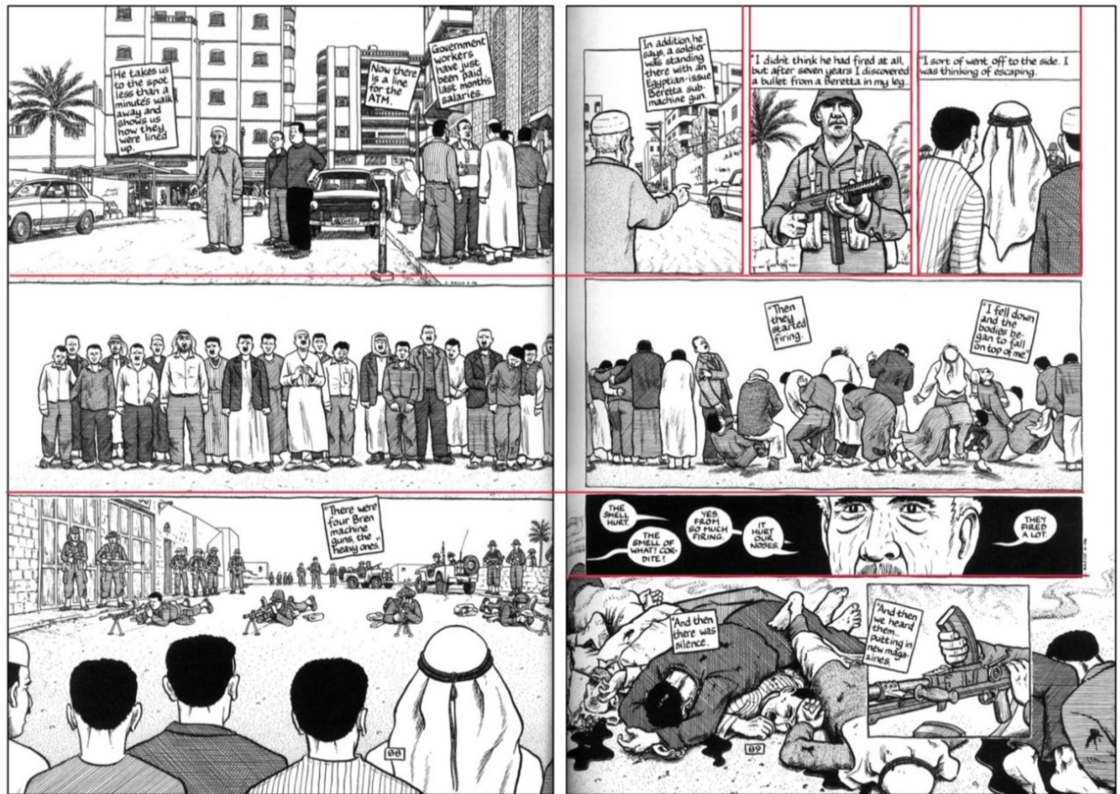

Fig. 39: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Pages 88-89. Red lines to show the balance of grid in the facing pages

Formally, page 88 consists of three single rectangular panels without gutters. The grid layout imitates the wide-screen effect of cinema. When viewed in conjunction with page 89 [Fig. 39], the readers can discern the balance in terms of the layout. In page 89, the four-tier panel division corresponds to two horizontal grids across page 88. The parallel balance in the facing pages is crucial to the crux of the narrative as Sacco can juxtapose the living and the dead in the same space of two facing pages. For example, the second panel of page 88 shows the group of Palestinians being lined up before the firing squad while its parallel counterpart in page 89 shows tumbling bodies. The background of both the panels is bereft of any detail. Both the pages start in the present of 2003 before it relapses with Misbah's testimony into the horror of 3rd November 1956. In page 88, Misbah along with the narrator and Abed are seen standing in the very place where the firing took place. Sacco's caption talks about a queue before an ATM of the bank for withdrawal of monthly salaries. However, the very next panel we can see

another kind of queue – a queue of people waiting for death. The irony cannot be greater. In page 89, Misbah in 2003 points to a car before the wall, precisely the spot where he remembers an Israeli soldier standing with an Egyptian-issue Beretta sub-machine gun during the massacre of 1956.

Fig. 40: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 90

Hillary Chute analyses page 90 [Fig. 40] extensively in her book, *Disaster Drawn*. According to her, the initial panel image of multiple guns firing towards the

left, occupying the entire horizontal space, is evocative of Goya's famous history painting of execution, *The Third of May 1808*, which in turn is inspired by Manet's similar *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian* paintings (Chute 240). The upper panel is without any frame as it intercuts the bleed of the page. Directly below, Sacco draws Misbah as he is testifying. The cropped face of Misbah against black background echoes the use of similar technique already done during the testimony of Saleh Shiblaq. Chute argues "Misbah is looking out not at the readers but presumably at Sacco, calling attention to the context of transmission of testimony; on either side of his face his testimony continues in speech balloons. (From a visual perspective, in which one looks directly at the speaking witness, Sacco, absenting his own body from the frame, suggests the reader as the testimonial interlocutor)" (Chute 240). In the lower half of the page, the artist imagines Misbah's narration from a very different angle. The layout suddenly changes from the horizontal plane to the vertical and the perpective shifts from eye-level view to birds' eye view. The four panels, immediately below the second panel, take us back to the past. The eye movement from the third to the fourth panel zooms out from above to show a row of crumpled dying men. In the fifth panel, we are again brought back to ground through a tight close of young Misbah lying in a pool of blood. The sixth panel is a mid-shot of the dying men while in the background the Israeli soldiers can be seen turning their back and going away from the scene. It is important to notice that Misbah's narration in the third and the fourth panel is here mixed with authorial caption, placed strategically between fifth and sixth panel. Misbah says "I was reciting the Koran…" within a floating caption in the left side of the page. His next utterance ("and my spirit went all the way up to the sky") is within another floating caption placed over the gutter between the third and the fourth panel. After another caption quoting Misbah, Sacco reverts back to indirect authorial narration describing the effects of the bullets on Misbah. He places it unboxed, in-between the fifth and the sixth panel. This seamless switching between different modes of narration is crucial in understanding the artistry of Sacco.

According to Chute,

> "In this page, as in others, one recognizes how comics, a form for which there is always the legibility of double narration, pictures the scene of address of

testimony, and also captures the layered view of the witness, who sees his own body ('my spirit went all the way up') as well seeing *from* his body. It expresses the synchronic temporality of witnessing. The page moves from Sacco's perspective to the witness' perspective, switching in and out from citation to dialogue to authorial narration; one sees the dexterity with which comics documents the always-frame-breaking modality of testimony" (Chute 242).

The page also foregrounds the problematics regarding the reception of reality through memory. The person giving testimony, the author in the avatar of the narrator, the author and the readers are on all different planes, although their paths crisscross and intersect each other. The act of telling/listening/drawing/reading builds up an axis of identification, although they never merge completely, thereby creating a complex texture of transmission of reality. In her novel *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag explores our response to images of war and suffering. In this context she refers to the objective/subjective-divide in the characterization of images and extensively uses the writings of Virginia Woolf, for she has written about the subject during and after the Spanish Civil War: "(...) the eye is connected with the brain; the brain with the nervous system. That system sends its messages in a flash through every past memory and present feeling.' This sleight of hand allows photographs to be both objective record and personal testimony, both a faithful copy and transcription of an actual moment of reality and an interpretation of that reality" (Sontag 23).

In the testimony of Faris Barbakh, Sacco creates pages of art that truly unravel the 'picturial turn' as described by the noted scholar W.J.T Mitchell in his book *Picture Theory*.[18] Faris Barbakh was only fourteen years old at the time of shooting in the town. Thirty to forty-five minutes after the Israeli soldiers burst into his home and takes away the adult men, he is sent out with a jug to fetch water. The lower tier of three panels (below the third-tier panel showing his cropped face) shows a young Faris with a jug in his hand, moving towards the scene of massacre – the Mamluk Castle in Khan Younis. He is drawn with his back to the readers. However, in the last panel of the page, as Faris looks at the right-

[18] Mitchell, W J. T. *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. University of Chicago Press, 1994.

hand corner, the background suddenly turns black. The details which can be seen in the preceding panels suddenly efface itself into a moment where they do not matter. Time stands still for Faris as he stumbles upon the scene of massacre where there are "more than 100 bodies…close to the wall, from the beginning of the wall to the end…" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 98). In the last panel of page 97 [Fig. 41], Sacco uses the caption and the line of vision of Faris as a cue to dare the readers turn the page. The caption box containing the words "I saw the bodies" is slightly diagonal and spills out of the frame of the panel into the white space, close to the page bleed. Visually it seems like an arrow which aligns with Faris' own line of vision. The arrow points to the spectacle of death that can be unravelled once the reader turns the page.

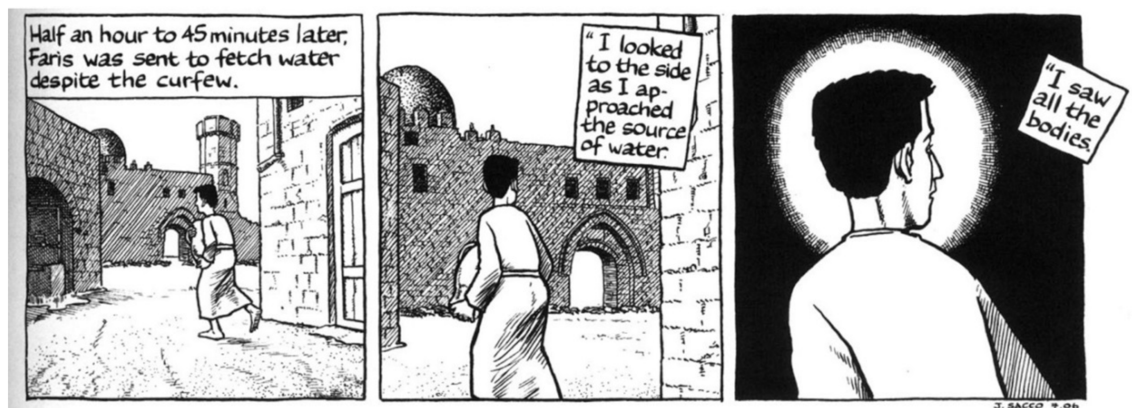

Fig. 41: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from page 97

When one turns the page, pages 98 and 99 emerge as double-spread of two images, each occupying an entire bleed page. While page 98 depicts the day of the event (3rd November 1956), the following page captures the same place in 2003. Drawn with same minute precision at the exact same angle, the before and after juxtaposition of the Mamluk castle wall seems horrifying. In page 98 [Fig. 42], the wall of the castle is lined with gunned-down bodies heaped over each other. The base of the castle cuts the page diagonally into two — the gate, the tower, the stone walls above and the white blank ground below. Four text boxes, disconnected, each a small, floating, irregular square, continue the testimony. Faris says that he puts down the jug. The inanimate object casts a shadow as Faris slowly moves towards the dead bodies. His body, numb with fear, is ironically the only one that can *move* in this scene. The angle from which the scene is visualized makes the readers witnesses to the scene as well. They are looking at Faris

looking. It is like a double scene of witness as Faris moves towards the dead bodies. In the contiguous image of 2003, separated by forty-seven years, the castle remains almost the same except for some crucial changes.

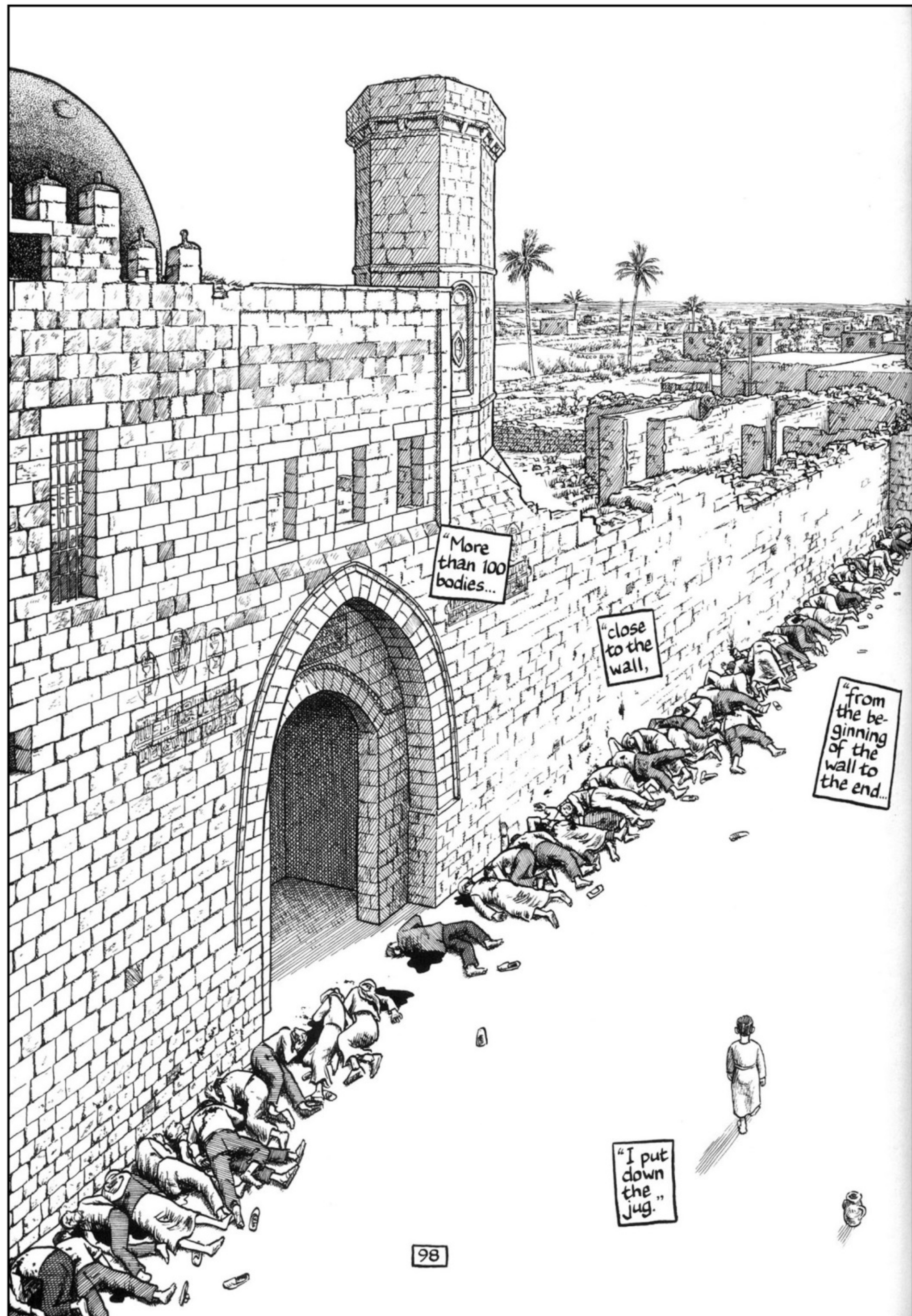

Fig. 42: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 98

A floodlight overhangs its arched gate, graffiti marks its lower expanse and new concrete structures dot the background. If one looks closely enough, one can

discern the presence of many matyr posters along the expanse of the wall. Indexing absent bodies, the posters mirror the murdered men of 1956. Where there were bodies of the murdered, now there are icons of matrydom.

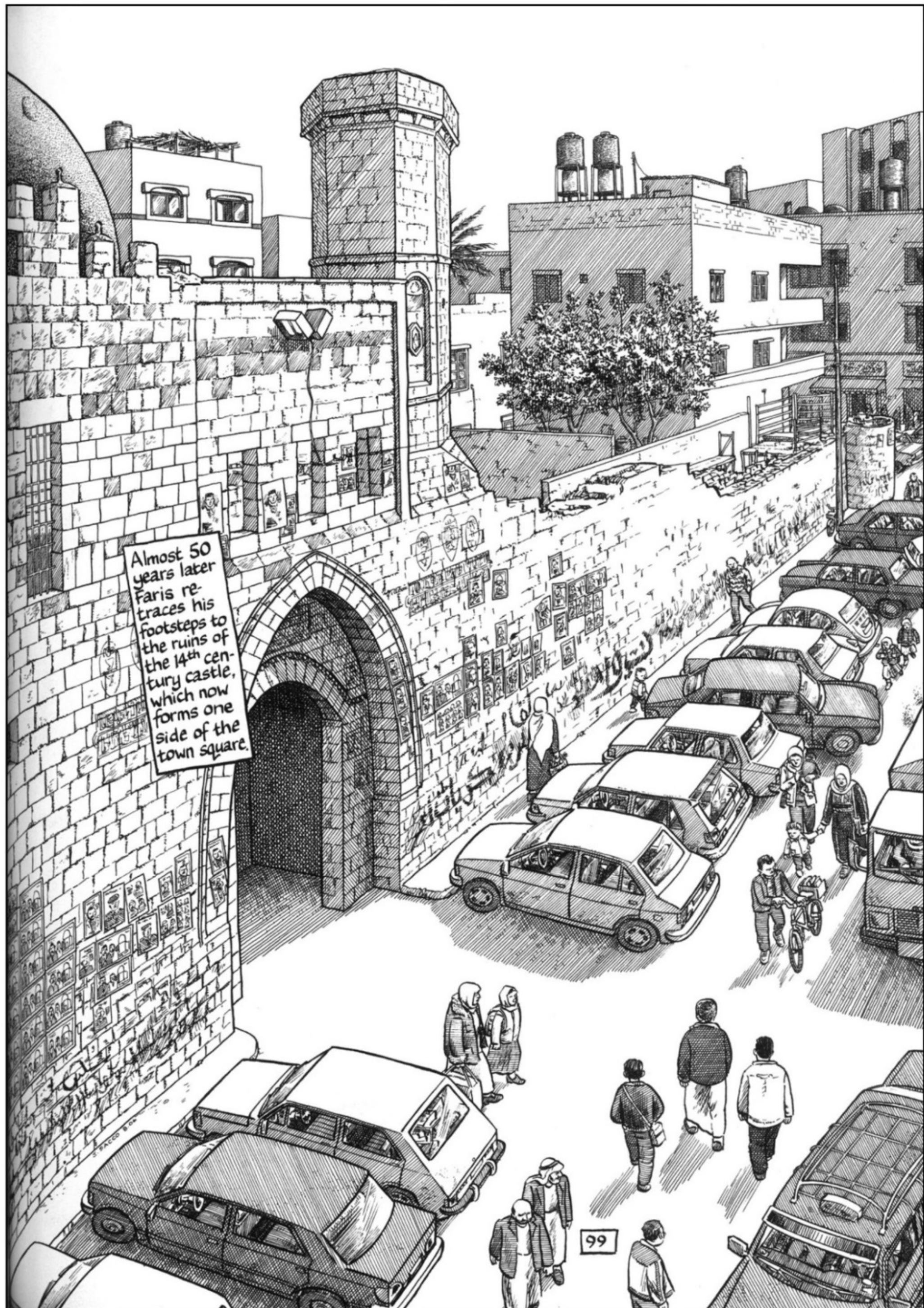

Fig. 43: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 99

Chute actually takes the metaphor of the mirror to a new dimension when in a footnote she suggests that “the location where the jug sits in the 1956 image

is where we see the jutting side mirror of a moving taxicab in the 2003 image, indicating forward motion and reflection of the past" (Chute 342). In page 99 [Fig.43], the bodies are dis(placed) by parked cars and people can be seen walking though the street. Faris occupies the same space within the image like the earlier one, walking towards the wall with his back to the readers. Now, of course, he is older and is accompanied by the narrator and Abed. When Sacco asks him two pages later, about how he feels now, he says, facing Sacco (and the readers): "I feel like I am that child again" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 101).

Sacco carries over this contiguous imposition of present and past in the upper panels of the next page [Fig. 44] as well. The only difference here is the absence of floating captions. There are only two images without any words. At the right-hand panel, Faris is seen looking at the base of the walls in the present time while the left hand panel places him in the same space, 47 years back, looking at the dead bodies. The silence of the panel testifies to the deep scars that the event and the place have over him. Sacco draws both the old and young Faris in the same pose looking down on the site of massacre. The man, carrying within him, the trauma of the massacre cannot separate the site of death from the event itself, although the entire place has physically changed. It recalls the already discussed work of French historian Pierre Nora and his notion of "sites of memory" — places where "memory crystallizes and secretes itself." (Nora 7).

Fig. 44: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 100

The posters of the matrys on the wall commemorates the 14th century Mamluk castle as a site of remembrance and resistance for future Palestinians who didn't witness the 1956 killings . The posters as an object inscribed in the site of memory act as a symbol of resilience of the Palestinian people. However, for an eyewitness like Faris, it is also part of his daily continuum of existence – a place where he is teleported to the gruesome past, a place which also marks his accidental survival. From the drawn images, it is evident that Faris describes every small detail of his encounter with the dead bodies at Mamluk Castle to the narrator and Abed. However, when he talks of the burial of the dead in *fusgeya* (common family grave), he can barely remember the names of his relatives killed by the Israeli soldiers on that day.

The last testimony of the section involving Omm Nafez, wife of Abdulla El-Sadoni, is more problematic, when collated with the next chapter titled "Memory and the Essential Truth". She starts her testimony by saying, "It is as if it is happening now. I'll never forget it" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 108). The words signify the firmness and conviction with which she narrates the killing of her husband and her two brothers, Ibrahim and Subhi along with the escape of another brother, Khamis. However, in the next chapter, Sacco dissects her testimony after comparing it with Khamis himself and Abu Antar (Khamis' nephew) who provide different versions of the event. It is to be noted that her most striking physical feature is one blind eye and one seeing eye, thereby immediately establishing her as a protagonist that both does not see and also sees. This feature embodies the quality of ambiguity in the narrative, allowing the narrative to operate within the interstices of a hybrid and non-binary space. Thus Omm Nafez becomes someone who was there and who 'sees', but who nonetheless does not 'know' perfectly. Her case seems to confound easy categorizing of 'seeing' and 'knowing' and instead allows them to coexist in a dynamic tension. The chapter 'Memory and the Essential Truth' begins with the layout of two-tier six square panels divided into three, each containing the portraits of the people who have narrated their own version of the events that happened on 3rd November 1956. Sacco addresses his readers directly by saying "You have just finished reading a string of personal recollections that tell the story of the widespread killings of Palestinian men by

Israeli soldiers in Khan Younis on November 3, 1956" (Sacco, Footnotes 112). However, in the next panel, overlaid on the bodies of those killed he talks about the discrepencies that he notes in these testimonies, assiduously excavated from these eyewitnesses – "memory blurs edges; it adds and substracts."

Sacco retells the tragic narrative of Omm Nafez in a sweeping collage of three panels [Fig. 45]. These panels are already there in the previous chapter. However, Sacco reproduces them in an entirely different chronology of time. The two panels at the lower part of the page are arranged in a reverse sequentiality.

Fig. 45: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 112

Khamis' own recollection picks up the difference with Omm Nafez' account — the brothers are lined up before being shot at — something to which Abu Antar concurs. Khamis talks of his own flight after knocking out an Israeli soldier and then scaling the boundary wall of the house. Then Khamis demonstrates to the narrator and Abed, the spectacle of Subhi's death (who succumbs to his injuries, as mentioned earlier by Omm Nafez). Khamis enactment of Subhi dying is drawn by Sacco with a rare eye of detail. In the previous chapter, as Subhi lies waiting for death, he is surrounded by elderly women. However, in this chapter, Subhi is surrounded by women and children with Khamis holding his back for support in order to ease his pain. The visuals are different although it describes a singular event. Sacco says that Khamis' version of Subhi's death generally matches with those of Omm Nafez and Abu Antar except on one crucial point. Both of them say that Khamis was *not* present at the moment of Subhi's death. Sacco inserts a black

panel in the lower part of page 115 [Fig. 46].

Fig. 46: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 115

It represents the momentary erasure of truth as testimonies here are generally conflictual and contradictory. Sacco literally and metaphorically reaches a dead end to his own excavation of the truth. However, he gives reasons for such discrepencies. It may be that Om Nafez was too distraught by her husband's killing to remember the event of Subhi's deth with exact fidelity. It may be that Abu Antar was too young during that time to remember the event exactly. Moreover, he also thinks of Khamis' own guilt in recalling the event. He survived while three of his brothers died and Sacco sums up his feeling when he says in an unboxed quote, "I cannot untangle the twining guilt and grief that envelope a person who survives what so many others did not, nor can I explain wht might induce a traumatized individual to recall a brother's death if he was not there – assuming he was not" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 116). Sacco acknowledges that there are lacunae in the way testimonial reminiscence (re)constructs a narrative because of its inherent plurality. However, whatever may be the differences, it does not efface the essential truth. For example, on 3rd November 1956, the three brothers of Khamis are among the 275 Palestinians killed by the Israeli forces, according to the official report in an UN document.

TESTIMONY AND SACCO'S CODA TO KHAN YOUNIS SECTION

It is important to understand the concept of 'testimony' in order to make sense of Sacco's method. To witness means to see, or to experience something. However, to witness also means to bear witness, to communicate one's experience to another or others through testimony. Without an audience which in turn performs as witness, this second type of witnessing as a performative act or testifying, is not a possibility. In academia, scholarly interest is primarily aimed at the genre of witness literature that spawned during World War II by authors such as Paul Celan, Primo Levi, Imre Kertész and others. Literary theorist Shoshana Felman and psychoanalyst Dori Laub published their pioneering work *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*[19] in 1991. This book explores the way testimonies from Holocaust survivors continue to reverberate in politics, culture, and art despite the 'crises of witnessing' broached in the title's reference to the perceived impossibility of bearing witness to traumatic events, which have left survivors speechless. Felman and Laub examine witnessing as a means of claiming responsibility not only for the individual's own story, but also for the general writing of history, in the difficult transformation from personal testimony to collective memory. Alternating between a literary and a clinical perspective, the authors analyze the positions, obligations, and negotiations of witnesses in a monumental work such as Claude Lanzmann's 9-hour documentary *Shoah.*[20] Remembering is a highly fluid process, an interaction of direct memories from an event, subsequent remembering, retelling and receiving the remembrances of another person. When speaking of memories of an event of political massacre that is not strictly personal, but which belongs to the collective realm of experience, there are many facets to it — the state's current official version, the repudiated state's counter version, other political views, ethno-religious views, spiritual views, secular views and even family views of the same event. The survivor lives with and within a distributed network of points of view (and memories and voices) regarding the experience of political violence. Within

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[19] Felman, Shoshana, and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. Routledge, 1992.

[20] *Shoah*. Directed by Claude Lanzmann. Les Films Aleph, 2003.

one point of historical experience, even within one person's narration of surviving political violence, there are many different ways of seeing many different things, and each connects interpersonally, culturally, historically, and spiritually with many other views. From this vantage point, testimony mirrors what Mikhail Bakhtin calls "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices."[21] This polyphony is shaped through "dialogic interaction" which bears not only the speaker's words and meanings but also those of the listeners. It is to be understood that testimony is always based upon a narrative. Where there is a narrative, there is going to be some degree of dialogic give-and-take between survivor and listener. In the polyphonic and dialogic approach, as the one undertaken by Sacco, the survivor and the receiver work together in such a way that the many different, perhaps even disparate, aspects of their experience are put together into a whole. Importantly, on the whole it does not sacrifice either the singular or the multi-voiced meanings of the person's experience of the violence. On the contrary, different positions and voices are given the chance to interact with or even speak to one another which creates the possibility of new positions and meanings. In this context, the concept of "social traumas" of Veena Das[22] which involves depictions and analyses of the "remaking of everyday life" in survivor communities is crucial. She shows how the survivors try to reassert the normalcy in their lives, after experiencing the extremities of atrocity and loss, and how this necessarily involves them struggling with language. In the examples of testimony seen in *Footnotes* and other works by Sacco, every eyewitness is indelibly bound by the presence of a listener/receiver who happens to be the avatar of Sacco himself. One problem he does not acknowledge is that all these testimonies have been translated into English, and this act of translation represents an additional act of mediation. We know from the text that Sacco speaks no Arabic. It is a paradox of testimony that we ask individual survivors to tell *their* story when fully realizing that this story is

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[21] Bakhtin, M M. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. University of Minnesota Press, 1984, p. 6.

[22] Das, Veena. "The Act of Witnessing: Violence, Poisonous Knowledge, and Subjectivity." *Violence and Subjectivity,* edited by Veena Das et al., University of California Press, 2000.

not solely *their* individual story but also a story that belongs to collective groups and to their histories. There is an actual giver of testimony who is a listener to himself or herself. And there is also an actual 'another' present in the room, the listener and recorder of testimony. This 'another', a listener, sets the frame, invites the survivor in, and guides the journey of truth-telling. He is physically present in the room, listening and interacting. And they bring with them an actual recording device (an audio recorder/video and still camera), which is another kind of presence, an impending promise of possibly a great 'many others' who may eventually listen to the testimony. The survivor has the primary responsibility for producing a polyphonic and dialogic narrative. But the receiver who is listening and interacting has a special obligation to help the survivor to resist the tendencies toward monologism. The receiver must not regard the survivors as objects, nor should they overwhelm the survivors' voices with his or her own surplus of information or understanding. The receiver is not to approach the giving of testimony as a system but as an encounter which encourages plurality of voices. Survivors' testimonies have a tendency toward a chronological form of three periods: before, during, and after. Instead, the aim of polyphonic and dialogic testimony is to create satisfying narratives that are not necessarily symmetrical in how they structure time. Bakhtin's comment on Dosteovsky is equally applicable to the study of testimony,

> "Where others saw a single thought, he was able to find and feel out two thoughts, a bifurcation; where others saw a single quality, he discovered in it the presence of a second and contradictory quality. Everything that seemed simple became, in his world, complex and multi-structured. In every voice, he could hear two contending voices, in every expression a crack, and the readiness to go over immediately to another contradictory expression; in every gesture he detected confidence and lack of confidence simultaneously; he perceived the profound ambiguity, even multiple ambiguity, of every phenomenon" (Bakhtin 261).

In contrast to the polyphony of the jostling memories in a testimony, Sacco writes a coda to the Khan Younis section involving the "monologism" of historical documents in an archive. He reopens the debate between memory (through testimony) and history that he earlier hinted at in the initial chapters. Journalists, artists, educators, politicians, human rights activists, and historians have relied

upon the powerful legitimacy, sensibility, and moral strength that survivors' voices add to histories. However, testimonies play a more limited role in documenting histories. They are often rejected because they are considered too subjective for history. Another weakness of testimony is that if people are speaking freely, then they are also free to exaggerate, distort, and lie. Witnesses, human or mechanical, are notoriously contradictory and inarticulate. However, that is paradoxically also the strength of testimony. As the cult South African writer Breyten Breytenbach says, "I believe that testimony is real because I see it as a part of living history."[23] The history referred to here is not just static documentation, but interactive conversation. The past is never just past nor is it just one solitary occurrence. It lives in the present and future and is full of variability, heterogeneity, and multiplicity. Shoshana Felman's interpretation of Claude Lanzmann's cult film, *Shoah* unveils the philosophical core of testimony. According to Felman, Lanzmann's film is not only about witnessing a catastrophe such as the Holocaust. It is also "…about the *relation between art and witnessing*, about film as a medium which *expands* the capacity for witnessing. To understand *Shoah*, we must explore the question: what are *we* as spectators made to witness? ... 'The truth kills the possibility of fiction' said Lanzmann in a journalistic interview. But the truth does not kill the possibility of art – on the contrary, it requires it for its transmission, for its realization in our consciousness as witnesses" (Felman 105).

In contrast to the polyphonic nature of testimony, history, as a discourse about the past and as a scholarly discipline with its own particular genealogy, is often characterized by its commitment to the empirical data from variety of sources usually collected in an archive. The study of history is shaped by the structures of archives which are socially constructed. Their underlying principles inevitably indicate dissemination of the forces of power. The choice of what to record and the decision of what to preserve are thereby the privilege of the powerful. Gradually, this limited dissemination of knowledge is made part of naturalized frameworks that constitutes the archives. Thus absences and

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[23] Breytenbach, Breyten. *Dog Heart: A Memoir.* Harcourt Brace, 1999.

omissions are as significant as the material which the archives contain.

The chapter 'Document' is almost a macrocosmic representation of Sacco's own project of re-writing history that are missing from the official archives — "The entire book is a kind of counter-document, a countermodality to the kind of archive Sacco encountered in the official records of the United Nations and Israeli Defense Forces" (Chute 243). The actual processes at play in *Footnotes in Gaza* involves field extensive research undertaken in order to uncover specific events that took place some fifty years earlier, on the 3rd and the 12th of November 1956, in the Palestinian refugee camps of Khan Younis and Rafa on the Gaza strip. Sacco does so through multiple interviews with eye witnesses, supported by archival research. Despite their severity, these events have been largely neglected in extant historical accounts as the empirical records in archives effectively contain nothing in terms of 'evidence'. Sacco's inscription, verbal and visual, seeks to investigate and to re-instate what had effectively been deselected by official and collective historical memory. The inclusion of the tools of Sacco's work (note-pad and pen, voice recorder and camera *ref.* page 12), corresponds to ways in which the book might self-consciously signal its process of construction. These routinely incorporated indication of the context of production works as assurances of professional rigour. Just as an archive needs to be built assiduously through scientific rigour, Sacco's documentative work requires similar kind of passion and professionalism.

THE INTERLUDE – FEAST

The interlude section, "Feast" begins in the same way as the first section, "Khan Younis". The first chapter, tellingly titled "The Story is Dead" begins with the constant ringing of the mobile phone, a trope that Sacco used initially in upper panel of page 4. The recall of that page is complete as the next panel in page 123 almost mirrors the panel in page 4 where Sacco is visualized as a man in a state of hurry, trying to embark or disembark from the car. The same gossip among the foreign correspondents ensues, reflected in the similar layout, seen earlier. However, in the next page, Sacco creates a template which is different from the

previous ones. Barbara (a journalist) rues that “there are no good stories”, probably hinting at the cyclical nature of the events in Gaza. As the Gulf war looms large, she and the other journalists are now more intent on following that new story — “the mother of all imminent epics”. The small panel in the right-middle shows the journalists making their respective plans in order to slip into Kuwait, the ground-zero of action. There is a caption attached to the panel where it is written “Long Live the Story” (Sacco, *Footnotes* 124). The sarcasm of Sacco is quite apparent here. He is not only criticizing the lack of attachment in the way journalists pursue their stories but he is deeply apprehensive about the ethics of journalism itself. For journalists, every story has a limited time span and when they outlive that, they move to newer and more exciting pastures. Their profession is defined by the shock of the new. In pursuit of the sensational, the human stories get lost. Sacco, however, is an exception. He goes back to Gaza in search of his old story which may not be in the ‘breaking news’ category but they are vital as they talk about human resilience and resistance.

In the next chapter “Claustrophobia”, the narrator is introduced to another character, Hani who is Abed’s friend in Gaza city and a collaborater in his activist work. In page 127 of the chapter, the overwhelming feeling of claustrophobia is accentuated in such a way that the upper panel almost struggles to breathe. The next page presents another striking contrast. After hiring the taxi, the narrator and his friends make their way towards Khan Younis. The vast expanse of the barren land through which the taxi makes its way after crossing the city undercuts the chaos of the previous page. The alternative use of negative space in successive pages builds up the tension of crossing the check-post at Abu Houli. There is a striking stylistic innovation by Sacco within the layout of the pages where this episode plays out. The captions in the upper part of the pages 127, 128, 131 and 135 are within a deep black border instead of thin demarcating lines making up a square. They resemble a trapped space seperated within the panel. These thick-bordered panels [marked in red in Fig. 47] visually symbolises the idea of segregation and isolation used by the Israelies as a strategic tactic against the Palestinians in the name of security.

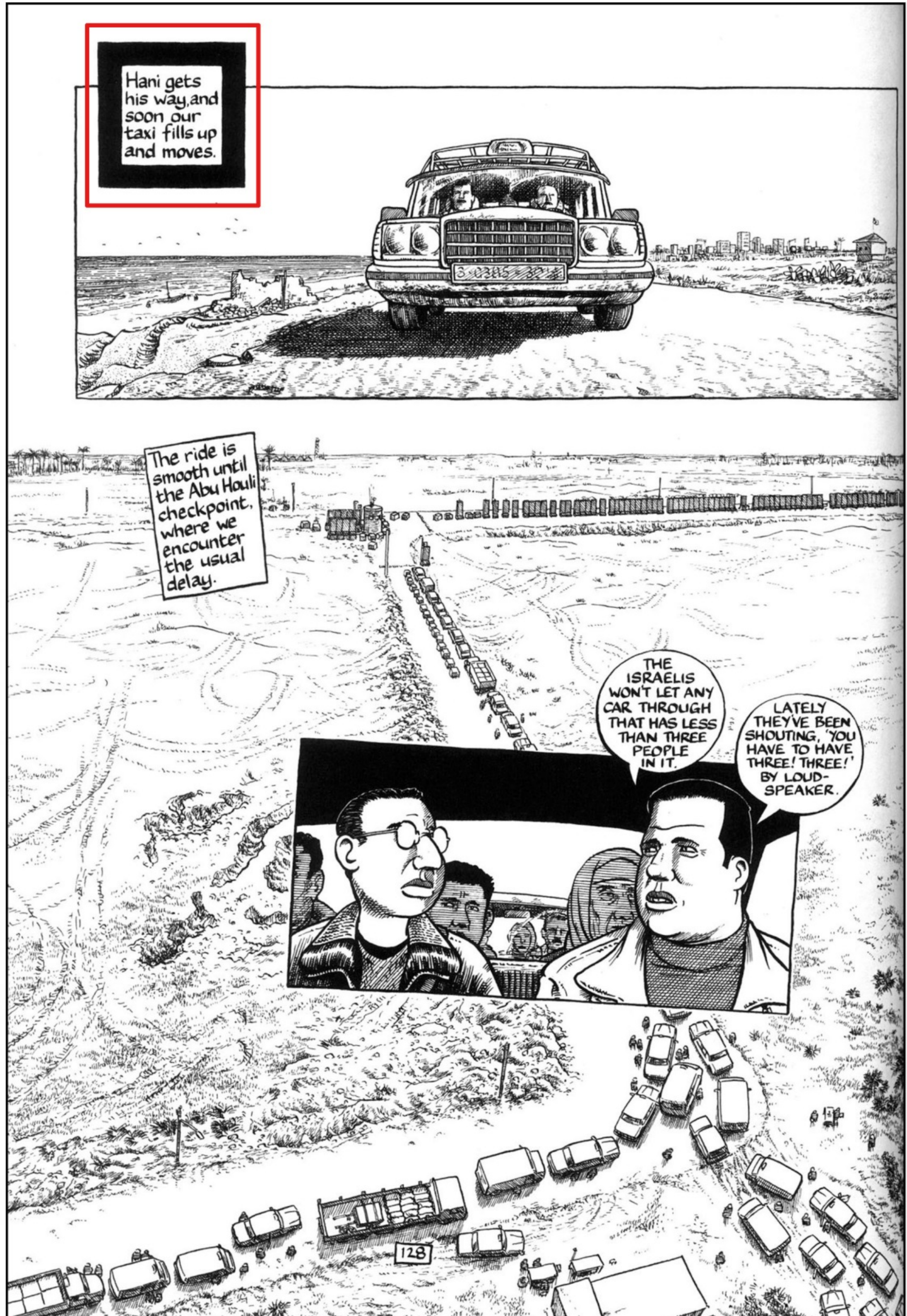

Fig. 47: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 128

The most obvious occurrence of segregation in the Palestinian Territories is the segregated road system. Both Palestinians and Israelis have their own road system. Although all Israelis can use almost all Palestinian roads (except in Gaza),

Palestinians' access to some roads is restricted or even forbidden. In page 128 [Fig. 47], Sacco creates a stunning birds' eye-view drawing of vehicles lining up before the Israeli checkpost at Abu Houli. The tyre marks of the vehicles can be discerned in the open field. A rectangular inset panel is imposed on the centre of the bleed image in which Abed is seen explaining to the narrator, the necessity of having at least three people in a vehicle. The ordeal of crossing the checkpost towers, guarded by bulletproof walls, is representative of the struggle that the Palestinians face to carry on their daily routine. It is to be noted that no Israeli soldiers are shown in the episode except for a hand that peers out of the tower to wave a car through. The effacement of the Israelis can be contrasted with the tense faces of the Palestinians for whom travelling within their own territories are always marked by surveillance and fear. In page 133, Abed recounts the event of a failed suicide attempt made by the Palestinians as their vehicle trundle through the checkpost. The bleed image of an Israeli checkpost, protected with barbed wires and high walls, fills up the entire page save the four floating panels, captions and speech balloon on the left side. The sky in the background is drawn with deep cross-hatched texture to give the image an ominous look. However, the focus of the page is two surveillance cameras that peer out of the tower. The gaze of the cameras is symbolically oriented towards the direction of the readers, so that their reading of the situation is continuously disrupted by the discomfort of being always in their line of vision. The next chapter "All of Us Will Get a Beating" shows a vocal Sacco who asks whether suicide bombings serve any purpose for the Palestinians in their fight against Israeli occupiers. Hani avoids a direct answer. The air of despondency is carried over by the re-introduction of Khaled who has "shifted into some sort of lower gear, like an animal dropping its heart rate to conserve energy" (Sacco, *Footnotes*, 135). Sacco uses a stunning sequence to showcase his isolation and alienation in the middle panels of page 135. Khaled is shown seated in a chair against a white background which is unpanelled. The same posture of Khaled is drawn against the immediate contextual background where Sacco can be seen looking at him [Fig. 48].

Fig. 48: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 135

Khaled is crestfallen as he finds no 'political horizon'. The very next sequence of panels in the lower part of the page [Fig. 49], shows a hand with a remote, surfing channels to discover a new political cloud looming large over the Arab world — the prospect of the imminent Gulf War.

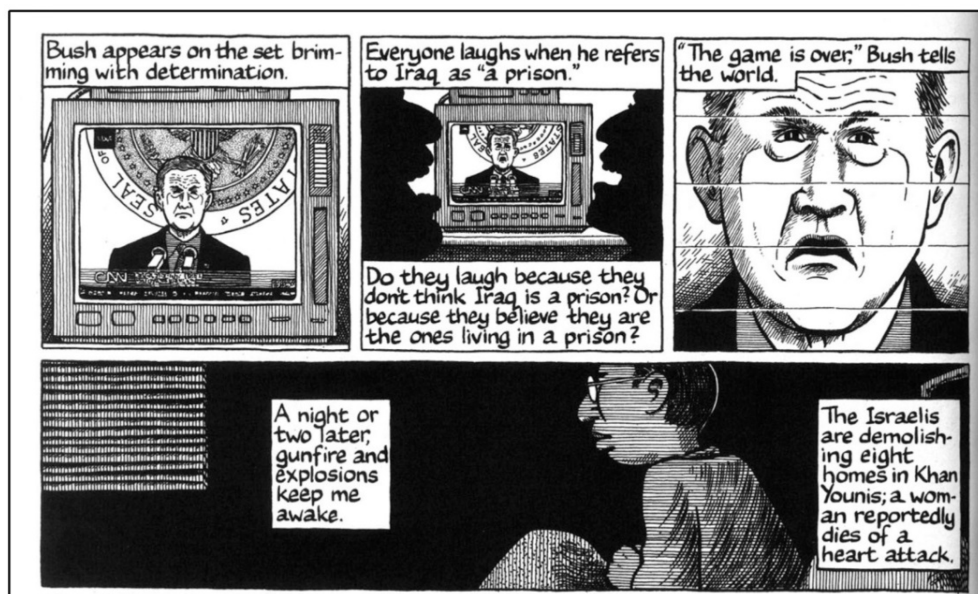

Fig. 49: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 136

The CNN anchors are giddy about the prospect of war and the word "twirls around their tongues like a chocolate mint" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 135). Sacco's insertion of TV news beamed by the western media (which frequently crops up in *Footnotes*) is strategic. It contrasts with the ground reality that Sacco witnesses in Gaza. The image of President George Bush declaring "the game is over" in a theatrical fashion may conform to the American stereotype of war as a spectacle but it sounds pathetic in a place where everyday innumerable people are rendered homeless and worse killed. These acts of inserting frame within a frame — TV

screen within the drawn panel — also draws attention to the problematic role played by the journalist-narrator. Sacco clearly distinguishes between the broadcast of Western TV news (meant mainly for consumption of their own home audience) and his own relentless quest to uncover the truth by meticulously interviewing people on the ground. However, by creating frame within frames in visualising the testimonies of the book, he locates himself both within and without. He wants to be the insider while unveiling the truth but his very own status remains that of the outsider reporting the accounts.

In page 136, this difference is constructed formally within the space of four panels in the upper portion (Fig. 50). The first panel contains the frame of the TV screen beaming the image of President Bush. The second panel continues with the TV frame, but now it is pushed a bit into the background to allow silhouetted figures some foreground space. The third panel zooms in onto the frame of the TV screen showing the close-up of Bush's face thereby dissolving the outer frame of the TV screen. In a shrewd play of perspective, the next panel abandons the 'frame of the TV screen' to show the narrator framed within the darkness of his room looking fixedly towards the left side of the page. George Bush, within the TV frame, is an obvious figure of hate but the narrator, despite his professed proximity to the Palestinians, ironically remains an outsider as well — his loneliness being marked by black background of the panel frame. This panel also echoes the upper panel in page 126 where the narrator and Abed are seen watching TV in similar eerie darkness of the room.

The next chapter "Feast" is probably the most violent and gruesome in the entire book, although it ironically depicts an occasion of celebration. Even, the chapter showing the scenes of massacre looks less visceral in comparison. The slaughter of a bull for the feast of Eid-Al-Adha, celebrates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Ishmael. The typical Islamic version of the story differs from the Christian and Jewish versions. In the latter, God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. In most Islamic accounts, God asks Abraham to sacrifice his first son, Ismael.[24] The chapter begins with drawn pictures of the bulls being brought to empty stores or

[24] Owen, Ben. "Overtaken by Further Developments: The Form of History in *Footnotes in Gaza*." *The Comics of Joe Sacco: Journalism in a Visual World*, edited by Daniel Worden, University Press of Mississippi, 2015, p. 220.

back lots for slaughter. While waiting for the butcher to arrive, Abed explains Sacco's 1956 project to a relative, Abu Hamed. He was only six years old during that time but he distinctly remembers running away from an Israeli air attack in the market before they entered Khan Younis. He states within a speech balloon (in capitals), "We make a sacrifice of the bulls and Sharon makes a sacrifice of us" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 139), thereby alluding to the rich ambiguous symbolism inherent in the above event. Earlier the author has already witnessed the killing of a bull by others in the street. The slightly tilted panels in the lower tier of page 138 is overwritten by floating captions, placed in such a way that it imitates the last struggle of the huge animal being hacked before its spasms are fully quelled. The upper bleed panel of page 139 shows children soaking their hands in the blood of the bulls, overflowing the streets and making imprint on the walls. This present-day image resonates with rich ironic symbolism as it recalls two other scenes from Sacco's depiction of the Khan Younis massacre of November 3, 1956.

Fig. 50: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 139 (above) and Page 111 (below)

First of all, the rivulets of bull's blood suggests the image of human blood flowing from the row of hundred Palestinian men gunned down by the Isaeli soldiers against the wall of the Mamluk Castle, as reported by Faris Barbakh. Secondly the marking of the wall by the blood-soaked hands of the children recalls the action of Omm Nafez, who darkened the walls of her house with handprints of ash in mourning the killing of her husband and his two brothers [Fig. 50].

Sacco actually gives a detailed account of butchering the bull right from the way it is tied by a rope to the measured distribution of its meat to various families. The celebratory sacrifice of the bull is conflated with linguistic signifiers that are related to war. As a hand is shown throwing out the spleen from the entrails of the bull, Sacco uses a simile — "the toxic spleen is handed gingerly to a boy who throws it like a grenade into the street" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 142). The symbolism is unmistable. The words complicate the question of who is the butcher and who sacrifice and what each role might mean in global geo-political scenario. The irony of being human victims before the Israelis and perpetrators of human violence on the animals foregrounds the complicated relationship that violence has on the Palestinians either in their daily life or on festive occasions. The question is accentuated when Sacco draws Hani just like he has drawn the old Feedayee and Khaled in Page 50. The black crosshatched background and the shadow on Hani's face looks ominous as the speech balloons and the floating captions around his face reveals that he couldn't just kill the bull himself. He also didn't take part in the skinning and cutting of the carcass, neither can he eat the meat.The guilt associated in the cold sacrifice of the animal is juxtaposed with the panels in the lower part of Page 147, where he is shown to be tortured by the Israeli soldiers. The ethical strain is continued in the next section as well when Hani disagrees with his friend, a teacher called Abu Mohammed over how to interpret history. When Abu Mohammed points out that the Arabs don't know their own history, Hani protests. He believes that the Moors' takeover of southern Spain in the 8th century was not an occupation as they 'brought enlightenment' while Abu insists that "the Muslim invasions <u>were</u> occupations" (author's underline) as "we came with the sword" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 149). Seen in this context, the word "occupation" echoes with multiple connotations — the literal historical occupation of Spain in far-off 8th

century, the present occupation of Gaza and also the impending occupation of Iraq by the American forces. Sacco seems to suggest that the past-present-future continuum of violence is a spiral from where there is no escape — only the roles of the victim and the aggressors change.

RAFAH SECTION

The last section of the book, "Rafah" begins with the chapter "House Hunting" where there is a debate between the narrator and Hani/Khaled about living in a refugee camp. While Hani and Khaled are opposed to the narrator's wish to live in the thick of things, Abed doesn't agree. The main bone of contention, according to them, is safety. However, there is an additional possibility of being branded a spy or a traitor as the camps have pockets of resistance. In the following chapter "Sea Street", narrator settles for a spacious flat. However, the theme of 'settlement' seems ironical as Sacco juxtaposes a bleed panel in the lower part of the page which shows the eradication of Palestinian homes by Israeli bulldozers. One formal change that can be noted in this section is the expansion of space within the pages. Unlike the section on Khan Younis, the four-tier panels are sparsely used in "Rafah" section. The chapter begins with Sacco surveying the Sea Street from the roof of his rented apartment. The first action of 'Sacco', after waking up in the morning, of looking down towards the crowded chaos of Sea Street is of crucial importance. Here the narrator occupies the birds' eye view as he surveys the choked street of Yibna neighbourhood in the foreground and the winding alleyways of Shaboura in the background. The middle panel with the street in the foreground actually shows the miniscule figure of the narrator standing on the rooftop [marked in red in Fig. 51].

However, in the last chapter in the section, also titled "Sea Street", the narrator looks at the same street from the ground level. It is to be noted that Sea Street is also the site where the town's men were herded to a schoolyard in the 1956 massacre. The trajectory of movement from the detached omniscient point of view of the narrator to the more intimate ground-level viewpoint happens only after he completes the narration of the 1956 Rafah massacre. This arc of gradual

involvement on the part of the narrator is also an act of self-embodiment within the narrative of "pain of the others". The narrator slowly 'inhabits' the body of the survivors and the dead before closing the book in a panel of complete darkness. 'Sacco' and Abed, from the vantage point of the apartment's roof, watches the dead body of a young boy being taken out in a procession.

Fig. 51: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 158

The men in the procession carry guns and their eyes are seething with anger. In the lower panel of page 158, Sacco draws them in a bleed panel from the perspective of the ground level. This is clearly not the narrator's point of view as he and Abed can be seen peering down from the balcony. The caption in the middle of the panel, however, talks about *their* point of view — "A short while

later, Abed and I watch the funeral procession going up the Sea Street" (Sacco *Footnotes* 158). From above, the narrator can hardly read the faces of the mourners, although the shimmering tension and anger in the air is easily palpable. Sacco draws two contrasting situations in two panels showing the same part of the Sea Street in the lower part of page 159. The empty street, after the procession passes by, fills up with people again, resulting in the resumption of usual daily activities. There are three floating captions placed diagonally in the panel depicting the empty street: "In four minutes the entire column has gone by / "Halas", as they say here / Finished" (Sacco, Footnotes 159). For the narrator, the above heart-rending experience doesn't elicit any specific response, except a curt 'finished'. He seems to suggest that death is so common in Gaza that they fail to arouse any specific response. Even in Gaza, Sacco is in search of pain but doesn't feel it too much, as he is probably numbed by its frequent encounter. The pain of others titillates us, so long as it is kept at a safe distance. In *The Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag argues that images are always produced with a point of view. There is a record of the real, and there is the person who takes the record. Subjective narrative and framing inevitably leave something out of the picture and put a certain spin on images. As Sontag argues in her book, since photography is a 'quick', richly condensed unit of information in a vast sea of information, it has become postmodernity's preferred method through which to display the pain of others. Thus, "the ultra-familiar, ultra-celebrated image – of an agony, of ruin – is an unavoidable feature of our camera-mediated knowledge of war" (Sontag 20). Sontag argues that "one's reactions to the photographs Roman Vishniac took in 1938 of daily life in the ghettos of Poland are overwhelmingly affected by the knowledge of how soon all these people were to perish" (Sontag 70). The pain and horror in Vishniac's pictures is primarily outside the frame. It is the dialogue between what we know and what we see in the powerfully constructed photographs that lends emotional force to them. The narrator's image of the mourning procession is however, not strictly a photograph. It is hand-drawn but the ideology it professes is eerily similar. Although Sacco may have been moved by the boy's death, he is still outside the frame — a sympathetic observer, but an observer, nonetheless. However, a visible change in stance can be seen in the last

chapter which ultimately leads to the stunning three-page coda.

Before proceeding to the recreation of the Rafah massacre, we need to look at the importance of the city itself. In a chapter called “Rafah’s Curse”, Sacco uses maps to visualize and explain the situation in Rafah. The city and the refugee camp (consisting of 30,000 and 90,000 people respectively) are situated next to the border with Egypt and act as a transit point for arms smuggling. The Isrealis use that as a pretext to completely raze to ground hundreds of Rafah’s dwellings. In the chapter titled “Attack West of Block J”, Sacco pays attention to one of the many episodes involving the ruthless demolition of houses by Israeli bulldozers. The first paragraph of the page 179 seems nothing out of the ordinary at first, with an accidental meeting with a befriended journalist, Asim.[25] ‘Sacco’ and Abed follow him as they hear the rumours about the bulldozers being at work again.

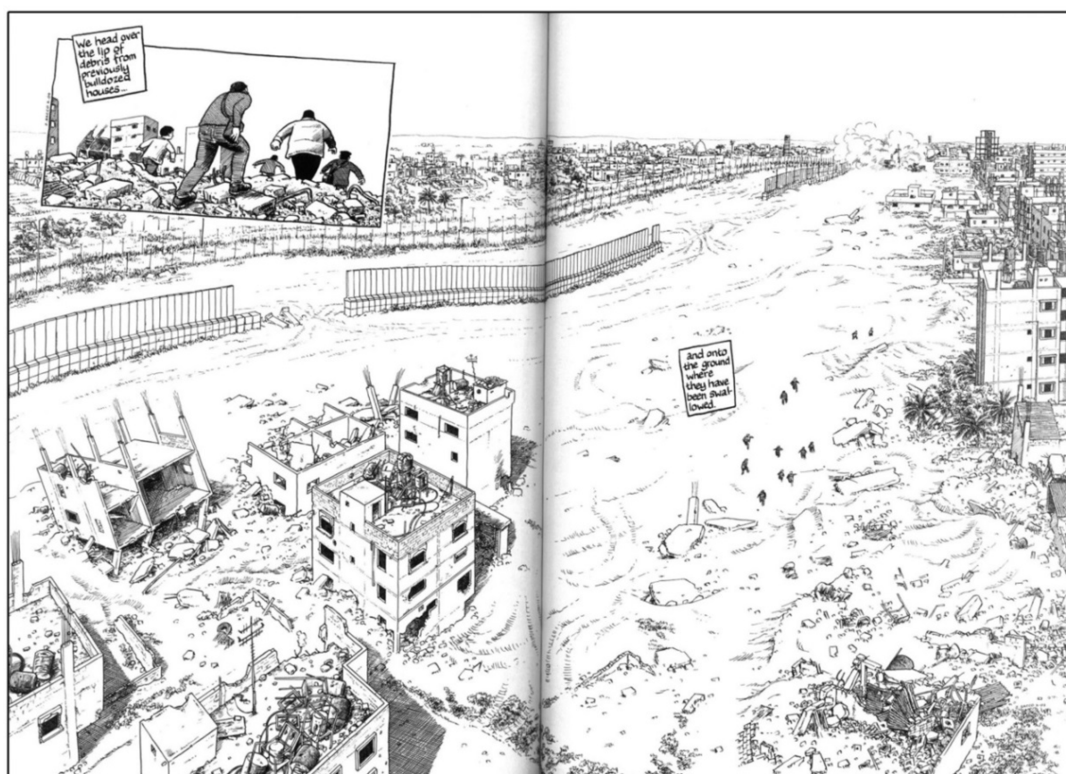

Fig. 52: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Pages 180-181

The two-spread expanse of Page 180 and 181 [Fig. 52] gives a bird’s eye view of the real devastation created by the bulldozers. The small panel at the top (drawn from a lower angle point of view) is literally and metaphorically swallowed by the vast negative space of a wasteland on which the buldings stood moments before

[25] Asim Rafiqui is a famous Pakistani photographer who blogs at http://www.asimrafiqui.com/tsh/.

they were demolished. ‘Sacco’ and his company seem like mere ants now, walking towards a cloud of dust spiraling in the horizon. From left to right of the spread, we see the half demolished houses, the wide strip of open space and the outskirts of the overcrowded refugee camp respectively. The visual symbolically creates an opposition between the need for space to live and the newly created ‘cleared’ sites. There is another visible contrast in the background of the image. Behind two sets of fences we see another town, but at the other side of the border with Egypt – a town with mosque, trees and squares surrounded by fields and olive trees. Sacco interlaces the widescreen perspective with the personal story of Munir Abdelsalam Hassuna whose house is among those attacked by the bulldozers.

Fig. 53: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 187

After the personal story, Sacco zooms in again – first on the same group of children running over the rubble from bird's-eye perspective to just above their heads, then to the discomforting look of heavy armoured tanks from frog-eye's perspective. The floating captions rebound off each other in different directions to create the illusion of chaos and disintegration and above all, an overwhelming sense of fear. At the centre of the page, we see two panels depicting the terrified face of a boy hiding behind a heap of dirt [see yellow marked area of Fig. 53]. Later in page 254-255, Sacco again reintroduces the trope of demolition with another double-page spread. This time however, the whole panel is occupied by one single heap of rubble, the pile almost as high as the building on the left [Fig. 54].

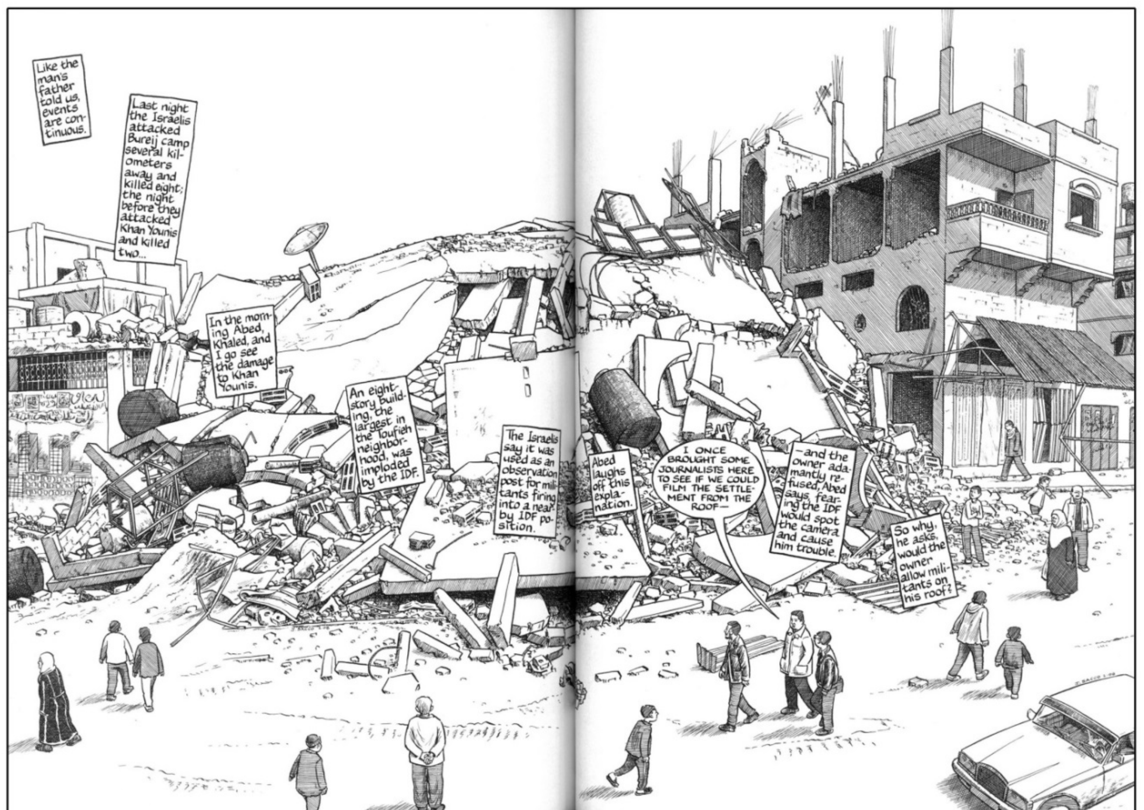

Fig. 54: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Pages 254-255

Unlike the Khan Younis section, Sacco uses a different technique while (re)constructing the Rafah section. The basis of his investigations involving multiple testimonies remain the same but the presentation with respect to layout and visual style undergoes a definitive shift. The build-up of the entire section leads to the massacre that happened in 1956 following a coerced congregation at

the school premise. It is presented chronologically but through the prism of multiple witnesses, thereby creating variations in the minute details about the incident itself. The title of the chapters makes this self-evident if arranged sequentially: “Announcement” – “Sea Street” – “The School Wall” – “The School Gate” – “The School Yard” – “The Screening” – “The Clean-up”- “The Burials”.

Fig. 55: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 205

In the “Announcement” chapter, Sacco presents 6 democratic panels, each containing a version of a statement regarding the call made over loudspeaker exhorting all the men (look at different versions referring to “people”/ “youth”/

"ages 15 to 60") to gather at the official school of Rafah (one specify it as El-Ameeriah School). Like previous occasions, Sacco makes all of them distinct through the foregrounding of meticulous physical facial details and different headgears. They conform to what Judith Butler says about "ways of framing (that) will bring the human into view in its frailty and precariousness" (Butler 77). He also provides their full name in small captions as marker of their invidual identity. Their gaze are directed towards 'Sacco' and also towards the readers who in turn look back to scrutinize further. Following the announcement, people rush out and make their way to the school through Sea Street where they are flanked and randomly shot at by Israeli soldiers.

In the chapter "Sea Street", Sacco focusses on Ayesh Abdel-Khalik Younis whose "memory is strong" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 216). Ayesh backs it up with the drawing of a map where he explains how the Israeli soldiers directed the onrushing Palestinians towards the School building (Fig. 56). Sacco merges Ayesh's cartographic detail with his own reimagined mapping of the Sea Street during the fateful day in 1956. The panels accompanying Ayesh's rough map show a birds' eye top-down perspective [Fig. 57].

Fig. 56: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 216

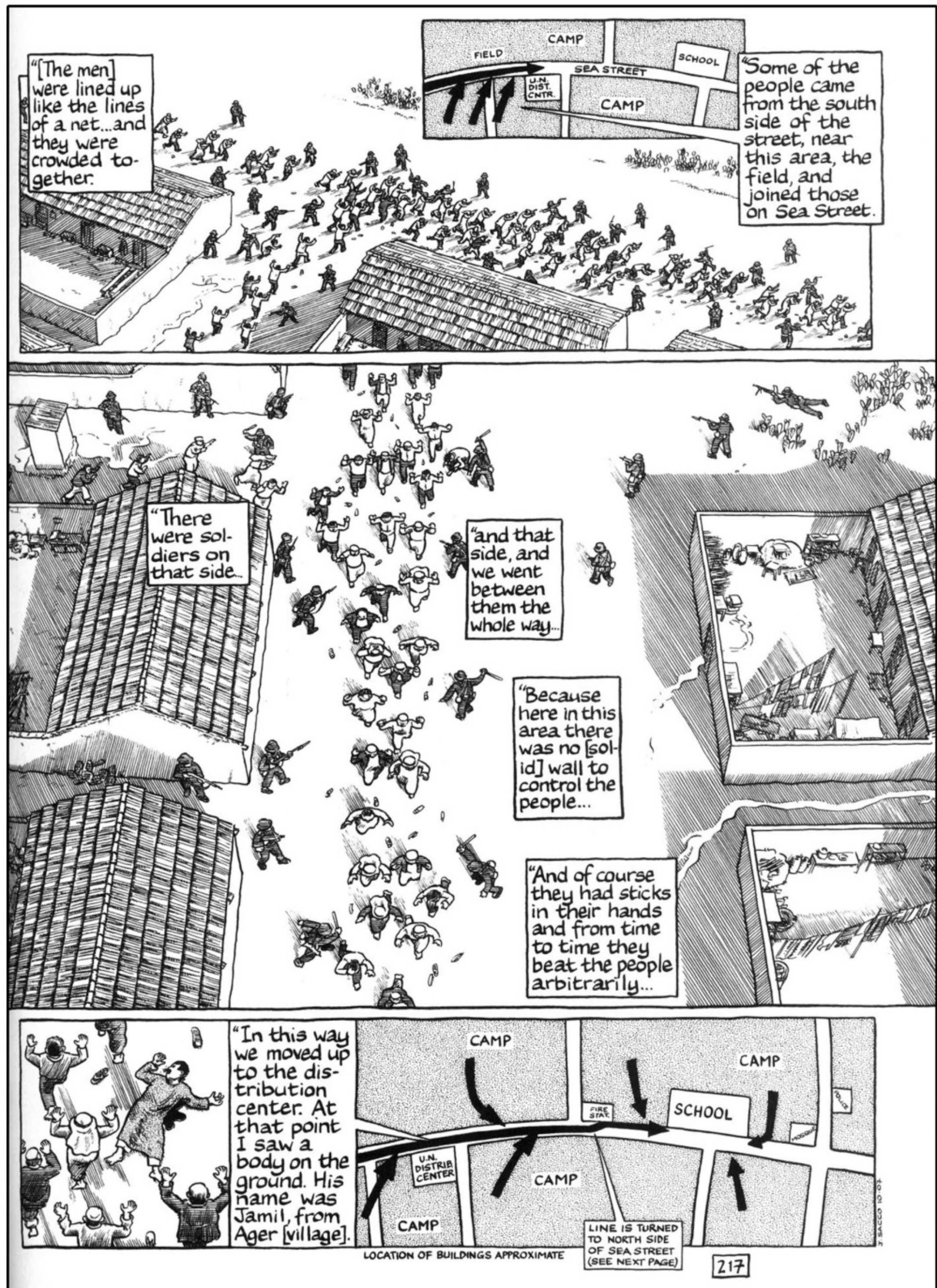

Fig. 57: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 217

There were incredible stories of survival like that of Mohammed Atwa El-Najeeli (Sacco, Footnotes 220-224). The author doubts the exaggerated narrative although he believes its essential truth. In the chapter "The School Wall", there is a poignant panel by an eyewitness, curiously referred to as "anonymous". Like Khamis in page 114-115, this person also enacts a scene before 'Sacco', Abed and Ashraf. The

action is contiguous but Sacco splits one panel to three in order to frame every moment of the ordeal that the man went through. Here only the man is moving through time [marked with red directional line in Fig. 58] while the Sacco and his companion remain frozen [bounded by red in the same figure].

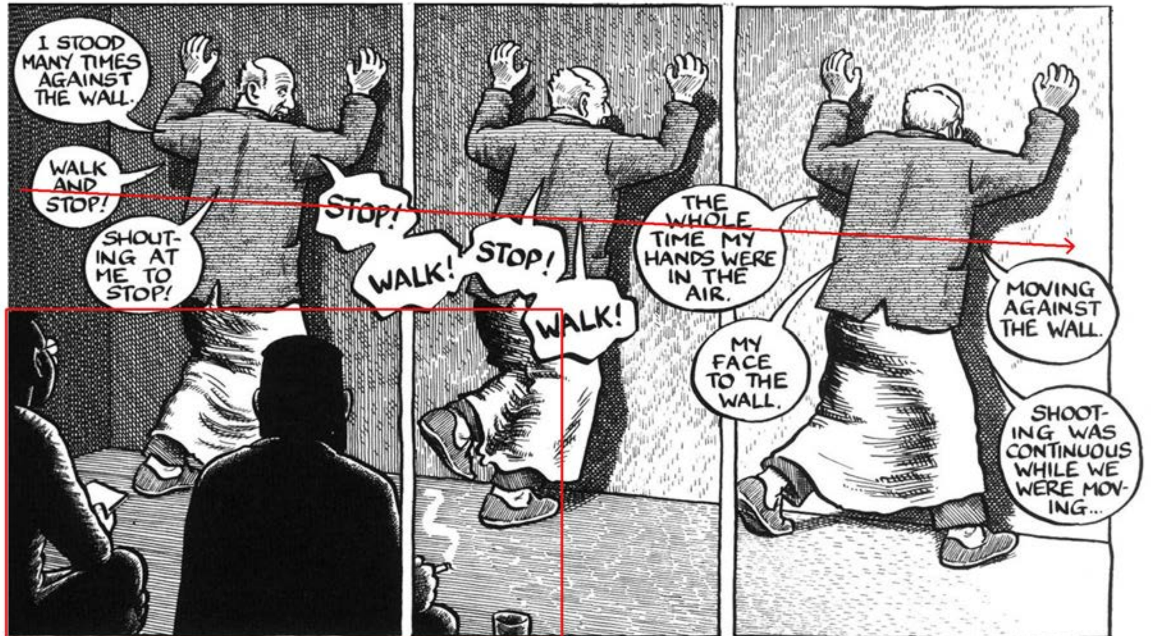

Fig. 58: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 227

Sometimes collaboration by more than one witness establishes the truth of an event like the beating of the people by clubs at the school gate (Sacco, *Footnotes* 236-237). In a stunning page, a plethora of testimonies gets validated through a mesmerizing collage of voices and the mental images of the ferocious Israeli soldiers using the club with impunity (Sacco, *Footnotes* 238). However, the *tour de force* in the Rafah section is a singular image in Page 265. Here Sacco effaces the individual identity of each Palestinians huddled together and draws them with uncanny similarity. The three insets (which include an anonymous man in the middle) show the immediate enactment of the situation but they only accentuate the overwhelming sense of claustrophobia [Fig. 59]. The rhythmic repetion of shapes is in considerable contrast to the scattered effect of the preceding pages. The repeating pattern of diagonal lines produced by arms extending towards hands that are clasped over bowed heads invites the eye to scan the surface in multiple directions and suggests the anonymity and subjugation of an enforced collective of victims.

Fig. 59: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 265

Fig. 60: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 306

The "Screening" chapter mostly follows a standard three tier layout [Fig. 60]. It accommodates testimonies of three witnesses and allows tha visuals to play out with respect to the corresponding words spoken by them. It ensures that the narrative proceeds forward. At the same time, the readers remain aware of the small inconsistencies that plague each testimony. Sometimes two-tier layout can also be seen as a variation and they are mostly combined with an overarching

headpiece foregrounding the testimonies. As the Palestinians rush to freedom after being released from the school yard there are more casualties on the way. The number of dead is beyond numerical count. What remains is a numbing sense of fear and horror. The night-time double-spread (in the chapter "The Burials") aptly decodes the trauma by making an intertextual reference to Gustav Dore's depiction of Hell in Dante's *Inferno* [Fig. 61].

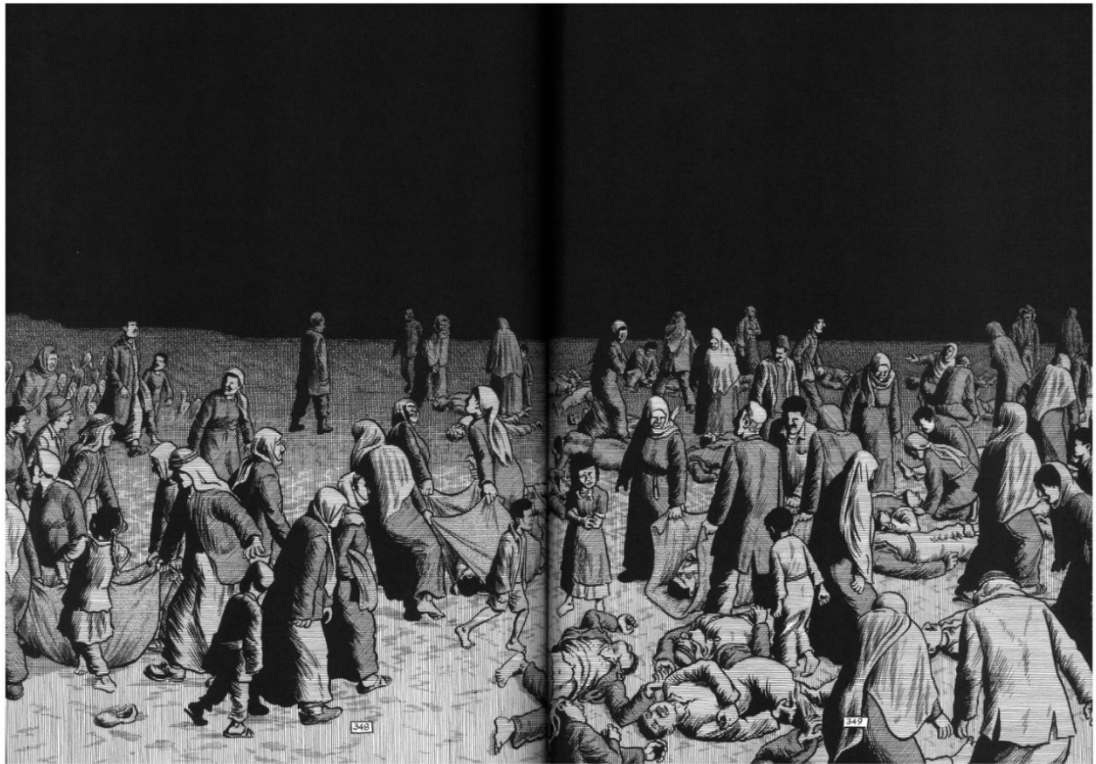

Fig. 61: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Pages 348-349

The last chapter "Sea Street" opens with Sacco and Abed making their way through the people. The first caption reads – "We're finished with our 1956 story". After completing the trajectory of the narrative, Sacco is going back home. Here for the first time, he calls himself a "historian" who is tired and wants to get on with his own life. The second tier in the page has two panels where the narrator is drawn, facing backwards to the readers, signaling impending departure. In the lower part of the page, the drawing becomes lighter with thinner lines and application of less hand-pressure while inking the panel. It signifies what the narrator is leaving behind — a world which he can now recollect only through the tinted prism of memory (Sacco, *Footnotes* 382). As he moves in the taxi, he peers through the window to look at present-day Rafah, a town bustling with people

going through their own daily continuum. The taxi window constitutes a frame within a frame. For the narrator, seeped in the gruesome events of 1956, the roads and the school gates can only trigger the memory of the past. In the panels of this page, the figure of the narrator is truncated. The second-tier panel posits the profile of the narrator in the left-hand corner while the third-tier panel zooms in to show the same profile in a tighter close-up.

Fig. 62: From *Palestine* (Left) and from Page 383, *Footnotes in Gaza* (left) respectively

In fact, if we look closely enough, there are four frames at play — the bleed of the book, the panel frame, the window frame of the taxi and the glass frame of the narrator's spectacles. Each of them contains and echoes each other. Sacco separates the narrator's profile from the thinly-cross-hatched background by employing thick lines and white space. This is also seen in *Palestine*, only the technique is reversed. In *Palestine*, the figure of Sacco-narrator is silhouetted in a similar three-tier panel depicting outside events through the car-window. The car-window becomes the film-screen while the narrator transforms himself as the spectator. It is symbolic of the dynamics shared by the narrator with his subject [Fig. 62].

In *Palestine*, all the three panels are wordless. The Palestinian children, the men and the Israeli soldiers are all looking at the narrator with pain, anger and

authority in their eyes respectively. In *Footnotes in Gaza,* there are floating captions – mostly unarticulated thought-stream of the narrator. Although the visuals firmly concentrate on the present, the captions make us travel to the memories of the past. Unlike on previous occasions when Sacco creates separate visuals to portray the past and the present here, he uses the visual-word dichotomy to create the difference between lived reality and memories of it. For him, words represent the polyphonic nature of the event where every version echoes each other with minor difference in details. Sacco refrains from showing what the narrator actually visualizes. It remains lodged in the deep recesses of his mind where the readers cannot enter. Jared Gardner calls this "a way of experimenting with new modes of telling stories about time that allow for the past and present, the monumental and the ephemeral, to speak to each other across seemingly irrevocable divides."[26] Instead, he falls back on the testimony of Abu Juhish who was clubbed on his head as he entered the school. Here the narrator-Sacco refuses to give his imagined image of the event, although the writer-Sacco provides them through the creative visual depiction of the given testimonies – an act that constitutes the writing/drawing of the book itself. In page 384, the readers see Juhish as a frail old man who has actually deferred the interview quite a few times due to health reasons. As he tries to tell the story, he cries. In a stunning panel (in the second-tier, right side), Belal is seen goading his grandfather (Juhish) to 'remember'. He says, "Now try to talk from your mind, not with passion…try to remember" (Sacco, Footnotes 384). The distorted face of Belal contrasts with the closed eyes of Abu Juhish. In the next panel, Belal asks him about the worst thing he remembers about the fateful day at Rafah, Juhish could only mumble two words: "fear…fear". The font is smaller here denoting the hushed nature of the words uttered. These are ironically also the last speech balloon (dialogues) of the book. Both Sacco as an artist (a secondary witness) and those he interviews (as primary witnesses) struggle to describe, verbally or visally, intense physical pain. In the lowermost panel of page 384, Sacco not only tries to depict this failure in describing physical trauma but he also visually represents the schism in the

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[26] Gardner, Jared. *Projections: Comics and the History of Twenty-first Century Storytelling*. Stanford University Press, 2012, p. 165

unspoken shared bond between the witness and the interviewer. Throughout the book, Sacco has contextualized interviews as social encounters, akin to participatory mode of documentary. The readers are intermittently shown scenes in which 'Sacco' can be seen sitting in crowded small rooms, sometimes cross-legged on the floor and often partaking in tea drinking rituals as he gathers information in order to piece together past events. These inclusions allow us to witness the process in a way which sustains a sense of authenticity. This strategy enforces the sense of sharing the experience of his information gathering process, and ostensibly adds transparency to the constitution of factual narrative and discourse. His function as narrator and character, simultaneously, facilitates a kind of splitting whereby the internal dialogue is contrasted with the way he is seen as one character among many.

Fig. 63: *Footnotes in Gaza,* from Page 384

Returning to page 384 [Fig. 63], we see the sense of social dissolving, leaving only the profiles of Abu Juhish (the primary witness) and narrator-Sacco (the secondary witness/interviewer) facing each other in pitch-black blackground. The obliteration of the social is signified by the effacement of background visual details. Their profiles against pitch black are separated by a shaft of white strip which contains the following words: "Suddenly I felt ashamed of myself for losing

something along the way as I collected my evidence, dis-entangled it, dissected it, indexed it, and logged it onto my chart" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 384).

Here the readers are allowed for the first time to notice a squint in Sacco's eyes through his thick glasses – a stylistic departure from the depiction of the narrator-self in all his works where his eyes cannot be seen through his opaque glasses. The partial drawing of the eye and the wrinkles around it makes him a figure with a sense of guilt – he does not know, and cannot know, the fear that Abu Juhish speaks about. By pitting himself directly against the faultlines of Juhish's 'fear', Sacco creates a moment of real awkwardness, both in terms of self-representation and in terms of how the reader is framed at this moment in the text. In this case, Sacco highlights an ethically problematic moment of representation, which we as readers experience viscerally as a moment meant to awaken us to the various ethical dilemmas of representing the pain of others: Sacco makes himself/us feel uncomfortable, and then he gets us to think about this discomfort and investigate its various dimensions.

CODA TO RAFAH SECTION

The next page (page 385) shows 'Sacco' and Abed in a taxi driving out of Rafah and literally 'out' of the pages of the book. His last words of reflection are incidentally the last words in the book itself as the next 3 pages are wordless. He reflects with a sense of pride that "how often I sighed and mentally rolled my eyes because I knew more about that day than they did" (Sacco, *Footnotes* 385). The words spoken by the researcher 'Sacco' sound hollow and self-ironic when one looks at the subsequent pages. Sacco includes this short 'footnote' as he is concerned with the smugness expressed by his researcher self who claims to "know more" than the primary witnesses. Thus the four-page wordless coda or the 'footnote' poses a counter-narrative to the previous narratives in the entire book. In page 385, the readers see an Israeli jeep trundling the road (today's Sea Street) while announcements are being made over magaphones. A tight close-up of an Israeli officer's mouth in the lower-most right-hand side panel can be seen to close the page. The next three pages have black backgrounds in the gutters and the

margins with no page markings – a formal departure from the rest of the book. It is as if the author has literally situated this shorter narrative outside the identifiable pages of the book (due to absence of navigable page markers) making it literally and metaphorically a 'footnote' to the earlier narratives. The panels in these 3 pages are squares – stacked in a neat grid of sixes (two in three-tiers).

Fig. 64: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 386 (unmarked)

The first panel in the upper-tier left-hand side opens with the image of three terror struck faces, two women and a man while in the background another person can be seen peering over the wall. The composition of the panel clearly

indicates it to be the point of view of an eyewitness who may or may not be Abu Juhish. The sequence that follows all point out to a consistent optical point of view. The view changes as the person moves. It is strangely akin to the viewpoint of the camera eye when it follows people and events as it unfolds. This is reminiscent of Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*[27] where the camera eye approximates and appropriates space and time as it moves along. In the first panel, a detail of a protruding hand can be seen. The second, third and the fourth panel denotes movement as the eyewitness moves along the road with fellow men. It is to be noted that the readers are also in the eyewitnesses' visual position which allows them to 'inhabit' the space of the eyewitness. The readers can actually be part of the eyewitnesses' perpective as he makes his way through the street, teeming with people, their hands up in a symbolic act of surrender.

In the fifth panel, the hands of the eye-witness also come up, indicating that he too is walking with his hands up in surrender [Fig. 64]. The hands, in a way, frame the rest of the panels till the end. Hillary Chute sums it up when she says that

> "It is Sacco's attempt to picture the other by inhabiting his point of view, by inhabiting, in a sense and asking the readers to inhabit, the space of the other's body. And if Sacco' work is about the embodiment of others, Sacco's own body, too, is a part of every page of his work…the hands, featured so movingly, and so prominently here – hands shaped in captive surrender, but which yet enter each side of the frame to stabilize our view – are the hands of the prisoner the reader optically occupies, but they also rhyme with the focus on the hands of the artist-reporter that one sees throughout…Embodiment in comics – on the page and in the mark, an index of the body – is a kind of compensation for lost bodies, for lost histories" (Chute 252).

With the advent of the Israeli soldiers in the arc of vision within the fifth panel, there is a perceptive quickening of movement until it becomes almost chaotic in the next panel. Thereafter, in the next page [Fig. 65], the eyewitness sees the legs of the trampled/slain bodies, as the school compound wall appears in the last lowermost panel of the next page.

[27] *Man with a Movie Camera*. Directed by Dziga Vertov. British Film Institute, 1929.

Fig. 65: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 387 (unmarked)

The last page [Fig. 66] is a mélange of bodies within which the eyewitness loses himself. The school-gate can be seen at a distance in the penultimate panel until a close-up of a club coming down closes the book in utter darkness. The complete blackout of the place, where the last panel in the grid should have been, signifies a loss of visual and haptic consciousness on the part of the eyewitness. The closure of the book in the blacked-out unconscious of the person, evidently hit

by the blow of the club, is probably the closest to the approximation of the pain felt by the person who has experienced the event first-hand. Seeing the sequence from the point of view of a Palestinian caught up in the events allows the reader to feel Abu Juhish's 'fear'. The readers can also take up any selective image from the grid of the panels and refer back to the sections where various witnesses talk about it.

Fig. 66: *Footnotes in Gaza,* Page 388 (unmarked)

In a way, the three hundred and eighty-five pages of the whole book can be juxtaposed with the three and half page wordless narrative to see the dynamics of memory at play. Sacco's work allows for a dual perception – the readers are both

connected to the other and yet they stand in a position of autonomy vis-à-vis the other. This autonomy is crucial for maintaining a critical stance in the face of looking at the pain of others. In the perceptive words of Sontag, "*our* privileges are located on the same map as *their* suffering" (Sontag 102) — the politics of spectatorship and the world of suffering are embedded in one another, that the one is instrumental in producing the other.

CHAPTER 4

THE ARRIVAL: THE MEMORY OF IMMIGRATION

"No fiction, no myths, no lies, no tangled webs – this is how Irie imagined her homeland. Because homeland is one of the magical fantasy words like unicorn and soul and infinity that have passed into language"[1] – Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*

'Life without memory is no life at all [. . .] Our memory is our coherence, our reason, our feeling, even our action. Without it we are nothing.' So tells Louis Bunuel in his *Memoirs*.[2]

IMMIGRATION – THE AMBIGUITY OF THE TERM

When the heart-rending photograph of the three-year-old Syrian boy, Aylan Kurdi[3] lying dead face down on the sand of a Turkish beach took the world by storm in 2015, igniting outrage over the continuing humanitarian crisis that stare across Europe, the complex issue of human displacement across nations seems to be a subject of unending debate. Indeed the ambiguities and flexibility of terms like 'exile', 'expatriate', 'émigré', 'immigrant', 'emigrant', 'refugee', 'evacuee', 'displaced person', 'outcast', 'remittance man' etc. point towards a complex dissemination of the travelling self constantly negotiating between home and abroad, native culture and adopted culture, between a here, a there, *and* an elsewhere. The conventional concept of 'exile' conforms quite faithfully to its commonly understood meaning, as reflected, for example, in the first of two definitions cited by *The Oxford English Dictionary* — "enforced removal from one's native land according to an edict or sentence." This traditional concept of exile normally has elements of compulsion and punishment about it and its expressions in literature characteristically emerges as lamentations of loneliness, homesickness and self-pity. But there is another concept which is more relevant to

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[1] Smith, Zadie. *White Teeth*. Penguin, 2000, p. 402.
[2] Bunuel, Louis. *My last Sigh: The Autobiography of Luis Buñuel.* Vintage, 2013.
[3] Wikipedia Contributors. "Death of Alan Kurdi." *Wikipedia*, 17 Feb. 2017, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_Alan_Kurdi. Accessed 18 Feb. 2017.

a modern examination of this phenomenon, and *O.E.D's* second definition succinctly puts it as — "expatriation, prolonged absence from one's native land, endured by compulsion of circumstances or voluntarily undergone for any purpose." The implications of words synonymous to 'exile' veer between between an archaic sense and a modern, political one – banishment/deportation; exodus/flight; émigré/immigrant; wanderer/refugee.

Edward Said in his essay *Reflections on Exile* elucidates this shift of meaning from earlier times to reflect on the harsh reality of today's world:

> "But the difference between earlier exiles and those of our own time is, it bears stressing, scale: our age with its modern warfare, imperialism, and the quasi-theological ambitions of totalitarian rulers is indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration. Against this large, impersonal setting, exile cannot be made to serve notions of humanism. On the twentieth-century scale, exile is neither aesthetically nor humanistically comprehensible: at most the literature about exile objectifies an anguish and a predicament most people rarely experience at first hand; but to think of the exile informing this literature as beneficially humanistic is to banalize its mutilations, the losses it inflicts on those who suffer them, the muteness with which it responds to any attempt to understand it as 'good for us.' Is it not true that the views of exile in literature and, moreover, in religion obscure what is truly horrendous: that exile is irremediably secular and unbearably historical; that it is produced by human beings for other human beings; and that, like death but without death's ultimate mercy, it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family and geography?"[4]

Said further says that this "irremediably secular and unbearably historical" phenomenon of untimely massive wandering remains "strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home whose essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious and even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are merely efforts to overcome the crippling sorrow of

[4] Said, Edward W. *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Harvard University Press, 2000, p. 138.

estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by "the loss of something left behind for ever" (Said 148).

The terminology of 'immigration', inevitably related and sometimes used interchangeably with 'exile' can be closely analysed in this context. By definition, immigrants are those who move across *national* borders, not regional or other boundaries. Thus, excluded are migrations that occur within national boundaries, such as the movement of blacks from America's rural south to the urban North during the first half of the 20th century. However even then, distinctions are blurred. The national borders are not fixed entities and they are always susceptible to shifts. *Boundaries* are constitutively crossed or transgressed. Sometimes people who were residing in their homeland find that they are residing in another nation despite the fact that they didn't move — the border did. Moreover, not everyone who crosses an international border is a migrant. Tourists, students studying abroad or diplomats are not defined as migrants, though they can sometimes live outside their homeland for an extended period of time. So the matter of 'settlement', whether defined as permanent or not, serves to differentiate immigration from other border crossings. Christian Joppke has proposed an alternative definition. He writes that, "Immigration is the permanent movement of people across states, seen from the perspective of the receiving (rather than sending) states."[5] Joppke voices a corrective to what he perceives to be a tendency to portray immigration as a "stateless" phenomenon. The onus is on states to define who is and who is not an immigrant. They do so by enacting laws. States distinguish immigrants into two broad categories – on the one hand are labour migrants i.e. those who move for economic reasons, while on the other hand are asylum seekers and refugees i.e. those who are motivated by the conviction that if they remain in their homeland, their lives are at risk. States enact immigration laws that are designed in theory to control the flows of labour immigrants.

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[5] Joppke, Christian. "Immigration." *International encyclopedia of the social and behavioral sciences, Vol. II,* edited by N. J. Smelser and P. B. Baltes, Elsevier, 2001. p.7208.

Asylum seekers and refugees are perceived to have been forced to depart from their homeland. Asylum seekers leave their homes because they believe they need to do so in order to escape danger, which can include the threat of involuntary confinement, slavery, physical violence, torture, or death. The danger can be associated with political upheaval in a nation, with religious or ethnic sectarian conflict or with the subjugation of the rights of women. As individuals, asylum seekers need to convince potential receiving nations that the claims that they are at risk are justified. Refugees differ from such asylum seekers – the fact that they are at risk is generally accepted by the representatives of the international political order. The key actor in this process is the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which since its creation in 1950 protects the rights of people who seek asylum in order to find safe refuge in another state.

THE MATERIALITY OF THE BOOK

The initial trigger of the book, *The Arrival*[6] is the author Shaun Tan's preoccupation to create something around his own complex identity. Born and reared in a multi-cultural background, Tan makes an honest confession regarding the ideation of the book — "While I have lived most of my life in the same place, I do empathise with those who feel a certain sense of displacement, and find the question of belonging constantly interesting. That's partly due to being non-indigenous and mixed race, living in a country with a largely transplanted culture, epitomised by the bulldozed landscape of suburban Western Australia in which I grew up. These were comfortable surroundings, but my childhood lacked any strong cultural roots or a sense of historical context."[7] He further adds,

> "This notion of an 'unwritten' journey has been something of a preoccupation in my other illustrated books, stories featuring nameless characters and places, themes of displacement and alienation. Naturally, I'm often asked if this has

[6] Tan, Shaun. *The Arrival*. Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007.

[7] Tan, Shaun. *The Arrival and Sketches from a Nameless Land: The Art of the Arrival*. Hachette Australia, 2000, p. 10.

> something to do with my personal background: the answer is yes, but not in a simple or obvious way. I grew up in the outer suburbs of a very remote city, Perth in Western Australia, one of two children in a mixed race family, my father Malaysian Chinese, my mother Anglo-Australian. At that time and place, being half-Chinese was unusual, and cause enough to feel like an outsider, although it's easy to overstate the effects of racism in an otherwise benevolent, middle-class suburbia. More critically, in terms of my artistic imagination, there is something interesting about living in such an isolated place, with parents of very different backgrounds, within a country with a brief but intense history of cultural displacement. It all tends to provoke some broad philosophical questions about identity and belonging. These questions also appear at a smaller scale, such as when I'm out sketching in the park, driving in the city, visiting a suburban supermarket, or remembering the coast of my childhood, running parallel to the flat line of the Indian Ocean. What does it mean to belong to a place, to understand a particular world, yet also feel that many aspects of it are beyond your grasp and can't be fully explained? I think this is a question everyone asks throughout their life, regardless of age, background or education. It's a basic question of existence" (Tan, *Sketches* 10).

The elusive genre of the book, along with its other postmodern features unmistakably posits *The Arrival* as an extension of this continuum. Tan's text blurs genres by demonstrating its affinity with both picture books and graphic novels/comic strips. Barbara Kiefer[8] explains, picture books, published for much of the last century generally as a 32-page hard-bound sequence of images and words, centered on a simple story, mainly for the education and enjoyment of the youngest readerships. They began to change significantly in the 1960s as the Vietnam War and civil rights movement opened the genre to previously taboo topics and new audiences (Kiefer 9, 19). Authorial intent to experiment with the conventions of picture books has resulted in the blending of their form and format with those of the comic strip and graphic novel (Kiefer 20). Tan confirms such

[8] Kiefer, Barbara. "What is a picturebook, anyway? The evolution of form and substance through the postmodern era and beyond", *Postmodern Picturebooks: Play, Parody, and Self-Referentiality*, edited by Lawrence R. Sipe and Sylvia Pantaleo, Routledge, 2008, pp. 9-21.; For further reference also see Kiefer, Barbara. *The Potential of Picture Books: From Visual Literacy to Aesthetic Understanding.* Pearson, 1994.

merging of genres in his essay "The Accidental Graphic Novelist"[9] (Tan 2011). He explains that he had originally planned to work on a rather traditional 32-page picture book of short written text and double-page illustrations. However, his ideas gradually grew into a 128-page project which is closer to graphic novel/comics[10] with no text and complex sequences of illustrations to match the "density of [his] subject" (Tan, *Accidental* 2-3). Marketing played a major role in naming the genre. The Australian publisher accepted Tan's initial outline for a picture book, while the French rights were sold to an enterprise specialising in *bande dessinée* and targeting adult audiences (Tan, *Accidental* 2). In the United States, *The Arrival* was also advertised as a graphic novel, this time for young adults (Tan, *Accidental* 2). Accordingly, it is very difficult to categorise the text — Tan's original plans and the pictorial character of the work signal its kinship with traditional children's picture books, while its complexity as a lengthy commentary on the political theme of cultural displacement and belonging mark the text's allegiance to boundary-breaking comics meant for adults. Such blending contributes to *The Arrival*'s postmodern indeterminancy.

The first thing that strikes the readers about *The Arrival* is the way the author Shaun Tan has presented the materiality of the book itself. The cover of the book [Fig. 67] imitates an old worn out book or album or folio, leather-bound, its edges slightly frayed due to ravages of time. The cover image showing a scene from inside the book is placed strategically in the middle, imparting a symmetrical structure to it. The centred placement of the title font and author's name accentuates that balance. Moreover, the image is the only part of the cover which is UV-embossed, distinguishing it from the surrounding parts. The tactile quality of the glossy surface contrasts with the matt finish around the image. The embossing ensures that the image is slightly 'raised' which not only enhances the tactile quality of the book cover but also creates a natural hollow frame within which the image (imitating a photograph) is inscribed. Even the bar-code, a necessity in the

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[9] Tan, Shaun. "The Accidental Graphic Novelist." *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature*, vol. 49, no. 4, October, 2011, http://muse.jhu.edu/article/454831. Accessed 8 Nov. 2012

[10] Tan uses the word 'graphic novels' but also acknowledges the way his publishers played a role in renaming it. So it is consistent with my position that graphic novel is a term used used by publishers to gain 'literary' traction.

book-trade, appears to be stitched to a stray piece of cloth in the back cover. The overall look of the cover spread, with its crumpled creases on the edges, makes it an artefact which has just about survived the ravages of time.

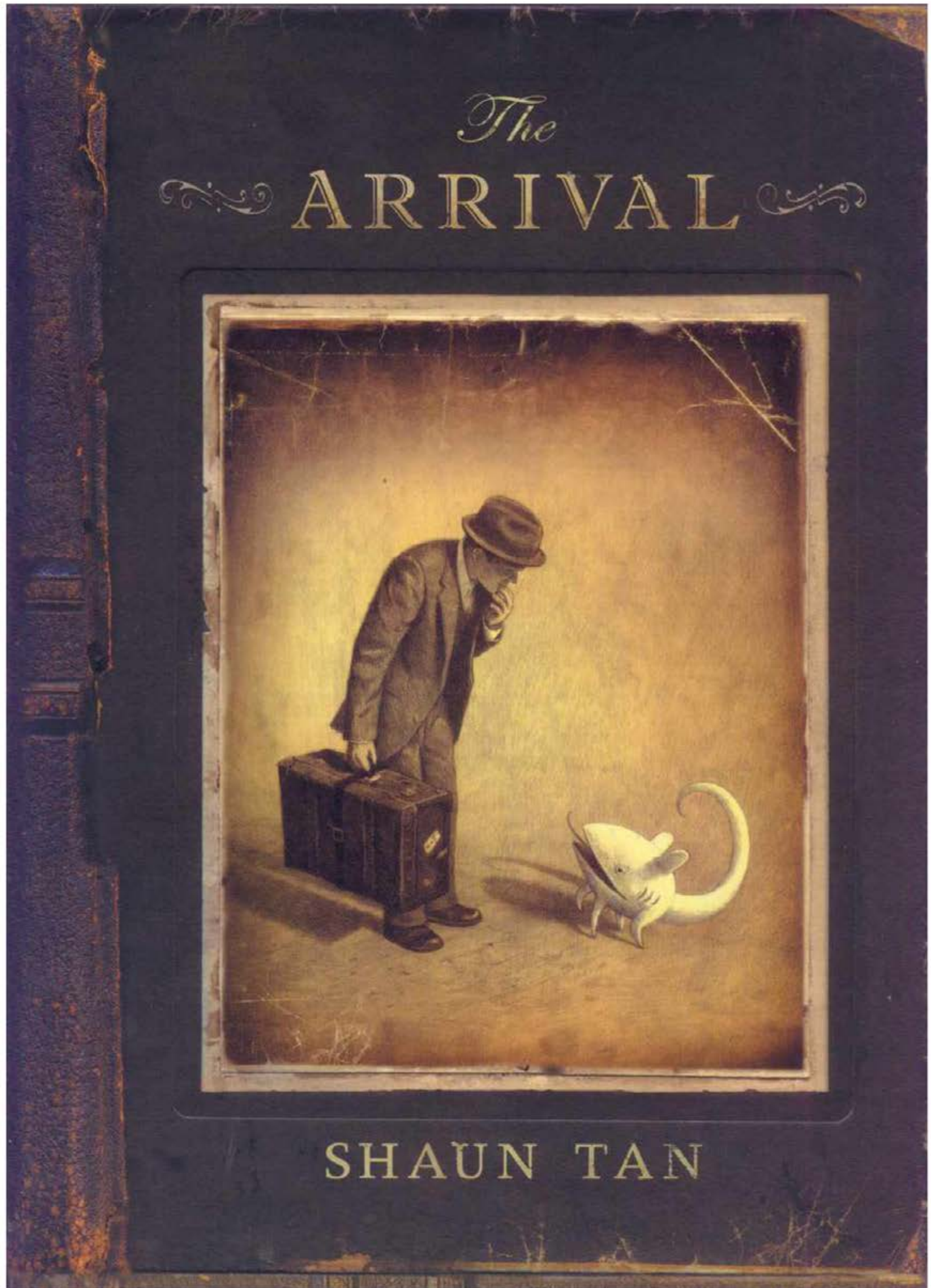

Fig. 67: Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*, Cover

So when a reader borrows or buys a book titled *The Arrival*, the first impression is like having an old album in hand, some(thing) that he/she has suddenly stumbled on. The 'newness' of the book is constantly undercut by the imitative evocation of the old picture album that has seemingly passed through many hands before finally 'arriving' at the intended reader (one who is presently reading the book). All books are artefacts but in its location from a time that has passed, *The Arrival* functions, in effect, as a souvenir of migration, a keepsake whose place of origin is impossible to locate. The temporal and spatial origin of the album is unknown except for its evocation of an unspecified 'past' time. The inside pages add to this construction of the past — they bear evidence of tears, rips, defects, stains, creases, partial erasure and markings. The first half-title page [Fig. 68] is shrouded in mystery as it uses lettering of an alien language to foreground its identity. The defamiliarised text *may* contain some meaning but the reader is unable to locate it. The act of withholding a clear identifiable name of the album adds to its exotic origin. Like a migrant who is unable to read a new language, the reader struggles to comprehend the written sign. Suddenly, the reader occupies the position, similar to the migrant. As a reader he/she is warned that they need to navigate the book/album in a more tentative way. The assured reading, with all the expected lexical codes in place, is not to be expected here. This page also inscribes the name of the author below the title which can only be visually read as 'Shaun Tan'. The denial of lexical clarity in reading the author's name also points out to the complex nature of the transmission of this particular album. The identity of the compiler of this particular album is lost in the melee of time. It is open to speculation whether it is a book of souvenir by an anonymous collector or by the migrant himself (the protagonist in the text) or by the daughter of that protagonist. In short, the album is a material entity from a far off land whose moment of origin has been lost forever.

The only recognisable spatial and temporal marking in the page is the miniscule blue stamp on the Inspection Card which denotes "Port of Departure: Glasgow" and "Date of Departure: 23 Mar 1912." The name of immigrant is also there in the card but the stylised longhand makes it difficult to decipher. Although this card apparently marks the album's journey as a traveling object, it may also be

part of curious but related collectibles that constitutes the creation of the album in the first place.

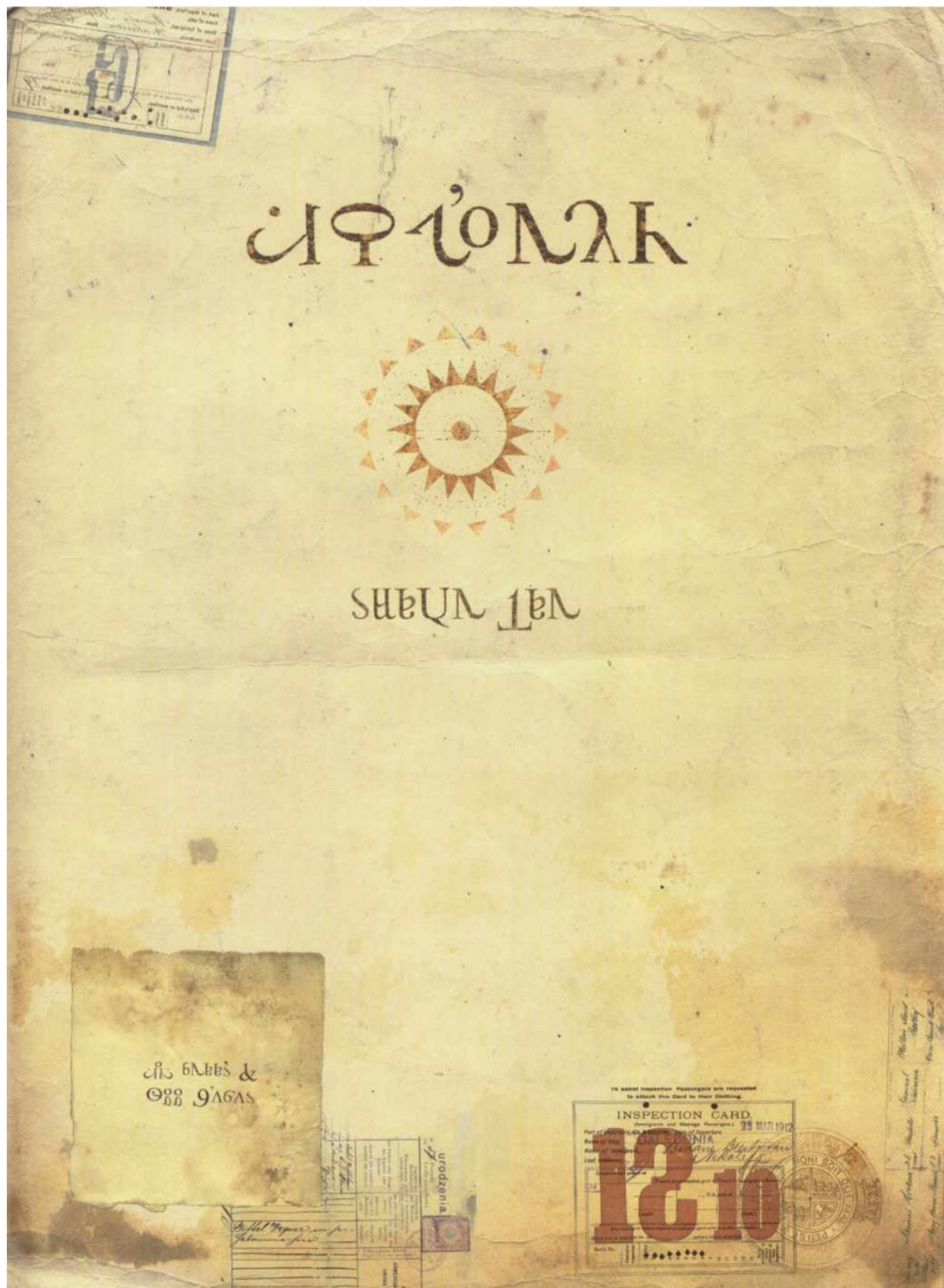

Fig. 68: *The Arrival*, Half-title Page

The stray inspection card (for Immigrants and Steerage Passengers) as an item to be preserved is closely related to the impulse of gathering archival materials related to immigrants in general. So the card *may not be* the key to the identity of the compiler of the album. This refusal to pin down the title of the album and the

identity of its compiler creates a sense of unease about its transmission through time. It also complicates its status as a received object that authenticates the past. The memory of 'authentic' experience is both elusive and allusive as it occurs beyond the present lived experience. So the memory of the past gets conflated in the memory of the artefact. Susan Stewart in her book, *On Longing*, explains as much when she says,

> "We might say that this capacity of objects to serve as traces of authentic experience is, in fact, exemplified by the souvenir. The souvenir distinguishes experiences. We do not need or desire souvenirs of events that are repeatable. Rather we need and desire souvenirs of events that are reportable, events whose materiality has escaped us, events that thereby exist only through the invention of narrative. Through narrative the souvenir substitutes a context of perpetual consumption for its context of origin. It represents not the lived experience of its maker but the 'secondhand' experience of its possessor/owner. Like the collection, it always displays the romance of contraband, for its scandal is its removal from its 'natural' location. Yet it is only by means of its material relation to that location that it acquires its value…The souvenir speaks to a context of origin through a language of longing, for it is not an object arising out of need or use value; it is an object arising out of the necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia."[11]

She also asserts that that a souvenir doesn't function without the supplementary narrative discourse that both attaches it to its origins and creates a myth with regard to those origins. This discourse belongs to the possessor, not to the object itself — "the souvenir displaces the point of authenticity as it itself becomes the point of origin for narrative. Such a narrative cannot be generalized to encompass the experience of anyone; it pertains only to the possessor of the object" (Stewart 136). In effect, positing *The Arrival* as a souvenir creates multiple narratological perspective for each reader who (re)arranges the content of the album in his/her own way. Another way in which Tan achieves this formally is by refusing to assign page numbers to this tome[12]. The reader, if he/she wishes, can move to any page,

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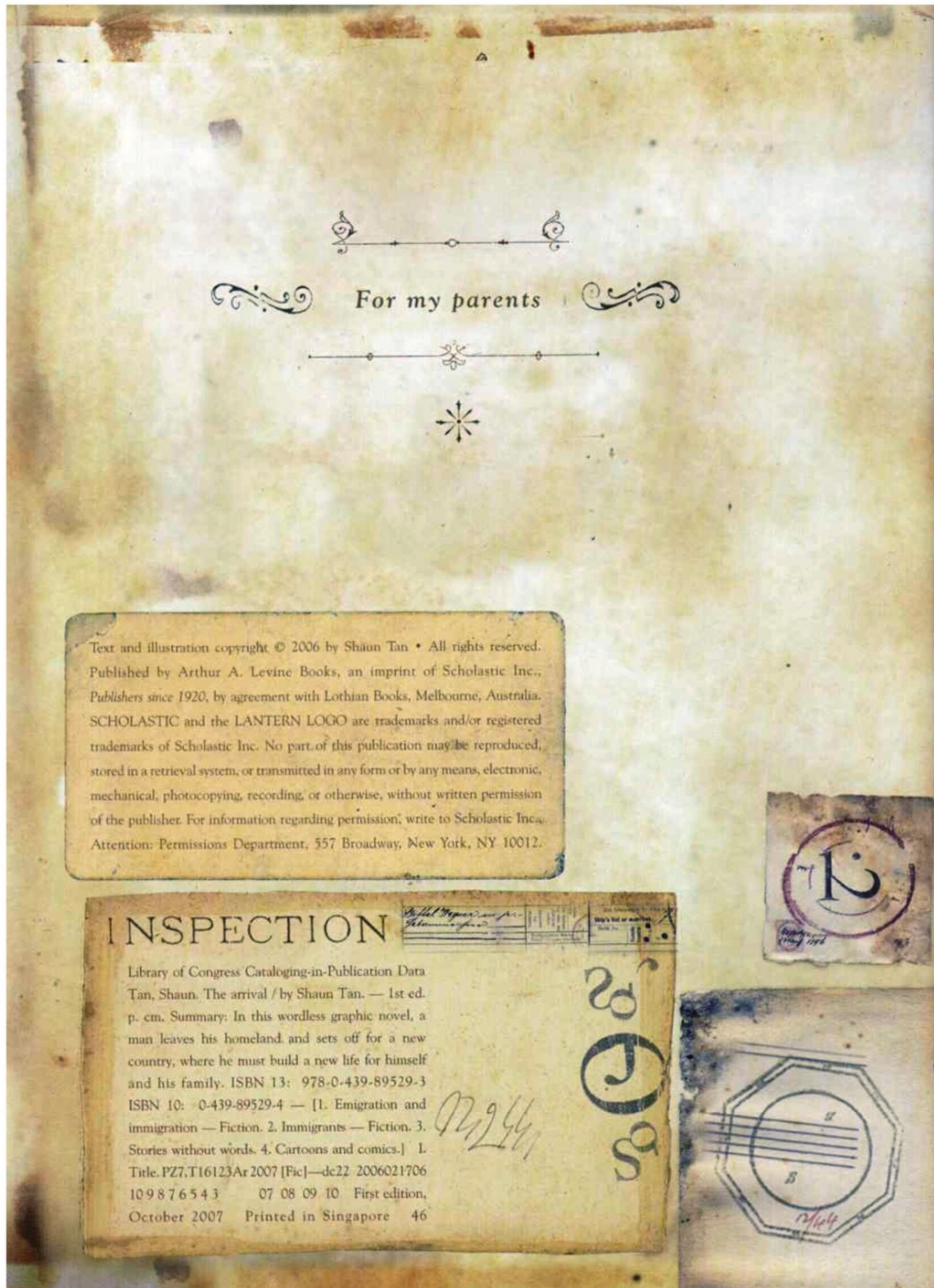
[11] Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, p. 135.

[12] I have manually marked the pages in the book only for the purpose of convenience. They are non-existent in the book itself.

any panel, any detail within a panel without referring to a specific page number. By deleting the page numbers, the author slyly encourages a random reading of the contents within the album rather than insisting on a chronological structured reading. The freedom from page numbers also puts the onus on the readers to physically locate his/her position in the book through the use of bookmarks. The bookmark (which can be anything from a ribbon to another folded page) is another artefact that needs to be inserted within the folds of the pages to 'find' the chronology of the narrative within the album. The effacement of the page number in the book is also the erasure of citational specificity within the narrative. In order to cite a particular panel, the reader has to create his own index, as conventional and accepted citation cannot be done without the mention of the page number.

According to Golnar Nabizadeh, "*The Arrival's* nostalgic remembrance of a future-past, carves out a space between realism and the surreal as it is haunted by an impossible desire for reunion…In this way, each reader mobilises the tradition of narrativisation by imagining the events within and around the construction of *The Arrival*."[13] The copyright page [Fig. 69] also masquerades an old album with small paper markings and stamps all over itself. Here, the inspection card of the earlier page is turned backwards to show details regarding the book. Below the title 'INSPECTION', the readers encounter Library of Congress-in Publication data, ISBN number, a brief summary and other details like genre and printing press from where it is 'produced'. The dedication and the copyright issues are written in the page like any other standard printed book in circulation. The page in the facing page reiterates the title, the author and the name of the publisher but this time in recognisable English language. The English full title page reads almost like a 'translation' of the previous half-title page. The two facing pages – copyright page and the full title page – are similarly presented as yellow, torn, archaic and soiled from regular usage or continued storage over years [Fig.70].

[13] Nabizadeh, Golnar. "Visual melancholy in Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*." *Journal Of Graphic Novels And Comics*, Taylor and Francis, vol. 5, Issue 3, 2014, pp. 366-379., http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21504857.2014.943549. Accessed 12 Nov. 2016.



For my parents

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INSPECTION

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Tan, Shaun. The arrival / by Shaun Tan. — 1st ed.
p. cm. Summary: In this wordless graphic novel, a man leaves his homeland and sets off for a new country, where he must build a new life for himself and his family. ISBN 13: 978-0-439-89529-3
ISBN 10: 0-439-89529-4 — [1. Emigration and immigration — Fiction. 2. Immigrants — Fiction. 3. Stories without words. 4. Cartoons and comics.] I. Title. PZ7.T16123Ar 2007 [Fic]—dc22 2006021706
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 07 08 09 10 First edition, October 2007 Printed in Singapore 46

Fig. 69: *The Arrival*, Copyright Page

The thin baroque decorative border frames of the full-title page imitate the introductory page of old photo albums. In the middle, a taped photograph of the protagonist with a hat is looking away from the direct gaze of the readers.

Fig. 70: *The Arrival*, Half-title page (left) and the Full title page (right)

The gaze of the protagonist is a very important formal element in *The Arrival* which will be explained later in the chapter. The two pages (copyright page and the full title page) inspite of their uniform look, also help to disrupt the complete identification of the book as a photo album. Despite its exterior facade imitating the material features of the old artefact, in the lived reality of present time, the readers have to either buy or borrow the book in order to read its content. The book needs to be mass printed, circulated, made available in bookstores and libraries in order to reach its intended readers. In sharp contrast to the photo album which is an artefact of personal memory in most cases, the book needs to be part of the regular trade practice of mechanical reproduction in order to be disseminated widely. Tan is aware of this paradox. He intentionally opens the liminal space within which the materiality of the book operates — as a real artefact of wide circulation and also as an imagined photo album kept over years as a souvenir of past. It is to be noted, as Tan himself has pointed out, that he has not only recreated the outer materiality of the photo album with scanned and photo-shopped details but more importantly, he is more interested in "borrowing the language of old pictorial archives and family visual vocabulary…which have

both a documentary clarity and an enigmatic sepia-toned silence."[14] He is clearly "intrigued by the idea of borrowing the 'language' of old pictorial archives and family photo albums … all these faded, unlabelled scenes that are at once particular and universal. Photo albums are perfect examples of how illustrated narrative works most effectively."[15] The photographic album with the silent parade of archival photographs collected together creates a narrative of memory. However, Susan Sontag in her cult essay "Plato's Cave" says, "photographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal, (but) they also help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure … a photograph is both a pseudo-presence and a token of absence.'[16] So if photographs preserve memory, they also help in the creation of 'counter-memory' within numerous 'absences' that they cannot capture. In fact, an archival photograph without a caption is almost like a undistinguishable continuum of the past that it professes to capture — all ancestors become abstractions, without their proper names; all family trips become the same trip. Sontag appropriately renames photographs as "ghostly traces" (Sontag 9). The use of the visual vocabulary of the photo album in *The Arrival* allows Tan to veer in-between the meticulous affirmation of the past ("documentary clarity") and the simultaneous denial of the absolute in the depiction of that past ("an enigmatic sepia-toned silence"). This alterity between presence and absence is enhanced by the fact that Tan doesn't use real photographs in this book at all. Although his drawings are photograph-like, they are *not* photographs per se. Like Sacco, he draws them with his hands. Unlike Sacco, he makes them painstakingly photo-realistic.

The endpaper of *The Arrival* is a double-spread which contains sixty passport-sized images, arranged in a neat grid of vertical six-tier, containing five horizontally aligned squares. Most of these passport-picture-like drawings are

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[14] Tan, Shaun. "Comments on *The Arrival." www.shauntan.net,* publication date unspecified, http://www.shauntan.net/books/the-arrival.html. Accessed 16 Dec. 2014.
[15] Tan, Shaun. "The 2009 Colin Simpson Memorial Lecture." Australian Society of Authors, 2009, https://vimeo.com/3969462. Accessed 20 June 2012.
[16] Sontag, Susan. *Susan Sontag on Photography*. Penguin, 1978, p.16.

inspired by old photographs from the archives of Ellis Island Museum in New York City. The anonymity of these endpaper images indicates identification with the large stream of refugees and migrants who are displaced from their homeland for various reasons. Tan has included their images to pay tribute to their different narratives that cannot be depicted in this book, although their narratives are refracted through the singularity of the migrant's story in *The Arrival*. In confronting these miniscule images, the spectator is also confronted with the whispered image of a ghost, which Barthes refers to as the 'return of the dead.'[17] The meaning of a photograph-like image is never fixed, never guaranteed which leaves the spectator unsure if they apprehend a real image (and thus a real narrative). Sontag uses the word "memory" here to connect with "the only relation we can have with the dead" (Sontag 90). Sontag actually refers to photograph as "not only an image (as a painting is an image), an interpretation of the real; it is also a trace, something directly stenciled off the real, like footprint or a death mask" (Sontag 154).[18] Its special status seems to derive less from the photographic end product than from the process of its production: photography is "a material vestige of its subject in a way that no painting can be" (Sontag 154).

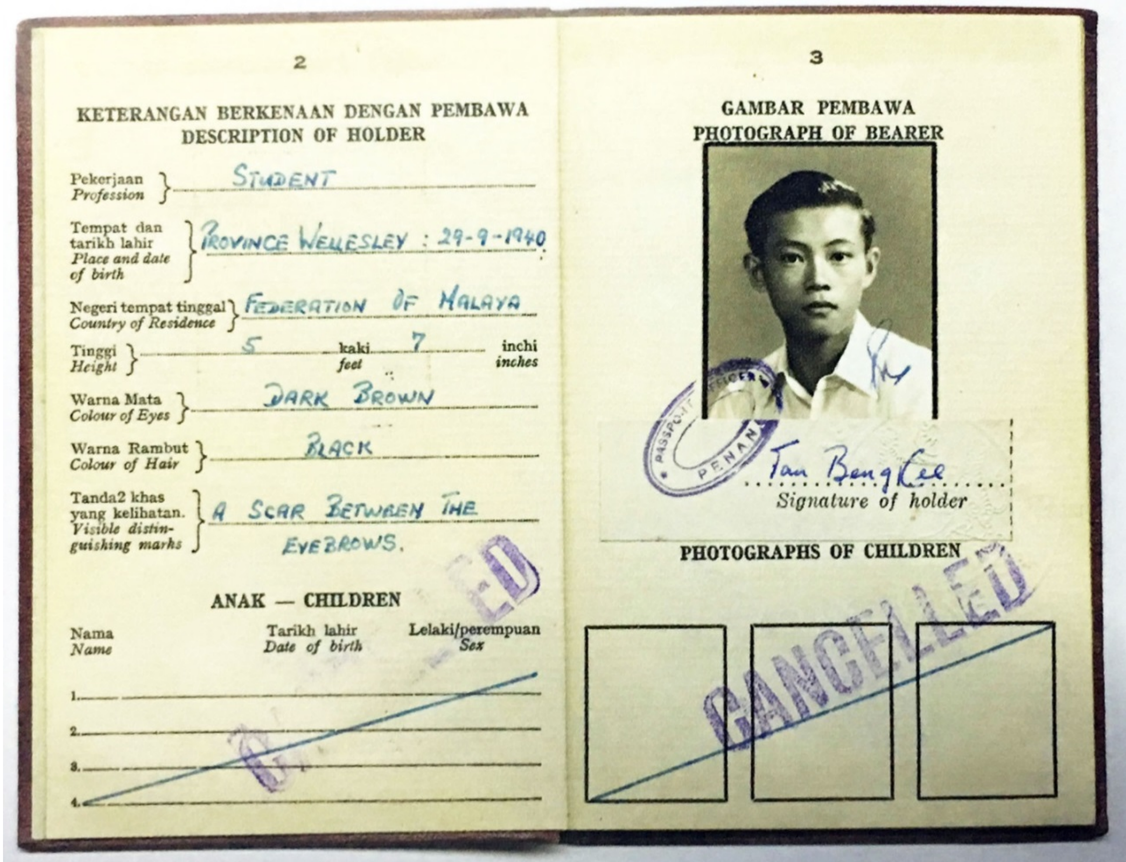
However, as mentioned earlier, Tan subtly subverts the aesthetics, specific to 'photograph', by imitating the photo-realism of the photograph and overlaying them with his hand-crafted pencil shadings. The "ghostly traces" become more elusive, freeing them from the material attachments of the real. They seem like an impersonal random collection of anonymous persons until the informed reader discovers a miniscule detail within the end-paper images [marked in red within Fig. 71]. One of the drawn portraits in the endpapers belongs to Tan's own father who is Chinese, born in Malaysia to immigrant parents. According to Tan, "They met at a stationary store where my mother worked, and where, my father, who had come to study architecture, began buying an excessive number of technical pens" (Tan, *Sketches* 10). Later he married her to settle in Perth where Tan grew up as a child. The portrait is situated at the lowest left-corner of the endpaper spread and it

[17] Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Vintage, 1981, p.79.
[18] Sontag, Susan. "Image-World." *Susan Sontag on Photography*. Penguin, 1978.

clearly imitates the photograph pasted on the first passport of his father as replicated in *Sketches From a Nameless Land: The Art of The Arrival*.

Fig. 71: *The Arrival*, Endpapers

In a way, Tan (re)writes himself within the narrative by placing his father's face within the mélange of unknown faces. Tan must have gained access to the old cancelled passport of his father as part of memorabilia related to family heirloom. Tan replicates the photograph of his father in the passport [Fig. 72] in the endpaper to conflate the narrative of his fictional protagonist with his own family narrative of displacement and migration. By this act, Tan links the past of his father's situation with his own present and places himself within larger collective of migration. The passport is also a document of identity and the paraphernalia associated with its stamping is elaborate and mostly bureaucratic. Tan recreates the same process in the manner the protagonist gets his identity papers when he first arrived in the alien land. Tan's father, like the protagonist of *The Arrival*, must have his own unique story to tell when he migrated from Malaysia to Australia.


2

KETERANGAN BERKENAAN DENGAN PEMBAWA
DESCRIPTION OF HOLDER

Pekerjaan / *Profession*: STUDENT

Tempat dan tarikh lahir / *Place and date of birth*: PROVINCE WELLESLEY : 29-9-1940

Negeri tempat tinggal / *Country of Residence*: FEDERATION OF MALAYA

Tinggi / *Height*: 5 kaki / *feet* 7 inchi / *inches*

Warna Mata / *Colour of Eyes*: DARK BROWN

Warna Rambut / *Colour of Hair*: BLACK

Tanda2 khas yang kelihatan. / *Visible distinguishing marks*: A SCAR BETWEEN THE EYEBROWS.

ANAK — CHILDREN

Nama / *Name*	Tarikh lahir / *Date of birth*	Lelaki/perempuan / *Sex*
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

3

GAMBAR PEMBAWA
PHOTOGRAPH OF BEARER

Tan Beng Kee
Signature of holder

PHOTOGRAPHS OF CHILDREN

CANCELLED

Fig. 72: Passport of Tan's Father

Of course, Tan never migrated. He is born in Australia. However, Tan as the child of a migrant, forms a distinct group shaped by personal, familial and larger cultural processes characterized by strong relational structures with others from a similar familial background. For him, the very act of drawing/writing about the present absences shows that memory is understood as the connective bridge between the present and the past. Memory is the only way of engaging the self with the reality of loss and void, the limits of the imagination and the remnants of a family's past. It also validates the contention of Maurice Halbwachs who says that the family is one of the social frameworks that constructs a common fount of memory (Halbwachs 58-59). It is given a different dimension by the idea of "postmemory" as coined by Marianne Hirsch – "Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor

recreated."[19] She maintains that postmemory seeks connection' with an earlier past of the family and thus to find elements of a usable past rather than absence, lack, or "nonmemory". Tan's connection with his own past is the trigger behind *The Arrival* as it seeks to revisit the site of his family's origin in a tale that is more allegorical than specific.

In the endpapers, Tan pays close detailed attention to both drawing and framing the faces of the migrants. The faces with their direct gazes and exotic headgears are framed as 'the other' to be seen, not as someone who also sees. The anonymous faces are *perhaps* the last extant memories of different forgotten trajectories of various lost migration narratives. The face is both the key and the question – it is the living remnant, the site of memory but it also charts forgetfulness of their stories. As the faces are put on view for the readers, mostly privileged Western viewers, a stance of 'not knowing' confronts the invisible power dynamics that structure acts of looking, in particular the ways in which Western viewers are accustomed to see 'the other'. Such uncertainty of 'not knowing' can function as a kind of ethical stop-gap, blocking the usual trajectory of seeing, so that 'the other' is not transformed into a definable object. Faces are referenced and framed like passport photos – simply boxed within a specific size, with no names attached. This kind of passport-like, no-nonsense framing mostly resonates with a kind of official discourse. This lends the stories – and the faces – a certain kind of legitimacy. Such framing also functions ironically, since many of these persons are in fact stateless and are unable to obtain a passport. While the faces depicted are certainly poignant, the readers are not being asked to identify or empathise with these faces as particular characters with specific narrative trajectories. The sheer numbers of these faces within passport frames are monotonous in their size and repetition which suggests a sense of truthfulness through consensus. The similarity of the frames reinforces the similarity of the stories, and together they build a fuller picture of immigration in general.

[19] Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Harvard University Press, 1997, p.22.

ON MIGRATION/IMMIGRATION

Before plunging into an analysis of the text, it is important to understand the discourse related to immigration. The problematic subject matter of immigration has been claimed by many social-science disciplines. Geographers, sociologists and economists (including economic historians) can probably claim the longest engagement but many other disciplines have also been involved, such as social psychology, political science, anthropology, history, demography, law and moving across to the humanities, literary, media and cultural studies.

Wilbur Zelinsky's "hypothesis of the mobility transition"[20] links changes in migration and mobility behaviour to different stages in the modernisation process. The key statement underlining the Zelinsky's model is that "there are definite patterned regularities in the growth of personal mobility through space-time during recent history, and these regularities comprise an essential component of the modernization process" (Zelinsky 221-222). Zelinsky later acknowledged the shortcomings of his Eurocentric model and in a frank reappraisal ditched his modernisation theory to confess that migration patterns in the less developed world are contingent on the decisions and policies of governments and large corporations in the rich countries. Saskia Sassen's recent work on global cities[21] further reworks the issue of migration. The primary engine of growth of global cities in the post-industrial era has been the clustering of corporate headquarters, financial centres and related producer services. The social and income structure of such cities takes on an hour-glass shape, with 'bulges' of high-income and very low-income inhabitants, the latter mostly consisting of migrants serving the needs of the former. Castles and Miller's *The Age of Migration*[22] adopts a broader political economy perspective on the phenomenon of global migration. They opine that migration flows are not all channelled along the pathways of capital penetration. Migration develops in ways that are much more spontaneous,

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[20] Zelinsky, Wilbur. "The Hypothesis of the Mobility Transition." *Geographical Review*, American Geographical Society, vol. 61, no. 2, April, 1971, pp. 219-249, http://www.jstor.org/stable/213996. Accessed 24 April 2014.

[21] Sassen, Saskia. *The Mobility of Labor and Capital: A Study in International Investment and Labor Flow.* Cambridge University Press, 1988. Print.

[22] Castles, S., and M.J. Miller. *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World.* Guilford Press, 2004.

patterned by geographies of perceived opportunity as they pop up in different parts of the world. They also pay attention to the role that the State plays in patterning migration flows. In today's world the immigration policies of receiving states – quota and admission systems, regulations of entry, duration of stay, work permits, citizenship rights etc. – directly shapes the volume, dynamics and geographical patterns of international migration flows. Castles and Miller do acknowledge that international migration challenges the hegemony of the state and fundamentally retextures national societies with the growth of "transnational societies" (Castles and Miller 12).

Charles Tilly[23] adds a new dimension when he re-phrases the idea of migration: "it is not people who migrate but networks" (Tilly 79). Migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, non-migrants and former migrants in webs of kinship, friendship and shared origin. There is a darker side to it, as the phenomenon of smuggling and trafficking networks across continents testify.

The second problematic addresses the matter of immigrant incorporation and its particular modes like assimilation, pluralism and multiculturalism. Sometimes the issue of assimilation is often an issue of racial supremacy — any group who is allowed to assimilate into the dominant culture largely depends on the whether that group will fit into the political, social, and economic desires of the dominant group, a group that historically comprises of European white ethnic groups. Robert Erza Park (1864-1944), one of the first American sociologists and scholars to focus on ethnic relations, is considered a founding father of early assimilation theories. Park's assimilation theory, widely referred to as the "race relations cycle"[24], was one of the first to incorporate the term "assimilation" into a model. Park suggested that immigrants are incorporated into a given society in four stages – contact, conflict, acculturation, and assimilation. His theory was that all immigrants face hostility and struggles initially, but gradually they are able to shed their ethnic identities and conform to the normative climate of the dominant

[23] Tilly, Charles. "Transplanted Networks." *Immigration reconsidered: History, sociology, and politics,* edited by V. Yans-McLaughlin. Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 79–95.

[24] Park, Robert Ezra. "Assimilation, social." *Encyclopedia of the social sciences,* edited by E.R.A. Seligman and A. Johnson, Macmillan, pp. 281–283.

group in society. Eventually the group melts right in with the dominant group. Park's theory was widely accepted but not everyone agreed with the simplicity of his model. For instance, Emory Bogardus[25] developed his own model in which he proposed seven steps towards assimilation, including the native population's curiosity about immigrants, followed by an economic welcoming, then competition, legislative antagonism, fair play, quiescence, and finally partial second and third-generation assimilation. The last stage of Bogardus's model is worthy of attention because he never claimed that immigrants would be able to assimilate fully into the receiving society but rather that second and succeeding generations would be accepted partially only after close scrutiny of their country of origin. Bogardus is better known for his social distance scale (the "Bogardus scale") used to measure the preferred distance between two groups of people. One the best known assimilation theories, introduced in the early 1990s by Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou is segmented assimilation.[26] Segmented assimilation refers to the idea that there are multiple routes to assimilation and that these routes are not necessarily positive in their outcomes. Depending on their national origins, wealth, skin colours, phenotypes, accents, social networks and opportunities, some groups may be able to assimilate more quickly or easily than other groups. Historically western European and other lighter-skinned immigrants have been more successful in assimilating into mainstream American society compared to their darker-skinned counterparts. It is to be noted that most of these pioneering work was done in specific context of American immigration issues, although they are regarded representational in wider context as well.

Transnationalism entered the lexicon of immigration studies in the early 1990s with the pioneering work of Glick Schiller. According to him, earlier era's immigrants have broken off all homeland social relations and cultural ties, thereby locating themselves solely within the sociocultural, economic, and political orbit of the receiving society. By contrast, today's immigrants are "composed of those

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[25] Bogardus, Emory. "A Social Distance Scale." *Sociology and Social Research, 17*, January–February, 1933, pp. 265–271, https://brocku.ca/MeadProject/Bogardus/Bogardus_1933.html. Accessed 12 Nov. 2012.

[26] Portes, A., and M. Zhou. "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and its Variants. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 530*, November, 1993, pp. 74–96.

whose networks, activities, and patterns of life encompass both their host and home societies. Their lives cut across national boundaries and bring two societies into a single social field"[27] (Glick Schiller 158). She uses two new terms – *transnationalism* and *transmigrants* – to describe this phenomenon. Perhaps the person most responsible for popularizing and expanding the use of the transnational perspective is the Princeton sociologist, Alejandro Portes. In his studies on various ethnic and social issues, Portes offers his most sustained articulation of transnationalism, explaining why it is unique, and what its implications are for ethnic communities over time.[28]

It is to be remembered that every voyage involves a re-setting of boundaries. The experience of exile/migrant/immigrant is never simply binary. According to Maurice Blanchot, "Exile is neither psychological nor ontological. The exile cannot accommodate himself to his condition, nor to renouncing it, nor to turning exile into a mode of residence. The immigrant is tempted to naturalize himself, through marriage for example, but he continues to be a migrant."[29] When migrants cross a boundary there is hostility *and* welcome. Migrants are included and excluded in different ways. Whilst some boundary walls are breaking down, others are being made even stronger to keep out the migrant, the refugee and the exile.

DECODING *THE ARRIVAL:* THE DEPARTURE

It is to be noted that *The Arrival* charts all these theoretical trajectories within its fictional ambit. One of the striking formal innovations to be noticed in *The Arrival* is the way the borders of the panel frame have been depicted. There are no hard lines unlike conventional frames in sequential graphic narratives. The slightly blurry borders are reminiscent of old film-reel or archival photographs. The

[27] Glick Schiller, N. "The Situation of Transnational Studies." *Identities, 4*(2), 1997, 155–166. ; For further reference see Glick Schiller, N., L. Basch, and C. Szanton Blanc. "From immigrant to transmigrant: Theorizing transnational migration." *Anthropological Quarterly, 68*(1), 1995, pp. 48–63.

[28] Portes, Alejandro. "Immigration theory for a new century: Some problems and opportunities." *The Handbook of International Migration: The American Experience,* edited by C. Hirschman, P. Kasinitz, and J. DeWind, Russell Sage Foundation, pp. 21–33.

[29] Blanchot, Maurice. *Vicious Circles*. Barrytown/Station Hill Press, 1995, p. 66.

indistinct frames also symbolize the temporality of memory as they fade out into the negative space. Literally, in each individual page, the negative space constitutes of the gutter, in between the blurry borders. The gutter is ample — mostly white, although in some pages, they are overlaid by darker vintage paper backgrounds. This foregrounding of the white space, evenly around the frames has created a distinct geometric grid in each page [for reference see the representative page in Fig. 73].

Fig. 73: A representative page from *The Arrival*

Except for full pages or spreads, whatever may be the arrangement, the grid is always “democratic” in the way it divides spaces down and across the rectangular page. The “democratic” division of space ensures that the page is

always evenly balanced in the way the sequentiality of the narrative is set up. Either they are arranged in the vertical alignment of 3 tiers and a corresponding horizontal arrangement of 3 panels or a ratio of 4 tiers with 3 horizontal panels. In some specific pages, Tan follows the template of the endpaper grid. The panels are stacked in 6 tier-five panel pattern, enabling the creator to make 30 panels. Writing about narrative techniques in comics, Claude Moliterni cites the case of Burne Hogarth's 1947 *Tarzan* comic and his manipulation of a repetitive grid to enable his drawing to reach a desired level of expression. His page design consisted of: "…three horizontal and three vertical strips. Over this grille, composed of nine equal rectangles, he ranged at ease, combining them in twos and threes, vertically, horizontally, or in four-block squares, thus obtaining a flexible, serene layout that accentuated his violently energetic style…"[30] Not surprisingly, due to the widespread disuse of rigid and repetitive page layout, alternative approaches to page design have been reflected in the research and writings of theorists such as Joseph Witek: "Given the freedom to design page layouts from scratch in the comic-book format, most artists almost immediately preferred to modify regular grids by eliminating one or more vertical panel borders to form double or triple width panels, thus varying the visual effect without actually altering the basic dimensions of the basic building-block panels."[31] Tan's use of "democratic grid" mirrors the explication of the term by Ivan Brunetti in his seminal book, *Cartooning*. Brunetti says,

> "By 'democratic', I am referring to a grid of panels that are all exactly the same size, from which we can infer their equal weight and value in the 'grand scheme' of the page. We can also think of this type of grid as an invisible template; it does not call immediate attention to itself, but invites us to an unimpeded narrative flow, acting as a living 'calendar' of events, sweeping or microscopic…We humans intuitively divide our existence into 'evenly spaced' units of time (not coincidentally, these are rooted in the cyclical patterns we see in nature: in the night sky, the tides, birth and death, our very heartbeats)."[32]

[30] Moliterni, Claude. "Narrative Technique." *A History of the Comic Strip,* edited by P. Couperie, M.C. Horn et al, translated by Eileen B. Hennessy, Crown Publishers, 1968, p. 187.
[31] Witek, Joseph. "The Arrow and the Grid." *A Comics Studies Reader*, edited by Jeet Heer and K. Worcester, University Press of Mississippi, 2009, p.153.
[32] Brunetti, Ivan. *Cartooning: Philosophy and Practice*. Yale University Press, 2011, p. 45.

Tan's division of the page into democratic panel is fused with the notion of "braiding" as coined by Thierry Groensteen (Groensteen, *System* 156-158). Thus *The Arrival* develops a whole vocabulary of spatial and temporal displacement which conveys manifold migratory histories and pasts that articulate cultures in transition. As Christophe Dony mentions,

> "One of the strategies specific to comics that Tan employs to convey this problematizing of space and time is that of 'braiding'. 'Braiding' is one instance of what Thierry Groensteen labels 'general arthrology.' In *The System of Comics* (2009), Groensteen opposes 'restrictive arthrology' to 'general arthrology.' He suggests that while the first concept is concerned with the relations between panels and their narrative interactions on the page, the second focuses on the meanings that can emerge from relations between panels at a distance. 'Braiding' is one example of general arthrology which, via the repetition of a specific panel arrangement, for example, connects narrative moments at a distance to reference a previous scene, sentiment, or atmosphere."[33]

In other words, Groensteen says that in some cases a group of sequential panels does not signify a sequence, but makes sense as a series. Groensteen himself describes a series as "a succession of continuous or discontinuous images linked by a system of iconic, plastic or semantic correspondences…the series is inscribed like an addition that the text secretes beyond its surface" (Groensteen, *System* 146). A series within the context of the comics can be less self-evident than a strict sequence, since the individual panels that make up a series do not necessarily occur next to each other in the comics' text or even on the same page. However, there will always be a kind of connect, a coherence. Groensteen calls the coherence that connects various panels in a work as a series, *tresage* or braiding, which deploys itself simultaneously in two dimensions — *synchronically*, that of the presence of the panels on the surface of the same page; and *diachronically*, that of the reading, which recognizes in each new term of a series a recollection of an echo of an anterior term. A tension is established between these these two axes but it results in the enrichment of the appreciation of the graphic narrative in

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[33] Dony, Christophe. "Moving between Worlds: *The Arrival." The Comics Grid*, 2011, p. 256, https://orbi.ulg.ac.be/bitstream/2268/109869/1/Moving%20Between%20Worlds_The%20Arrival_Comics%20Grid.pdf. Accessed 16 Dec. 2016.

question. Braiding thus manifests into consciousness the notion that the panels of a graphic narrative constitute a network. It creates a network within a comics' text through a paradigmatic or 'associative' logic in addition to the 'syntagmatic logic' at work in the sequence. Groensteen aptly calls "braiding as a supplementary relation that is never indispensable to the conduct and intelligibility of the story which the breakdown makes its own affair…Through the bias of a telearthrology, images that the breakdown holds at a distance, physically and contextually independent, are suddenly revealed as communicating closely, in debt to one another – in the manner that Vermeer's paintings, when they are reunited, are perceived to come in pairs, or in threesomes" (Groensteen, *System* 146).

Thus for Shaun Tan, the democratic grid becomes the tool for creating more complex narrative references than merely achieving spatial balance. The "braiding" within these panels ensures that the narrative mimics the displacement of a migrant's tale and connects it to his/her memories. The apparent symmetry of the spatial co-ordinates metamorphoses into various random disseminations that constitute the cusp of any memory. Various key images within panels can be mapped into other panels within the book as mirrors, echoes or reverberations of the previous entities. These are akin to floating signifiers that makes the entire book a cartographic puzzle that needs to be arranged by every individual reader in his/her own way.

I will analyze the modality of the formal grid first and then collate it with the braided 'floating signifiers' to create praxis of analyzing the text. The first section of the book displays a particular narrative movement which can be aptly termed 'Departure'. The first page of the section begins with images of many inanimate objects. The sequence seen horizontally portray an origami bird, the table clock (the clock hands showing ten past ten), the hat and the coat on the hook, a half-opened utensil and a spoon, a drawing (done by a child), a fractured teapot, a cup of tea (with its rim broken) along with a paper (probably a ticket) depicting the photograph of a steam-ship, a part of an old suitcase with clothes arranged neatly. These material objects all point to an ambience of domestic warmth. This tedium of objects is broken by the introduction of three human figures in the far right-hand lowermost panel [marked by red in Fig. 75].

Fig. 74: *The Arrival,* Page 1, Section I

However, that will prove illusory once the readers flip the page as they will soon discover that the human figures are part of a framed photograph. Tan employs the cinematic technique of zooming in order to shift from intimate familiarity to a sense of defamiliarised objectivity. The last panel in page 1 of Section I turns out to be a material object as well when we see the zoomed out frame of the family photograph resting on a ledge [Fig. 75]. The panel frame in page 1 imitates the physical frame of the photograph while in page 2, the panel frame contains it like a Chinese-box structure.

Fig. 75: *The Arrival,* From Page 1 (left) and Page 2 (right), Section I, collated together

The frame within a frame paradigm is taken further forward as the readers see a human hand taking the photograph and wrapping it up within a piece of cloth and putting it into the suitcase [Fig. 76]. The obvious symbolism here is that of the box of memories that everyone carries within himself/herself. However, the folding of the cloth which envelops the photograph echoes earlier references of folding in page 1 [Fig. 74]. The readers are invited to singularly look at the material objects discretely. The frames are of equal proportion and colour and thus they have equal contemplative weight.

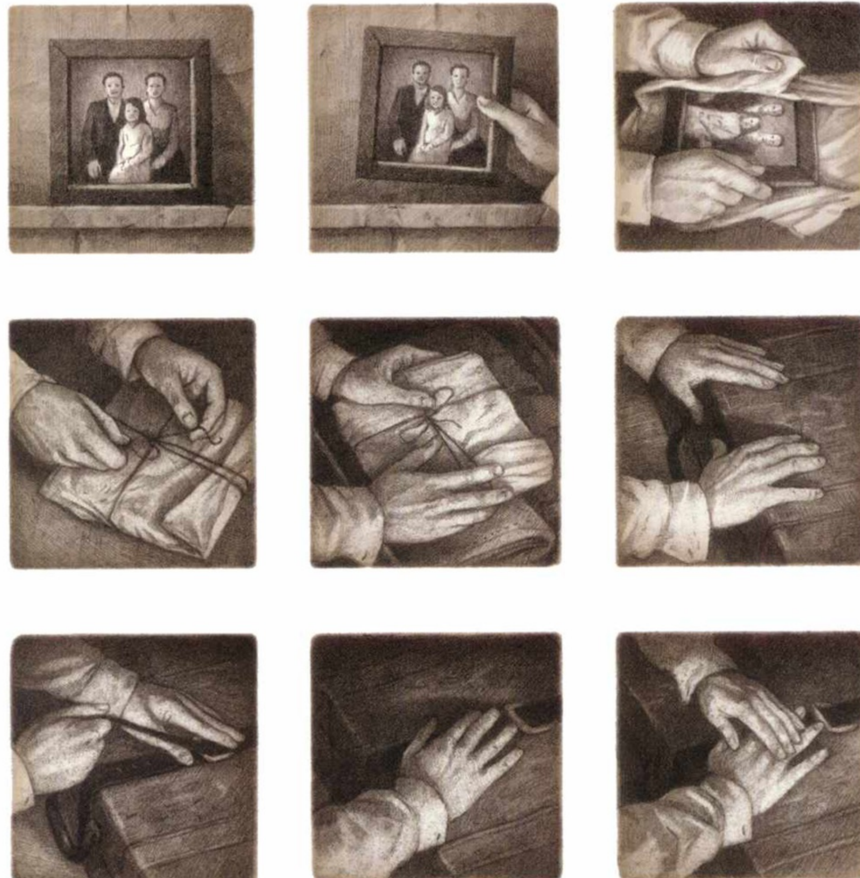

Fig. 76: *The Arrival,* Page 2, Section I

These nine panels can be viewed separately but the readers also make subtle connections within them. The origami bird has a counterpart in the hand-drawn bird sitting on the shoulders of the man in the centre panel of the page. The clock has its echoes in the smiling sun within the drawing, both indicative of time. The doodled family slowly transforms itself into a more real photographed presence in the last panel of the page. The steaming vapours from the teapot can also be seen emanating from the cup of tea. The origami bird is made of paper, which is also the medium of drawing for the child. The tickets are also made of paper. The cloth hanging in the third panel is mirrored in the folded cloth neatly packed within the box. The paper drawing is that of the man with the hat while in the photograph he is hatless. Another hat can be seen hanging in the hook in the third panel. These indices of a common thread point towards a connection between the apparently disparate objects which is later revealed in page 3 of Chapter I. The image that occupies the entire page is like a key to a zig-saw puzzle — all the objects in the previous pages are part of a domestic setting. In the foreground, the readers see a woman comforting a man as he has finished packing his suitcase of belongings. Everything in page I and 2 can be seen within a specific context in page 3 [marked by red dot in Fig. 77]. Except for the half open box and the family photograph in the last two panels of page 1, everything remains untouched or unchanged. Tan has actually offered a close up of all the objects which exist in the same spatial dimension. The initial breaking up of spatial coordinates with respect to the individual objects is also an invitation to scatter the gaze of the readers into small zones which disorients even the most familiar everyday objects. The alienation of the objects, taken off from their sites of spatial existence, reflects the alienation of the man who will travel into the realm of the unknown, away from the world of familiar and everyday comforts. Another subliminal idea that underlies every image in page 1 and page 2 is the act of creasing/folding/bending/wrapping. The paper with which the origami is to be created needs to be folded, the drawing bears marks of folds, the clothes can be folded inside the suitcase, so too the photograph. The box can be folded shut like memories. The fold highlights the notion of forms that can change, shift, morph and move.

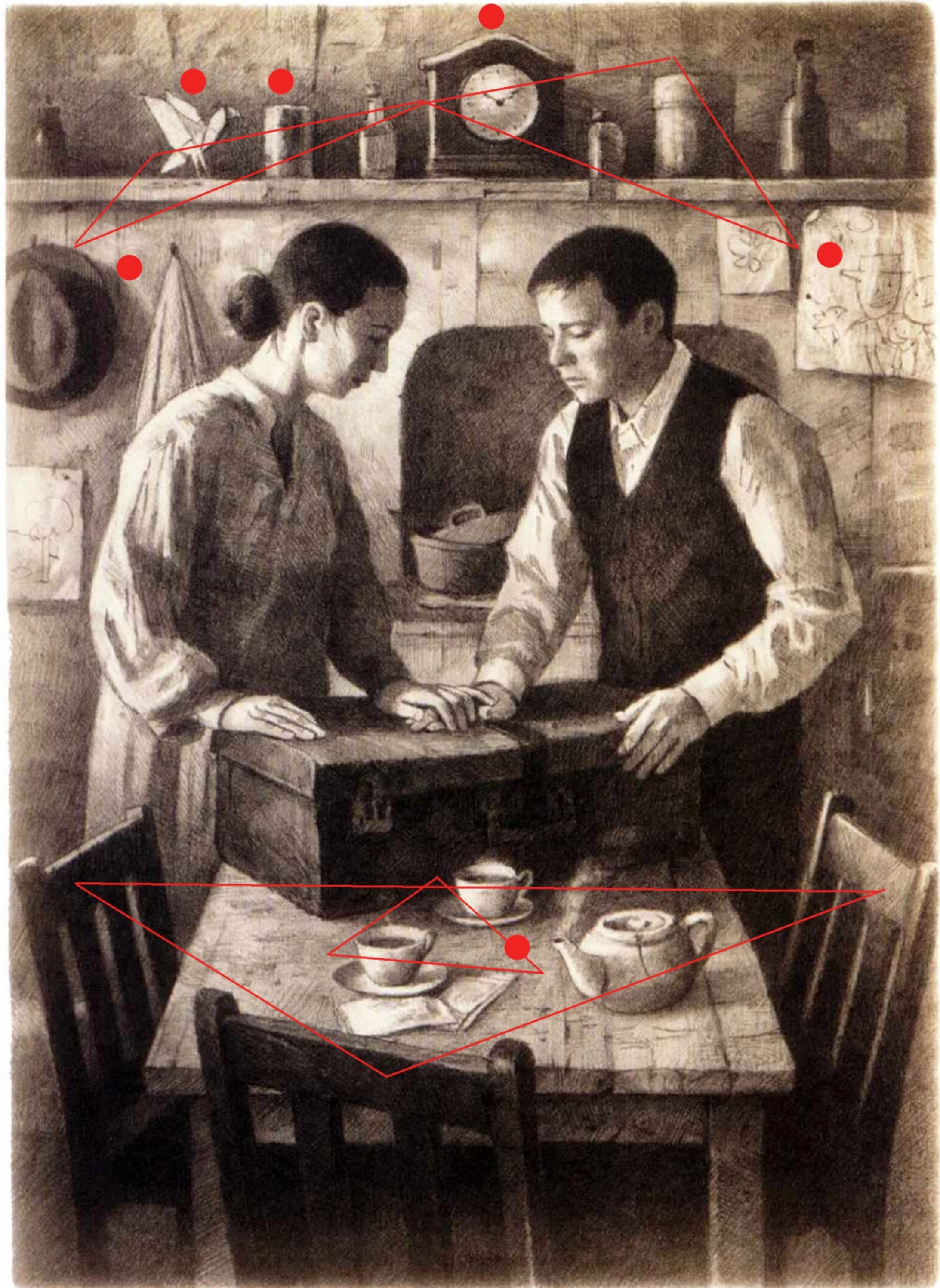

Fig. 77: *The Arrival,* Page 3, Section I

The fold, in itself, is a metaphor of migration as they experience monumental shifts while negotiating displacement. It is significant that Hillary Chute also suggests that the “gutter can be understood as a ‘fold’ or ‘crease’.”[34] The gutter as

[34] Chute, Hillary. *Contemporary Graphic Narratives: History, Aesthetics, Ethics.* Thesis, The State University of New Jersey, 2006, p.202.

a fold contains memories of absence as the narrative propels forward. Moreover, the art of origami consists of the skill to fold a two-dimensional piece of paper into a three-dimensional object. Tan himself confesses, "My dad taught me most of the origami I know, so I associate it with a craft that comes from 'elsewhere' and travels like a meme, and related to my ancestry."[35]

The origami bird is visualized as something poised to fly, its wings outstretched although the feet is firmly on the ground. This freeze moment of pre-departure statis can also be seen in page 3 [Fig. 77] where the migrant prepares to leave his country holding his partner's hand. The couple's facial and body gestures hints at tension and inexplicable sadness. The three inanimate chairs in the foreground create a compositional frame within the panel. The objects (included in the previous pages) along with three chairs envelops the main subjects, bringing them to focus. The shift of focalization from the objects to the human story is achieved seamlessly. The image in page 3 can be spatially sub-divided into small compositional triangles. The three chairs, the two cups and the teapot, and the four hands (with two together forming one) create a formal balance right through the central axis of the image. Above, the five objects (the origami bird, the clock, the hat, the drawing and the half-opened utensil) can be strategically bound together by invisible lines forming different triangles [marked by red in Fig. 77]. Although there is sadness around impending departure, there is still the comfort of known objects occupying assigned corners of home space. All this reassurance will disappear when they venture outside where the threat of the unknown looms large. It is to be noted that the big box in which the protagonist packs his belongings occupies the centre of the page. It is the repository of all the memory that the protagonist is carrying from his home to his journey towards the unknown land. It is packed, meaning that it can be unpacked at convenient moments of introspection, whenever needed. Memory can be transplanted but actual homes cannot be done so.

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[35] Nabizadeh, Golnar. *Departure and Arrival: Loss and Mourning in Literary Migrant Narratives*. Thesis, The University of Western Australia, 2011, p. 206, research-repository.uwa.edu.au/files/3218750/Nabizadeh_Golnar_2011.pdf. Accessed 8 Aug. 2012.

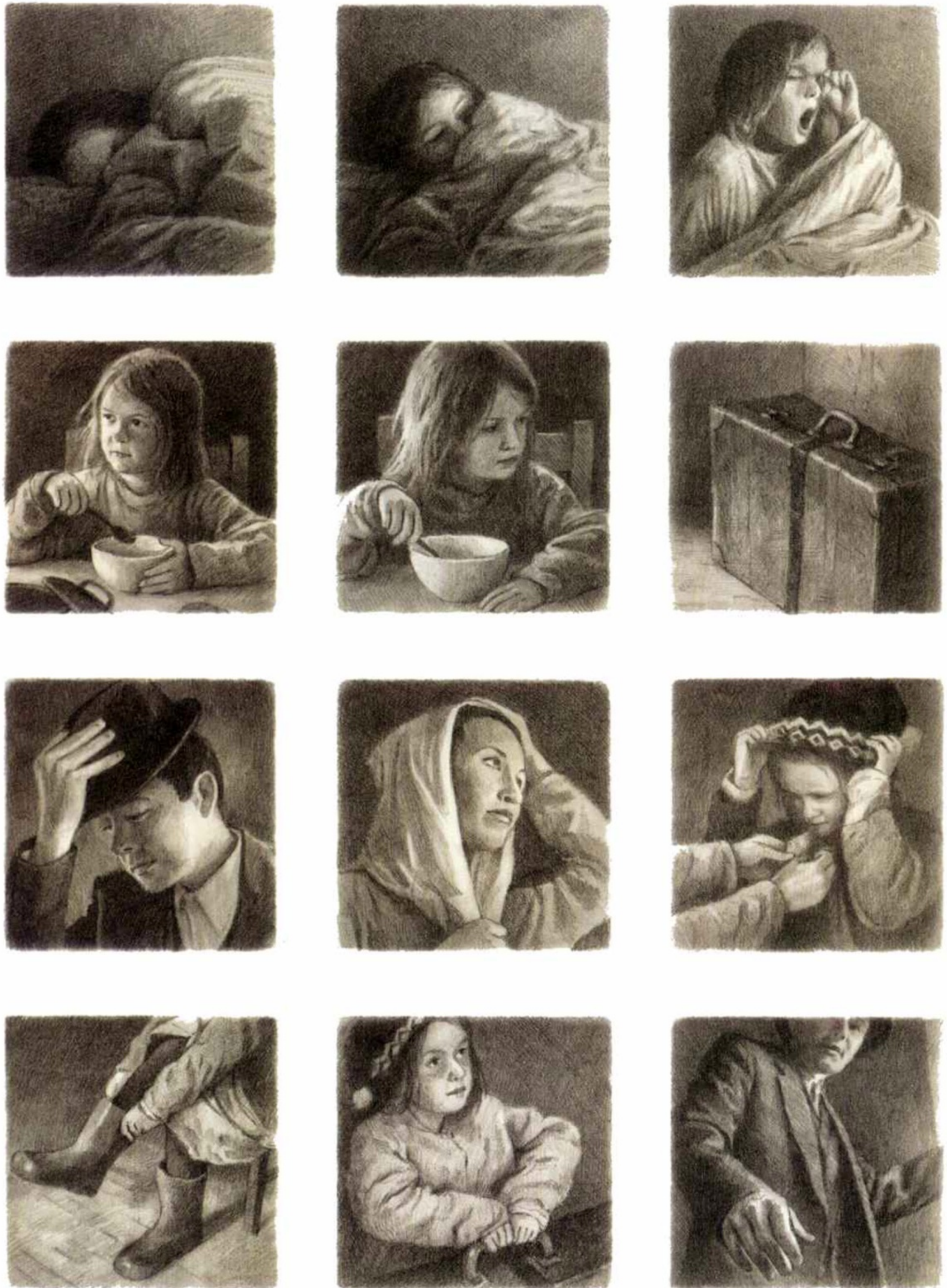

Fig. 78: *The Arrival,* Page 4, Section I

Page 4 of this section [Fig. 78] continues its focus on the packed suitcase which occupies panel six of the page. Tan here creates a democratic panel in the vertical-horizontal ratio of 4:3 — a clear departure from the earlier paneling in page 1 and 2 where the ratio is 3:3. It starts with the awakening of a little girl whose presence is already registered in the family photograph within the frame.

One of the most interesting aspects of this page is the way Tan uses the gaze of various characters to create the paradigm of departure. He creates a synecdoche of images — using parts of body anatomy to depict gestures and its associated tactile element. From the first tier where the eyes of the girl are shown closed, Tan moves on to the second tier of panels where the she is seen taking breakfast. Initially distracted, she turns her head in the opposite direction (the central panel of second tier) where her gaze is clearly attested by the packed suitcase which is shown in the next panel.

The characters put on their respective headgears in the third tier, thus preparing for the departure. While the gaze of the protagonist is oriented towards the bottom-left side, his partner's (wife?) line of sight is in the opposite direction – upwards-right side. Tan creates an entire stack of left-vertical panels which are mirrors of the central-vertical panels. The axis of differential gaze-directions frames the moment of departure. The alterity created between looking sideways at different directions subtly weaves in emotions of a family bidding farewell to a member. While the migrant looks inward for solace in nostalgic memory, the other members look to him as somebody who can provide them with hope in future. The tension within the protagonist and his family can be deeply felt as they look towards an unforeseeable future with trepidation. The last panel in the lowermost right-hand corner freezes such a moment as the protagonist extends his hands to receive the packed suitcase from the child. The hands extend to the edge of the panel but doesn't show the suitcase handle. The effacement of the moment of touch between the protagonist and his child is a leap that Tan takes in order to accentuate the painful parting moment of departure.

The next page (page 5) foregrounds one of the most stunning uses of shadow to usher in the double spread of page 6 and 7. As the family leaves the confines of four-walls and walks down open spaces, they are shadowed by the serrated tail of a serpent-monster (Fig. 80). This tail is also the reader's first encounter with the 'fantastic' in the work. Tan in his comments on *The Arrival* explains: "One of the images I had been thinking about for years involved a scene of rotting tenement buildings, over which are 'swimming' some kind of huge black serpents. I realized that these could be read a number of ways: literally, as an

infestation of monsters, or more figuratively, as some kind of oppressive threat."[36] Later in Chapter III, the protagonist uses the same metaphor to explain to another immigrant, the reason for his departure from his homeland.

Fig. 79: *The Arrival,* Page 5, Section I

In the following double spread [Fig. 80], Tan depicts the fear and

[36] Tan, Shaun. "Comments on *The Arrival." www.shauntan.net,* publication date unspecified, http://www.shauntan.net/books/the-arrival.html. Accessed 16 Dec. 2014.

uncertainty of the ominous but ambiguous threat as the massive tails are shown to cast a web around the cityscape. It is to be noted that Tan doesn't show the entire creature, keeping a sense of mystery around it.

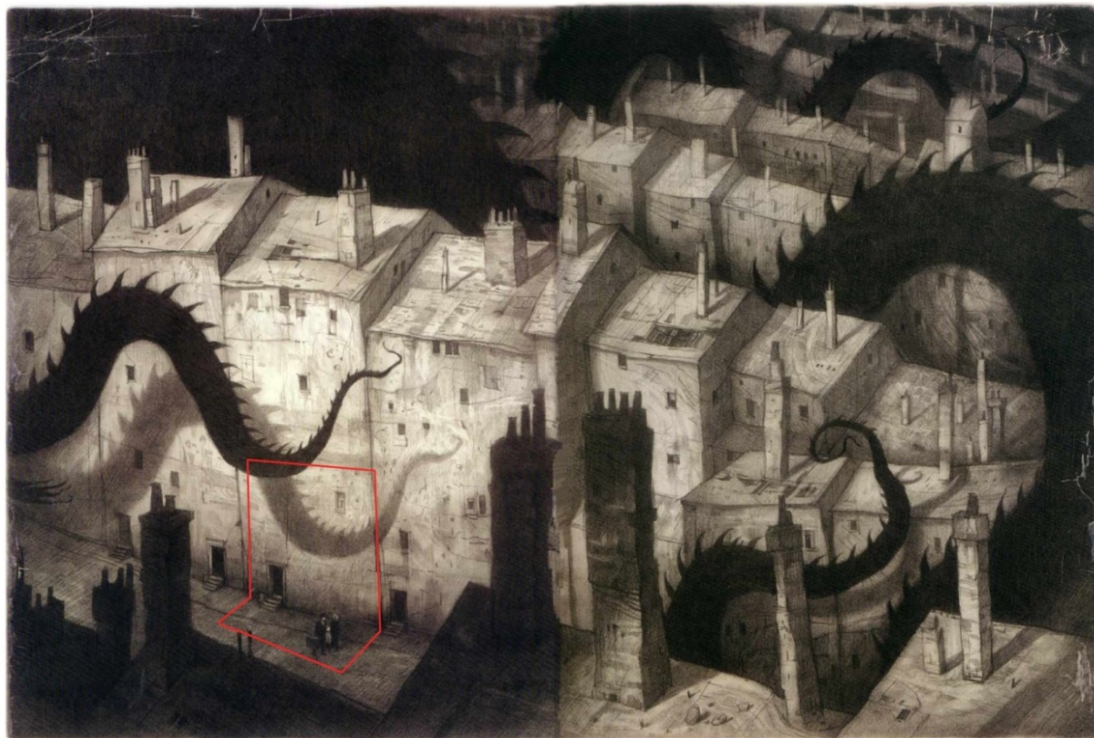

Fig. 80: *The Arrival,* Pages 6-7, Section I

Pages 5, 6 and 7 have no other characters except the family making their way through 'a sea of tails' although the station scene shows crowds. This is significant as an earlier draft by the artist (Tan, *Sketches* 16) shows other people in the street around the huddled family. He obviously decides to do away with the crowds in the streets to accentuate the loneliness of their existence. The single page 5 and the corresponding double spread 6-7 is also an attempt to metaphorically foreground physical city space as private psychological space of the family. The composition of page 5 [Fig. 79] deserves special mention. The door with steps and the window in the top corner are placed in such a way that an imaginary diagonal line could thread through them. The tail cuts through that invisible line inducing an element of chaos in the symmetrical set-up. The tail actually arches over the family as they move out of the panel. In the next double spread, the readers realize that it is not a single tail that threatens the family. As the zoom-out occurs [the marked red in Fig. 80 constitutes the panel in Fig. 79], it comes to light that the sense of fear is overwhelming, as the entire city is overrun by these deadly monsters. The

family looks miniscule, almost helpless. They are too small to confront the bigger picture. The readers, too, share their sense of unease as the skyline goes dark with the emergence of these creatures from every nook and corner of the cityscape. The images have an affinity with Francisco Goya's *Los Caprichos*, or *The Caprices* which are a bizarre and disturbing series of eighty etchings and aquatints.

Fig. 81: Francisco Goya*, The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*

The title, *Los Caprichos*, suggests invention and fantasy. Goya's use of the term is a nod to painters like Botticelli, Dürer, Tiepolo and Piranesi. One of the most studied plates is Plate 43 – *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* [Fig. 81]. The plate depicts the artist lying asleep with his head on the desk while various visions and dreams of owls, bats, asses and giant cats swirl above his head. The inscription accompanying the etching reads: "The artist dreaming. His only purpose is to banish harmful, vulgar beliefs and to perpetuate in this work of caprices the solid testimony of truth" (transcribed in English). Goya also wrote a caption for the print

that complicates its message, “Imagination abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters; united with her, she is the mother of the arts and source of their wonders.”

Tan’s monsters are not unlike Goya’s as they are the very embodiment of irrational which the family struggles to make sense of. Tan also recounts in *Sketches from a Nameless Land* of how an interviewed immigrant referred to his country’s oppressive regime as a “fearful dragon” (Tan, *Sketches* 16). Finally Tan says: “Shadowy creatures seem an ideal metaphor for many unspoken fears: political oppression, poverty, war, corruption, religious persecution and even ecological collapse. At the same time they escape such specific interpretation, and I think this is the most important thing in illustration: that an image feels truthful beyond any explanation.”[37] In this narrative, it is by this kind of intrusion of the ‘fantastic’ that the origin of remembrance is staged. The surreal effects the transition from oblivion to memory. The ‘fantastic’ forms the stimulus and impetus for a past which belongs to an alternative world that cannot be explained or defended but which radically breaks or transcends ‘natural’ orders. The ‘fantastic’ content of memory represents a radical disruption and severance of all recognizable links to the known and the natural. The ‘fantastic’ is thus placed at what we may term a ‘blank spot’ of collective memory – the origin, something that is constitutive of its identity, but which it cannot observe. In art of *The Arrival*, the intrusion of the fantastic ensures that the natural orders have collapsed and the memories also become representations of the *absent* other. Although anterior part of the monster remains a mystery, its eerie presence is registered in the expression of the child’s face in page 8 of section I. She is not overtly fearful of it but looks a bit downcast. The middle panel in page 8 shows an old railway station where suddenly many people can be seen. It is drawn realistically in sharp contrast to the earlier cityscapes infested with serpent-like tails. Here, there may be a hint of the tails but it blends with the smoke emanating from the steam-engine. In the lower tier, the father opens up his hat to reveal the origami bird which he gives to the child as a token of remembrance. Bird as a symbol is apt as it depicts flight and

[37] Tan, Shaun. *The Arrival and Sketches from a Nameless Land: The Art of the Arrival*. Hachette Australia, 2000, p. 16.

migration. As the family embrace each other before bidding the father goodbye, Tan once again reverts to the 4:3 panel format. The hands once again become a motif for gestural rituals associated with departure. The touch and its consequent withdrawal depict a profound sense of loss. The 3 lower tier panels shows the departure of the train as its smoke trail recedes into perspective and gradual oblivion. They are drawn from the point of view of the mother and the child.

Fig. 82: *The Arrival,* Page 10, Section I

Page 10 is a full spread where the serpent tails return. The mother and the child stands as the creatures besiege the city and their mental space. The baroque composition of the page with a funnel-like perspective creates a more accentuated sense of fear and apprehension [Fig. 82]. The page also recedes from the earlier point of view and includes the standing figures of the duo. Although they are in the foreground, they are subsumed within the shadows cast by the buildings while the creatures play on in broad daylight. The chiaroscuro actually increases the tension of the narrative. The empty area in the line of sight of the mother and the child embody an absence that cannot be filled until the family unites in the last section.

THE JOURNEY

Section II traces the journey of the migrant as he embarks on the journey towards an unknown destination. It is reminiscent of various real stories regarding the 'middle passage'. Tan utilizes the movement from the personal to the impersonal to depict the micro and macro processes of migration. The zooming out technique employed in this page denotes a spatial flux from a specific focus area to something larger is also suggestive of the migration experience where the personal narratives are frequently subsumed within more definitive pattern of impersonal events. Page 13 [Fig. 83] posits the now familiar family photograph, drawn tilted to include a hint of the frame in which it is held together. In the second panel, the view recedes back to reveal a hand holding a spoon and a bowl, slightly reminiscent of the material objects of the first page of section I. The third panel uncovers the image further with the emergence of the traveler sitting with the bowl in front of the family photograph. The fourth panel of the sequence in the second tier foregrounds the man as he peers through the porthole of the ship in which he is travelling. The fifth panel makes him more miniscule as he recedes to being part of a large ship which has many more such portholes carrying many more migrants (panel 6). The portholes of the ship (panel 7) disappear completely in the last panel of the page where we can only see the ship travelling through the sea. This panel is oddly reminiscent of the picture of the ship in panel 7 of page 1

Section I. This gradual shifting of focus from microcosmic detail to the macro-picture enables Tan to weave in the larger issue of migration in general and conflate it with the personal migration narrative of the unnamed protagonist. The spatial inflection from micro to macro perspective is indicative of the mobility of the migrant narratives where the personal gets swallowed up within the collective.

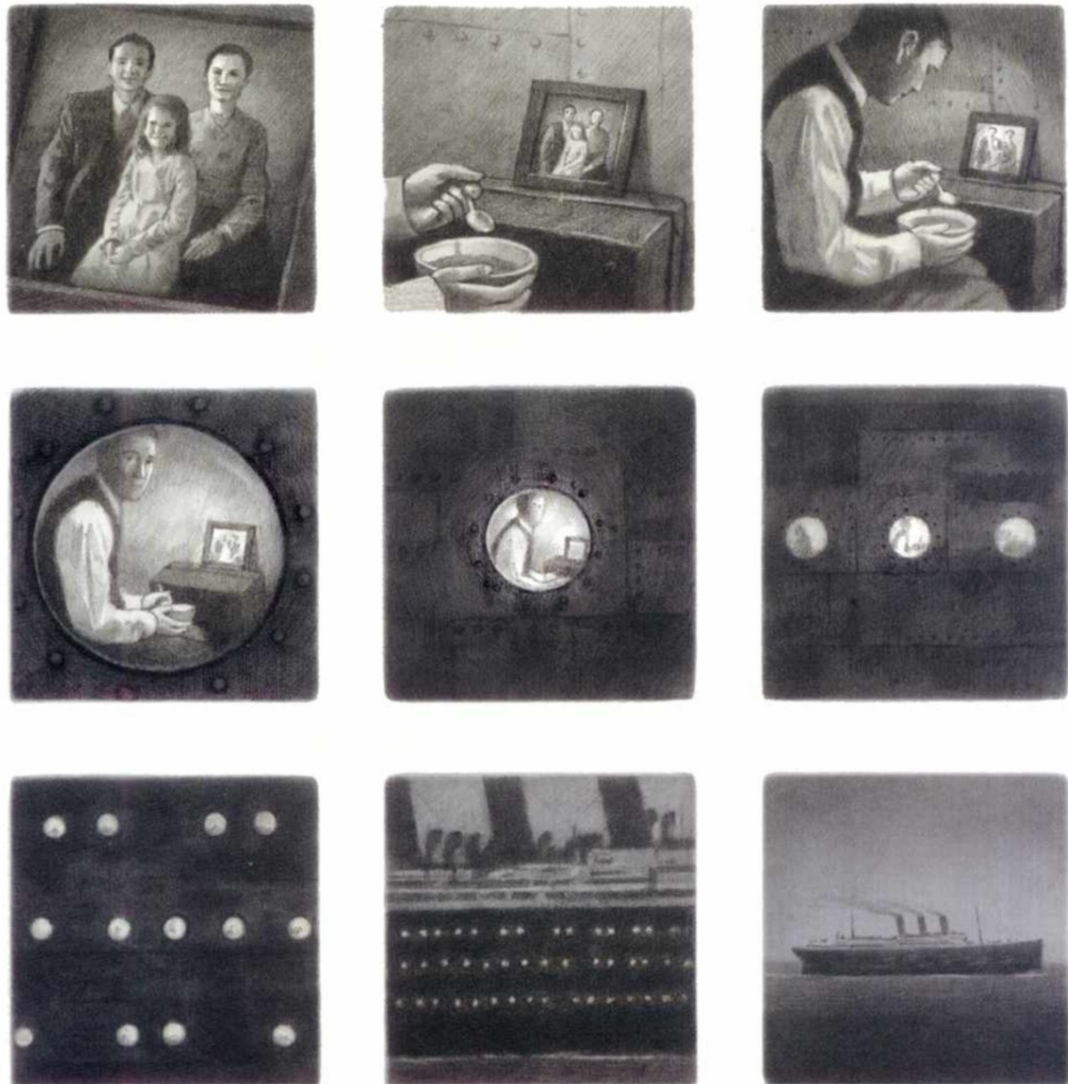

Fig. 83: *The Arrival,* Page 13, Section II

The double spread in Section II (page 14-15) uses the vast negative space around the cloud formation to put the ship in perspective. The composition of the image is created using the rule of the third. The horizon of the sea forms a line on which the ship is moving from left to right. Above, the horizontal division is broken up by amorphous cloud formations in the middle of the spread. Oddly reminiscent of John Constable's various studies of cloudscapes, the formation seems to billow out in different directions of the page. The smallness of the ship also leads us to

reimagine the initial panels of the earlier page and brood over the situation of the migrant in such perspective. A sense of alienation is accentuated in the spatial sublime that contrasts the dimension of the ship and the sky. Tan manipulates the eye movement of a potential reader by deftly calibrating the scale of the image. The reader's eye movement seeks out the ship from the previous panel and so aligns along the horizontal line of the black sea, although there is a simultaneous pull of the vast space above the forlorn sea-strip. The tension that it creates purely on the compositional plane symbolizes the difficulty of displacement from a known place to an unknown space.

Fig. 84: *The Arrival,* Pages 14-15, Section II

The next double spread (page 16-17) features an incredible narrative pivot as Tan draws 60 panels of various cloudscapes. He keeps the creases and wrinkles of the paper intact in order to mirror the endpaper composition of 60 portraits. The squares show images of abstract/amorphous clouds in different hues (from black and white to different tones of sepia) and shapes, thus creating a polyphonic layout. This is visible in the episode where the protagonist, after having embarked on the ship that will bring him to the new land, looks at the clouds from the deck of the vessel. Graphically, this lingering gaze at the sky is represented on a double splash page which contains equivalent panels in size and shape depicting various

types of clouds. This very specific spatial layout is reproduced nowhere else in the book but on the endpapers (cover-flaps) in which portraits of migrants from different ethnicities and times is depicted in a similar way and format. Both the double spreads uses 60 squares in the horizontal-vertical ratio of 10:6. The spread is also a supreme example of Groensteen's 'braiding'. Braiding' via the repetition of a specific panel arrangement connects narrative moments and references a previous scene, sentiment, or atmosphere.

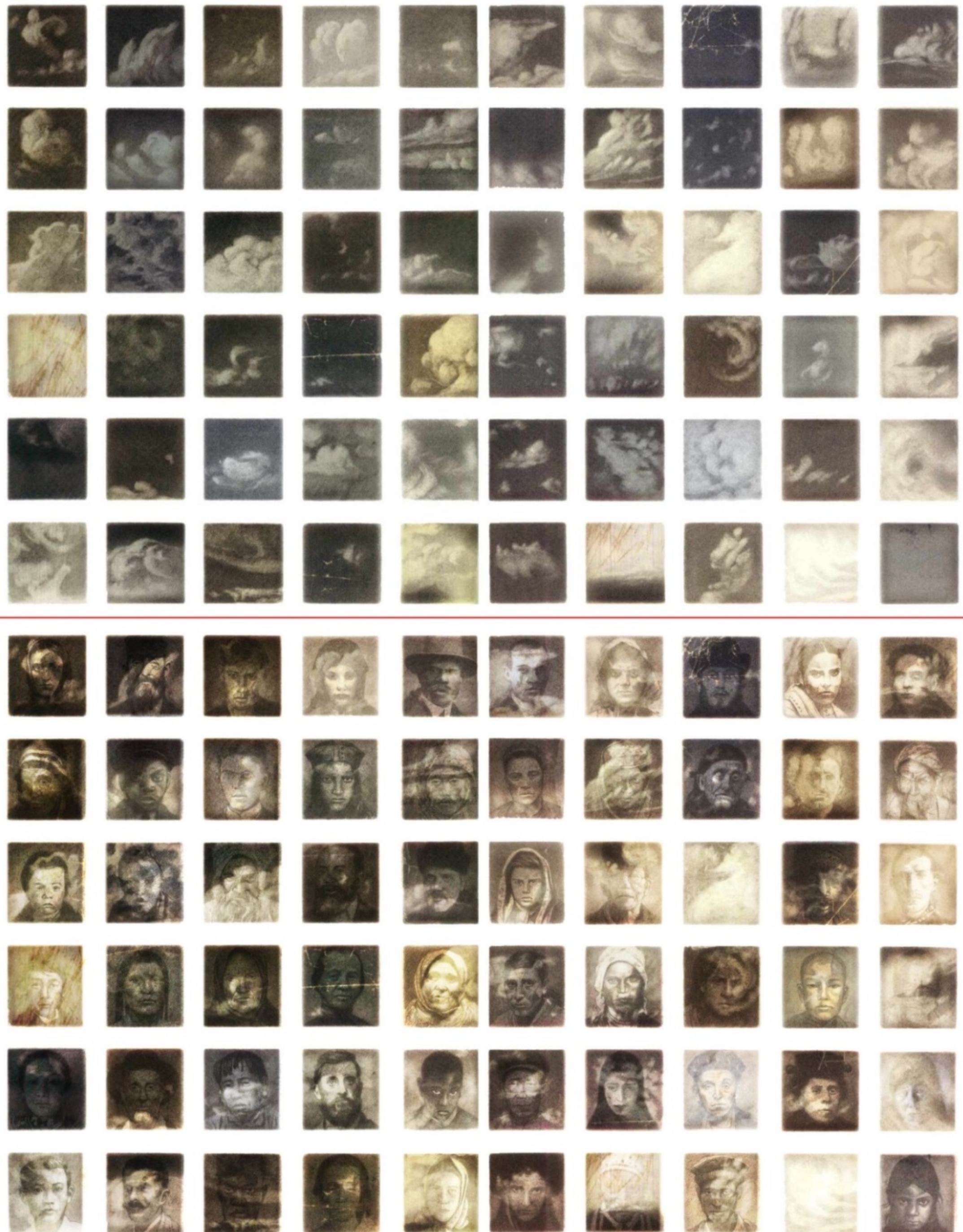

Fig. 85: *The Arrival,* Page 16-17, Section II (above). The created palimpsest combining the endpapers with the double spread, Page 16-17, Section II (below)

If the two double spreads – the endpapers and the page 16-17 of section II – are overlaid on each other to create an imaginary palimpsest, the result is fascinating [see Fig. 85]. Constructed like a newsreel, all these clouds can represent the truncated visual testimonies of the journey of various migrants in different times in different places. The square panels represents corresponding gaze of the migrants captured within their respective visual fields — individual 'visual pockets' of experience that each of them may have experienced on their way to nameless lands. These visual pockets are woven together to create a collage of cloudscapes.

The irregular nature of the clouds is also a direct contrast to the definite geometric shapes that the migrants will encounter within their controlled alien surroundings later in the book. In *The Arrival*, 'braiding' works towards a polyphonic understanding of diasporic narrative and conveys a chorus of migrants' memories. Thus Tan's formal technique brings different histories into relief, proposes different kinds of narratives, mixes the personal with the historical, and intersperses his (post)memory with that of other people. Whereas before this episode, Tan makes use of external focalization (i.e. the character was enclosed in the panels), the images of the clouds are represented without characters in the frames. This switch of perspective thus suggests that the clouds may reference the protagonist's gaze, or that of any other migrant portrayed in the end-paper. This ambiguity, once again, reasserts the importance of plurality that permeates throughout *The Arrival*.

According to Dony,

> "The consequences of this visual crossover are manifold. First, it thematically and historically connects the protagonist's journey with that of other migrants from former times and as such establishes a disruption of place and time. … Secondly, the braid attests to the mobility of migrants and diasporic subjects, their fluid identities, and their ability to call into question the myth of harmonization generally associated with globalization. Their movements from the margins of the book to the center of the narrative obviously challenge the binary conception center/periphery long held in Western discourses. In fact, the mobility of migrants and the multiplicity of voices that the braid articulates work towards a conception of the global which is multi-faceted and plural rather than monolithic and universal. The fragmented layout of these pages corroborates this claim,

suggesting that a whole (the page, the global) can only be thought of in terms of its various parts or fragments (panels, localities)" (Dony 256).

Page 18 of Section 2 goes back to the full page image of the ship like that of page 2-3. However, there are subtle differences regarding orientation. While the double spread conjures vastness through a stretched horizontal layout, this one has a more vertical orientation. The clouds look less imposing here and the sea occupies almost half of the page. This frequent change of perspective illustrates the gradual passage of time as the migrants travel to reach their destination. In fact, pages 14-18 denote the passage of time without directly showing the migrants. The memories of their travel sadly comprises of nothing more than the tedium of changing cloudscapes as their ship ploughs their way through the desolate sea. As Tan puts it succinctly in *Sketches*, "Lack of first-hand experience perhaps gave me some advantage in appreciating the fundamental strangeness of the migrant journey, without too many preconceptions. I've always been intrigued by images of ships crossing vast oceans and people boarding trains for places they don't know" (Tan, *Sketches* 15). The lack of first-hand knowledge actually gives Tan the freedom to create deeper textual implications by subverting an iconic painting that he knew from childhood. As shown in *The Sketches*, he actually abandons his earlier draft depicting the scene of a long ocean voyage.

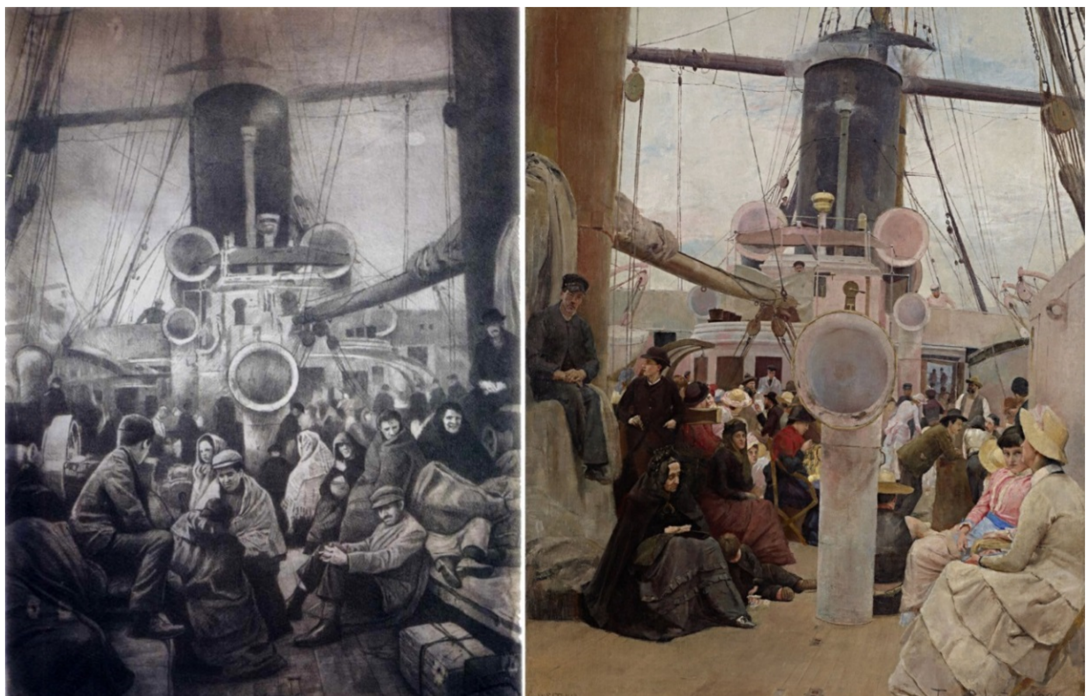

Fig. 86: *The Arrival,* Page 19, Section II (left); Tom Roberts, *Coming South* (right)

In Page 19, Tan takes the cult Australian painting, “Coming South” (1886) by Tom Roberts as his reference [Fig. 86]. While the painting depicts European ladies and gentlemen travelling to Australia, Tan in his panel replaces them with steerage passengers, based on archival images of immigrants travelling to New York during the same era. In the panel, Tan intentionally keeps the background of the ship the same as Roberts’ painting to extract its inter-textual significance.

In page 20, Tan returns to the protagonist and he is seen penning something in his diary. As the other panels unfold, he tears off the page from the diary, folds it to make an origami bird, the same one that the readers have earlier encountered in page 1 of the book. As he holds the origami bird in his hand, he suddenly turns around to see a strange sight.

Fig. 87: *The Arrival,* from Page 21, Section II

The act of looking at something above is prefaced by a gestural swivel movement on his part which is shown as a sequence from lowest tier panel of page 20 to the upper tier panel of page 21 in section II [Fig. 87]. As the migrant protagonist looks above, Tan shifts to a birds’ eye view to give a completely new perspective. The migrants are greeted by a swarm of strange birdlike creatures that seem to usher the sighting of the land after days of travel. The white flying creatures seem to bear rays of hope in the dreary atmosphere. It is to be noted that this page’s colour palette seems to have a marked yellowish tinge in contrast to the grayish sepia tones of the previous pages. Page 22-23 again constitutes a double spread and acts as a gateway to the world of a different experience. The arrival at the alien land is framed by a gateway where the previous symbols (re)surface in the strangest ways [Fig. 88]. The idea of the familiar *unfamiliar* overwhelms the readers if they try to read the implications hidden within the drawn image. The background of the image recreates the skyscrapers of a large city (with a hint of

New York). The harbour has a large gateway (two statues shaking hands with each other) which is also reminiscent of the Statue of Liberty. Hands as gestural symbol return as do the material objects with which the book began.

Fig. 88: *The Arrival,* Pages 22-23, Section II

The feet of the statues have boat like structures on which the tea-cup, the utensils and the suitcase can be seen. The suitcase specifically acts as a recurrent metaphor for the burden of memory that the protagonist carries with him. Tan himself says, "That journey between two worlds seems especially poignant when the migrants describe carrying all their worldly possessions in a single suitcase: the only tangible evidence of a life suspended between a lost homeland and ununknown future" (Tan, *Sketches* 15). An immediate sense of welcome is evoked in the evocative mode of meeting between the two statues. The birds, another persistent symbol, flock around them to intensify the sense of welcome. In the next page (page 24, section II), Tan again shifts to a ground perspective which showcases the enormity of the carrier which brings the migrants to the alien land. The point of view is probably from the port in the land which makes the hull of the ship seem enormous. In page 25, Tan illustrates the arrival of the migrants with several sequences that detail the bureaucratic processing that is associated with their integration in the new land. The frames detail the embarking of the migrants

and the subsequent formation of a queue. The queue photograph has an archival ring around it and is probably inspired by real photographs of migrants disembarking in Ellis Island, New York in the 1900s.

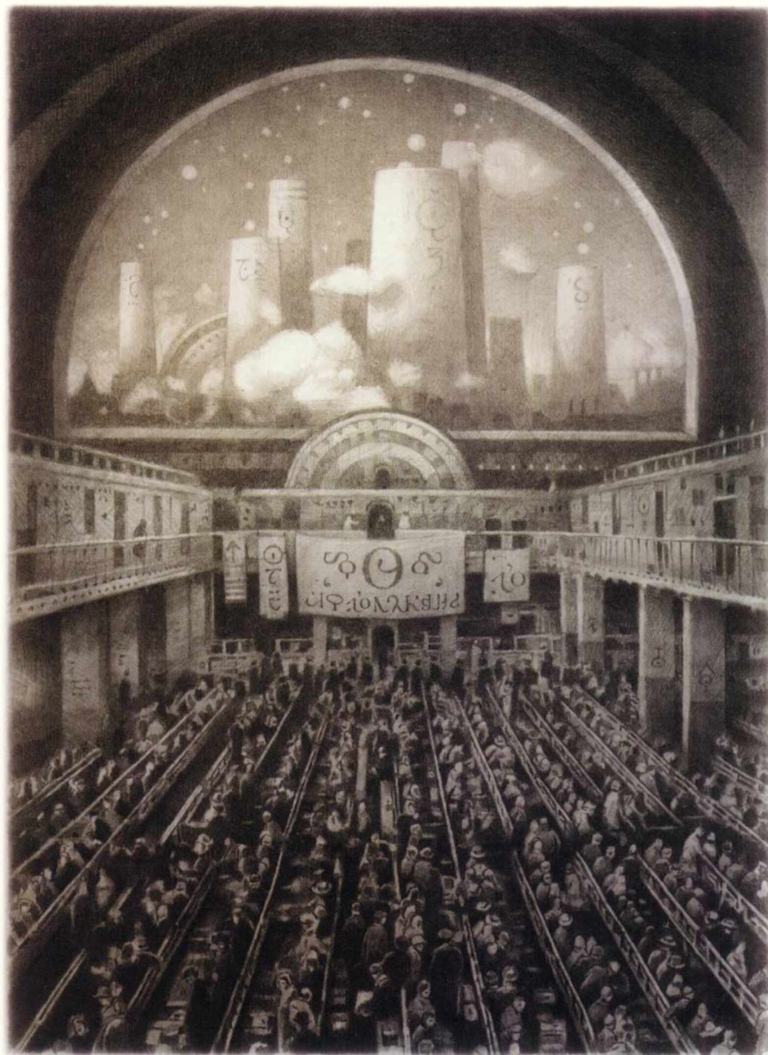

Fig. 89: *The Arrival,* Page 26, Section II (above); The archival photograph from the Registry Hall,

Ellis Island (below)

The following page's (page 26) illustration of 'The Great Hall' is based on the photograph of the Registry Room at Ellis Island, circa 1907-1912. The historical photographs are used to anchor the fictional narrative into a believable visual sequence. Tan confesses,

> "Here I tried to amplify the subtle poetry of the original image: the huddled darkness of massed people, the bench lines receding towards a flag in the center (a strange symbol of authority and freedom) and the protective embrace of the cathedral-like vaulting. The overexposure of the upper storey window suggests a land of luminous opportunity just beyond the 'gates.' The image suggests feelings of tedium and reverence, suffused by obscurity: we don't understand this place and so, only able to read it at an intuitive or emotional level, we also become 'immigrants'. … I've always been interested in the parallels between history, dreams and art, given that the past is another country, sustained in the minds of the living through a willful act of imagination" (Tan, *Sketches* 12).

The weaving of personal dreams with history creates a memory of a place that is mostly imagined rather than lived. The improvements from the archival photograph show the imagination of a master artist at work. First of all, the sense of order in the composition is almost geometric in precision. The bigger arch which acts as a window to the outside nestles within it another smaller semi-circle under which the banners and the flag are placed. The registration desks in the ground and the gallery above are all drawn in perfect perspective as they converge towards the imaginary vortex of the semi-circular shapes. The 'O' like lettering represents the focus of the image and is girdled both above and under with door like structures that signify the passage to the new land. The use of luminous light falling on the chimney like constructions that can be seen beyond the arch brings rays of hope. There is actually a marked contrast in the tonality of the views inside and outside the hall. The image outside the Great Hall may well be the imaginative projection of the migrant's idea of what to expect in the new land. The floating clouds and the small balloon like bodies provide a bokeh-like effect to the entire image [Fig. 89].

The fact that it can only be viewed through the semi-circular half-arch of the Great Hall makes it a metaphorical window of the mind. If the image is

mapped with respect to its geometric alignment, the upper part of the image actually approximates the drawing of a human eye. The image is slightly reminiscent of the famous painting titled *The False Mirror* by Rene Magritte where the eye doubles up as the literal and metaphorical visual field of memory.

Page 27, section II turns towards the sorting processes through which the migrants go through. The medical examination of the migrants upon their arrival at Ellis Island has been well documented, including the system of pinning papers on the migrants' clothing, or chalking onto their garments a symbol to represent any suspected disease. The physicians of US Public Health Service used symbolic codes[38] to assign markings on each protagonist, for example the mark X (high up at the front side of right shoulder) would suggest mental defects. In particular, they searched for a disease in the eyes called trachoma. This eye disease cause blindness and it can also lead to death. Nearly 50% of those who had to be examined further before registration were due to this eye disease. After the check-up by the doctor the immigrant went on to the long queue were they must wait for the interrogation. In the Registry Room there could be waiting approximately 5000 people at the same time. Immigrants who passed the interrogation got their 'landing card, the permit to leave and enter New York. Tan documents the process meticulously using different surreal paradigms. He returns to the democratic panel set-up again in page 27. He also disembodies the protagonist by focusing on separate body parts as he opens them for scrutiny and examination. The upper-tier third panel showing the examination of the eye is a direct 'quote' from the archival photographs that can be easily found with respect to Ellis Island migrants' tests.

Tan keeps the same layout throughout the registration process although there is a slight paradigm shift as far as content of the panels is concerned. The migrant is seen in various modes of gestures, making his point during a prolonged interrogation process [Fig. 90]. The reader's point of view is that of the interrogator who is facing the visibly distressed migrant. The various facial and

[38] Refer to http://www.ellisisland.se/english/ellisisland_immigration3.asp. regarding the detailed process.

bodily gestures are mapped against different reactions of the migrant. Initially he can barely hear, slowly goes on to argue his case and finally breaking down emotionally.

Fig. 90: *The Arrival,* Page 28, Section II

For the first time, the migrant's gaze is directed towards the reader directly. It is a ploy by Tan to project a certain amount of empathy for him as he literally struggles to claim his identity. There is a sense of confusion, tension and sadness as he offers his testimonial for migration under official scrutiny. The background of the panels also effaces any specific object, making it bare and

unspecific. It mirrors the isolation of the migrant and a certain lack of communication in an alien surrounding where he needs to integrate in order to survive. The last panel sums up the apprehension of the migrant as he ponders over the outcome of his interview. Page 29 of Section II sets up the final sequence of this process where the readers are given access to the production of the identity papers of the migrant in the new land. Here the migrant is absent – instead we see different set of hands performing different functions ranging from sorting, typing, printing, inspecting and finally stamping the papers. As Golnar Nabizadeh writes, "Similar to the medical examination, this process typifies the partial erasure and reincorporation of the migrant body under official discourses of nationhood" (Nabizadeh 223).

Fig. 91: *The Arrival,* From Page 30, Section II

Soon Tan reverts back to the image of the migrant gazing directly at the readers although they will soon discover that it is only his passport photo within the identity papers that are newly created for him [Fig. 91]. The metaphor of folding takes over again, as the protagonist puts the paper into his pocket to embark on the journey into the new city. In the third tier third panel, there is a repetition of the image within a frame but again the readers discover it to be part of a flying compartment attached to a hot air balloon like vehicle that will fly him into the utopian land. This alternative shift between extreme close-ups and the view from the distance calibrates the way readers look into the displacement of the migrant. Page 31 magnifies an earlier image in page 26 where it is visible through the arch of the "Great Hall'. The chimney like structures release many such hot air balloon-like devices that float in the air seeking to enter the realm of new city. The effective oscillation in spatial frames also foregrounds the abiding theme of the

book. The singular experience of a specific migrant is part of numerous such stories that 'float' in the air, all seeking their respective validation. The ploy is similar to the idea already stated in the end-papers – to de-privilege the migrant's journey, not by undermining it, but rather locating it as one of the many stories of escape, refuge and displacement. The consequent utopian cityscape in the double spread page crystallizes Tan's idea of the new place into which the migrant is pitchforked. It is shaped like a new-world metropolis, distinctly different from the dark city left behind by the migrant.

Fig. 92: *The Arrival,* Pages 32-33, Section II

There is a sense of spatial freedom despite a confusing assemblage of bizarre architecture, mystifying symbols, strange vehicles and winding labyrinths. The chaotic arrangement also signifies the density of the structures and the diversity of life in the place. Tan explicitly describes the beginning point of his ideation,

> "I imagined the protagonist of *The Arrival* being released into the evening sky by balloon, and left to drift on random air currents. I had originally imagined this as an extended sequence (one for which my page count didn't allow), a solitary voyage above a strange metropolis. The imagery was inspired by a television documentary about spawning coral; the small eggs released by coral polyps along the Great Barrier Reef looked a lot like tiny hot air air balloons, floating randomly on nocturnal waters. If these land in the right spot, a new coral colony might

> grow, far away from the original. This is not unlike human migration on a different scale…More generally, the place in which any migrant ends up building a life is largely a matter of chance, of intentions tempered by accidents and random opportunities in an arbitrary world" (Tan, *Sketches* 20).

The imaginary cityscape itself is full of allusive symbols. Dominating the right side of the spread is a bird carrying an egg, a symbol of fertility and hope. The bird with wings is a recurrent motif across the book, whether they are represented in form of origami, strange creatures or static statues. The half-circular structures and the triangular beacons populate the matrix of the city. It is apparent that the city runs on industry as smoke emanates from the chimneys. In the left hand corner, there is the glowing presence of the circular moon. However, if we look closely enough, it can well be the balloon like vehicle that carries the migrant to the heart of the city. Tan intentionally swathes the cityscape with fading light as it recedes from right to left. It is akin to the afterglow of the setting sun which wraps the place in a subtle interplay of light and shade. The entire city is inscribed by ambiguous language signs that are inscribed in all the places ranging from billboards, walls of the street and the buildings as well as the body of the giant statue. The strangeness of the signs captures the alienation of any migrant who is suddenly pitchforked into a land of unknown language.

In page 36 and 37 of the book, the readers are given the first inkling of the insides of the new world as experienced by the migrant. As the balloon booth touches down and spreads its wings, the migrant climbs out of it into a cityscape which curiously resembles scenes from American depression. In page 35, the bigger picture is mapped and then Tan moves closer to definitive scenes in the street through which the protagonist walks down. Tan recalibrates his page layout into something different here — page 36 and 37 consists of 4 panels each in the portrait format. The protagonist is placed in the extreme right lower position so as to give a visual field that spans his 360 degree trajectory. There is a disarming mix of the known and the unknown as he tries to make sense of the activities going around him. Starting from his immediate left position, the rectangular panels draws a trajectory of oval visual orbit inhabited anti-clockwise by people chatting, woman selling egg-like substance, a street vendor, a newspaper boy, a girl waiting

with a cat (like) creature, a street-barber and two street musicians respectively. Within this visual grid, there is a sense of alienation, gesturally expressed by the placement of the hands on the chin by the protagonist himself [Fig. 93].

Fig. 93: *The Arrival,* Pages 36 and 37 seperated by red line, Section II

In pages 38 and 39, Tan dwells on the unknown symbolism of the street to accentuate the strangeness of the setting. Here it seems that even time has a different measurement. In the last panel of the page, the protagonist stumbles upon symbolic directions in the street which he corroborates with his own reference book. Here he meets a man with whom he tries to communicate but fails. However, in a string of three panels in the second tier, Tan depicts the breakdown of gestural mode. The protagonist takes refuge in a doodled illustration of a bed to convey his need. The fact that they already have established a form of communication, suggests that the unsettling of assumptions is aided by exchange and dialogue, even in challenging situations where alternative forms of communication such as doodling on notebooks may be required to convey meaning.

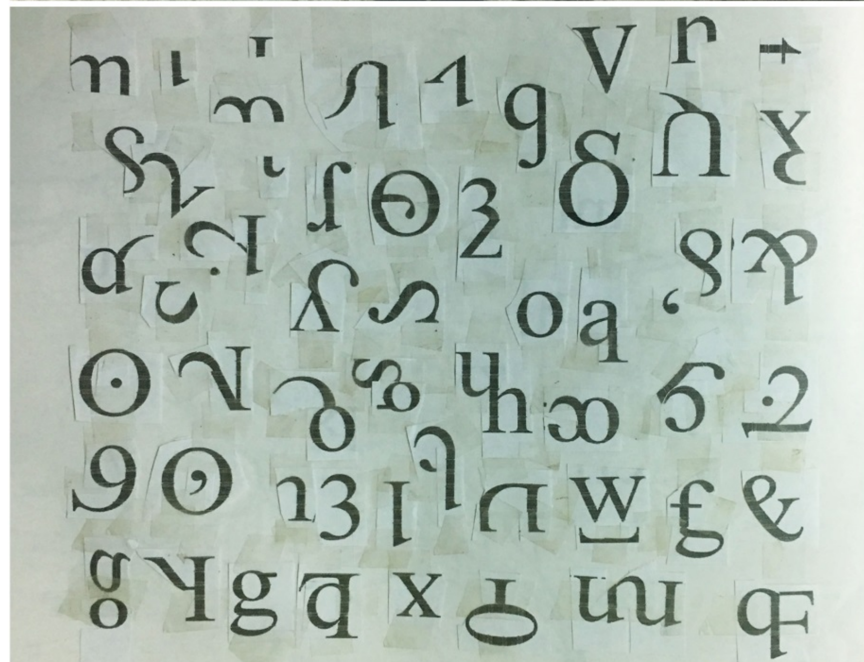

Fig. 94: *The Arrival,* Pages 58, Section III (above). An early drawing featuring indecipherable maps (From *Sketches* 30); Tan's creation of the 'new language' by rearrangement of Roman letters and numbers (From *Sketches* 31)

Fictional languages are woven throughout the illustrations in *The Arrival*, to the extent that it's not entirely correct to call it a wordless story. Tan creates this new kind of language through an interesting experimental ploy as described in *The Sketches*, "The main recurring script is completely arbitrary yet hopefully convincing: a surgical rearrangement of Roman letters and numbers, using scissors and tape. The effect is immediately disorienting, which in itself reminds us of our dependence on the written word for security and authority when it comes to meaning...This also meant that I did not have to worry about the problem of an English-speaking immigrant, as I wanted to avoid any culturally specific character" (Tan, *Sketches* 31). The use of in comprehensible language places the readers in the mind of the protagonist. The readers themselves are new arrivals, only able to decipher meaning and value from visual images, object relationships and human gestures and then make creative associations. Thus when other form of communication fails, the character resorts to sketching objects in a notebook that he carries everywhere — drawings of a room, a loaf of bread, even an abbreviation of his homeland in simple outlines. Tan says, "It's no coincidence that the main character in *The Arrival* looks like me: I used myself as a reference model out of convenience, but there's also a self-reflexive comment here on the role of an illustrator as storyteller, where some ideas can only be expressed through a silent language of images" (Tan, *Sketches* 31).

One interesting point to note in this new surrounding is the recurrence of new creatures with vaguely similar tail coils like that encountered by the migrant in his home country. However, in the new world imagery, the serpentine symbol is subject to substantial revision. Occasionally, negative connotations are still present. For instance, at the factory where the protagonist finds his third place of employment, the assembly line topped by enormous wheels resembles a greyish serpent, possibly suggesting robotic existence, debilitating repetition, and uniformity, encapsulating the perils of industrialization. The workers look puny to the huge machine, setting in a process of back-breaking monotonous work on the assembly lines [Fig. 95].

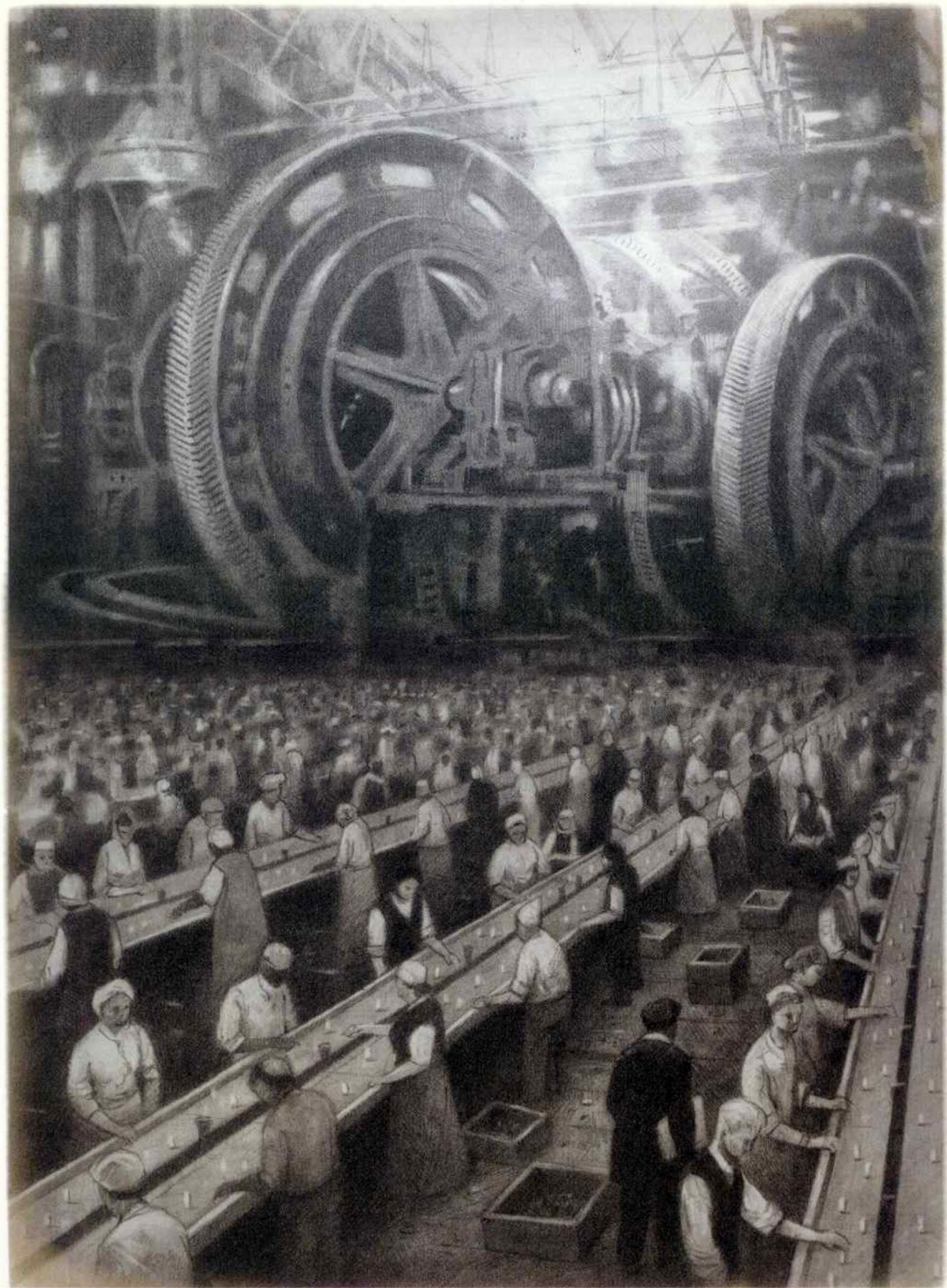

Fig. 95: *The Arrival,* Page 87, Section IV

Consequently, the scene is not dissimilar to the young female immigrant's memory of the smokestacks in her homeland (Tan, *The Arrival* 56). However, unlike the narrative's rendition of the industrial complexes of her home country, the factory in the New World is embedded in space permeated by snake-like images that may carry strong positive symbolism. More specifically, in the New York-like metropolis and the natural space depicted outside it, the spiralling lines can be read as something that signal play, togetherness, optimism, fluidity, and harmony. For

example, shortly after the completion of assembly-line shift, readers find the protagonist engaged in a game where the people, their animals, the playfield, the landscape, as well as the skyscape are organised into eccentric circles partially consisting of spiky lines infused with light.

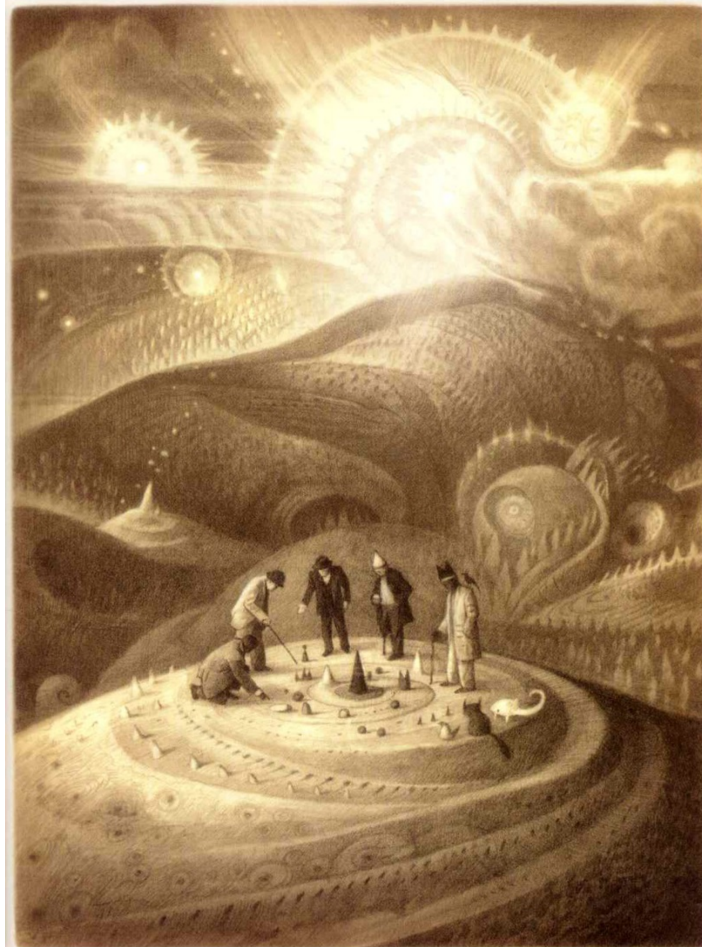

Fig. 96: *The Arrival,* Page 101, Section IV

In spite of their visible differences, there is sense of camaraderie among the characters who gets involved in the joy of creative play. The serpentine images of the protagonist's homeland and the new world assembly line are transformed into what appear to be symbols of inclusiveness and anti-totalitarian values. Similarly, in another new world scene, the readers are likely to share the immigrant's alarm when they discern a spiky tail emerge from a container, only to learn that in this particular context, the tail does not embody a menace but emerges as a body part of a cuddly pet. As a result of such repeated shifts in meanings, readers are prepared to reinterpret any of the book's symbolic elements as they metaphorically get to travel with the character through the act of reading. In page

42 (Section II), we see the protagonist moving into a room where he will stay in this new land. As he retrieves the keys, he is saddled with a new set of objects within the domestic realm. Each of the implements and compartments, within this new space baffle him with their show of difference. While they vaguely resemble in parts objects from the migrant's previous home, their form now incorporate unknown features into their functionality. As he tentatively moves around the place, there is a sense of shock and awe at the new toys. When the migrant opens a large container in the apartment, a tadpole-like creature follows the man in his new abode. The extended frame of this encounter depicts a stand-off between the migrant and the creature that stands with a friendly pose on the man's bed while he holds a spatula like object in mid-air. The impasse is broken by the man shooing the creature off the bed and out of the frame. While there is no clear resolution, from this moment onward, the animal becomes the man's pet.

Fig. 97: The companion animal in *The Arrival*

The animal is difficult to pin down in terms of its outer appearance. Tan recollects that

> "the design of the creature…was inspired by childhood memories of raising tadpoles in an aquarium….There is a stage between tadpole and frog that's especially intriguing, where limbs are just starting to grow and an expressiveness develops in the face. There's some analogy here with the transitional consciousness of an immigrant, being not quite one thing or another… The creature is connected to the immigrant in a way that is intimate but unclear: as with pets, there is an unspoken empathy that transcends culture and intelligence" (Tan, *Sketches* 35).

This strange animal whom the protagonist confronts in page 43 turns out to be the best companion to the man in the unknown land. The idea of a man confronting a bizarre animal and having to learn to live with it in a confined space is deeply significant. It tells us about the need to accept certain things in the absence of full comprehension. Sincere acceptance may also be likewise reciprocated. As familiarity sets in, the animal becomes more benevolent. Later, it is integrated within the family after the wife and daughter reunites with the man. In Section VI, page 117, the origami of the animal replaces the bird and the daughter accompanies it in her detours across the new place [Fig. 98].

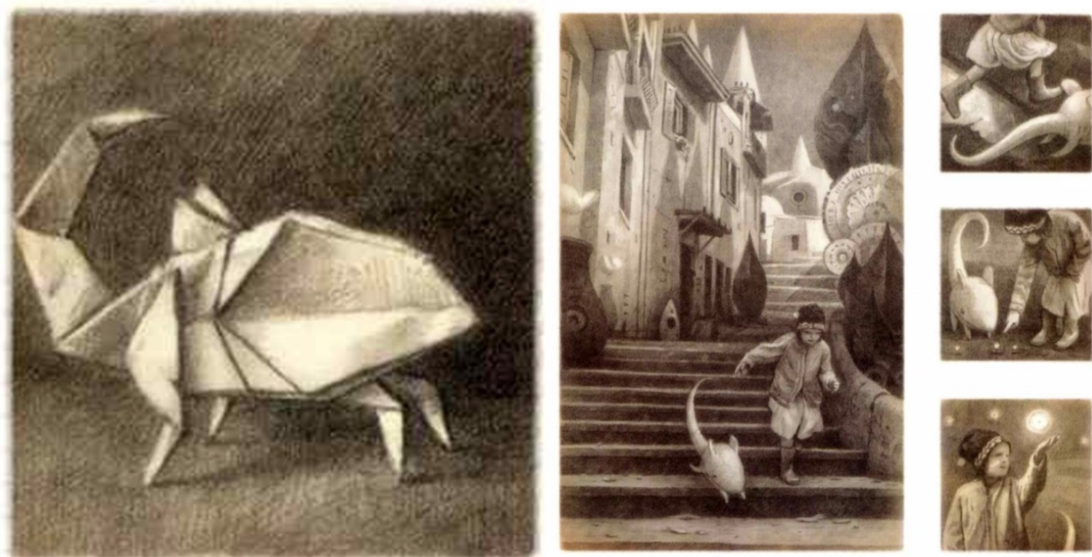

Fig. 98: From *The Arrival,* Section VI

After his encounter with the tadpole-like animal, the man commences to unpack his suitcase. He ruminates about his family which is presented by Tan in a stunning boxed perspective [Fig. 99]. Despite being separated by distance and time, the man connects with his family through imaginative projection of his memories associated with bonding around the ritual of eating together. Details like the unoccupied chair and the ever-present spiked tail of the serpent-like creature hovering over the window create a tremendous sense of empathy for the displaced. This simulated memory-image reinforces the intensity of loss the migrant experiences in the new land. The migrant unpacks the portrait of his family from the suitcase and nails it to the wall, using a shoe to drive the nail in. Subsequently in page 45 [Fig. 100], the point of view of the migrant merges with

the gaze of the reader. We are granted access into the thought process of the protagonist – the first two panels isolate the images of his wife and daughter, which are rendered in different sepia hues. Immediately after the close-up on his daughter's image, the reader encounters a memory-image – image of the family's hands clasping each other's, an exact repetition of the image from the morning of his departure (Tan, *The Arrival* 9).

Fig. 99: From The Arrival, Page 44, Section II

The perspective shifts to the outside of the apartment window. As the subsequent frames zoom out to a wide-shot of the external apartment wall, the migrant's image is subsumed amongst the building's façade, in the same movement towards defamiliarisation as when he was travelling on the ship.

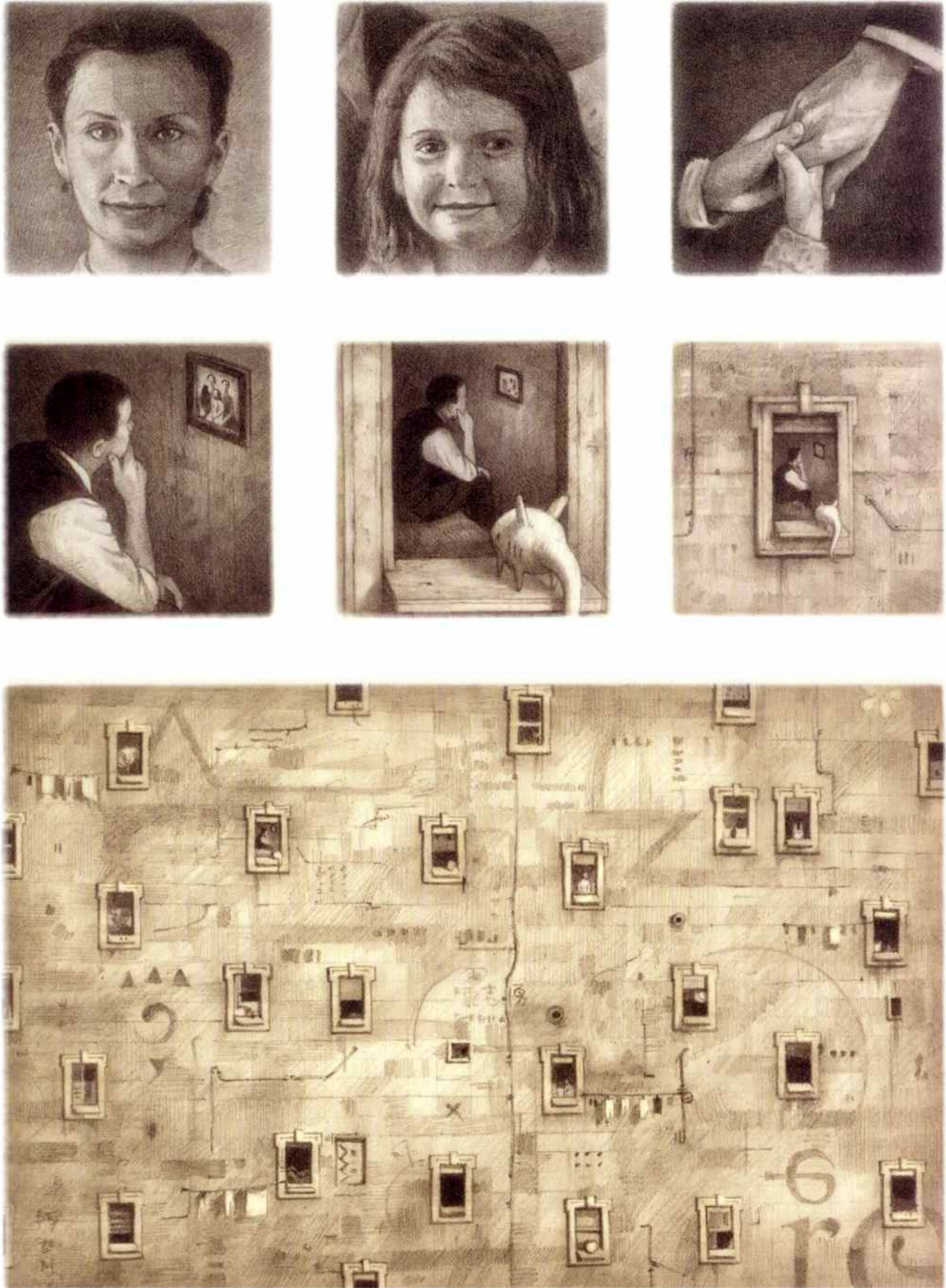

Fig. 100: *The Arrival,* Page 45, Section II

The double-page spread (page 46-47) that follows, with the birds in the foreground, recall the association between birds of passage and the migration journey from the Harbour scene [Fig. 101].

Fig. 101: *The Arrival,* Pages 46-47, Section II (left); From Page 21, Section I (right)

THE ENCOUNTERS

Soon after his arrival, the migrant begins looking for employment, and he faces a number of challenges with each role he tries because of his unfamiliarity with the linguistic conventions that characterise each position. This is conveyed most clearly on his first day pasting posters around the city. When his supervisor returns, the migrant realises that he has in fact been pasting the posters upturned and he is fired from his job (Page 82-83). Finally, the migrant commences work in an enormous factory line, inspecting small containers for defects. (Page 86-87). As he gets integrated within the cultural landscape of his 'adopted place' he slowly starts to make human friends. It is to be noted that from the first moment the protagonist arrives, he is repeatedly offered help by kind strangers, whether in trying to find shelter, comprehend the system of public transportation, identify edible produce or understand the process of food preparation. As a result of such sympathetic assistance, his initial confusion, nostalgia, and loneliness gradually seem to give way to optimism and a sense of community.

Embedded within the grand narrative of *The Arrival* are three stories of people who had to leave their home countries for different reasons. Here, Tan highlights the idea of universality in the stories of these people rather than pointing to their differences. There is a common thread which ties their narratives together. In the first one, (pages 55-57) a young woman – a child at the time of her departure – escapes harsh treatment from her employee – whose face remains

anonymous. Deprived of her treasured books, she was coerced to sweep chimneys and maintain fire in a hell-like dark factory.

Fig. 102: *The Arrival,* Pages 66-67, Section III

In the second story, (Page 65-72) a couple in love escapes hordes of gigantic people, who literally clean the city and sweep its inhabitants with strange machines on their backs [Fig.102]. Tan points out to the trigger of the idea,

> "The scene of towering giants destroying a city is a typical example [of using photocollages in preparation for a drawing]. The initial concept was inspired by a description of communism by a Romanian refugee: she explained it as an ideology of negation, of liberty and beauty being 'sucked away' and replaced by a spiritless pall of 'silent greyness.' For me, this provoked quite a literal mental image: powerful beings sweeping a world with vacuum cleaners (also suggestive of that terrible euphemism 'ethnic cleansing')" (Tan, *Sketches* 40).

The third story (page 89-96) features an old man, a former soldier who lost his leg in war. Tan depicts stark realities of conflicts with a striking imagery of soldiers running hopelessly (page 92). In the facing page (page 93), they are contrasted with the detritus of war – bones, skeletons and deserted trenches [Fig. 103]. The story ends with the solitary soldier's agonising shuffle as an amputee through a post-war landscape, which takes place over twelve frames.

Fig. 103: *The Arrival,* Pages 92-93, Section IV

One important stylistic innovation done by Tan while integrating these three episodes in the book is the use of cinematic fade-out into a flashback. It is a difficult thing to depict in a static medium like comics. Tan, in order to overcome the difficulty, uses colour effectively. In the first story of the woman/girl [Fig. 104], there is a visible shift from bright sepia (present) to darker greyscales (past).

Fig. 104: *The Arrival,* Pages 54-55, Section III

Moreover, the panel border also becomes a formal tool to ensure the transition from the present to the past. The soft indistinct panel borders make way for hard-framed borders that imitate archival photographs. They are also foregrounded against rough texture background in complete contrast to the white negative space of the other pages.

In the second story, both the migrant and his acquaintance hold their hands up as they look up and 'back' into the memory of their respective pasts [Fig. 105]. As the man commences his story, his image is zoomed in upon over three successive frames. This sequence ends with a single frame that contains only a close-up of his eye. Flames dance across his iris, suggesting that the man's story has 'come alive' for him as he delves into his memories of the traumatic past. This marks the reader's entry into his story, which commences overleaf in a dramatic double-spread frame.

Fig. 105: From *The Arrival,* Page 65, Section III

The third story begins with a casual conversation with an old man during the migrant's stint in the factory. In a cinematic transition, the man looks closely at an assembly-line object he picks up [Fig. 106].

The next frame depicts the man adopting the same pose in his youth, this time holding a flower (Page 89) and the reader completes the dissolve between the two images in the space of the gutter. The dissolve into the past commences the man's story as a soldier and the next sequence depicts him bidding farewell to a loved one as he sets off for war. Here the use of colour is reversed. The hue of each frame becomes progressively darker as the men walk past corpses, before breaking into a run against a ravaged background. The horror is amplified over the next two pages, as the reader is faced with the bones of the dead in a cold, blue-grey frame.

Fig. 106: *The Arrival,* Pages 88-89, Section IV

The fifth or the penultimate section of the book opens with the grasshopper-like bird hopping around before picking up twigs or leaves to make a nest on the migrant's windowsill. He is seen writing a letter that he folds into an origami bird. The form of this bird reminds the reader of his family and allows us to infer that the letter and the money he includes are intended for his family 'back home'. As the letter takes flight in a contraption similar to the balloon the migrant travelled in upon his arrival, the trees and flora loom large in a lonely landscape. The following double spread of what Tan calls the "Four Seasons" (Tan, *Comments*), utilises the changing appearance of a tree-like form to depict the passage of time of approximately a year. Of particular interest is the use of radial pattern in the drawing of a blossoming tree as they convey rich significance of life, energy and fertility. It is a pattern that appears throughout the book – in architecture, on clocks, animal wings and documents – and originates from the floating, protozoan objects that greet the new arrival in the new country. In the double spread they return as luminous entities, showering the landscape in a stream of light. Tan stuggles to explain their presence: "I can't fully explain them but they feel very important in the imaginary world. In a somewhat spiritual way, they offer a glimpse of the interconnectedness between all things, something that

may be perceived without ever being fully understood” (Tan, *Sketches* 44). Upon turning the page, the reader confronts the city in a snowy winter-scape. As time moves on, page 110 shows that the spring has arrived. The creature alerts him to the arrival of the mail and an origami letter-bird in turn alerts him to the arrival of his family. The next sequence of panels show the migrant rushing to meet his family as they land in another balloon-contraption. The excitement surrounding their arrival is depicted through successive frames which successively depict the migrant’s excited ‘call’ to them, her mother dropping the suitcase and the migrant’s hat falling as he begins to run towards them. While the migrant runs to meet his family, the silhouettes of the birds flock overhead. The next double-page spread (page 114-115) pans out to show the family reuniting as their miniature figures hug in the expansive landscape.

The final or the sixth section opens with a repetition of the arrangement of images as seen in page 1 of the book. However, the items within each panel have changed (Page 117). For instance, the origami bird of their old world residence is replaced by the origami of the family’s fantastic pet. Likewise, their new world home features a futuristic clock with a large dial rather than a conventional one, anemone-resembling foods instead of a soup pot, the girl’s drawings of air ships instead of her sketches of the family, an innovative stainless teapot rather than a traditional ceramic one, and a newspaper in an invented language instead of a stack of tickets for the transoceanic passage (Fig. 108).

Fig. 107: *The Arrival,* Page 1, Section I (left); Page 117, Section VI (right)

These changes in objects document the cultural adaptation of this group of individuals into the new geographic space. The contents of the protagonist's new living quarters can also be possibly viewed as the loss of their original culture. However, such an adaptation or potential loss is only partial, since several items remain constant across the cultures. The hat hanging on the hook on the wall is identical in both worlds, as is the attire of the family members in the photographs. The composition of the next full-page frame (page 118) reflects page 3 by locating each object in the family's new domestic setting [Fig. 108].

Fig. 108: *The Arrival,* Page 3, Section I (left); Page 118, Section VI (right)

The narrative closes with the symbolic image of the little girl showing the way to a newly arrived young woman who appears lost. Readers, encouraged to develop a transitory, contingent subjectivity through the act of reading the text, are to an extent dependent on the guidance of the narrative's strangers in order to overcome their own sense of displacement. The girl points to a location *outside* the frame and her position as an inhabitant of the place, directing the new arrival, gestures towards the cyclicity of belonging and inclusion. In a way, the narrative starts again. However, the girl's story to make the new setting her 'home' also calls to question the multiple implications of the particular word in the modern world.

Adorno in his nostalgic renderings in exile has written that "dwelling, in the proper sense, is now impossible," "the house is past"[39] Similarly Chambers refers to the impossibility of homecoming in modernist displacement, as homecoming "calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation."[40] Displaced subjects (migrants, exiles, tourists) in contemporary societies can signify mobility and habitation simultaneously. Like Tan, many of us have 'homes' in the plural.

[39] Adorno, Theodor W. *Minima Moralia; Reflections from Damaged Life*. New Left Books, 1974, p. 38-39

[40] Chambers, Ian. *Migrancy, Culture, Identity.* Routledge, 1994, p. 5

CHAPTER 5

THE CARDBOARD VALISE: TOURIST DESTINATIONS AND MEMORY

KATCHOR'S WORLD

In 21 August 2015[1], the elusive guerilla street artist, Banksy created 'Dismaland', a temporary art installation in the genteel seaside town of Weston-super-Mare, U.K. which is a dystopian interpretation of Disneyland, 'the happiest place on earth'[2]. A lot was crammed into the small site, both physically and conceptually. Despite being labelled as an art show, the "bemusement park" (Banksy also called it 'a family theme park unsuitable for children'[3]) was at once a political commentary of resistance against crass commercialization, an actual entertainment venue and an acrid comment on the Disney-style theme parks. In a way, it was also a twisted tribute to our chronic leisure surplus. It exposed our voracious appetite for making detours to places of desire and consume ready-made cultural artifacts as casual tourists.

Comic artist Ben Katchor's world approximates the subversive idea of Dismaland and probably goes further. He is a recorder of vanished and vanishing places. He notices what others fail to see and generally disregard. The creator of *Julius Knipl, Real-Estate Photographer* (Little Brown, 1996)[4], *The Jew of New York* (Pantheon, 1998)[5] and *The Beauty Supply District* (Pantheon, 2000)[6], another Knipl collection — Katchor has been admiringly described by novelist Michael Chabon as an "archaeologist of outmoded technologies and abandoned past times, a fellow playing a kind of involuted Borgesian game with the entire notion of nostalgia

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[1] Brown, Mark. "Banksy's Dismaland: 'amusements and anarchism' in artist's biggest project yet". *The Guardian*, 20 Aug., 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/aug/20/banksy-dismaland-amusements-anarchism-weston-super-mare. Accessed 24 Aug. 2015.

[2] Ibid.

[3] "Banksy's Dismaland gloom a joyful memory from the seaside." *BBC News*, 27 September, 2015, http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-bristol-34330108.

[4] Katchor, Ben. *Julius Knipl Real Estate Photographer*. Little Brown, 1996

[5] Katchor, Ben. *The Jew of New York*. Pantheon Books, 2000

[6] Katchor, Ben. *The Beauty Supply District*. Pantheon Books, 2006

itself proving that one can feel nostalgia not only for times before one's own but, surprisingly, for things that never existed."[7] Katchor's memory games with his readers in these books are about spotting the residues of culture in an urban surrounding. Knipl's city is not readily identifiable, but it inspires a subtle sensation of nostalgia that makes the reader return to their own environment with an altered sense of perspective. The small businesses that Julius Knipl finds on his exploration of the city are very different from those that adorn American streets today. In a world in which corporate branding and big business dominate the commercial urban landscape, Katchor's strips sound a resonant note of caution to the contemporary readers. Nathalie op de Beeck suggests that Julius Knipl signals "a contemporary American mode of theorizing memory and urban decay."[8] Ben Katchor's dreamlike interpretation of New York (or other American cities) is deliberately unspecific, imprecise and incomplete. The freedom from obligation to declare the urban environment exact or 'finished' allows Katchor to remain free to foreground its very human details.

> "Like Cohen, Katchor does not create literal documentaries of changing times, but in his best pictorial sequences, he shows how we encounter (and generally ignore) dusty or gummed-up traces of the past in the material layers of shop fronts, sidewalks, and alienated commodities. His comics use visual and verbal cues toward the same philosophical ends as Benjamin's compilations, getting readers to pause long enough (often in a state of boredom) to observe neglected shop signs, seldom-noticed monuments, nearly obsolete careers, and the circulation of capital in the urban space" (Beeck 821).

In *The Cardboard Valise*[9], Katchor goes beyond his known ambience and tackles the theme of mobility, specifically, travels undertaken by a tourist. He overlaps this with the narrative about the memory of urban objects which mirrors his earlier work. *The Cardboard Valise* is permeated less with nostalgia for lost crafts and products, than with a sense of wonder about the lives and afterlives of industrial objects.

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[7] Michael Chabon, "Introduction." *Julius Knipl Real Estate Photographer*, by Ben Katchor, Little Brown, 1996.
[8] Beeck, Nathalie op de. "Found Objects". *Modern Fiction Studies,* Vol. 52, No.4, 2006, p. 807.
[9] Katchor, Ben. *The Cardboard Valise*. Pantheon Books, 2011.

TRAVEL NARRATIVES

Before analyzing the text, it is important to look at the theoretical underpinnings of tourism studies (especially with relation to visual culture) which have emerged as a serious subject of research in recent years. It is also important to note the paradigm shift that occurs when certain specific ideas of travel are being construed as part of tourist mobility.

"The idea of travel as a means of gathering and recording information is commonly found in societies that exercise a high degree of political power"[10], and the ethnographic discourses generated by travellers as part of Occidental expansionism were preceded by earlier Arab counterparts.[11] The cross-cultural encounters brought about by the voyages of discovery from the sixteenth century onwards enabled "comparisons [that] helped to change Europeans' self-image of Europe from being a periphery to ancient centres, to being a centre in its own right which was at the edge of the 'modern.'"[12] This self-mythologizing process embedded and relied on a hegemonic discourse of ethnocentricity and racial superiority.[13] More specifically, the concept of 'race' was vital to the colonial endeavour as the ideological licensing of economic expansionism, from slave trade to colonial exploitation in India and elsewhere. Travel literature proliferated as print culture accompanied European expansion and travellers became the "seeing eye, and the recounting voice" of the new colonial powers (Kabbani 6). Moreover, visual practices of appropriation and display; the drive "to collect and order the planet in visual form" (Amad 101)[14] helped shape discourses of cultural difference, geographic and ethnographic knowledge. In narratives shaped by this cultural heritage ideas of exploration and mastery, self- discovery and cultural capital have come to be closely related. Thus, in the language and discourse of travel from the British Grand Tourists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to contemporary forms of mass tourism and independent travel "travel continues to be figuratively

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[10] Kabbani, Rana. *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of Orient.* Pandora, 1988, p.1.
[11] Ibid. pp. 1-3
[12] Leed, E.J. *The Mind of the Traveler: from Gilgamesh to global tourism*. Basic, 1991, p. 21.
[13] Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Penguin, 2003, p.7
[14] Amad, P. "Between the 'Familiar Text' and 'Book of the World': touring the ambivalent contexts of travel films." *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel*, edited by J. Ruoff, Duke University Press, 2006, pp. 99-116.

treated as a form of personal appropriation" (Adler 1383).[15]

However, historical and culturally specific models for thinking about and representing travel do not necessarily encompass the plurality of experience constituting travel in the current global context – "there are countless mobilities, physical, imaginative and virtual, voluntary and coerced."[16] In a globalised society, the ideas of movement are embedded not only in changing metaphors, but changing experiences as well. The accelerated sensations of speed create new accelerated sublime landscapes. 'Travel' looks like a restrictive term if try to map the trajectory of multiple postmodern movements. Instead we can use the "new mobility paradigm" coined by John Urry and Mimi Scheller to understand the dynamics of tourism as highly mobilized "tourismscapes."[17] In fact, Urry states that almost all places are "toured" and the "pleasures of place derive from the connoisseurship of difference"[18] (Urry, *Places* viii). According to him, the "language of landscapes" thus becomes a "language of mobility, based on judgments of abstract characteristics" (Urry, *Places* vii).

TRAVEL AS TOURIST MOBILITIES

Mobilities incorporate diverse practices and experiences that constitute tourism. Although tourism might be broadly defined as travel as leisure, this is in no way a simple distinction – tourist experiences and practices may include travel undertaken for other purposes. On the other hand, some travel undertaken within the context of leisure resists association with tourism for a variety of reasons. Without clearly defined distinctions, cultural associations set the traveller apart from the tourist and vice versa. In consonance with postmodern critical approaches to the visual that foregrounds loss of meaning[19], industrialised

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[15] Adler, J. 'Travel as Performed Art.' *American Journal of Sociology,* 94: 6, 1989, pp. 1366-1391.
[16] Urry, John. *The Tourist Gaze*. Sage Publications, 2002, p. 161.
[17] Van der Duim, R. "Tourismscapes: An actor-network perspective." *Annals of Tourism Research, 34*(4), 2007, pp. 961-976.
[18] Urry, J. "Preface: Places and performances." *Travels in Paradox,* edited by C. Minca and T. Oakes, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2006, pp. vii-xi.
[19] Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. University of Michigan Press, 1994.

production and passive consumption[20] and the seductive, yet hollow, spectacle[21], "the mere sightseer has come to be universally denigrated, as someone who is necessarily superficial in their appreciation of peoples and places."[22] Thus discourses of consumption and leisure are particularly associated with tourism.

Tourism is purely a twentieth-century phenomenon which has grown significantly in economic and social importance. The enigma of defining tourism has plagued scholars and academics alike since the 1960s.[23] Tourism is a problematic concept due to the term encompassing a diversity of connotations. Many scholars have provided tourism studies with a multiplicity of definitions to explain the multifaceted essence of the term. Noted critic John Tribe offers a broad perspective, which allows for the term to embrace many of the stakeholders involved, by defining tourism as, "the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction in generating and host regions, of tourists, business suppliers, governments, communities, and environments" (Tribe 641).[24] However, tourism cannot be confined to standard definition due to its crossing of several interdisciplinary boundaries no matter how broad. Hom Cary indicates that tourism studies spans across the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, economics, art history, psychology and political science among others.

The tourist has been generally seen as an object for consumption rather than a subject capable of providing rich data filled with representative experience.[25] Daniel Boorstin first defined tourist experience as popular consumer behaviour and lamented the ongoing loss of "real" travel.[26] He argues that in modern era travel has become transformed from a precarious and transformative venture to an increasingly "bland and riskless commodity."[27] Later, Dean MacCannell discussed the modernity of touristic experience and constructed the

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[20] Adorno, Theodore. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture.* Routledge, 1991

[21] Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. Zone Books, 1994.

[22] Rojek, Chris, and John Urry. *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory*. Routledge, 1997, p. 7

[23] Hom Cary, Stephanie. "The Tourist Moment." *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 31(1), Jan., 2004, pp. 61-77, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2003.03.001. Accessed 15 Feb. 2014.

[24] Tribe, John. "The Indiscipline of Tourism." *Annals of Tourism Research,* 24(3), 1997, pp. 638-657.

[25] Urry, John. *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. Sage Publications, 1990.

[26] Boorstin, D. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America.* Harper, 1964.

[27] Ibid. 116

authenticity research paradigm.[28] This paradigm is carried forward by scholars like Hom Cary who writes, that "in journal entries, postcards, photographs, storytelling, etc., the moment is clearly (re)presented, (re)produced, and (re)created through narrative" (Hom Cary 64). The narrative associated with these objects transforms into a construct packed with representation, subjectivity and ideology. Then the label of "tourist" vanquishes and the "subject" materializes along with the individual within it. One of the effects of tourism is retreat from the routine of life, allowing for the unexpected, taking pleasure in refreshment and play, and to escape from work and responsibility which allows the individual to let go, thus exposing a more "authentic" self.[29] N. Wang indicates that tourists are not only searching for the 'Other', but are also on a quest for self-identity and that tourism is a vessel for self-discovery.[30] This is particularly true in the case of photography and tourist identity.

In spite of all these important interventions, tourism studies changed when John Urry mapped the discipline within his wider "new mobilities" paradigm. His seminal work, *The Tourist Gaze*[31] has advocated that the "tourist gaze" of the "Other" is central to the touristic experience. For Urry, gazes are socially organized. So the onus is not on the individual tourist who chooses how to look, watch, spot, glare, gape, see, look, glimpse, peep, peek, stare or gawk, however he/she wants, but rather it is a cultural production – a way of seeing. He says, "this gaze [the tourist gaze] is as socially organized and systematized as the gaze of the medic" (Urry 1). The tourist gaze is socially organized, it is flexible, it is historical and therefore changeable.

The tourist gaze triggers visual and narrative depictions of tourist destinations that are strategically promoted by the marketing industry to contrast it with people's daily routine and work schedules at home. These imaginaries are captured through signs which signify a particular fantasy. Varieties of gazes

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[28] MacCannell, D. *The Tourist: A new theory of the leisure class.* University of California Press, 1976.
[29] Edensor, Tim. "Staging tourism: tourists as performers." *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 27, issue 2, April, 2000, pp. 322–344.
[30] Wang, N. "Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience." *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26(2), 1999, pp. 349-370.
[31] Urry, John. *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. London: Sage Publications, 1990.

organize anticipations of a wide range of experiences, from romance and pleasure to health and education. As a result, tourism has become a central component of the processes of globalization, subsuming ever larger numbers of travellers to every part of the globe. From small towns to metropolitan centres, places compete for the growing flow of tourists by inventing and reconfiguring themselves to be able to attract visitors. Most unlikeliest of places have developed tourism infrastructure – from concentration camps, jails, military occupation sites, to places associated with mass murder and sacrifice, poverty stricken neighbourhoods and even dilapidated industrial sites. Such places and their populations enter a worldwide network of restaurants, museums, tourist information centres, tour operators, tourist agencies, tour guides, marketing enterprises, transportation corporations, mass media outlets and TV travel programs. Tourist representations are based on selected elements of history, heritage, culture, ways of life and various features of townscape and landscape. These are captured through photographs, maps, film, documentaries, news, novels, postcards, souvenirs, travel blogs and like. Such media enable this particular way of seeing a tourist destination to be endlessly reproduced and globally disseminated. As more and more spots around the globe compete to become tourist destinations, tourist gaze becomes an ever more perfected marketing effort to maximize the potential of a destination.

Critics like Bronwyn Morkham and Russell Staiff[32] have argued that Urry's concept of the tourist gaze evokes and inverts the Foucauldian notion of disciplinary surveillance that seeks to address the position of "those who are gazed upon."[33] They also suggest that the concept of the gaze, as applied in the theorising of cinema as in tourism, overstates the aspect of ocularism in ways that obscure other considerations and sense experiences. Moving away from the visual as the privileged focalising point allows consideration of two equally salient aspects of travel – encounter and performance.

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[32] Morkham, B., and Staiff, R. "The Cinematic Tourist: Perception and Subjectivity." *The Tourist as a Metaphor of the Social World*, edited by Graham Dann, CABI, 2002, pp. 297- 316.
[33] ibid: 311, n1, original emphasis

EMILE DELILAH AND HIS XENOPHILIA

The Cardboard Valise carries Katchor's trademark blend of humour and irony, fluid pen strokes and offbeat philosophical musings. A complex work that goes beyond the ideologies of tourism studies, it is ultimately about human motivations to journey abroad and the often more difficult journey to find fulfilment at home.

At the heart of the narrative is Emile Delilah. Seduced by travel bug at an early age, he can neither have a proper job nor have a normal relationship. Katchor portrays Delilah as a "xenophiliac" who is addicted to foreign lands and suffers from a condition that can be described as "a morbid love for every nation but his own" (Katchor 15)[34].

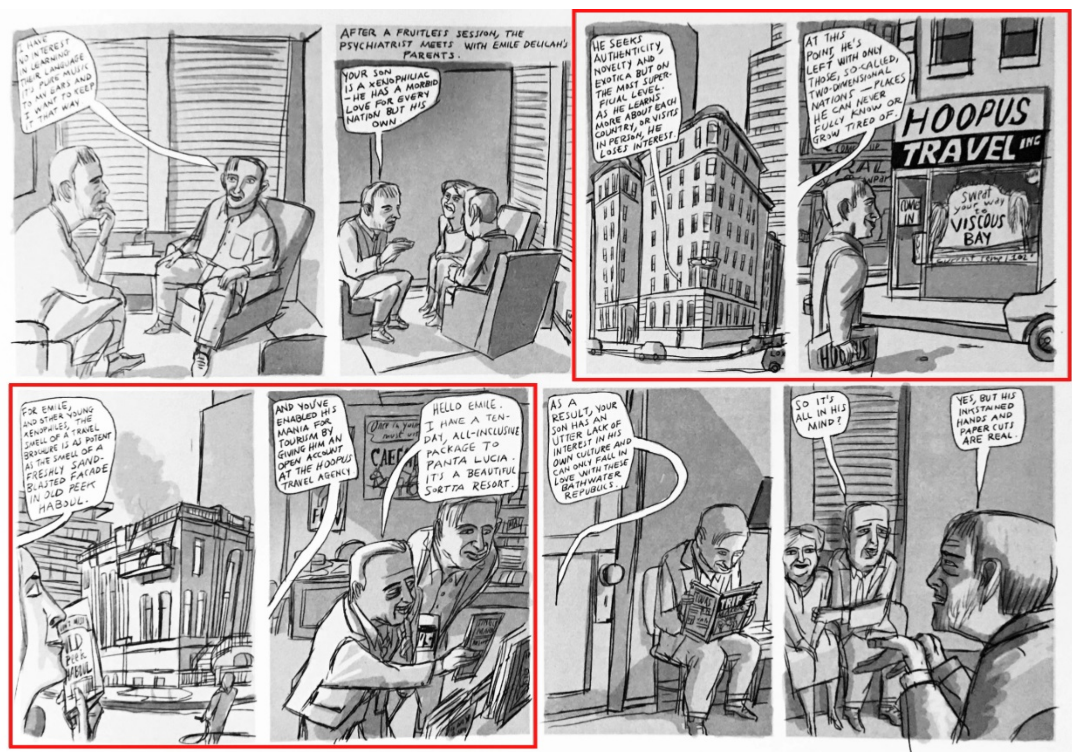

Fig. 109: Ben Katchor's *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 15

The encounter with Delilah's parents and the psychiatrist reveals Delilah's quest for authenticity, but on a superficial level. The arc of 8 panels within the page [Fig. 109] shows the artistry of Katchor. Firstly, the page (15, *my numbering*) is different in tone from the other pages that precede and follow it. The off-white background with softer wash shadows signals a retreat to memory. The first panel

[34] Like the previous work, *The Arrival*, *The Cardboard Valise* also doesn't have page numbers. So I have resorted to manual numbering of pages for convenience.

shows Delilah in the psychiatrist's couch. He can be seen in the penultimate panel devouring a travel brochure sitting outside the chamber, while his parents listen to the diagnosis of the expert. In the intervening 4 panels (diagonally placed to each other, marked in red), Katchor foregrounds the trigger for Delilah's pathological condition – Delilah's parents (particularly his father, Caesar Delilah) have ironically fuelled his xenophiliac desire by gifting him an open travel account with "Hoopus Travel Agency". The psychiatrist's words looms over like a voice-over until he surfaces again in the last panel. In one page, Katchor moves to the past and at the same time plumbs the *pastness* of that past.

Fig. 110: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 42

In fact, even when Delilah returns home to Fluxion City — apparently located seven miles southeast of Bayonne, New Jersey — he maintains the lifestyle of a tourist:

> "For some people it's impossible to make the transition back to the workaday world. You've seen them—habitual vacationists. They've discovered that they feel most themselves in after-pool attire and see nothing wrong with sunbathing on a busy midtown street" (Katchor 42).

He fails to adjust to home, so much so that when he finds his bed unmade, he promptly makes a call to housekeeping. He has momentarily forgotten that he is not at a hotel, but his own home [Fig. 110, the marked last panel]. The afterglow

of vacation experience effaces his cultural identity. As Delilah walks as a flaneur through the city space, his T-shirt has the following words inscribed on it: “I went on Tensint Island.” It could well have been – “I went on Tensint island and never came back.” Emile, despite his presence in the city, resides in the imaginary landscape of the island space.

While describing the xenophiliac tendencies of Emile, the psychiatrist also talks about the fleeting nature of his attachment with each country. As Emile learns more about one country or visits one in person, he immediately loses interest. So his present attachment deeply concerns “only those two-dimensional nations – places he can never fully know or grow tired of” (Katchor 15). Later in facing pages 30-31, Katchor ruminates on this particular idea of nationhood.

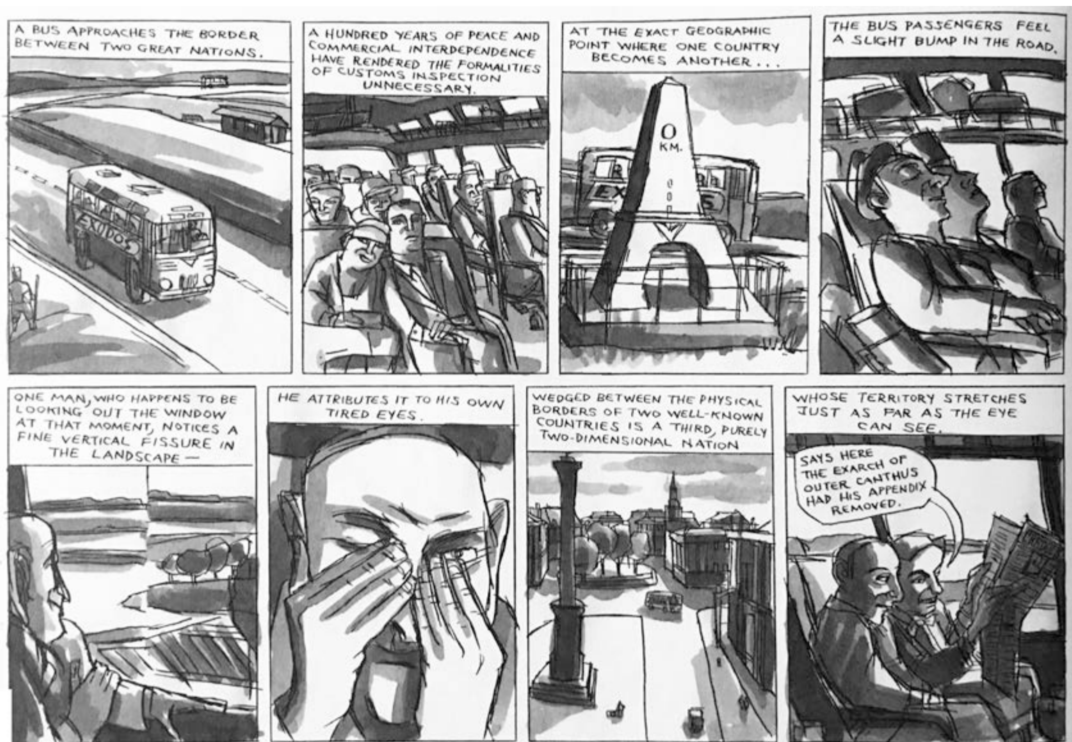

Fig. 111: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 30

As a bus crosses the border between two great nations, the passengers only experience a slight bump in the road “at the exact geographic point where one country becomes another” [Fig. 111]. A hundred years of peace has rendered the formalities of custom inspection utterly disposable. Of course, Katchor is being ironical here. His utopia regarding the dissolution of nation-borders, cruelly puts in perspective, the crushing restrictions imposed by the Israelites on the Palestinians within their own spaces in *Footnotes in Gaza*. In a visual tour de force, Katchor

slightly shifts the visual field within panel 5 of the page. The vertical fissure [Fig. 112, left panel] that literally cuts the panel into two is later attributed to the tired eyes of the onlooker (and consequently, the reader as well).

Fig. 112: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 30

Katchor's fantasy takes him to probe further in order to de-construct the idea of nationhood with its elaborate paraphernalia of borders, walls, checking points, security, passports and travel documents. Within the liminal spaces of two physical borders lies a "third, purely two-dimensional nation whose territory stretches just as far as the eye can see" (Katchor 30). In a verbal sleight within last panel of page 30, the narrator makes it apparent that "Outer Canthus" is one such two-dimensional country – a country which can only exist within the pages of the book or within travel brochures. In a Borgesian twist, Katchor actually gives a number list of countries that exist partly or solely in two-dimension. The respective community of three-dimensional and two-dimensional nations are wrecked by an enmity which can result in the violence of "ugly exchange of hand gestures" (Katchor 31). The author also hints that Delilah's engagement with two dimensional nations may be a metafictional reference to his obsession of conjuring imaginary spaces while reading travel brochures in Hoopus Travel agency. They may also refer to the literal two-dimensional drawings of places contained within

the book itself – not unlike “Outer Canthusian style pressed rose petals” (Katchor 31) that can be used as bookmarks to locate pages. After all, paper roses are like paper nations – they can be marked, folded, dog-eared, crushed and converted to pulp in paper-making factory.

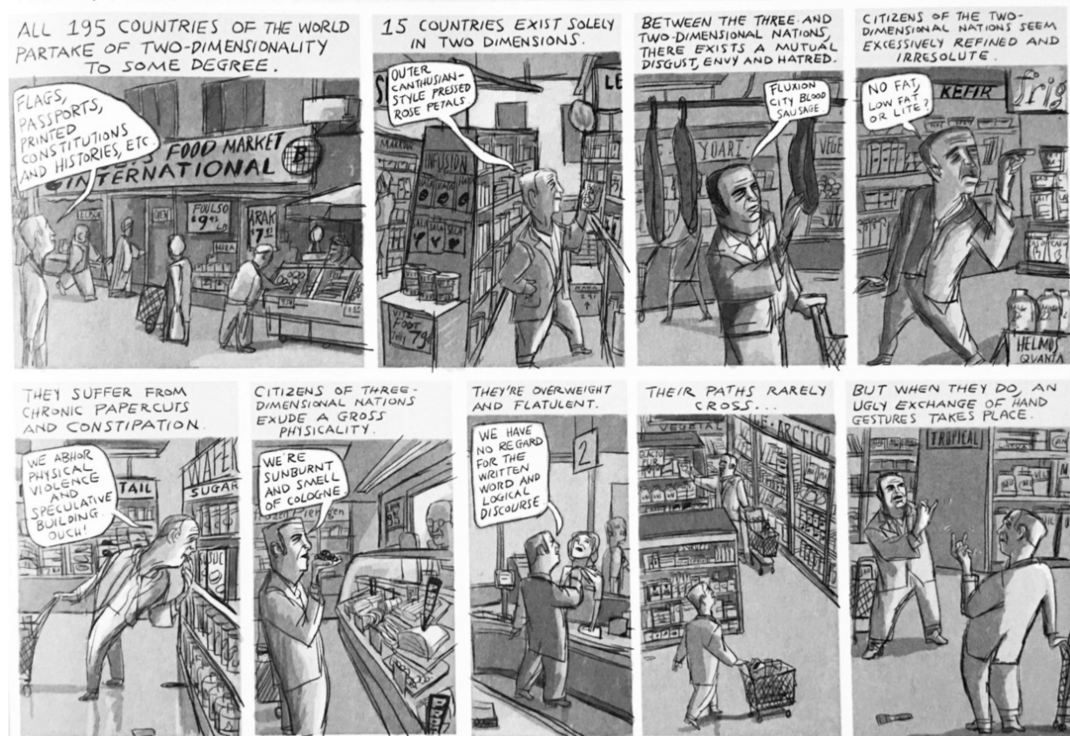

Fig. 113: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 31

Over the course of the novel, Delilah’s xenophilia brings him on visits to curious destinations, including Tensint Island, home to world-famous restroom ruins. But it is the nation of Outer Canthus (the anatomical term for the outside corner of one’s eye), a place of questionable charm, that is so irresistible that he finds himself returning there over and over again. Katchor relishes the opportunity to ‘invent’ a nation whose attributes seem vaguely familiar yet undeniably odd, part dusty Old World charm and part schoolboy fantasy. It is a culture of great haters—verbally abusive inhabitants mutter phrases such as “That shovel nosed little martinet, I trespass on his mother’s vegetable garden”. Katchor painstakingly builds up the place block by block. A small part of Outer Canthus is given away to ‘tourist trade’ with Asychelle Diurnorama as its centre. The subtle play on the word ‘diurnal’ (day-to-day) ensures that the tourists who visit it “savour the relentless cycle of day and night slowed to half its speed” (Katchor 26).

Fig. 114: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 26

Once outside the contraption, they feel the quickening of time so much so that they feel ready for their last rites. The 'diurnorama' is a metaphor for life in Outer Cantus. It is a place caught within a warp due to the paradoxical waxing and waning of time.

Fig. 115: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 26

The guiding principle of this great nation is determined by pure sensory appeal. No wonder, it uses "lick" notes and its national hero is an unnamed man who invented the wireless transmission of scents [Fig. 116]. Katchor draws a memorial of this genius in the city square of Outer cantus which is admired by visiting tourists. The three panels in the upper part of page 27 foreground Katchor's cinematic play of perspectives. The first panel is a close-up of the note in hand of its owner; the second one is a mid-shot flashback to hero's explanation of olfactory experience while the third panel is long-shot of his memorial. The speech-balloons seem to be the continuation of the captions as they echo each other in verbal jousting.

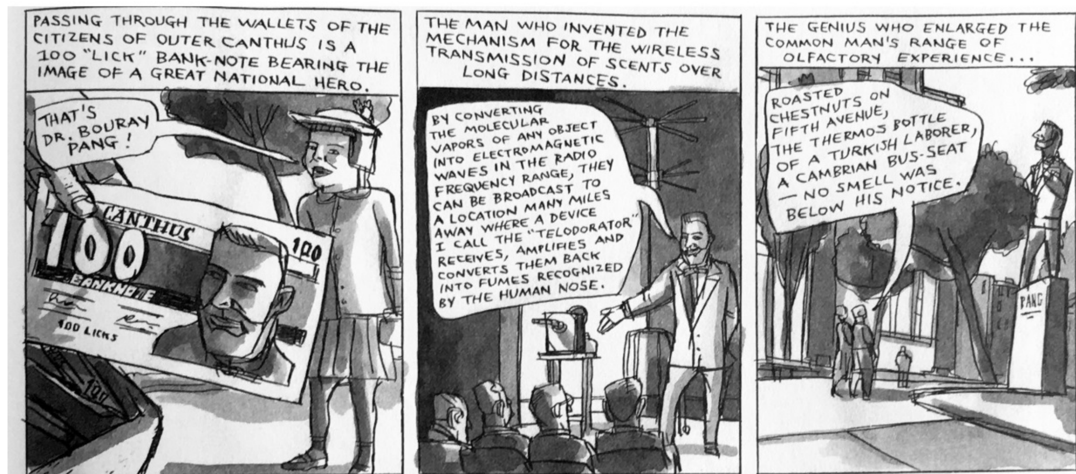

Fig. 116: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 27

The conceit of smell is taken to its limit by the depiction of small change currency, suggestively called "Eurintine" (sly reference to urine). It is of negligible value as one thousand Eurintine can only buy a glass of artificially flavoured salad water. Inscribed within the coin is the profile of Orfan Gidyup whose obsession in life is to spend time before "telodorator" smelling Parisian chorus girls [Fig. 117].

Fig. 117: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 27

In addition to these, Katchor adds other hints about life in this surreal place. The "pale, will-o-wisp" skin colour of the Canthusians is given a lot of focus. Katchor may be ironically referring to human obsession with skin colour and the associated politics of race that plays out in our daily life. He begins with a complex guidebook description first. Even upon arriving at the place, the tourist may not get the real feel of colour as "the pigmentation of the skin depends upon a momentary balance of chemicals in the bloodstream" (Katchor 28). Historically they are

represented in painting as having “lobster-red complexions”, yet most of the times they are like chameleons that change their colour to blend into their surroundings [Fig. 118, fourth panel].

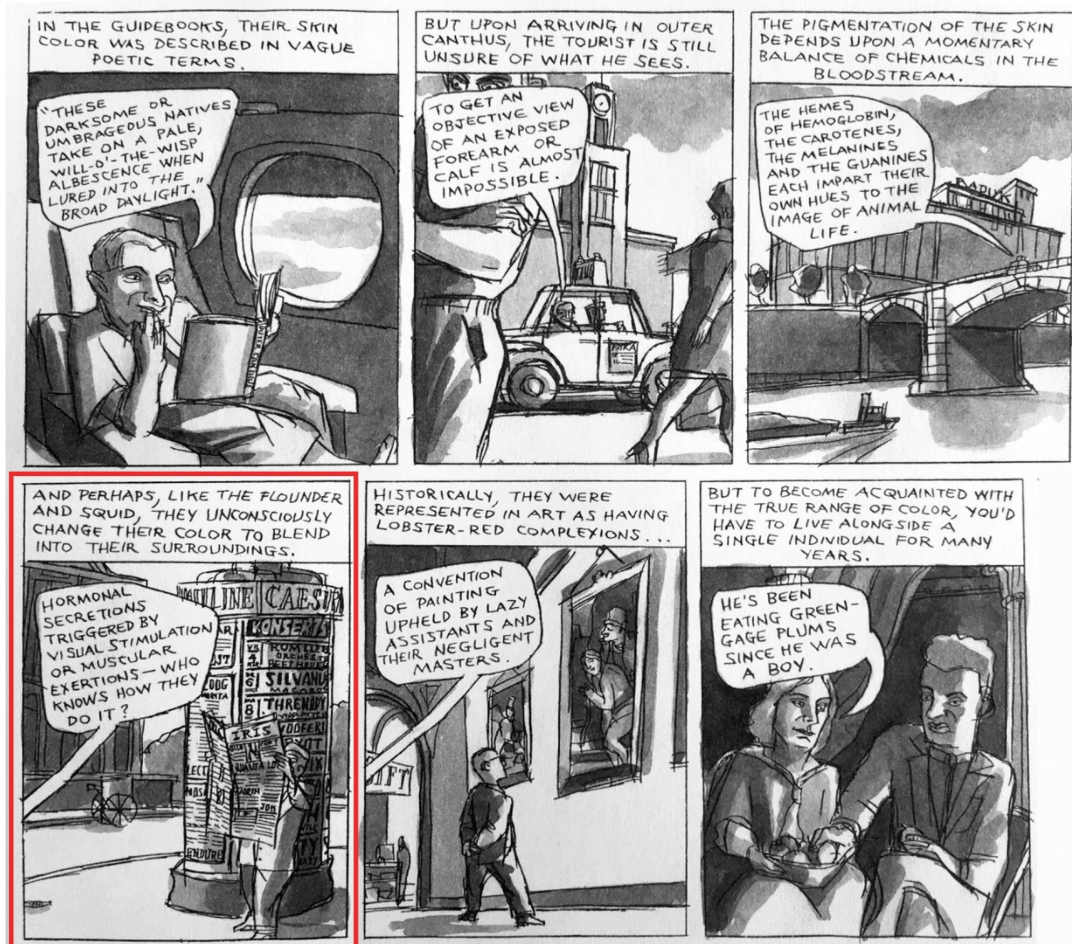

Fig. 118: *The Cardboard Valise,* from page 28

However, Outer Canthus’ façade as a tourist haven also nurses an ugly secret.

Fig. 119: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 33

The real economy of the place is run by modern industrial plants which produces one child’s toothbrush from “20 pounds of meadow grass”, one colour television

picture tube from “1000 empty aspirin bottles” and one artificial wool men’s sports jacket from the “gnawed remains of 5,000 boiled lamb chop dinners” (Katchor 33). It is understandable that the ecology of this utopia is quite fragile. The working of aggressive capitalist consumer culture is laid bare in a stunning panel at the lower end of page 33 [Fig. 120] where the guide issues a caveat to the tourist about the possible fall-out of revealing their ‘secret’ to the unerring consumer.

Fig. 120: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 33

It is to be noted that Katchor doesn’t show these snap-shots about the land in a chronological way. Instead, he shuffles them incessantly like a pack of cards, only to reveal things at the right moment. He showcases a non-linear collage of images on Outer Canthus which (re)creates the sight and smell of the place, so much so that it seems real. However, there are enough hints to suggest that “Outer Canthus” may only be a two-dimensional “drawn” nation – inked assiduously by an

artist called Ben Katchor on paper. Visually, Katchor's work has a distinctively sketchy, unrefined feel, with a grey wash in place of colour and an unerring sense of body language. His illustrations change continuously across the eight frames on each page, capturing buildings, streetscapes, and other curious settings both at close range and from afar. Meanwhile, the narrative—which is inserted across the top of each rectangular frame—and the dialogue are both hand-printed by Katchor in capital letters, making the experience feel both personal and informal. This very act of drawing and craftsmanship may have given birth to this utopian country. In page 105, there is a whole page insert documenting the actual production of ink from "Solvent City." It is drawn like an industrial brochure, in a style different from the other pages of the book [Fig. 121].

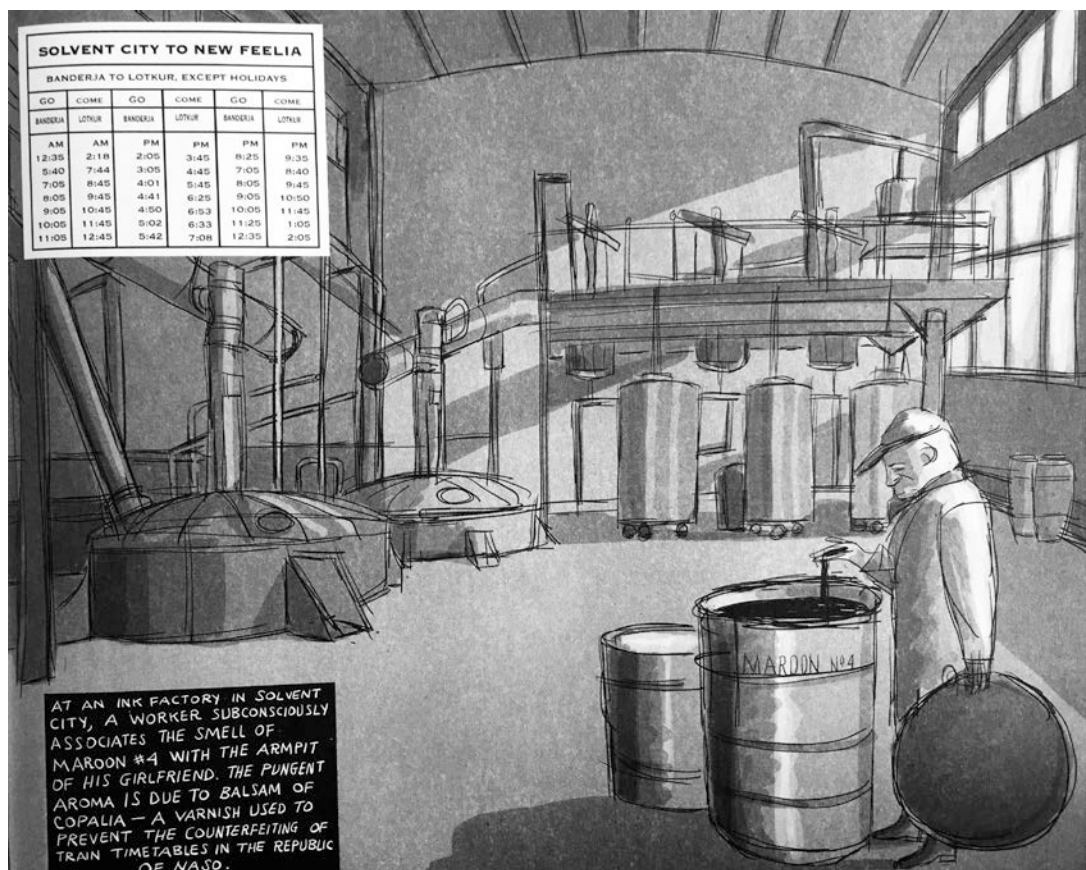

Fig. 121: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 105

One of the major entertainments in Outer Canthus involves sensual finger-play with morsels of left-overs. They cling to them, argue and fight over them before disposing those "odoriferous" tit-bits for stray dog or cats to eat [Fig. 122]. The perversity of smell seems to sustain their life. This one-line idea is given the width of a whole page to 'play' itself out. One of the interesting aspects of Katchor's

layout in the book is its constancy. The majority of the pages consist of 8 panels in 4:4 upper/lower ratios. However, no where do they seem static or staid. One of the reasons is the constant flow of characters, some of whom appear only once in the narrative before vanishing from the pages forever without a trace.

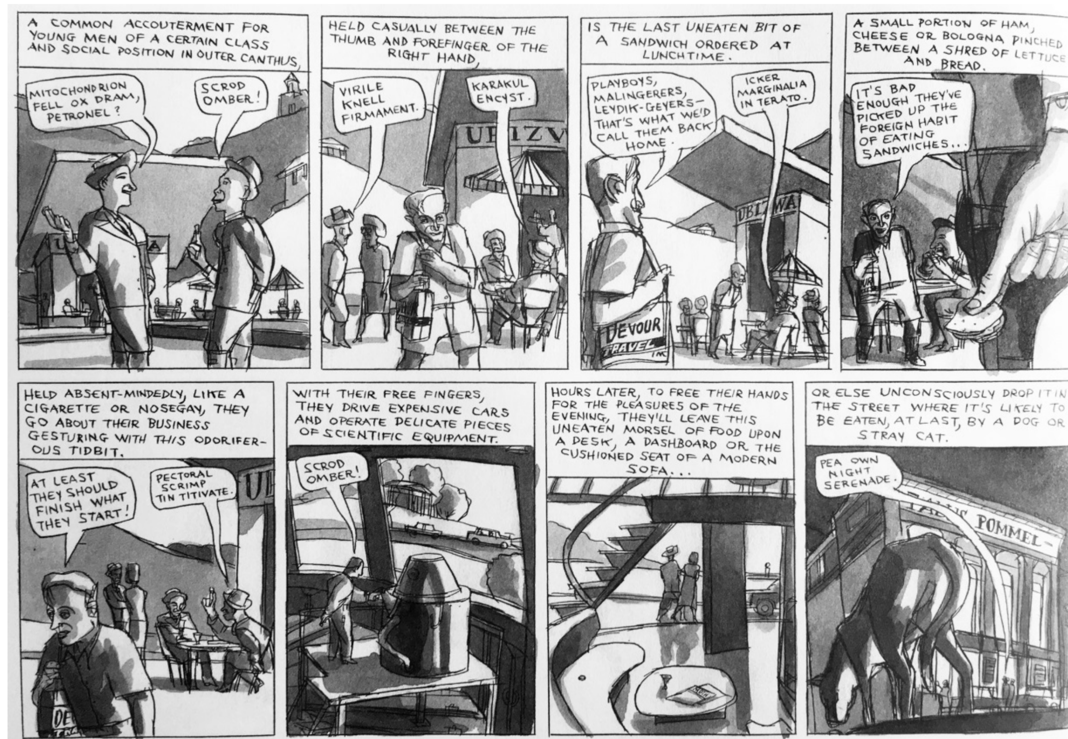

Fig. 122: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 36

If we look closely at page 105 [Fig. 122], we can see the use of multiple points of view, not just with respect to visual composition but also in terms of textual placements. Many voices jostle together, talking about the same subject but from different perspectives. The speech-balloons and the captions are contiguous in the way they supplement each other. The authorial voice and those of the characters merge to create a continuum.

When we see Outer Canthus through Emile Delilah's eyes, the metafictional reference to paper is evoked again. Delilah, the quintessential tourist is seduced by the smell of pamphlets and picture postcards describing the place. Once he inhales them deeply he is teleported to a place called "Perforation Point" where the "Outer Canthusians go to get a sense of the fragility of life" (Katchor 103). The reference to paper-marks is unmistakable as he gnaws at a small printable ticket and the "sweet, sharp tang of foreign ink and paper overwhelm his senses" so much so, that he can conjure the sheer face of a cliff in his mind. The

two facing spread [Fig. 124] dedicated to this particular incident spoofs the myth of touristic travel. Delilah's imagined mobility helps him to dissolve the fine line between "home" and "elsewhere".

Fig. 123: *The Cardboard Valise,* Pages 102-103

In this context it is important to understand the interplay between lived landscapes and their respective representations and consumption. Landscapes work as a text, as a build-up consequence of place-identity process, resulting in a

palimpsest of continually overlaid landscapes, which are deciphered and recoded through the practice of tourism.[35] The notions of "home" and "elsewhere," "us" and "them" are constructed through mobility, motility (potentials of mobility) and migration. The scope and scale of mobility and motility has changed in a postmodern world through the intensity in time-space expansion/contraction. "Tourismscapes"[36] in their rhizomatic character have contributed to the changed understanding and analysis of spatial concepts, such as place, centre, and periphery. Bouncing between the perceived and imagined boundaries of those different aspects, travellers are constantly changing places, landscapes, and their own identity. Thus identities of places are never "pure", but always porous and the product of "other" places. Landscapes of tourism are one of the most imagined ones and those multiple layers of imagination constitute themselves in realities of those landscapes. Landscapes in tourism work under the notions of departure and return, the momentary escapism, the illusionary (re-)entering of places of elsewhere. Even the multi-sensual bodily experience of "being-there" locates the place into our "body-subject," we inhabit places more outside of their actual physical realm in our pre- and after imaginations and practices.[37] The visionary landscape of "Outer Canthus" offers pleasure to the senses and Delilah is completely absorbed by its myth. As Barthes argues, myths are not as much created as veiled.[38] These selectively modified representational landscapes for appropriating the needs of the present consumer society reflect that idea more than anything else.

ISLAND EXPERIENCE

The "myth of island"[39] is a powerful one in tourism studies. The "lure" of the islands emphasizes on the feeling of separateness, of being cut off from the

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[35] Knudsen, D. C., M. M. Metro-Roland, A. K. Soper and C. E. Greer, editors. *Landscape, Tourism, and Meaning*. Ashgate, 2008.
[36] Van der Duim, R. "Tourismscapes: An actor-network perspective." *Annals of Tourism Research, 34*(4), 2007, pp. 961-976.
[37] Casey, E. S. "Body, Self, and Landscape." *Textures of Place. Exploring Human Geographies,* edited by P. C. Adams, S. Hoelscher and K. E. Till, University of Minnesota Press. 2001, pp.403-425.; Suvantola, J. *Tourist's Experience of Place*. Ashgate, 2002.
[38] Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Jonathan Cape, 1972.
[39] Harrison, D. "Islands, image and tourism." *Tourism Recreation Research, 26*, 2001, pp. 9-14.

mainland. Critics agree that the fascination of islands for tourists is dependent on several factors, such as "remoteness, physical separation and isolation, access to abundant water and the influence that water has on the physical and cultural environment, the sense of adventure of getting there, a manageable scale, … a particular way of life, often a slower pace than on the mainland, and a preserved culture and language" (Baum 28)[40]. The island mystique lies in remoteness – a movement towards the periphery. Paul Theroux refers to this movement as "anti-tourist appeal"[41] – "the fact that few people go there is one of the most persuasive reasons for travelling to a place." New remote locations offer illusions of getting there before they are lost to frenetic development.

Fig. 124: *The Cardboard Valise,* separate panels from Page 4

In *The Cardboard Valise,* Katchor presents Tensint islands as a subversion of one such destination. The island's capital city is called "Occupatia" and it is famous for its "public restroom ruins". While travelling to the island [Fig.124], Delilah is aware of its "mysterious allure" and acknowledges that it is only applicable to foreign tourists from another culture and not to locals. Tensint is not

[40] Baum, T. G. "The fascination of Islands: A Tourist Perspective." *Island tourism: Trends and prospects,* edited by D. G. Lockhart and D. Drakakis-Smith, Mansell, 1997, pp. 21-35.
[41] Theroux, Paul. *The Happy Isles of Oceania. Paddling the Pacific*. Hamish Hamilton, 1992, p. 387.

a virgin remote island. On the contrary, it is over-burdened by a rampant tourism industry which has completely taken over the place. In page 19, Katchor gives us the tourist map of the island [Fig. 125].

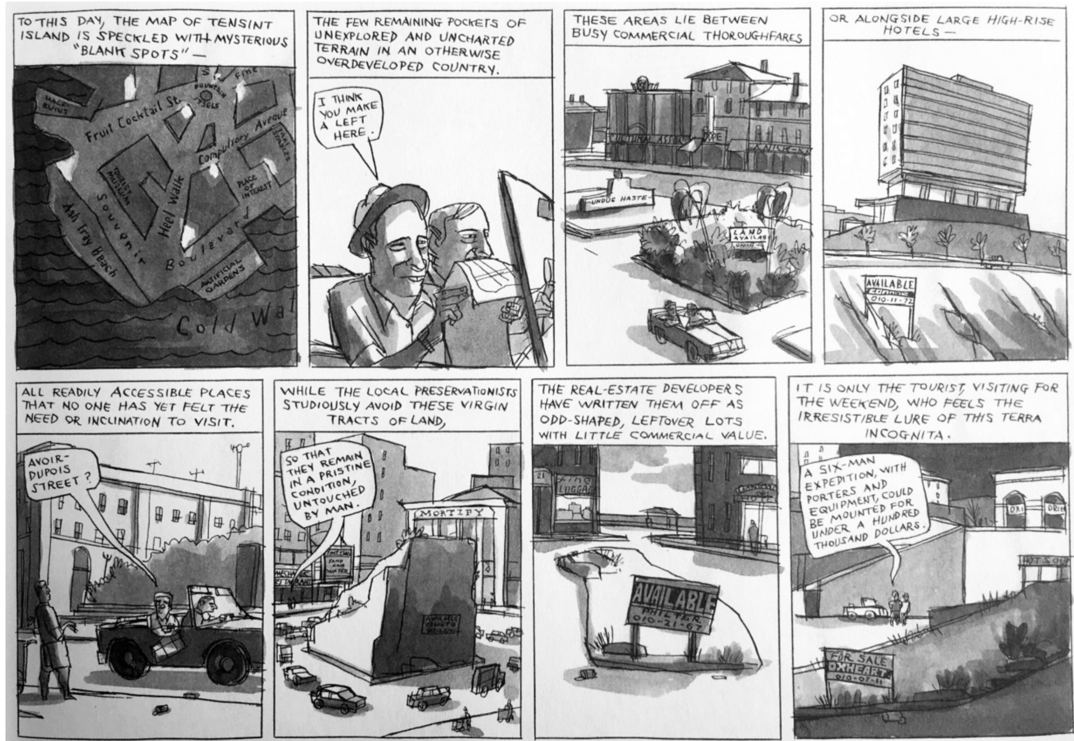

Fig. 125: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 19

The “mysterious blank spots” on the map – “left-over lots with little commercial value” (Katchor 19) interest the tourists who are otherwise subsumed within its commercial frenzy. Emile explains to a salesgirl in the souvenir shop his real motivation to come to Tensint Island [Fig. 126]. In his own country, the public restroom structures were dismantled before his birth and so there is no alternative place where he can satiate his interest in the subject except for the island.

Fig. 126: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 5

The conversation with Emile and the salesgirl that follows is couched in imagery of a casual sexual encounter. Emile thinks that “each word I utter adds a deeper level of misunderstanding.”

Fig. 127: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 6

In the page above, one of the interesting things to note is the way Katchor draws the posture of respective characters. In the second panel, we stumble upon the anatomical eye of the salesgirl [Fig. 127, marked in red] instead of the visible eye. This particular panel foregrounds Delilah’s vision and his obsession with body parts. He even takes note of her outer earlobes. However, Delilah’s anthropological gaze is misconstrued by the salesgirl who tries to ward him off despite professing a slight hint of sexual attraction for him. Here Katchor clearly plays on the idea of “other” as constructed by the tourist in an alien land. Emile Delilah is so smitten with experiencing other cultures that he actually finds “the lack of communication” as “enchanting”.

The souvenirs which return with the tourists remain unsold on the dusty shelves of toy and novelty shops in Fluxion city. For example, Katchor charts the fate of one such object – “The Voracious Maw” (Katchor 53). The collectible is “a twelve-inch long muscular tube molded out of soft, translucent plastic” (Katchor 53). Its battery operated mechanism produces the effect of peristalsis – a series of

wave-like muscle contractions that moves food to different processing stations in the digestive tract. The imitative effect of digestion is used in the toy to extract silver dollars from within its bowels [Fig. 128].

Fig. 128: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 6

A symbol of materiality, it is abhorred by the inimitable, charismatic, spiritual orator Calvin Heaves. He gathers "world-weary" crowds at the Quiver Tabernacle for his weekly "Sermon from the Mouth." Calvin believes that the mountains of unsold and unsellable goods piled up at Discounts International reflect the unappeased and unappeasable commercial longings of the dead. So he preaches man's continued existence beyond death:

> "Upon death, the human appetitive urge departs from the body in the form of a twelve-inch-long section of colorless sausage casing…This immaterial gullet, or soul, finds its eternal home in the shadow of the street curb where it continues forever in its peristaltic contractions" (Katchor 49).

For "demonstration purposes", Heaves employs the discarded battery-operated toy oesophagus, "The Voracious Maw", originally manufactured in faraway Buccal Mucosa for the Sowtoy Company of Liebestraum, Ohio. For good measure, Tensint Island is also an entertainment hotspot and it hosts eccentric artists like Cherub Galliot who specialises in "ice-cream cone licking". He performs publicly for the tourists in blazing afternoon sun in order to create transient abstract forms with the perishable commodity [Fig. 129]. From the snapshots documenting the island, it is apparent that Katchor wants to subvert the idea of sensory involvement that the tourists have with various commodities in the destination spaces. He takes the conceit too far in order to poke fun at our follies.

Fig. 129: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 16

Characters like these are all mirror reflections of Katchor's idea of the city creatures, obsessed by their own idea of urbanity. Weird moments like these also define tourists' relationships with messages contained in representational landscapes. They are neither accidental nor marginal as they are continuously instructed by various indicators on the meanings of the iconography of their experience.

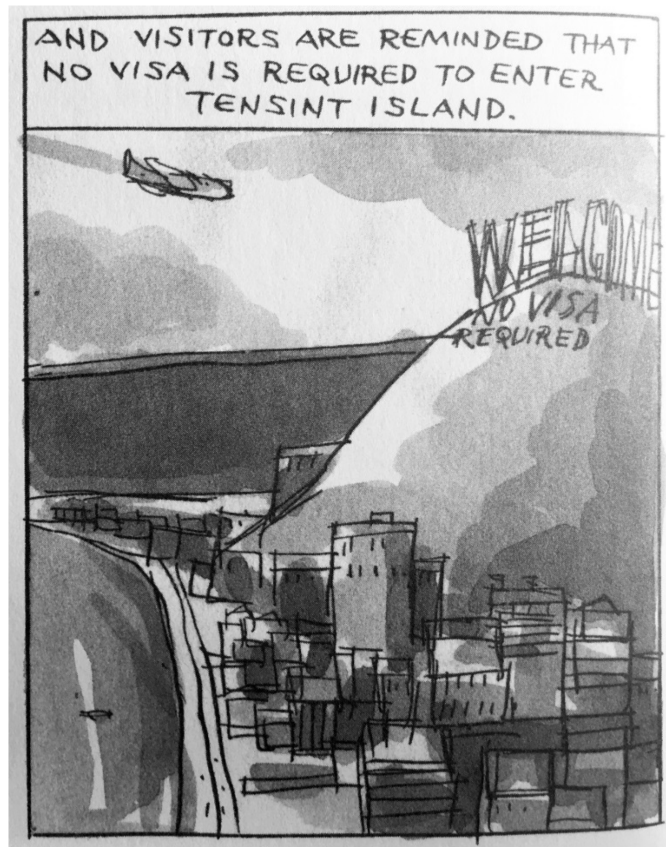

Fig. 130: *The Cardboard Valise,* page 22

One crucial aspect of Katchor's world is apparent freedom of movement. Entry to Tensint Island doesn't require any bureaucratic paperwork lie visa [Fig. 129]. Anyone can go to the place without any restrictions. There are suggestions within the text, that the island, like any other tourist destinations in travel brochures, can be accessed even without physically travelling there. The island becomes a metaphor for an imagined landscape – the "absent presence." Michel de Certeau talks about these imaginary 'scapes' when he says, "We are struck by the fact that sites that have been lived in are filled with the presence of absences. What appears designates what is no more, . . . [what] can no longer be seen…Every site is haunted by countless ghosts that lurk there in silence, to be evoked or not."[42] With these absences, Katchor stimulates the viewers to fill up the blank spaces within the landscape.

He goes even further when he literally effaces the entire island from the face of the earth in a moment of creative madness. The metaphorical absence becomes real. The entire Tensint island disappears into the sea as its substrata, permeated by the accumulated runoff of dry cleaning fluids, vaporizes [Fig. 131].

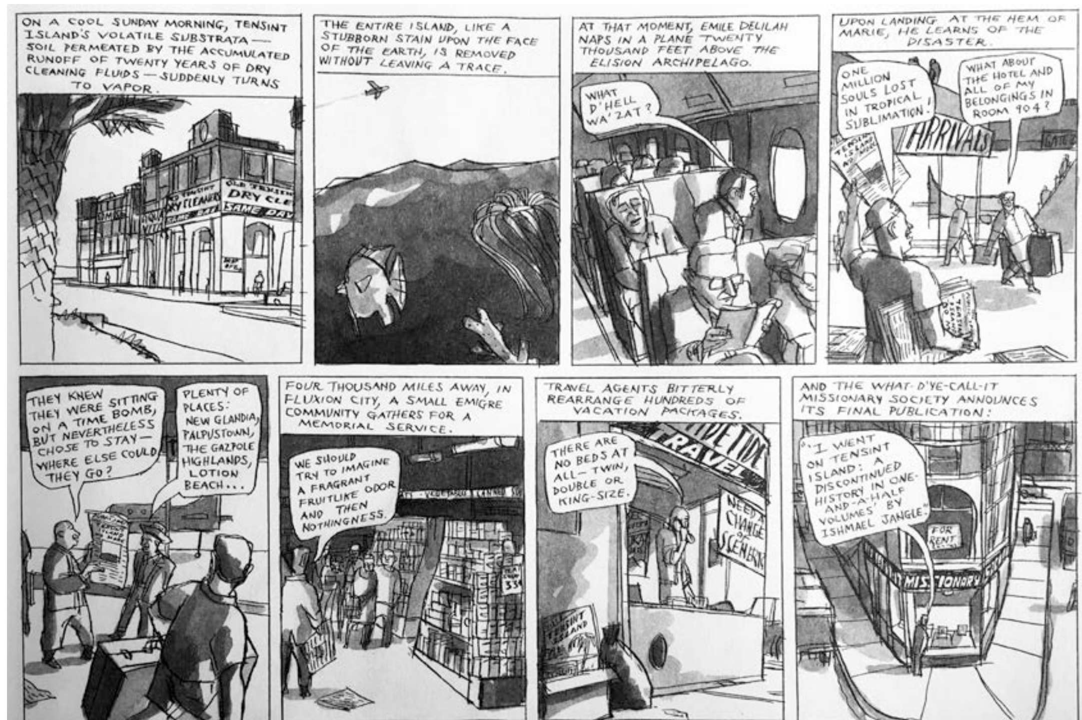

Fig. 131: *The Cardboard Valise,* page 25

[42] Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. University of California Press, 1988, p. 143.

A last, the extreme commercialization has taken its toll. It is followed by customary obituaries in expected corners of the world which celebrated its presence as a tourist destination. As the island sinks, so too the obsolete artifacts carried over by Emile in his valise.

ELIJAH SALAMIS AND HIS SUPRANATIONALIST WAY

Whereas Delilah seeks solace in the landmarks of other civilizations, Katchor's other protagonist is a self-styled prophet of the "supranationalist way". Elijah Salamis is Delilah's neighbour in the dilapidated apartment building at 575 Kavanah Avenue, Fluxion city [Fig. 132]. A perfect foil to Emile, he has conversely decided to apply his knowledge of foreign customs and artefacts to rid himself of all cultural attachments. He has cocooned himself in his room which in turn has become a place of tourist attraction. In his sterile apartment, he dreams of an internationalist world where public spaces and everyday objects are bland, uniform and devoid of all historical allusions. Preaching the erasure of national identity, Salamis' vision of a world without borders is sterile and predictable. However, Salamis has his own band of devoted followers. They eagerly report to him about their findings on culturally stripped locales which range from buildings of vast, featureless housing development projects to 24-hour food warehouses selling only generic brands.

Fig. 132: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 43 (left) and page 47 (above) respectively

It is only at night that he ventures out of his room to take in fresh air in a tee-shirt and shorts amidst freezing cold [Fig. 132].

Fig. 133: *The Cardboard Valise,* from Page 48

The reason for his abnormal dress is the ideology that he professes – local climactic conditions cannot dictate the generality of his clothing. According to him, “There is the supranationalist way! It may be painful, you may be taken for a lunatic, but only by rejecting the provincial demands of the climate and ancestry can man so fully exercise his free will” (Katchor 48). Salamis is actually a portrait of a myopic flâneur on the streets of Fluxion City. Salamis explores the city in his own way and nothing, practically nothing, escapes his view. Once he comes across a worn, plastic adhesive bandage that has fallen from the finger or toe of a wounded man or woman [Fig. 134]. He studies the object carefully and come to the conclusion that its small diameter may suggest that the owner may have an automated coffee machine. He concludes that this may be deposited in a Natural History Museum but decides otherwise. He kicks the object further into the realms

of obscurity so that it can be discovered “twenty five years later” by “someone more photogenic than myself” and announce the findings to the world.

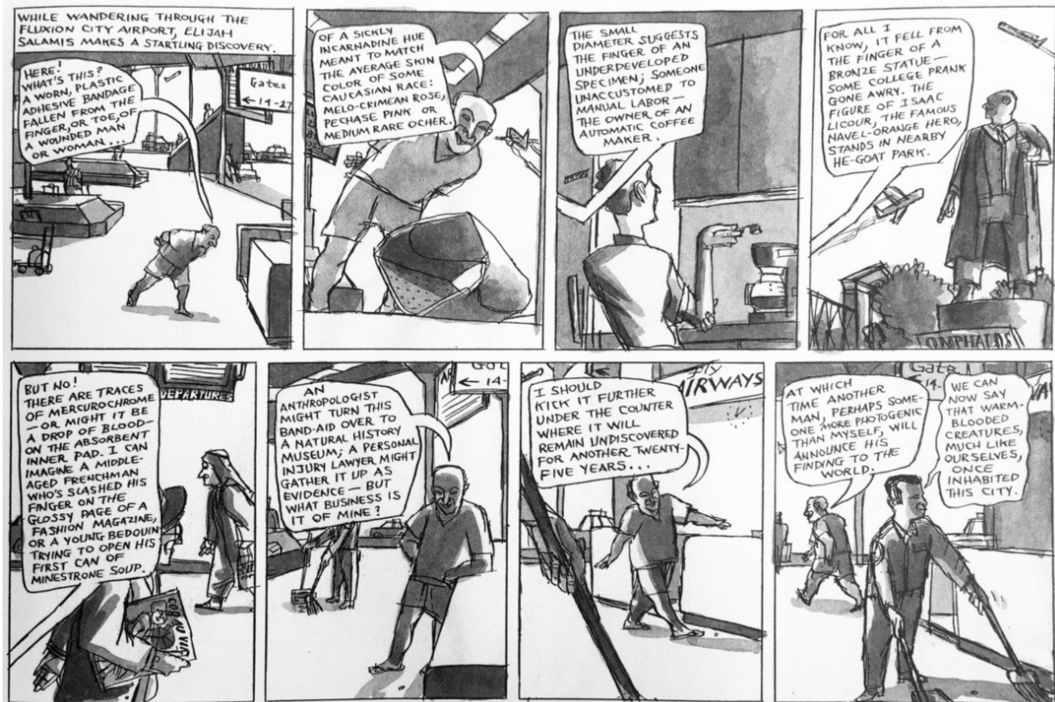

Fig. 134: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 61

Salamis also spends his time practicing Puncto – the “international language of incomprehension” meant to promote “global peace” by its inventor. “Puncto” may be seen as Katchor’s subversive take on Esperanto, the so called world language.

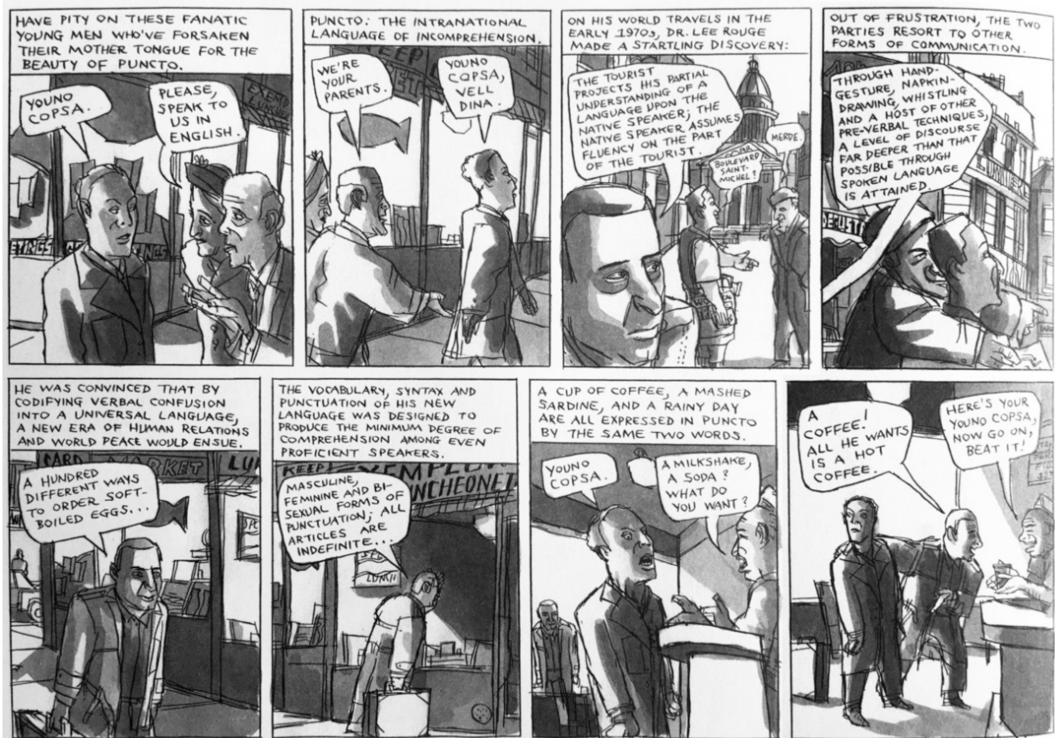

Fig. 135: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 74

TRAVEL, TOURISM AND AUTHENTICITY

As noted, rather than a unified category, tourism/s might be better conceived in terms of multiple positions and experiences.[43] A different alternative is the framing of tourism as a quest for authenticity. The focus on authenticity in discourses surrounding tourism resonates on locations, experiences and commodification. A prominent advocate is Dean MacCannell[44] who draws on the sociological model of different stages of social performance by Erving Goffman to conceptualise sets of front and back regions of tourism, in which authenticity is both satisfied and deferred. However, critics like Appadurai[45] have concluded that the idea of authenticity today is merely a matter of power, of who has the right to authenticate. The fine line between what might be regarded as an "authentic" experience and what constitutes the perceived "authenticity" of a host culture during such an encounter cannot be easily separated. Tourist experiences accommodate a broad array of social practices and not all of them can be related to the concept of either authenticity or otherness. However, when such an experience is framed in terms of cultural difference, questions about "authenticity" re-surfaces as a marker of evaluation, as it happens in Katchor's work.

Like the majority of the protagonists in Katchor's previous graphic novels— such as Nathan Kishon in *The Jew of New York*, or Julius Knipl, the real estate photographer in the eponymous book — Emile Delilah is a loner. We glean the impression that he comes from a wealthy family and is raised by a succession of nannies, mostly ineffective and cruel. He is also particularly susceptible to the nefarious schemers of the tourism industry. The "xenophilia" of Emile is triggered by Hoopus Travel agency that specialises in swindling vulnerable customers by making them believe the seductive images in travel brochures and picture

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[43] Rojek, Chris, and John Urry. *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory*. Routledge, 1997, pp. 1-3.
[44] MacCannell, Dean. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. Schocken Books, 1976, pp. 100-102.
[45] Appadurai, Arjun. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 44-45.

postcards. A raid by the police finally reveals the dark secret which ends with the suicide of Giorgio Hoopus, the owner [Fig. 136]. The page throws up the important question – does Tensint Island or Outer Canthus exist in reality or are they figment of imagination, surreptitiously "authenticated" by travel literature?

Fig. 136: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 39

Katchor creates other characters like the explorer Rudolf Maennerchor who seeks "authentic" experience in foreign lands. He is like an anthropologist determined to discover the native culture of the Tensint Islands. Rudolf travels light unlike Emile. He takes only a small artificial leather bag and try to avoid all the trappings within which the tourist gets ensnared. He stumbles upon "a black market in uneaten toast from the hotel dining rooms", "a fertility cult surrounding pieces of obsolete exercise equipments discarded by the hotels", "an unwritten encyclopaedia of facial and postural gestures used to solicit tips" and other inconsequential habits. However, he turns out to be more of a bully than a proper scientific observer. He shoves a local boy up against a parked car and literally forces him to explain the meaning of an early morning gathering of islanders. It exposes the way authenticity is achieved – through violence and power.

MATERIALITY OF THE CARDBOARD VALISE

The Cardboard Valise is not only a Swiftian take on tourism mobility, but it also talks about other stories of lost and obsolete material objects, of production and of waste — memories of matter that we covet, store, or throw away. In Katchor, they seem to take a life of their own. It mirrors what Jane Bennett examines in her book *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* – the vitality of obsolete objects that have been released from human uses and continue to unfold their lives on a different plane. Her term 'thing-power' invokes an enchanted world that is animate with all sorts of beings in order to draw "attention to an efficacy of objects in excess of the human meanings, designs, and purposes they express or serve."[46] Katchor's world of material objects is equally associated with the slow death of cultural forms as with a nostalgic mode of restoration. An object may be obsolete in one context but very much current in another. The past, the present and the future all congregate in these obsolete commodities. They function as an obdurate reminder of recent pasts and forgotten futures.

Katchor's book is also a memory-work on the physical materiality of the book itself in an increasingly digitized landscape of cultural communication. The tactile nature of the starched paper made into a book is part of Katchor's resistance against technology. We have seen numerous suggestive take on value of the presumably outmoded book form from the other important practitioners of graphic narratives like David B.[47] or Marc Antoine Mathieu[48] who have engaged intensely with the subject over the last few years. Based on his readings of Ben Katchor, Jared Gardner has convincingly argued that comics, due to their visual form and their medial specificity, may be "best suited to articulating the complex demands of the present new media age in relation to the media of the past."[49] Katchor constantly questions the place of the human in the contemporary world of

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[46] Bennet, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things.* Duke University Press, 2010, p. 20.
[47] B., David. *Incidents in the Night* Book 1. Translated by Brian & Sarah Evenson, Uncivilized Books, 2013.
[48] Mathieu, Marc Antoine. *L'Origine.* Delcourt, 1990.
[49] Gardner, Jared. "Archives, Collectors, and the New Media Work of Comics," *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* 52, no. 4, 2006, p. 803.

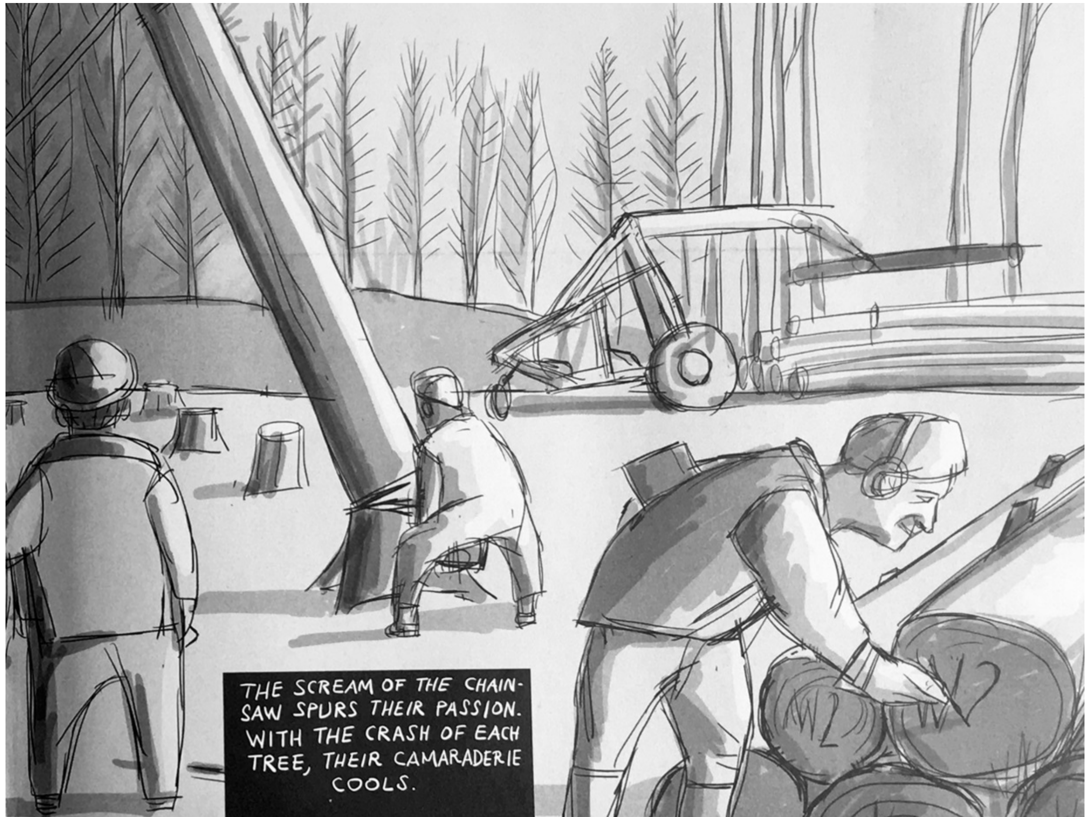
disposable products, media, and architecture. In a recent interview, the cartoonist reflected on the production process of his work and its ecological impact: "It's a luxury to sell paperback books that require 30 gallons of water to produce. And they are disposable now—paperbacks are not things you necessarily will keep."[50] While there is no immediate remedy for this conundrum, he suggests that book production should not remain a naturalized, invisible process that keeps its own material evolution out of the authors' and the readers' sight. *The Cardboard Valise* (also his latest work, *Hand-Drying in America*[51]) enacts this ethos both in their content and in the material form of the codex. They are creatively connected to the cycle that characterizes the circuit of print culture.

The Cardboard Valise is tinged with nostalgia for lost crafts and products. There is also a subversive delight about the trajectory of material industrial objects from its origin to its demise and thereafter. In Katchor's world, every consumer good has a material history of metamorphosis. In one section, Katchor depicts a recycling plant that converts potatoes into rubber tires, mown grass into toothbrushes and leftover food into artificial wool jackets. In the first few pages of the book, the reader learns about the eponymous cardboard valise.

Fig. 137: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 1

[50] Katchor, Ben. "Ben Katchor." Interview with Robert Birnbaum, *The Morning News*, Feb. 29, 2012, http://www.themorningnews.org/article/ben-katchor. Accessed 16 Mar. 2015.
[51] Katchor, Ben. *Hand-drying in America and Other Stories*. Pantheon Books, 2013.

Emile Delilah uses this suitcase during his vacation, lugging an inordinate amount of refuse with him including "pocket dictionaries, bottles of dried typewriter correction fluid, cut-rate multiple vitamins, monogrammed belts' and much else" (Katchor 5). After showing Delilah and his valise, Katchor narrates an extended history of its manufacture, showing how the valise is designed to maximize size and minimize weight. Costing less than thirty dollars, it is a disposable accessory for travelers who leave in a hurry and wish to take along everything they possibly can. The cardboard from which it is made shows the traces of coarse recycling. one panel reads – "If you look closely, you'll see pieces of a pornographic magazine, Christmas wrapping paper, and bloody tissue paper" (Katchor 3). The suitcase thus figures as an archive in two senses. Firstly, it can store almost all personal possessions of an individual, as seen in the case of Emile Delilah. Secondly, it also stands as a material reminder of past human productions, ready to be discarded and recycled once again after its short life span. As a central material commodity, Katchor uses the analogy between the suitcase and the physical codex. This analogy also unfolds within the metatextual spaces of the book. On the front endpapers, Katchor depicts woodsmen at work in a province of Outer Canthus.


THE SCREAM OF THE CHAIN-SAW SPURS THEIR PASSION. WITH THE CRASH OF EACH TREE, THEIR CAMARADERIE COOLS.

TWO AVID READERS COPULATE IN THE SHADOW OF THE NANCHANTZ PAPER PLANT IN OUTER CANTHUS.
This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the
author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons
events, or locales is entirely coincidental.
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Portions of this work originally appeared in different form in Baltimore City Paper,
Miami New Times, Chicago Newcity, Philadelphia City Paper, San Diego Reader,
Weekly, and Washington City Paper.
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Katchor, Ben.
The cardboard valise / Ben Katchor.
p. cm.
ISBN 978-0-375-42114-3
1. Graphic novels. I. Title.
PN6733.K38C37 2011 741.5'973–dc22
www.pantheonbooks.com
Printed in Singapore
First Edition
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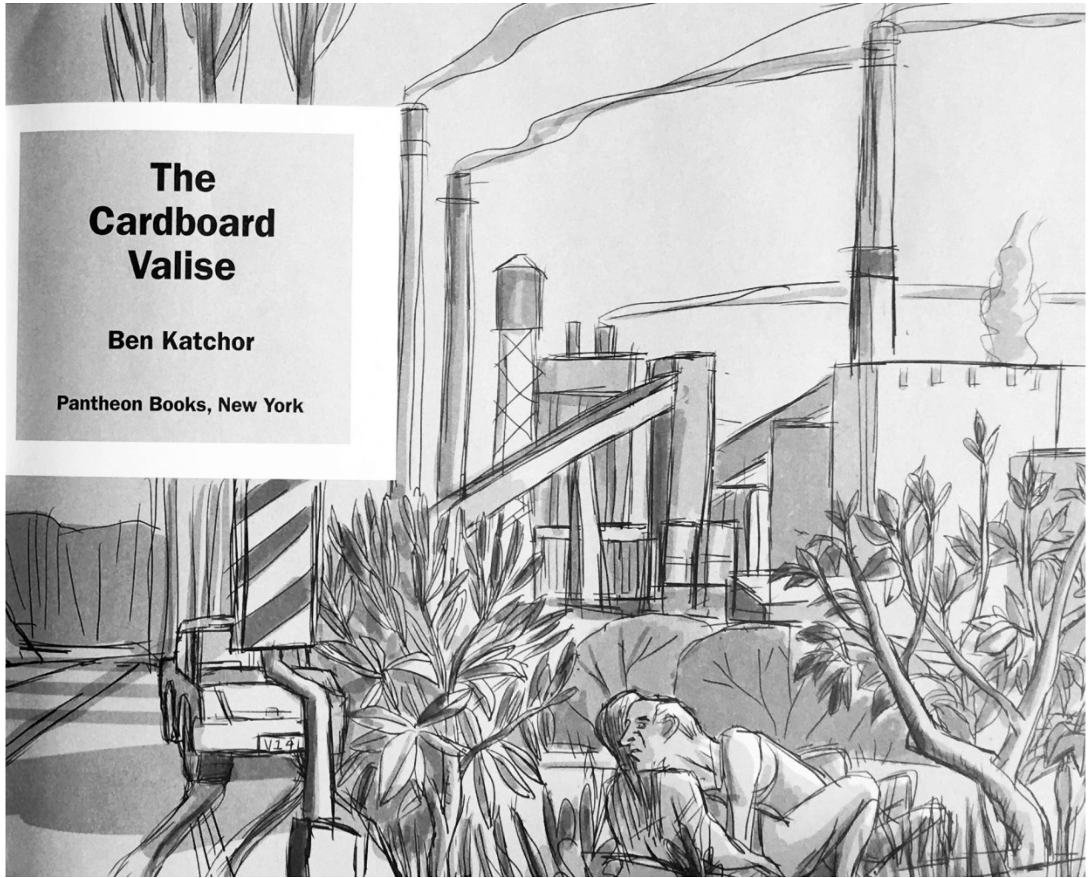
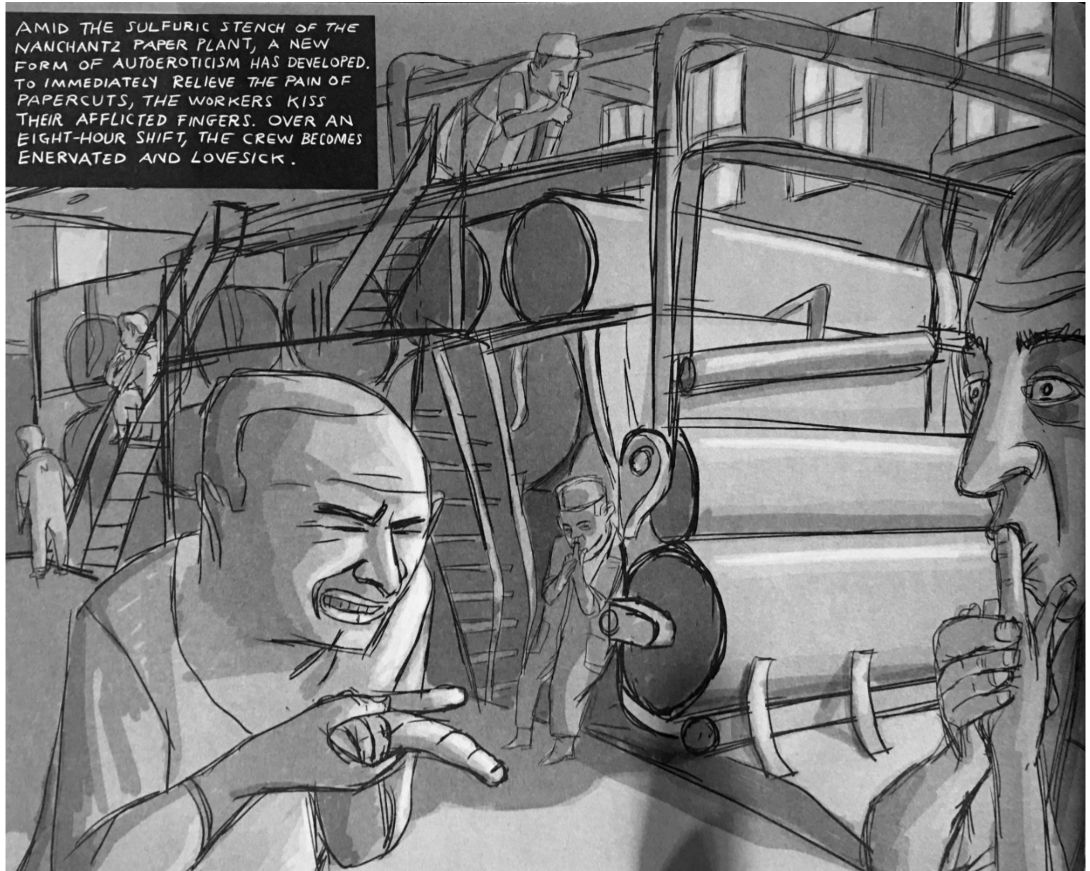
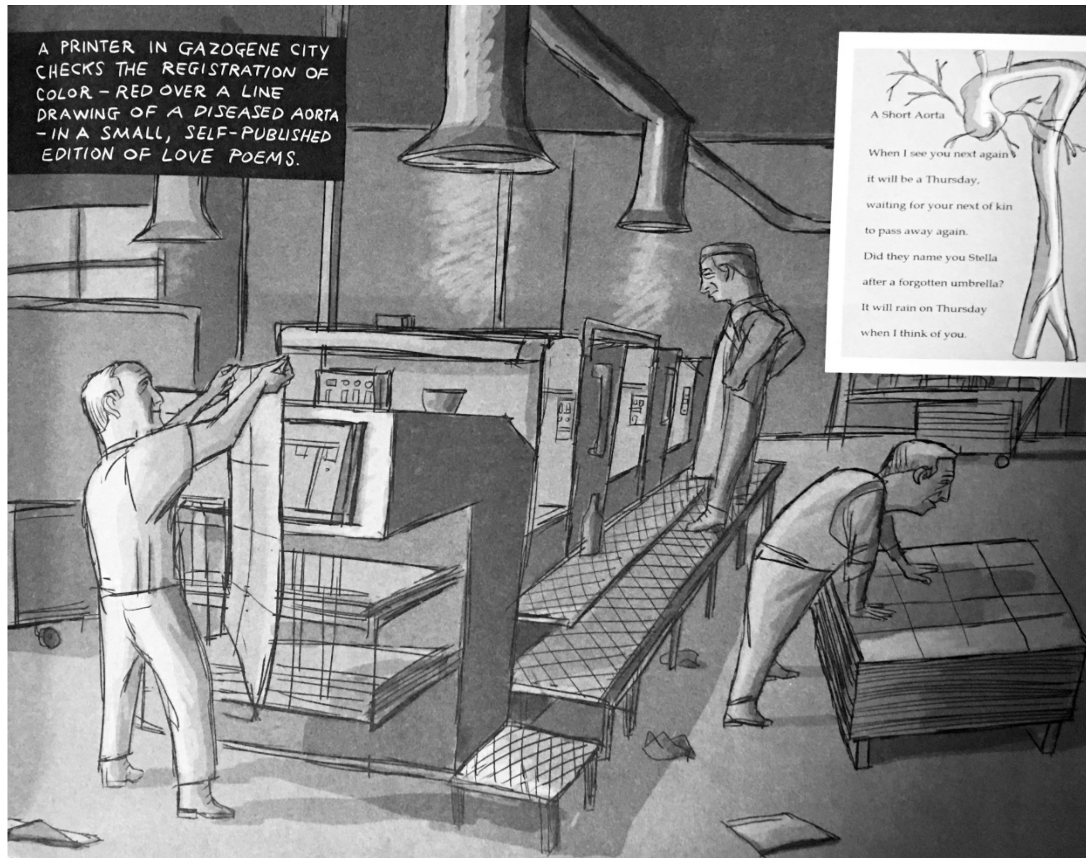

The Cardboard Valise
Ben Katchor
Pantheon Books, New York


AMID THE SULFURIC STENCH OF THE NANCHANTZ PAPER PLANT, A NEW FORM OF AUTOEROTICISM HAS DEVELOPED. TO IMMEDIATELY RELIEVE THE PAIN OF PAPERCUTS, THE WORKERS KISS THEIR AFFLICTED FINGERS. OVER AN EIGHT-HOUR SHIFT, THE CREW BECOMES ENERVATED AND LOVESICK.



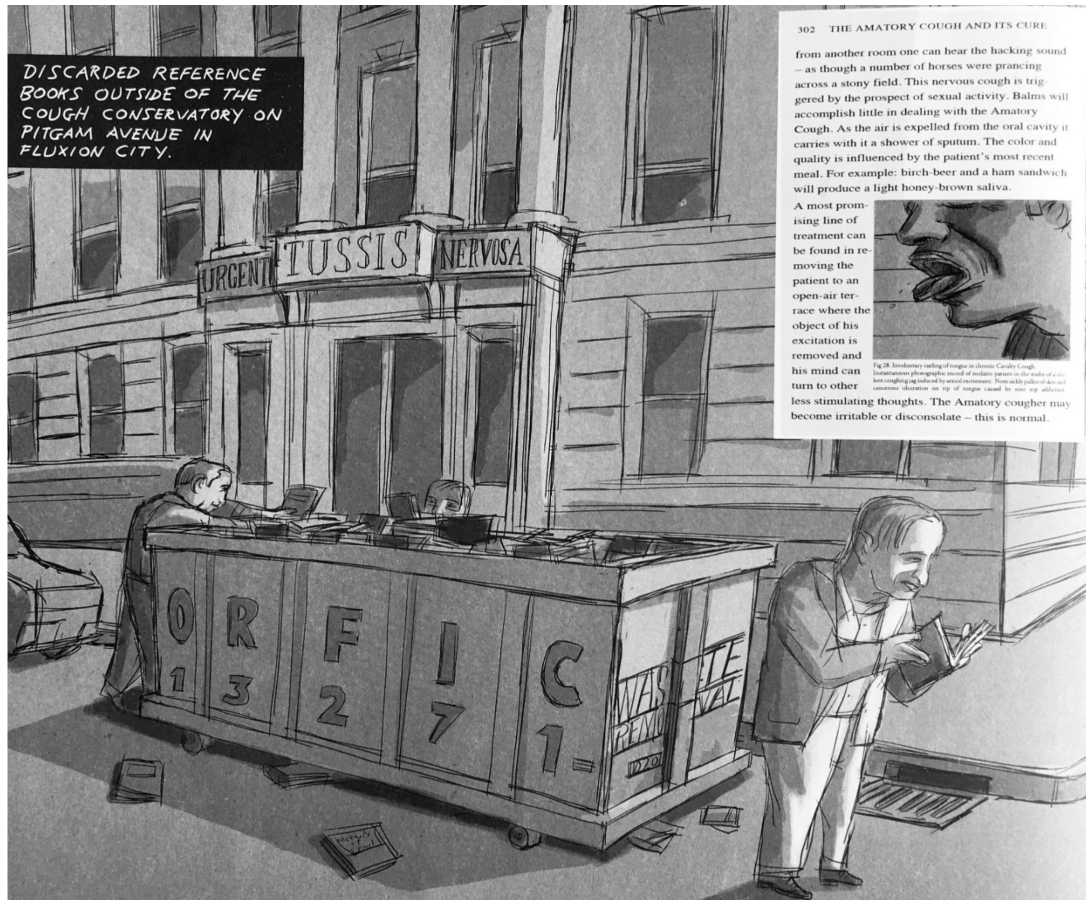


Fig. 138: *The Cardboard Valise,* front Endpapers

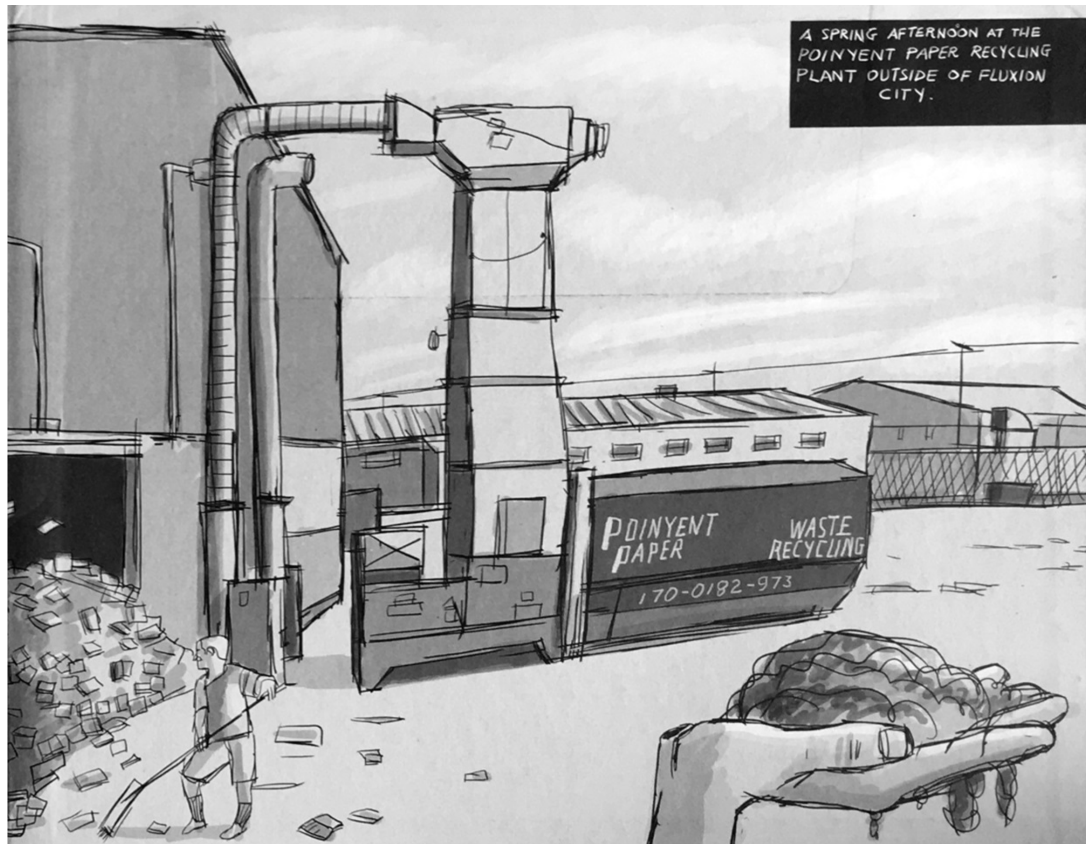


Fig. 139: *The Cardboard Valise,* back Endpapers

At this early stage of book production, the erotic appeal of materials sets in: the workers write love letters to each other, but soon direct their erotic longings to

the felled trees. The front endpapers of *The Cardboard Valise* playfully begin with the cutting of tress, the origin of pulp from which paper is made. The caption reads – "The woodsmen of Guttralilly work in polygamous couples. Their affections are exchanged via notes written on slips of coarse paper./ The scream of the chainsaw spurs their passion. With the crash of each tree, their camaraderie cools" (Katchor front endpapers, unmarked). The idea of foreplay, consumption and birth of 'paper' is couched within the sexual imagery involving the woodsmen and readers alike. Katchor actually harks back to the site of origin of the book that we are holding in our hands and reading. Here, I have intentionally separated the spreads of the endpaper in order to create a series diptych, each of which mirrors the other [Fig. 139 and 140]. The next panel depicts a cargo truck with a load of trees passing by "two avid readers, who copulate in the shadow of the Nanchantz paper plant." Inside the plant, the workers cower in the shadow of a giant Fourdrinier machine, tending to their paper-cut fingers. Eventually, at a printing plant in Gazogene City, the papers receive their imprint, a "small, self-published edition of love poems" [Fig.138]. The idea of a paper plant [here, named 'Nanchantz' (none such?) paper plant] churning out papers from pulp is revealed in the afterglow of "autoeroticism" which involves the sucking of one's thumb by the workers after receiving "papercuts". The opening of a real "wound" is reminiscent of the ink spills that the artist can go through while "inking" his sketch. The printer actually produces a love poem enticingly titled "A Short Aorta" which may also be seen as an ode to the amatory activities undertaken earlier. It is only here in the entire book that Katchor actually uses mechanical type. Otherwise, the entire comic narrative is also hand-lettered by him. In the last page of the sequence, we can see a reader picking and reading a rejected book from a garbage dump of the "Pitgam Avenue of Fluxion city".

By the end of the book, Katchor again takes up this narrative thread. We see workers preparing stacks of unsold copies of an obscure guidebook for remaindering and recycling. The full-page panel on the back endpapers depicts a paper-recycling facility with an unidentified hand in the foreground, holding up a little pile of pulp [Fig. 139]. With this final image in mind, readers are left to wonder about the afterlife of their own copies. The very conceit of the narrative

starts from the origin of the material on which the auteur sketches out his ideas. This retreat happens before the narrative proper starts. In fact, the endpapers of the book host a micro-narrative in itself. Unlike *The Arrival*, here it is not even connected directly to the storyline of the main narrative. There is only a tenuous connection related to the production of travel brochures for Tensint Island whose ruins fascinate Delilah. The endpaper-narrative effectively traces the origin of the material that constitutes the book itself, one that we are holding in our hand and reading. The overt erotic imagery that are part of the paper-production methods as enumerated by Katchor can be read as a metaphor for the seduction that the medium exerts on the human readers.

If we look at the entire sequence of front and back endpapers, Katchor skips an important step – the "creation" of the content of the book. That is undeniably done with same passion that accompanies the "production" of the book. The absent step can produce books like "The Amatory Cough and its Cure" (as shown above) or it may also result in "The Cardboard Valise".

Various instances throughout the individual strips allude to the possibility that Outer Canthus is an entirely imaginary place, hallucinated by the eccentric characters. Adapting the medical term canthus, which means the left or right corner of the human eye, Katchor locates the setting of *The Cardboard Valise* at the barely perceptible periphery of human vision. The suitcase itself then transforms from a mere tool of travel into an embodied metaphor of traveling. Likewise, to achieve the immersive effect of reading, the physical book figures as a central component of Katchor's poetics. Referring to material design, the cartoonist has insisted that the endpapers in this book are not just decorative—they are part of the story. The book and the suitcase not only share a common production cycle – they also resemble each other in their material form. To drive this point home, Katchor and the cover designer Chip Kidd attach two foldout handles to the volume so that readers can theoretically carry it like a valise [Fig. 140]. The presence of the paper substance therefore aligns the reading experience with the fictional world. The visual proportions of typography, the heft of the printed volume, and the texture of paper enter this sensory scenario, even while readers feel absorbed in fictional worlds. Radicalizing this logic, Katchor insists that

the material form of their texts is not only an external shell, but also an integral part of their works.

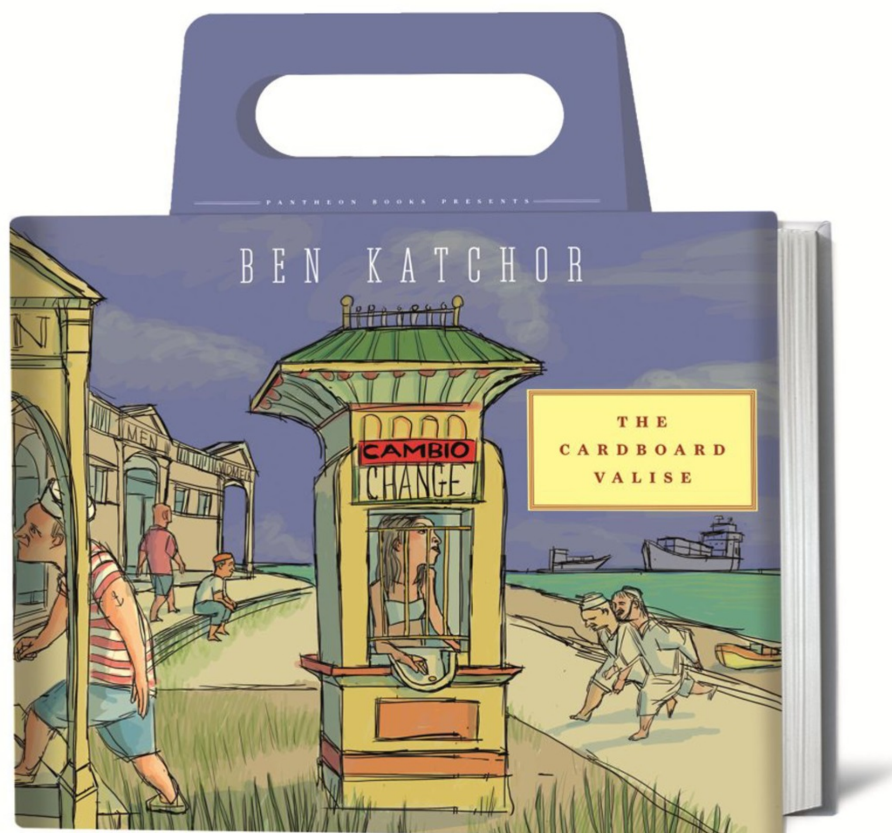


Fig. 140: *The Cardboard Valise,* the Book

Thematically, *The Cardboard Valise* is also similar to his next book, *Hand-Drying in America.*[52] Here Katchor introduces the investigative reporter, Josef Fuss who visits a printing plant in China to research the factory's dire working conditions and disastrous ecological effects. The exhaust and runoff from the factory pollute air and sea, while the enterprise consumes irresponsible amounts of fossil fuel. Fuss then embarks on a crusade through the media, dramatizing the "human suffering and environmental depredation" caused by just those "few moments of literary and visual pleasure that we enjoy via books."[53] In the closing section of the book, Fuss's findings are put into perspective by a critical freelance journalist, who conjectures that "based on sales figures, we can see that literary and coffee-table

[52] Katchor, Ben. *Hand-Drying in America: And Other Stories.* Pantheon Books, 2013

[53] Katchor, Ben. *Hand-Drying in America: And Other Stories: Graphic Novel.* Pantheon Books, 2013, title page.

books account for an insignificant portion of the world's print pollution."[54]

EMILE AND SALAMIS: CONVERGENCE

Like *The Arrival*, the book has no page numbers. The lack of page numbers indicates that the narrative is not a linear one. The episodic pauses in between are not marked either by a changed colour tonality or by a different kind of layout. The style is similar in all the episodes and blends in and out of the narrative flow. The first few pages illustrate this more than anything else. When the endpaper episode ends, the readers stare at a young man, dragging an oversized bag "across the floor of a great airport terminal building" (Katchor 1) [Fig. 137]. The writing in the caption concentrates on the description of the valise and how "its terrible weight, once set in motion", pulls the man "along in a direction slightly different from the one he had intended to follow" (Katchor 1). Instead of taking a bus back to the city, the man (not mentioned by name until later) takes a taxi. While boarding the taxi, the man reveals the details of the contents inside the valise. It is supposedly packed with hundreds of medical textbooks "back when they were printed on that heavy coated paper" which he found in the dumpster on Pitgam Avenue. The panels of the page end here. However, the mere mention of Pitgam Avenue makes the reader glance to the left of the open book where a man is seen poring intently over old medical textbooks in the last front endpaper [Fig. 141].

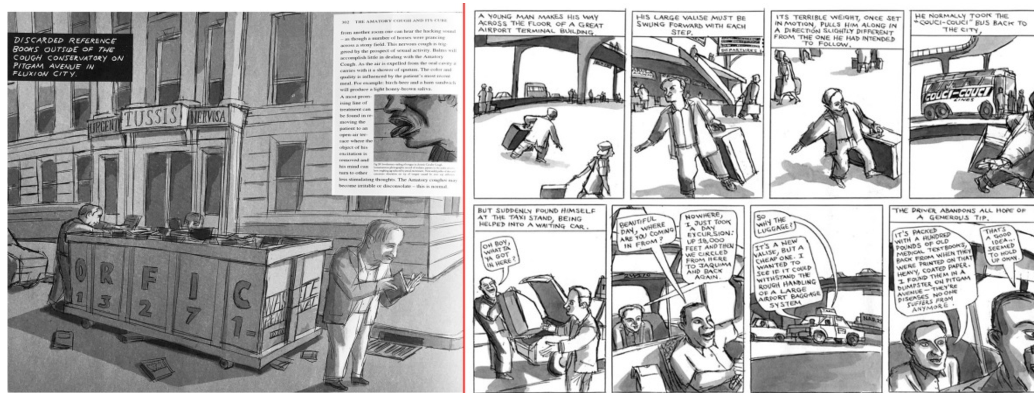


Fig. 141: *The Cardboard Valise,* last front Endpaper and Page 1 as a spread

Suddenly, the reader, instead of moving forward into the narrative moves back

[54] Katchor, Ben. *Hand-Drying in America: And Other Stories: Graphic Novel.* Pantheon Books, 2013, back Endpapers.

and witness the ‘origin’ of the valise. In the next page, Katchor takes the readers into a store where various objects for travel ranging from irregular bath-towels to Plaster-of-Paris statuary can be obtained. The suitcase/valise in question is kept in the upper part of the store and the seller reveals its unique pedigree – 56 inch Fitzall (fit all?) “Ahasuerus” that costs a mere 29.99 pounds. However, he warns that this valise is not for the frivolous summer vacationer or the casual tourist. It is for those who “pack it up and move, either across a hallway or across ocean” (Katchor 2).

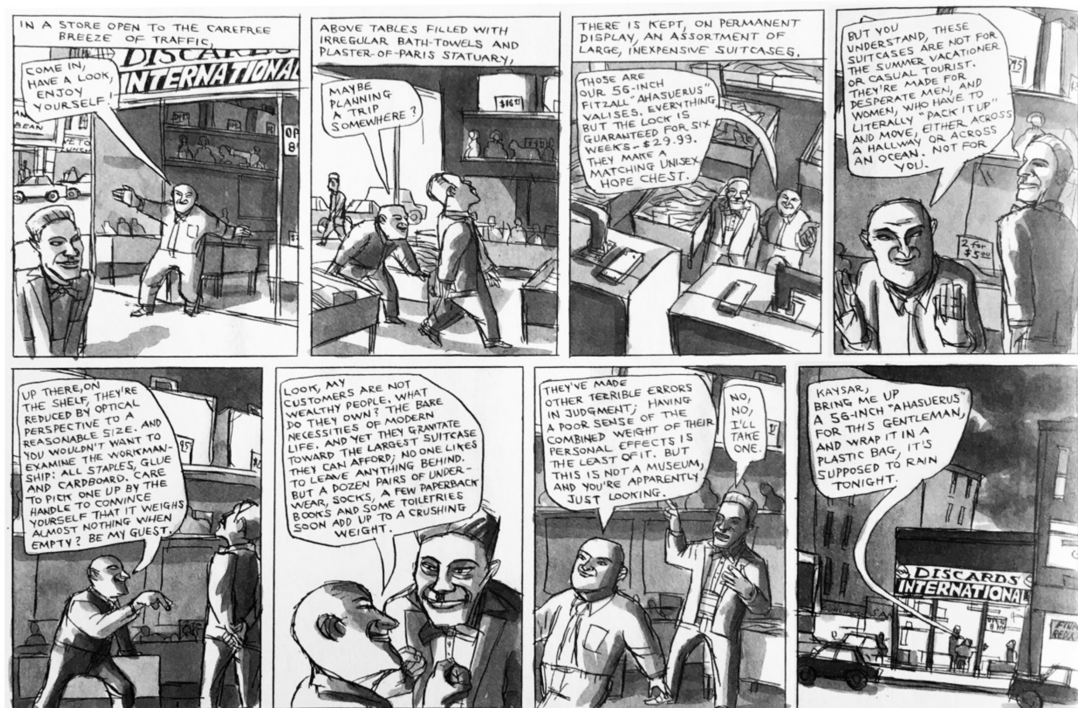


Fig. 142: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 2

As the story moves into the next page, we see an attendant Kaysar, going into the basement to bring up a specimen of the incredible valise [Fig. 143]. Katchor then dissolves into another flashback which now seeks the root of another narrative – the making of the suitcase itself. The readers are made privy to information about the construction of materiality, as far as the valise is concerned – it is assembled “amidst the glue fumes and staple-gun salvos of a loft in Cachexia, New Jersey”. This makes the product a local one. However, the very next panel debunks that theory as “all of the card-board parts were imported from outer Canthus for a fraction of what they’d cost domestically” (Katchor 3).

Fig. 143: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 3

Similarly, in *Hand-Drying in America,* Katchor asks his readers to immerse themselves in its urban dreamscapes, but also to believe the fictionalized story of how the hardcover book is assembled in China, shipped worldwide and delivered to their doorstep. The next page again moves fast forward to another episode where the readers see the man keeping the valise in the middle of his hotel room during his trip to Tensint Island. As the valise is being unpacked, the story takes another unpredictable turn as an angry bellhop addresses the fellow workers of the hotel about the unnecessary invasion of foreign artefacts which causes "cultural pollution of a magnitude" that cannot be tolerated. He warns that there is no room "on this small island for winter coats, pocket dictionaries, bottles of dried typewriter correction fluid, cut-rate multiple vitamins, monogrammed belts, zippered Bibles and loose change" (Katchor 5). The contents are then uploaded into Timrod's van in order to get them dumped into ocean. However, Timrod distributes all the contents of the valise in a roadside free-for-all sale. Through certain other situational detours, the protagonist (now named as Emile Delilah) discovers that his father Caesar Delilah has also been a one-time visitor of the Tensint Island. Katchor takes the opportunity to launch into the story of Emile's father. Thus we can see that a random association of one object or an event is

creating a network of rhizomatic storylines which echo off each other in this complex and layered narrative about the vagaries of tourism mobility.

The Emile Delilah story is interspersed with stories of other odd characters who dot Katchor's world – Val Forzhack, a drum major or Cherub Galliot, the arty ice-cream licker or Moses Junker, the taxi-driver or Sinclair Jammy, "radical turkey-roll reformer" or Audrey Vohlspeck, "card-carrying member of the sans serif league" or Frederick Donjon, the Chinese restaurant visitor or Uri Maidle, the maker of the "first-kiss anti-septic pads."

The narratives of Emile Delilah and Elijah Salamis are relentlessly parallel and they don't converge until at the end. When an ecological disaster obliterates Emile's usual vacation destination – Tensint Island – his parents instantly presume that he is dead. Emile feels unwanted and muses, "My birth put a crimp in their social life, they were bored by my company as a teenager; they spent a fortune on baby sitters and psychiatrists… And so, they took the news of my premature death in their stride" (Katchor 118). No wonder Delilah spends his life in a series of self-imposed exiles. He intently pores over the announcement of his own memorial service and learns that his parents have already dedicated two projects in his name – a museum gift shop and a commemorative apartment.

Elijah Salamis looks at the memorial service as a chance to stamp his own ideology – "I see an opportunity here. A chance to effect a secular resurrection, debunk another fraudulent religion and sabotage the memorial industry" (Katchor 122). When the meeting between Delilah and Elijah occurs, Katchor uses a full page panel. He doesn't give names but that is not needed as we are already acquainted with these two characters long enough in the book to make them out. Salamis finds Delilah making his way to his own memorial service through Holmut Avenue. The scene is almost a vague re-enactment of a quasi-spiritual scene where one character is looking at the other with mutual reverence [Fig. 144]. Emile's face is illuminated by soft light that refract through various shops windows. The caption in the right side specifies the broadcast of the nightly prayer wafting in. The background constitutes of a jumble of imaginary signboards and other tourist attractions. He succeeds in reuniting Delilah with his parents, while simultaneously exposing the conman on the pulpit as an exploitative fake. Thus the

book's climax leads to the public debunking of a religious charlatan who argues that it's not our ethics or imaginations or faiths that live on after our deaths, but our acquisitiveness, real pathos and real bite.

Fig. 144: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 120

Katchor actually introduces another character who like Emile and Elijah also resides in the same building at Kavanah Avenue. The third resident of the building, Boreal Rince, is the supposed king of Outer Canthus, who "narrowly escaped death by taking an air-mail flight out of Gazogene City." Although he plays a minor role in the novel — shortly after entering the story he is ousted from his apartment and surreptitiously makes his way back to Outer Canthus hidden in a large cardboard valise — his story serves as a reminder that travel is not always chosen, but often takes the form of an undesired displacement from home. The idea of memory in *The Cardboard Valise* resides in the materiality of the lost objects. In fact, the book ends with the image of Boreal, "the exiled king of Outer Canthus", hiding inside the cardboard valise and relishing detail of Outer Canthusian cultural life. In a way, the valise becomes a symbolic object – an object of memory that also encloses our world. It contains obsolete unused books but it may also harbour a forgotten

exiled king who consider it as his “temporary throne” (Katchor 125). The material book is also shaped like a valise. In effect, the book contains pockets of memory of those objects that are lost forever or at the verge of being lost within the web of aggressive consumerism.

Fig. 145: *The Cardboard Valise,* Page 125

Katchor is also the master of the diagonal. The entrepreneurs and officials, hucksters and glad-hands who inhabit *The Cardboard Valise* virtually never traverse the panels comprising Katchor’s strict eight-panel grids from back to front or side to side. They stride purposefully and gesticulate wildly from the left foreground to the rear background. They gaze up with wonder from the lower left to upper right. They follow sight lines that lead us not infinitely back into the panel but out of it, in whatever direction, even toward us. In an interview, Katchor tells Sean Collins that he draws his comics using the theatrical stage as a touchstone, rather than the flattened and cropped space of film or photography – “The spatial composition of my picture-stories is pre-photographic (and pre-cinemagraphic) and more closely related to the theatrical space of a stage, in that I’m always striving to described a precise spatial drama without the flattening and random cropping of photography. When comics began to emulated films and the analysis of motion, spatial description and a description of the richness of the moment

became less important. My approach is to construct a palpable space. Whatever happens in that space becomes believable."[55] Indeed, simply by staging his comics in such a way that the tile floors, shelf tops, ceiling fans and side alleys of his cities are made visible to characters and readers alike, he constructs a world that feels more livable than accrued detail can ever hope to convey.

The persistence of such features as deckle edges, laid paper, hand-drawn typography (Katchor handprints the captions in capital letters) and printing on fine natural shade paper suggest that economic explanations of obsolescence cannot tell the whole story. Instead of giving up the materiality of the book to economic semantics it is important to reconstruct the object of literature within new materialist paradigms of aesthetics and hermeneutics. When Delilah's worried parents ask, "So it's all in his mind?" to which the analyst answers, "Yes, but his ink stained hands and papercuts are real" (Katchor 15).We can see how Katchor references his own hands and his archived ready-mades which spur the genesis of such narratives. Delilah is an idiosyncratic person, ostensibly far removed from our everyday reality but he is also Katchor, messy and ink stained like him.

In this book, Katchor also directly dissects mobility caused by tourism. The place of tourism in visual culture, as spectacle, voyeurism, metaphor or phantasmagoria, is well established but seemingly so embedded that it is somewhat neglected or overlooked in what might be described as a problem of ubiquity – both of images and tourism itself. Tourism, as a prime manifestation of social change, has the ability to act as a vehicle for showing how visual discourses of leisure can be located in "the practices, politics, and poetics of cultural and visual representation."[56] Tourism is a form of mobility framed by sets of cultural, economic and political phenomena, with its meanings and applications loaded with ambiguities and uncertainties, then we also have to accept that the rapid growth of the Internet, multimedia and digital images has exposed tourists and host communities to a bewildering array of interpretations and histories of place and culture. So, this book by tracing objects from the pre-digital era intends to

[55] Katchor, Ben. "'Just to demonstrate that it's Possible': Ben Katchor on The Cardboard Valise". Interview with Sean Collins, *www.cbr.com,* 1 Feb. 2011, http://www.cbr.com/just-to-demonstrate-that-its-possible-ben-katchor-on-the-cardboard-valise/. Accessed 16 Mar. 2012.

[56] Schwartz, Joan, and James Ryan. *Introduction: Photography and the Geographical Imagination.* I.B. Tauris, 2003, p. 4

explore the more nuanced debates about what tourism means in modern/postmodern society. Tourism is a "relentless force" that is "re-ordering society."[57] He reflects Katchor's viewpoint when he says, "our everyday lives are becoming more like that of a tourist: wanting to live near easily available Italian or Vietnamese food, the urge to take photos of the most mundane subjects, going out for drinks mid-week and not just at weekends … it may not exactly fit everybody's personal profile but the data tell us that the service economy is expanding in ways that stretch far beyond the needs of holidaymakers: we are all tourists now!'[58] In an essay by the eminent sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2005) provocatively called "tourists and vagabonds"[59], he describes tourism as "the only acceptable form of human restlessness", which in a way has to be a precursor to his idea of "liquid modernity" in which society and technology changes so fast we never have time to catch up and assimilate new ways of being before the next idea comes along. Katchor's tourists and vagabonds try to negotiate this flux in their own inimitable way.

[57] Franklin, Adrian. Tourism as an ordering: Towards a new ontology of Tourism." *Tourist Studies*, 4, 2004, pp. 227-301.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Baumann, Zygmunt. "Tourists and Vagabonds: Heroes and Victims of postmodernity." Reihe Politikwissenschaft / Institut für Höhere Studien, Abt. Politikwissenschaft, 30, 1996. http://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/26687/ssoar-1996-baumann-tourists_and_vagabonds.pdf?sequence=1. Accessed 04 April 2014.

CHAPTER 6

MEMORY AND MOBILITIES AS METAPHORS OF THE COMICS FORM

In the previous chapters, I have attempted a detailed analysis of three comics that revolve around various facets of the mobilities paradigm – *Footnotes in Gaza* deals with a global journalist seeking stories of survival in zones of conflict, *The Arrival* is an allegorical narrative about migration while *The Cardboard Valise* is a Borgesian tale about the ironies of a travelling tourist. In each of these three works, I have also shown how the concept of memory (especially collective memory) is intimately associated with the study of mobilities. These are mere representative references. Comics, in general, seem to be a particularly receptive form where ideas of mobilities and memory intersect, elide and overlap with each other. It may be due to the fact that the form itself is a metaphorical extension of these paradigms.

HORIZONTAL MOBILITIES

Mobility constitutes the metafictional entity of the comics form itself, specifically when we look at conceptual framing of formal aspects like sequentiality and use of various modes of paneling and gutter-space. In other words, it is intrinsic in the way a comic narrative formally reorganizes itself into a sequence. As already discussed in Chapter 1, comics are often considered to be one of the most recent narrative form. Theorists anxious to respond to cultural criticism have sometimes been at pains to rehabilitate sequential storytelling as an ancient form of art, pointing to predecessors from the Bayeux tapestry to William Hogarth's print series. However, there is a vast gulf separating these early examples of pictorial storytelling from the highly sophisticated comics by authors such as Art Spiegelman, Neil Gaiman, Alan Moore or Chris Ware who have emerged from the broader tradition of comics since the mid-1980s. One of the most repeated dogmas associated with comics studies is the understanding of

comics as a linear or 'sequential art' with a 'grammar' composed of panels and frames separated by gaps and gutters.[1] By "dividing the picture into several distinct frames", the argument goes, that graphic narrative "uses the eye of the spectator moving from panel to panel to keep narrative time running. The reader (for the eye movement amounts to an act of reading) constructs a story"[2]. According to this school of thought, comics narrative is structured by means of grids and gutters. Effectively, it breaks the narrative flow down into discrete panels and it opens up a space between the panels that offers a way in for readerly engagement and imagination.[3]

Even in graphic narratives that follow a more formal grid pattern, the linear understanding implied by the term 'sequentiality' may be too reductive and the emphasis on gaps and gutters misleading. As the narrative is broken into segments that are displayed spatially, comics enable "suggestive, but subliminal connections which need not correspond to the linear logic of the narrative sequence."[4] After all, readerly engagement with the story world is bound to focus not on the space between panels but on what is inside the panels as well as on the ways in which panels speak to each other. It is important for us now to move away from the linguistic-structuralist idea that comics narrative has a "grammar" (Eisner 2) and that this grammar entails a linear reading. It is important to understand that the images in a visual narrative *do not* function as signs in a manner comparable to words in a sentence.[5] The image in a visual narrative may be understood productively as a full statement whose relation to preceding and following statements is much "less embedded in paradigmatic networks of meaning" (Metz 26) than that of words in a sentence. In fact, the linear sequence is only one of many possible ways of organizing visual information in a form like comics.

While taking about sequentiality, it is also important to look at the recent

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[1] McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art.* HarperPerennial, 1994.; Eisner, Will. *Comics & Sequential Art*. Poorhouse Press, 1985.
[2] Ewert, Jeanne. "Reading Visual Narrative: Art Spiegelman's *Maus*." *Narrative,* 8.1, 2000, pp. 87–103.
[3] Berlatsky, Eric. "Lost in the Gutter: Within and Between Frames in Narrative and Narrative Theory." *Narrative,* 17.2, 2009, pp. 162–87.
[4] Witek, Joseph. *Comic Books as History: The Narrative Art of Jack Jackson, Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar*. University Press of Mississippi, 1989, p. 28.
[5] Metz, Christian. *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*. Oxford University Press, 1974.

theory developed by the French scholars[6] while giving attention to the page as a physical, graphic and narrative unit. For them, the page is the reference unit of the comics' language which is different from the popular approach taken by Scott McCloud in *Understanding Comics*. McCloud examines panel-to-panel relations, but without having consideration for the complete page. The term used by Henri Vanlier[7] for the comics' page – "*multicadre"* or "a multiframe" is more pertinent now. The relations that the artist displays between the panels are of utmost importance, from the geometric as well as from the semantic point of view. In his most recent works, Thierry Smolderen has studied the history of speech balloons[8] and the various and competing conceptions of the page layout in comics from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[9] With these in-depth studies of a technical or an aesthetical problematic, he is able to untangle the mixture of cultural, ideological and symbolic determinations at given periods. One of the most innovative approaches is by Philippe Marion[10] who discusses the problem of graphic style as the individual expression of an artist. He is interested in the *trace* left in the drawings by the artist (or, in Marion's own terminology, the 'enunciator'), a phenomenon for which he invents a neologism, namely the concept of *graphiation*. He tries to demonstrate that the emotional and empathic response of a reader towards a comic is founded on this graphic trace expressing the subjectivity of the artist. He believes that in a drawing, we have to distinguish between two different dimensions – the *monstration* (the act of showing, representing something – which is the transitive dimension) and the *graphiation* (turning towards the graphic trace – the reflexive dimension). For Marion, our passion for comics is explained by the memory of our own experiences as a child. The reader is a "graphiateur" who ignores himself. When we read a comic and we perceive the graphic trace of a specific artist, we are sent back to the traces we

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[6] Miller, Ann, and Bart Beaty. *The French Comics Theory Reader.* Leuven University Press, 2014.
[7] Groensteen, Thierry. "The Current State of French Comics Theory." *Scandinavian Journal of Comic Art* (SJOCA), vol. 1:1, spring, 2012, pp.113-114.
[8] Smolderen, Thierry. "Of Labels, Loops, and Bubbles: Solving the Historical Puzzle of the Speech Balloon." *Comic Art* 8, 2006, pp. 90–112.
[9] Smolderen, Thierry. "Trois forms de pages", *Neuvième art* 13, 2007, pp. 20–31.
[10] Baetens, Jan. "Revealing Traces. A New Theory of Graphic Enunciation." *The Language of Comics. Word and Image*, edited by Robin Varnum and Christina T. Gibbons, University Press of Mississippi, 2001, pp. 145–155.

produced ourselves in our childhood and to a given psychic context. Through the reactivation of these memories – even if it is a subconscious phenomenon – we identify with the artist.[11]

In his seminal book, *The System of Comics,* Thierry Groensteen describes the layout of a comics page by focusing on specific phenomenon which do not necessarily effect the globality of the page like "the suppression of a frame, thickness and regularity of inter-iconic space, the recourse to an insert, location of speech balloons, the number of strips and the regularity of their height, the number of panels, which define the denseness of the page, etc." (Groensteen 24). According to him, all these are part of the "spatio-topical system." *Spatio* refers to the space; *topical* comes from the Greek *topos*, which means place. In Groensteen's view, 'space' and 'place' must be considered separately, although they are connected to each other. A panel has a certain shape and surface, but it is also located at a given place on the page and in the book, and these placements matter. Spatio-topical parameters open a choice of possibilities for the artist but also set certain rules or constraints. While talking about sequentiality, Groensteen talks about the subject of drawing by comic artists. According to him, comics artists specifically make *narrative drawing* (Groensteen 161). One of the characteristics of narrative drawing is that it "obeys an imperative of optimal legibility. It uses different parameters of the image (framing, composition dynamics, colour placement, etc.) in a manner that mutually and concurrently reinforces them to the production of a unique effect" (Groensteen 161). So, most of the time, drawings in a comic have a way of communicating their message directly and do not need the mediation of the language. He, of course, does not speak here of the additional functions of speech balloons, but of the way the intrinsic message of the drawing is decoded. Nevertheless, it is true that an image can be considered as an *utterable* which means that it can be translated, paraphrased in the language of words. Apart from being an utterable, it is also a *descriptable* and an *interpretable* (Groensteen 107). Thus, according to him, the construction of meaning is *staged*, especially when we take into consideration a sophisticated comic. There are different *planes of meaning* – one's understanding

[11] Ibid.

of a panel at first glance is always to be verified and adjusted on the basis of the information given by the preceding and following panels which constitute a frame of interpretation; but also on the basis of the complete sequence that allows new inferences and leads to the production of a global meaning.

Seen in the light of these theories, the sequentiality of comics takes a new dimension altogether. While a linear reading of these elements is possible, in principle, — as the scenes follow a left-to-right or top-to-bottom path — such a reading does not do justice to the architecture of the page, which calls for a simultaneous reading that takes into account the size and positioning of the separate elements within the page layout, their layering one on top of the other. Some critics like Sabine Gross have convincingly argued that the flexibility of eye movement in reading even a verbal text is not at all dissimilar from the roaming eye of the spectator of a picture or painting. Moreover, reading a text in any medium is always a dynamic hermeneutic process that combines bottom-up and top-down interpretive schemata.[12] Graphic narrative, in particular, with its infinite possibilities of arranging frames, panels and individual scenes within frames and panels (including, but not limited to, arrangement in a sequence), will provide ample illustration for the necessity to employ a more dynamic and multi-layered conception of reading. That reading will take into account the manifold schemata, assumptions, inferences and hypotheses that the readers rely on to impute narrative meanings to a sequence of images.[13]

Using the panel as the base unit for his system, Groensteen writes of the ways that framing and placement determine how a panel functions as an "utterable" and as the primary plane of the three-tier "staging of meaning" in comics. Panels in triad compose the syntagm of Groensteen's second plane, where informed interpretation begins. The reader must take into account the panels which precedes and succeeds the present panel while constructing semantic relations between them. The page layout and breakdown are the linear

[12] Horstkotte, Silke. "Zooming In and Out: Panels, Frames, Sequences, and the Building of Graphic Storyworlds". *From Comic Strips to Graphic Novels: Contributions to the Theory and History of Graphic Narrative,* edited by Daniel Stein Jan-Noel Thon, De Gruyter, 2013, p. 39.

[13] Lefèvre, Pascal. "Narration in Comics." *Image & Narrative*, 1.1, 2000, http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/narratology/pascallefevre.htm. Accessed 16 Dec. 2014.

spatial/temporal designations for these meanings while discontinuous networks of correspondences between panels create the general arthrology of the work. Within a general arthrology, Groensteen further distinguishes between gridding (*quadrillage*) and braiding (*tressage*). Gridding is simply the way a page is broken up spatially – it is also, "a primary repartition of the narrative material" (Groensteen 144). Thus gridding is a way of inspecting meaning without any consideration for the content of the page. Braiding addresses the potential relations between any panels that exist as a supplement to the intelligibility of the work, which is determined by its breakdown. Simply put, the breakdown of panels into a logical or narrative sequence may hold some units to be physically and contextually independent, yet braiding reveals the way these very panels associate and communicate with one another (for example, through an identical construction of the panel with different content, or a repetition of a single motif through disparate episodes etc.).

Thierry Groensteen's theory of braiding (Groensteen 156-158) argues that graphic narrative puts every panel in a potential relation with every other. This pronouncement can be seen as an improvement over the doctrine of sequentiality. The relations between individual panels can be of an iconic as well as of a rhetorical nature and these results in a semantic over determination of the graphic narrative. A single panel only acquires meaning in a sequence but it is always part of multiple sequences of varying length, from the triad of preceding, current and following panel through the "hyperframe" of an entire page and up to systems of panel proliferation such as the "multiframe" and the "multistage multiframe" (Groensteen 30-31), which are increasingly inclusive. Thus the panel has to be simultaneously read on at least three levels. To cite an example, the recurrent use of metaphor and metonymy may connect panels across pages.[14] According to Philippe Marion,[15] the panel is an expressive element traversed by two contradictory dimensions—the story *(fonction-récit)*, which makes the spectator glide over the image and the picture *(fonction-tableau),* which strives to

[14] Kukkonen, Karin. "Beyond Language: Metaphor and Metonymy in Comics Storytelling." *English Language Notes*, 46.2, 2008, pp. 90–98.
[15] Marion, Philippe. *Traces en cases.* Louvain-la-Neuve: Academia, 1993. Also cited in Silke Horskotte's essay mentioned earlier.

focus the viewer's attention by isolating the image from the story. Thus, every panel addresses the reader on two complementary (sometimes contradictory) levels to which we must add a third function that refers the panel to the narrative structure in its entirety, thereby increasing the likelihood of a roaming, non-linear reading pattern.

In any complex comics, where many scenes refer forward and backward to each other, where panels are frequently repeated with a difference, where episodes are introduced through flash-forwards or flashbacks get retold from different points of view, the dynamic interaction between the visual and verbal has to be studied in the context of the entire graphic novel since it is only here that panels gain their full meaning. The repetition of sequences calls for a simultaneous reading of each individual sequence on not only two, but at least three and sometimes even four levels – (a) Individually, each panel deserves close and careful attention, as minute details and changes in content, colour and perspectival angle open up different interpretative possibilities. (b) Each panel is part of a sequence, narrating a self- contained series of events, unified by stylistic choices. (c) Moreover, each sequence has to be read in the larger context of a narrative and has to be interpreted with reference to its narratorial origin and its perspective. (d) The above three repetitions as well as their embedding speak to each other across chapters through a process of braiding, thereby necessitating a further gathering of information.

This idea of reading comics as *roaming* (instead of being seen as just imposing a linear sequentiality) is close to the new mobilities paradigm which looks at the proliferation of nodes of connections. The random mobility attached to decoding comics undermines the earlier reductionist theory of linear sequentiality as suggested by Eisner and McCloud. If we impose the mobilities paradigm on the methodology of deciphering the form of comics, we can see that all panels are tied to thin networks of connections that stretch beyond their immediate loci. It also means that no panel can be like an isolated island. However, based on above discussions about comics' layout, it is to be assumed that the kind of mobility attached to it is mostly syntagmatic or horizontal. Temporally, syntagmatic or horizontal movement refer *intratextually* to other

panels (signifiers) *co-present* within the text, whether linear or otherwise. In linguistics, syntagms (which operate through horizontal axes) are often defined as "sequential" but they can represent *spatial relationships*. Ferdinand de Saussure puts emphasis on "auditory signifiers" which "are presented one after another" and "form a chain". But he also notes that visual signifiers (he provides examples of nautical flags) "can exploit more than one dimension simultaneously"[16] If we overlap this to the idea of reading comics by travelling/wandering/roaming through interconnected nodes in both space and time, we get the idea of horizontal mobility. In fact, Groensteen's theorisation of comics basically navigates this horizontality.

VERTICAL MOBILITIES

However, in addition to horizontal mobility, we need to negotiate another kind of mobility while making sense of comics – the vertical or paradigmatic mobility. In semiotics, paradigmatic relationships can operate on the level of the signifier, the signified or both (Saussure 121-124). Some like Thwaites *et al.* argue that within a genre, whilst the syntagmatic dimension is the textual structure, the paradigmatic dimension can be as broad as the *choice of subject matter*. In this framing, *form* is a syntagmatic dimension whilst *content* is a paradigmatic dimension.[17] This is too restrictive a formulation as form can also be subject to paradigmatic choices; similarly content may give itself to syntagmatic arrangement.

Vertical mobility opens up the interstices of comics' narrative. Horizontal mobility, despite Groensteen's concept of iconic solidarity (which indicates that comic panels are never read purely by themselves but in the context of all other contiguous panels in the layout) never really probes the in-betweenness of the composition, the unexplained pause in the contiguous act of reading or the absence in presence. It merely ensures a formal visual energy created by compositional and other elements internal to each panel and by the layout. It only

[16] Saussure, Ferdinand. *Course in General Linguistics*. McGraw-Hill, 1966, p.70.
[17] Thwaites, Tony, Lloyd Davis, and Warwick Mules. *Tools for Cultural Studies: An Introduction*. Macmillan, 1994, p. 95.

propels the reader's eyes as they move from panel to panel and from page to page in his/her quest to 'read'. It does impart a sense of sustained or varied visual rhythm, either along the predetermined left-to-right, top-to-bottom path of reading or by creating alternate experimental paths, mapped within the context of the entire book. However, it cannot help us to understand the resistance of reading. Vertical mobility ensures that we don't gloss over the scars or scratches inherent within the narrative as we try to unpack the meaning of panels. Vertical mobility opens up spaces of resistance both with respect to form and content.

For example, the blank space of the gutter, translated as *blanc* in its French usage, is constitutive of comics' formal logic and grammar. It is where the readers project causality and where the division of time in comics is marked. However, the gutter is both a space of stillness – a stoppage in the action, a gap – and a space between movements. According to Kentridge, "the perfect point" for him and many visual artists "is that point between stillness and movement."[18] In effect, the gutter can be seen as a gesture to experience interval between frames of presence.[19] So while the panels carry the actual physical traces of drawing, the gutters carry their own inarticulate shadow. According to Kentridge, "Erasure and the traces it leaves are about the passage of time, and hence about memory." Erasure also "gives you a sense of the process of both making and thinking, which is not linear but a series of advances and reversals and lateral moves."[20] It triggers the sensation of being within an alternative space where advance/reverse/lateral movement undercuts and cancels each other. Sometimes, there are pages in comics where there is no gutter but only a simple line to separate two contiguous images. There the semantic relation between the images remains the same. So gutter may be physical or virtual. When it is virtual, it is a forced virtual, an identifiable absence. The gutter acts the symbolic site of this absence – "More than a zone on the paper, it is the interior screen on which every reader projects the missing image" (Groensteen 113). It functions like memory itself, which is always there but is more pronounced in its absence.

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[18] Auping, Michael. "Double Lines: A 'Stereo' Interview about drawing with William Kentridge." *William Kentridge: Five themes*, edited by Mark Rosenthal, Yale University Press, 2009, p. 243.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.

The very concept of memory encapsulating the idea of resistance works along the paradigmatic or vertical plane. While history appropriates the chronological horizontal movement of events as it gets documented, memory seems to locate the absences within the said trajectory. Similarly, the gutter, if considered as a mere formal appendage, can only serve as a visual signifier and nothing more. However, if we conceive the gutter as a metaphor for in-between-ness between presence and absence, it becomes more than a narrative cog. It vertically swathes through the panels to imprint its 'scar' on the narrative. It unpacks absences that are 'invisible'. So if horizontal mobility means 'roaming', forward or across, vertical mobility entails a steep climb against gravity. It is exhausting but also rewarding at the end. Within the sweat and pain of resistance, lies the polyphonic truth of comics. Seen in this respect, the paradigms of vertical mobility and memory constitute the metafictional entities of the form itself.

MEMORY AND MOBILITIES IN COMICS

As seen in my rigorous analysis of three comics, the basic idea of mobilities and memory seems to echo each other. However, we can probe further. Specifically, the verticality of memory and mobilities in comics opens up an interesting area of shared interest. The influence of memory on mobilities paradigm in comics can be seen in two important ideological interventions related to the creator and the creation. Firstly, the self-reflexive, playful manner in which a *creator* (the comics artist) inserts himself/herself within the narrative, irrespective of the fact whether his/her comics is a work of fiction or non-fiction. The self-awareness is also accentuated by the ambiguous location of the artist – in between the self and the other. Secondly, I wish to focus on the ideology of the hand-drawn images (a crucial aspect of the process of *creation*) which distinguishes it from other medium like photography and film. It also creates a sense of interstitial transience which allows the comic artist to negotiate the interaction of memory and mobility with a complexity, rarely seen in other medium.

THE CREATIVE SELF

It is important to consider the role of the comics artists in the three discussed texts (one non-fictional, two fictional) which deal with different aspects of mobility. It is seen that they have all tenuously woven themselves within the respective narratives in a strategic manner. The self-reflexivity not only draws attention to their ideological position with respect to the narratives in question but it also creates a palimpsest of (re)written memories that shapes his/her identity. In fact, the very idea of inscribing one's identity as an auteur of experimental comic form can be found in the continual evolution of selves which are continually reconstituted, rearticulated and refigured with each new experience.

In case of non-fictional comic reportage (like in my chosen text, *Footnotes in Gaza)*, it is imperative for the artist to weave himself/herself within a narrative. A comic journalist can situate himself in a number of ways – as a character in the story, as a stand-in for the reader, as a commentator on the action, or as a neutral observer. His textual voice can indicate whether he is a participant, alternatively can describe for the reader what he sees as an eyewitness or can employ the third person omniscient voice commonly used in print journalism. However, in comics, there is an additional advantage of visual positioning. Visually, he/she can draw himself/herself into the story, or he/she can create a visual point of view, positioning himself/herself either inside or outside the frame. Joe Sacco is not only the writer and illustrator of his panels but he is also the main character within his narrative. Gillian Whitlock uses a specific term, "autobiographical avatars"[21] to depict the creation of this kind of persona. Sacco considers himself as a filter and through the inclusion of his visual presence he makes the reader aware of his role and perspective. His cartoon avatar activates and contextualizes the narrative within and across the panels. What consistently attracts the readers' attention regarding Sacco's self-representation is the way he draws himself. Indeed, when comparing a real-life picture of Joe Sacco and the hand-drawn portrayal of Joe in

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[21] Whitlock, Gillian. *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit*. University of Chicago Press, 2007, p. 35.

the novel, we only see a basic resemblance. In the drawing, his lips are exaggeratingly enlarged, his chin is non-existent, his two front teeth are much larger and his eyes are permanently hidden behind his glasses. In effect, Sacco portrays himself as an awkward geek despite his quite normal look in reality. Effectively, Sacco's avatar's face is no more than two eyebrows, glasses, a rather large nose and an extremely large mouth. When he is drawn sideways, his ears only consist of two curved lines. The consciously cultivated self-representation is in complete contrast to his normally 'accurate' drawing style. In fact, his attention to detail in illustration is astonishing particularly when it comes to the art of portraiture. All the faces that Sacco draws exhibit the exact weighted expression in consonance to the unique situation of the narrative. Even an insignificant and miniscule face in a crowd will be most naturally represented. However, this attention to detail does not extend to the portrait of Sacco himself who always appears in the same way.

Fig. 146: Sacco and his cartoon avatar

I think the primary reason for this contrast in representation is to denote the irony of his located-ness. While the author occupies a relatively 'safe' position as an outsider recording the stories of pain, the victims themselves have no such privilege. The effacement of the details in the illustration of the author-self maybe due to the fact that Sacco doesn't want his own personal emotions to undermine the powerful stories narrated by the eyewitnesses. If he had inked changing contours of expression in his face while he listens, he would have also compromised on his integrity as a 'neutral' observer. Although the façade of

neutrality ultimately crumbles within the narrative and Sacco clearly empathizes with the victims, it happens through his textual voice rather than the visual demeanour of his 'autobiographical avatar'. One strategic move on part of Sacco while constructing his avatar is to efface his eyes while drawing him(self). We can barely plumb the emotional involvement or gauge the real reaction of Sacco-avatar as he literally and metaphorically hides behind his opaque glasses. In fact, throughout *Palestine* and *Footnotes in Gaza* we never get to see the eyes of the narrator-avatar except for a brief period at the end of *Footnotes* when he visibly squints at Abu Juhish's lacerating testimony. His opaque glasses form a frame in themselves and act as a reflector of memory – the memory of others.

In *The Arrival*, an allegorical fictional work about migration, Shaun Tan etches out his self in a more round-about way. As discussed earlier in chapter 4, Tan (re)writes himself within the narrative by placing his father's face within the mélange of unknown faces in the endpapers of the book. Tan replicates the photograph of his father in the passport to collate the narrative of his fictional protagonist with his own family's narrative of displacement and migration. Even within its fictive world, the encounter of the protagonist with domestic material objects in the book serves as the key by which he seeks to write him(self). Memories and emotions are frequently attached to specific objects.[22] Material things create hybrid ecologies of the self and their emotional register especially within narratives having an autobiographical dimension. These complex, strange ecologies become vivid and visible when they are displaced from their immediate surroundings and transplanted elsewhere. Annette Kuhn (1995) describes the capacity of minute domestic material objects to spark "radiating web[s] of associations, reflections and interpretations" through messy, ongoing encounters[23]. As Bruno Latour says in his path-breaking study, *Reassembling the social: an introduction to Actor-Network-Theory,* "even the most routine, traditional, and silent implements stop being taken for granted when they are approached by users rendered ignorant and clumsy by *distance* – distance in time as in archaeology, distance in space as in ethnology, distance in skills as in

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[22] Latour, Bruno. "The Berlin Key, or how to do words with things." *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture,* edited by P.M. Graves-Brown, Routledge, 2000.
[23] Kuhn, A. *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination.* Verso, 1995, p. 4.

learning."[24] Latour's idea of distance is beautifully rendered in *The Arrival* by Tan when the nameless protagonist opens up his suitcase to reveal a scene from his home and later a photograph of his family that he carries along with him. This is a familiar domestic scene which is viewed after travelling away from home for some time. It suddenly becomes an encounter of an uncanny, unsettling and defamiliarizing experience. Far removed from his domestic setting, the protagonist can still *see* his absence from home, foregrounded by an empty chair around the dining table which is boxed within the suitcase that he carries with him. Pictorial representations like these, through their presence as material objects, are charged with memory and have the capacity to take us out of place and occupy multiple places. Thus the place (in the above page, the cosy dining table) is not merely a backdrop for memory and narratives of self but is constitutive of them.

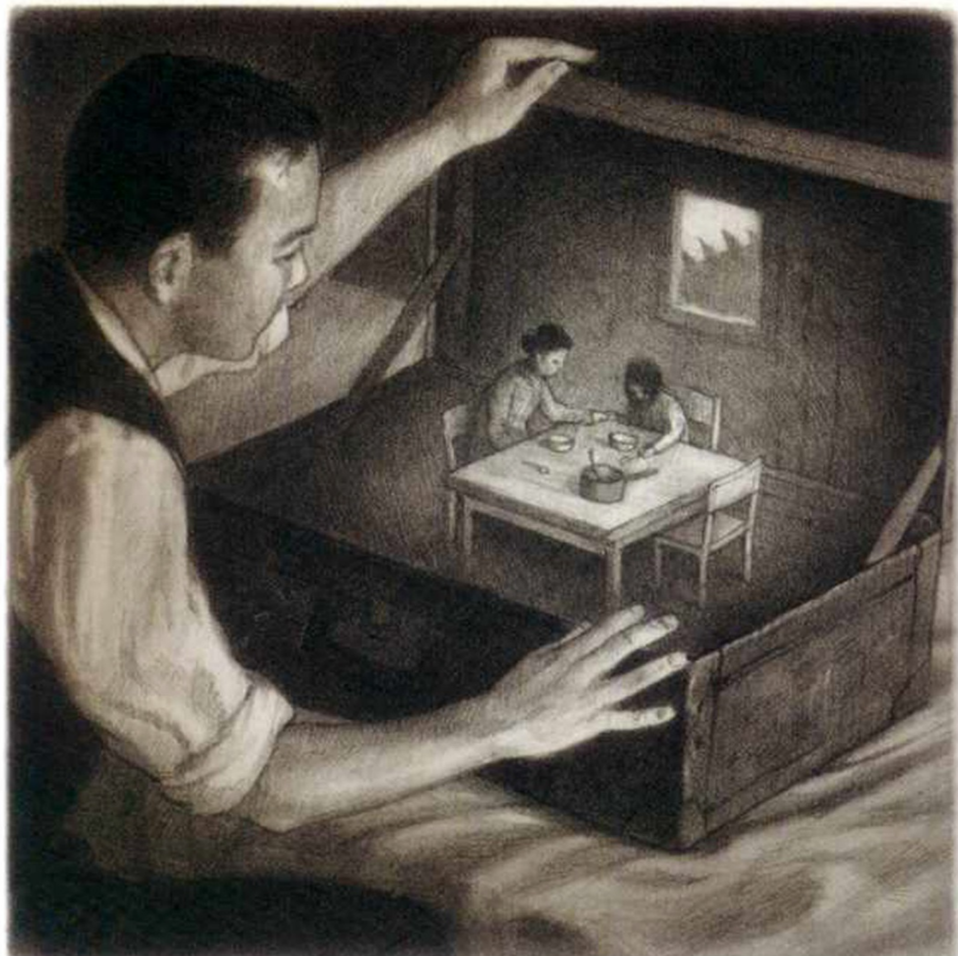

Fig. 147: The Protagonist's encounter with self/family in *The Arrival*

[24] Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford University Press, 2005, p.8.

The 'home' becomes an absent presence for the protagonist. He is somehow trapped within the liminal spaces of his memory and the immediate present, tenuously held together by the ideology of the "familial gaze" – a term coined by Marianne Hirsch, to imply "the set of visual interrelations that constitute both the subjects and the viewer of the photographs as members of the family group."[25] The metaphor of protagonist's encounter in this particular panel approximates Tan's own father. He was not privy to his father's story but despite minor differences, it could not have been much different. By drawing his protagonist's story as an allegory, Tan imprints the memory of numerous such 'absences' in the elliptical trajectory of various migration mobilities.

In the complex fictional work about detours of a tourist, *The Cardboard Valise*, Ben Katchor continues in the same tradition of his long running syndicated comic strip *Julius Knipl: Real Estate Photographer*[26]. Knipl lives in a city not unlike New York City, and wanders the streets of the city between jobs, photographing buildings for estate agency advertisements. The unnamed city that he inhabits looks and feels like New York City, although it is not the New York City we might recognise. In the introduction to the first collected volume of Julius Knipl strips, Michael Chabon describes it as a "crumbling, lunar cityscape" – "...a world of rumpled suits, fireproof office blocks with the date of their erection engraved on the pediment, transom windows, and hare-brained if ingenious small businesses; a sleepless, hacking-cough, dyspeptic, masculine world the colour of the standing lining of a hat" (Katchor, *Julius Knipl* Introduction). These idiosyncratic characters are all mirror reflections of Katchor's idea of the city creatures, obsessed by their own idea of urbanity. Although these are distinctly different characters, Katchor frequently describes his style as "authographic"[27] – a fusion of biography and graphic images that represents his own self and experiences through his hand-crafted images. In his work we encounter the detritus of popular culture sprouting and consequently disappearing in the urban black-hole, leaving behind a

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[25] Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory***.** Harvard University Press, 1997, p.10.; Hirsch, Marianne. *The Familial Gaze*. University Press of New England, 1999.
[26] Katchor, Ben. *Julius Knipl: Real Estate Photographer*. Little Brown, 1996.
[27] Katchor, Ben. "Comics artist Ben Katchor on city living, urban sprawl, and art as activism". Interview with Brett McCabe, Mar 29, 2016, https://hub.jhu.edu/2016/03/29/ben-katchor-center-arts/. Accessed Mar 30 2016.

palimpsest of ambiguous clues. Unlike Guy Delisle, who is present in his non-fictional travel comics as an observer or a participant, Katchor cannot have the same privilege in his fictional world. In fact, a staple theme in contemporary autobiographical comics (like we see in Craig Thompson or Guy Delisle), as identified by Groensteen, has been the focus "on the chronicle of the professional life, the *mise-en-scène* of the author's trade in comics" (Groensteen 149). This chronicling also serves to authenticate and authorize the artist and the narrative. What is chronicled is not just the professional life, but the making of a particular work in a self-reflexive fashion. Katchor's fictional work is not strictly autobiographical in the conventional sense of the term. However, they are 'autobiographical' in the way all his characters refer back to the idea of the flaneur, roaming about in the streets to find out interesting oddities that constitute the unsaid missing part of our life. He creates personas which are derived from his own engagement with city life. In *The Cardboard Valise*, he goes further – he pitchforks his created personas to an alien surrounding, rather than a known place. His idea of the tourist-persona (Emile Delilah) generally aligns with that of critics like Hom Cary[28] who see them as an object for consumption. Katchor's tangential narrative allows them to metamorphose from being objectified 'tourists' to emerge as individual 'subjects'. Katchor makes them retreat from their routine life, allows the unexpected to take over, thus exposing their more "authentic" selves. In fact, the daily continuum of Katchor's characters in his universe is about unearthing the uncanny. So when he creates a character travelling to different place away from the confines of his known world, the effect is more surreal.

Katchor's project also has an eerie resemblance with Walter Benjamin's unfinished *The Arcades Project*[29]. Benjamin abandoned work on it in the spring of 1940, when he was forced to flee Paris before the advancing German army. In the foreword to the work, the editors (Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin) ask, "Did he leave behind anything more than a large-plan or prospectus? No, it is argued,

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[28] Hom Cary, Stephanie. "The Tourist Moment". *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 31(1), Jan., 2004, pp. 61-77, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2003.03.001. Accessed 20 Mar. 2011.

[29] Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Edited by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Belknap Press, 1999.

The Arcades Project is just that: the blue print for an unimaginably massive and labyrinthine architecture – a dream city, in effect" (Benjamin, *Arcades* x-xi). Like Benjamin's flâneur, Katchor's characters travels through urban space and the space of modernity but is always casting glance towards the past. They inevitably revert to Katchor's memory of the city as shown earlier in this work. Katchor uses the complimentary concepts put forward by Benjamin in *The Arcades Project* – "Erlebnis" can be characterized as the shock-induced anaesthesia brought about by the overwhelming sensory bombardment of life in a modern city, somewhat akin to the alienated subjectivity experienced by a worker bound to his regime of labour. "Erfahrung" is a more positive response and refers to the mobility, wandering or cruising of the flâneur. Benjamin cited Baudelaire's poetry as a successful medium for turning "erlebnis" into "erfahrung". As Benjamin wrote in his section of *Illuminations* entitled *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire*: "The greater the share of the shock factor in particular impressions, the more constantly consciousness has to be alert as a screen against stimuli; the more efficiently it does so, the less do these impressions enter experience (Erfahrung), tending to remain in the sphere of a certain hour in one's life (Erlebnis)."[30] Benjamin does not just write *about* the flâneur but, in *The Arcades Project*, he writes *as* a flâneur. The origins of *The Arcades Project* are in the textual detritus of Benjamin's research – a method that echoes Baudelaire's ragpicker and which he refers to when he writes that, "poets find the refuse of society on their street and derive their heroic subject from this very refuse. This means that a common type is, as it were, superimposed upon their illustrious type. … Ragpicker or poet — the refuse concerns both."[31]

The ragpicker is recurring motif in Benjamin's writing and offers a useful metaphor for his textual methodology. Like Benjamin, Katchor is interested in what *was* and what *might be*. He is looking for where the imagined city meets the material one. At the juncture of the real and unreal, the identity of an auteur is inscribed, not as him(self) but as an urban everyman. Katchor's sense of selfhood in a decaying environment approximates Giddens idea of self-identity in today's

[30] Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968, pp. 143-144.
[31] Benjamin, Walter. *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism.* Verso Books, 1993, p.36.

world.

> "We are, not what we are, but what we make of ourselves. It would not be true to say that the self is regarded as entirely empty of content, for there are psychological processes of self-formation, and psychological needs, which provide the parameters for the reorganized self. Otherwise, however, what the individual becomes is dependent on the reconstructive endeavours in which he or she engages. These are far more than just 'getting to know oneself' better: self-understanding is subordinated to the more inclusive and fundamental aim of building/rebuilding a coherent and rewarding sense of identity. The involvement of such reflexivity with social and psychological research is striking, and a pervasive feature of the therapeutic outlook advocated."[32]

THE MEDIUM AND THE IDEOLOGY OF THE 'DRAWN'

In his work, *Journalism*, Joe Sacco talks about the sense of ambiguity that is imparted with the idea of illustration/drawing –

> "Drawings are interpretative even when they are slavish renditions of photographs, which are generally perceived to capture a real moment literally. But there is nothing literal about a drawing. A cartoonist assembles elements deliberately and places them with intent on a page. There is none of the photographer's luck at snapping a picture at precisely the right moment. A cartoonist 'snaps' his drawing at any moment he or she chooses. It is this choosing that makes cartooning an inherently subjective medium."[33]

It is to be noted that comics are a composite art and comics artists incorporate maps, charts, photographs, sketches, photocopies, or paintings into their narratives. To an exceptional degree, the past decade has witnessed a new thrust in creative experimentation and innovation marked by the coming together of photography and cartooning in comics. From the mix of photography and cartooning in *Le Photographe*[34] by Emanuel Guibert, Frédéric Lemercier, and Didier Lefèvre to the cartoon altered photographs reproduced in Eddie Campbell's

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[32] Giddens, A. *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern age*. Polity Press, 1991, p. 75.
[33] Sacco, Joe. *Journalism*. Metropolitan Books, 2012, pp. xi-xii.
[34] Guibert, Emmanuel, Didier Lefèvre, and Frédéric Lemercier. *The Photographer*. First Second, 2009.

The Lovely Horrible Stuff[35] to the recent web photo-comics of Derik Badman (2013), Lynn French (2007) or Seth Kushner (2006), there is ample evidence that photography has found its way into a wide spectrum of comics' genres. This is, of course, not only limited to comics but to other genres as well that flourish in the 21st century. The ubiquity of rapidly produced and widely disseminated photographic images results in a shift in ways of seeing the world at large. Even before the invention of photography, painting/illustration had been influenced by proto-photographic techniques through the use of drawing and drafting aids, such as the *camera obscura*, the *camera lucida*, the *silhouette machine*, the *magic lantern* and the *physionotrace*. But, photography was more than a visual aid to painters. Some critics like Thierry Smolderen argues that "the photographic image became the reference by which all graphic representation was instinctively measured" (Smolderen 121).[36]

Fig. 148: *Le Premier Cigar*

Although, the analogy may be a bit stretched, there is no doubt that photography as a practice brought about a lot of change in way comic artists utilized their medium. Cartoonists were swift to adapt to the new visual culture. Nancy Pedri writes that as early as 1900, a two panel photo-comic strip entitled "Le premiere cigar" was produced in *Album Noël*, a collection of ninety-seven comic strips by

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[35] Campbell, Eddie. *The Lovely Horrible Stuff.* Top Shelf Productions, 2012.

[36] Thierry, Smolderen. *The Origins of Comics: From William Hogarth to Winsor McCay*. Translated by Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen, University Press of Mississippi, 2000.

different artists including Achille Lemot, J. B. Clark, and F. M. Howarth. "Le premiere cigar" is a two photograph comics sequence of a young boy smoking a cigar; the photographs are placed side-by-side, traced with a dark line, separated by a large gutter with an ink drawing of a devil-like figure that emerges from the smoke of a cigar, and accompanied by a verbal text narrating the boy's experience.[37]

Despite the continuing dialogue between the two medium, there is also a crucial difference that the comic artist exploits. The cartoon image does not hide or attempt to hide the hand of its maker, as the photographic image does. It draws attention to and, at times, even exploits the fact that what it shows has been "transformed through somebody's eye and hand."[38] Whereas the cartoon image, with its use of symbolic abstraction and distortion, makes apparent its own hand-craftiness, the photographic image conceals its maker's hand and thus is readily approached as "an imprint or transfer of the real" (Krauss 26).[39] Given their unique modes of production – one handmade, the other mechanical – the two types of images cannot be further removed one from the other.

Noted comics scholar Bart Beaty distinguishes between 'stylized' quality of drawn images/cartoons and the 'realist' quality of photographs. It is supported by others like Ann Miller[40], Barbara Postema[41], Douglas Wolk and Pascal Lefèvre.[42] Marianne Hirsch in her path-breaking essay also re-iterates that the intermittent use of documentary photographs in Art Spiegelman's *Maus* expose all images as fictional constructs.[43] While remaining sensitive to the mutual differences and

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[37] Pedri, Nancy. "*Thinking about Photography in Comics.*" *Image [&] Narrative*, vol. 16, no.2, 2015, http://www.tireview.be/index.php/imagenarrative/article/download/802/607. Accessed 2 Jan. 2016.

[38] Wolk, Douglas. *Reading Comics: How Graphic Novels Work and What they Mean*. De Capo, 2007, p. 118.

[39] Krauss, Rosalind. "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism." *October* 19, 1981, pp. 3-34.

[40] Miller, Ann. *Reading Bande Dessinée: Critical Approaches to French-language Comic Strips.* Intellect, 2007, p. 123. Miller looks at use of other media in comics as instances of intertextuality.

[41] Postema, Barbara. "Draw a Thousand Words: Signification and Narration in Comics Images." *International Journal of Comic Art,* 9.1, spring, 2007, pp. 487-501.; Postema, Barbara. *Narrative Structure in Comics*: *Making Sense of Fragments*. Rochester Institute of Technology, 2013, p. 488.

[42] Lefèvre, Pascal. "Mise en scène and Framing: Visual Storytelling in *Lone Wolf and Cub*." *Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories and Methods*, edited by Matthew J. Smith and Randy Duncan, Routledge, 2012, pp. 71-83.

[43] Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*. Harvard University Press, 1997, p.25.

similarities, it is important to understand the ideology of the drawn picture. The ambiguity within the idea of the drawn image is utilized by the comic artist to talk about memory in a way that photographers simply cannot do.

Drawing is a difficult term to theorize. Most practitioners resist a particular definition, instead preferring to acknowledge drawing as a fluid and evolving medium. At an early age most children spontaneously engage in mark making using whatever material comes to hand – pencils, crayons or even found materials, such as food, dirt or sand. This mark-making process prefigures writing and is a natural process by which infants attempt to understand their environment and their experience of it. Before learning to write, most people engage spontaneously in mark making and drawing. Yet most of us regard drawing (a fundamental form of human expression) as a specialist rather than a universal activity. Drawing's historical position is that of a secondary, preparatory form to other disciplines. From medieval to modern art, drawing mostly constituted an intermediate moment, a passage for the realization of the major work of painting, sculpture, or architecture. It is an exercise, the testing field that prepared for the final work.[44] Influential theoretical works like John Ruskin's *The Elements of Drawing* (1857) all contributed to entrench this idea. It is not until the advent of Modernism that we revised our idea about drawing per se, although, curator and writer Barbara Rose argues in her essay *Drawing Now* that as far back as the fifteenth century, drawing has been equated with "invention." Quoting the Renaissance biographer and artist Giorgio Vasari's description of drawing as "originating in the intellect of the artist, its first concrete realization being the sketch", she claims a preceding history for drawing that is not solely rooted in technique and observation.[45] Rose, in her exhibition, extends her emphasis on concept to include what she terms the "autographic" drawing – the drawing that is confessional and biographical, based on an experience, a form of self-revelatory mark, an unmediated form of direct communication. It doesn't seem coincidental that this very term is curiously picked by Ben Katchor while describing his own comic work.

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[44] Fisher, Jean. "On Drawing." *The Stage of Drawing: Gesture and Act: Selected from the Tate Collection*, by Catherine de Zegher, Tate Publishing and the Drawing Center, 2003, pp. 217-230.
[45] Rose, Barbara. *Drawing Now*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1976, p. 9.

Viewing drawing through a temporal framework allows us to consider it as both an act that takes place in the present as in the time of the drawing's creation, while also being a trace of this action, the record of a past event or gesture. There is also the crucial element of incompleteness that forms the very ideology of the drawn picture. As Craig-Martin suggests, "Spontaneity, creative speculation, experimentation, directness, simplicity, abbreviation, expressiveness, immediacy, personal vision, technical diversity, modesty of means, rawness, fragmentation, discontinuity, unfinishedness, and open-endedness. These have always been the characteristics of drawing."[46]

Drawn pictures (whether on paper or a digital tablet) have unique properties of contingency, intermediacy, in-betweenness and becoming that "always exist in the present tense, in the time of unfolding ... a continuous incompleteness."[47] Art historian Norman Bryson sums it up wonderfully when he writes: "A hand that is about to make its first trace on the surface ... the present of viewing and the present of the drawn line hook on to each other, mesh together like interlocking temporal gears; they co-inhabit an irreversible, permanently open and exposed field of becoming, whose moment of closure will never arrive."[48]

This idea of unfinished-ness is the most important attribute of the hand-drawn images. Photographs cannot have this attribute. The comic artist utilizes this ideology to reframe the idea of memory in their narrative. Memories are also understood to be embodied, fragmentary and episodic. Never a complete work, they are an ongoing montage of scraps given meaning through narratives. It is to be noted that the three auteurs (Sacco, Tan and Katchor) that I have cited all use hands as the primary instrument to sketch out their work. All of them actually draw our attention to the ambiguity inherent in their hand-drawn sketches. They may use photographic material for their references (as evident in Sacco and Tan) but the final work, as we see it, is all crafted by the magic of their hands.

It is generally assumed that photographs play against and trouble

[46] Craig-Martin, Michael. Catalogue essay for 'Drawing the Line.' *Drawing*, Occasional Press, 1995, p. 11.
[47] Bryson, Norman. "A Walk for a Walk's Sake". *The Stage of Drawing*, edited by Catherine de Zegher, Tate Publishing and The Drawing Centre, 2003, pp. 149-158.
[48] Ibid.

memories. In fact, they often prompt memories that may not otherwise be recalled (Rose 13). Most people find it difficult to remember at all without mementos like photographs to objectify their memory. Every photograph triggers subjective traces of memory as well. However, photographs cannot stir the consciousness of the subject as much as hand-drawn drawings can. The tactile quality of the drawing wedges out moments of ambiguity which photographs forecloses. That ambiguity is also indicative of memory – not personal memory of things past but collective memory of loss and trauma.

Joe Sacco in an interview to Tuhus-Dubrow gives a more specific answer –

> "I'm walking around in Rafah and I'm thinking, I'm going to have to draw this stuff. I'm always thinking – like, making mental reminders to myself, which I'll put right in my journal, I'll say, don't forget how many kids you have to draw in the background, because there are kids everywhere. So I'm thinking in those terms, it's like the atmosphere – sometimes you can't capture it exactly on film, but you're thinking about it, you're thinking about the way the dust is swirling in the air, and bits of trash are flying up, all that stuff you can really never capture unless you're a really good photographer. And I'm not, and I've got a *cheapo* camera. But yeah, you don't need to write about the swirling dust and the sand that's blowing in your eyes, you can just draw that all the time. And if you draw it over and over again, people get the message."[49]

Whereas the photograph shows the image of a city or a place, the dynamics of a drawing has the capacity of translating the environment of those spaces and make it part of collective memory. One tends to routinely perceive photography as a fragment of a moment of reality, but it is also a representation, mediated by the camera and by the eye of the photographer, which limits the framing and the focus zone. On the other hand, the greatest virtue of the drawing resides on the simple fact that it is regarded as a manual and crafted *copy* of something seen. In other words, its mediated image representation character is reinforced for the reader. Thus, through drawing, it is possible to have a more detailed and discernible image, which favours understanding by those who consume it, as another representation. For a long time, photography and journalism positioned

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[49] Sacco, Joe. *January interview Joe Sacco.* Interview with Rebecca Tuhus-Dubrow, *January Magazine*, 2003, http://www.januarymagazine.com/profiles/jsacco.html. Accessed 12 Feb. 2011.

themselves as spaces of reality – being objective and corresponding to the original. The camera captures what reality offers at that moment. Drawing is especially a *composition*. In other words, elements are added to it, so as to reinforce the perception and sensation of the depicted environment. Joe Sacco himself says that he draws the same thing over and over in order to get the desired message across. At that moment, the artist's commitment is not to the faithful reality of the image that presents itself before his eyes, but to what he *interprets* as important from the reality he *experiences* in that space. Such dynamics is evident through Sacco's remarks concerning his work methodology, in which he collects printings and scribbles, photographic details and then gathers everything in his illustrated narrative. In other words, the *composition*, the perception of the space, the environment and the whole are more faithful to the spirit of the place and time than just being a rigorous textual or imagistic correspondence.

In addition, the uncomfortable images of realities and specific daily events that photography or audio-visual are not allowed to show through the press and television, due to their brutality and violence, may find their elucidating way in drawing and in the comics' narratives. In comics there is such a possibility and it increasingly appears to be an alternative narrative. There are not many images as informative and capable of showing the whole and the environment as such, immediately after the bomb attack to Hiroshima, as those depicted by Nakazawa in *Barefoot Gen*[50] or Spiegelman's *Maus*[51], representing the prisoners at Birkenau concentration camp. If a team of foreign journalists may experience difficulties showing how people live in the capital city of a dictatorship, Guy Delisle translates Pyongyang to comics, going through the iron curtain.

A stunning example of the way the hand-drawn images capture a different dynamics of reality can be seen in page 342-343 of *Footnotes in Gaza*. In the chapter titled 'Ramadan Mohammed El-Modalel', Sacco, Abed and Ashraf find the name of Ramadan in the list of martyrs of 1956 and goes to enquire about him in his house. Years have passed but his mother is still waiting for his son to return home. When she meets Sacco and his friends, she thinks that they have found her

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[50] Nakazawa, Keiji. *Barefoot Gen: A Cartoon Story of Hiroshima*. Penguin, 1990.
[51] Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*. Pantheon, 1991.

son. Pressed for time, the author and his friends depart, leaving behind a ruminating mother. In a stunning two page-spread, Sacco captures the loneliness and futile longing of the mother in deep cross-hatched ink patterns which is a departure from his usual drawing practice. It is as if Sacco has adjusted his drawing style in keeping with the dark, melancholy mood of the narrative. The emptiness of the last panel with lengthening shadows foreshadows the pathos of the mother, forever waiting for his son to return. The memory of loss as felt by the victim is translated into deep anguish through the imagery of the drawn. Unlike history, memory is resistance. Drawing is also a conduit for that same act of resistance.

Sacco, the artist is literally present in every line of his artistry. According to Rebecca Scherr[52], "every line is a kind of resonance, carrying a trace of the artist's hand, acting as a reminder of the labour, involved in the creation of the work."

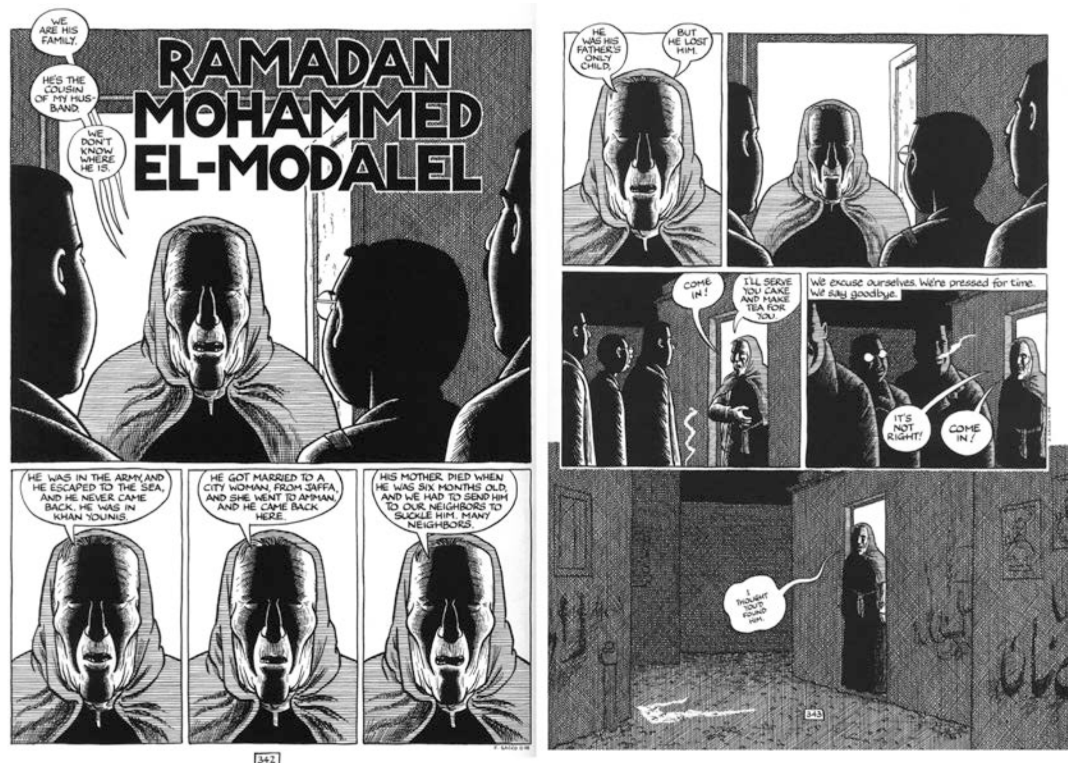

Fig. 149: *Footnotes in Gaza*, Pages 342-343

In Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*, we have seen a similar transmutation of the photographic truth into illustrations of greater allegorical import. Since Tan's photographic resources belong to different centuries and varied cultural contexts, he has to translate them into a consistent visual design. While talking about his

[52] Scherr, Rebecca. "Joe Sacco's *Comics of Performance.*" *The Comics of Joe Sacco: Journalism in a Visual World*, edited by Daniel Worden, University Press of Mississippi, 2015, p. 184.

own work-process, he downplays the importance of originality in favour of 'translation', the recombination of elements into a coherent whole: "I never feel like I own the ideas, they're just ideas that are out there. I myself am constantly drawing from things around me. I feel like I'm a translator more than an artist."[53]

In another interview he elaborates on his artistic practice –

> "…This can perhaps be best explained when we ignore any straightforward understanding of a word like 'illustration', that is, illustration as a visual clarification of an idea, or a form of literal demonstration. Like writers, illustrators are not really attracted to their chosen language for its descriptive clarity or objectivity, but more for its slipperiness, mystery, ambiguity and accidental poetry…There is a dreamlike quality to these kinds of picture-stories that I find endlessly engaging, and I think there are certainly parallels between the way visual stories and dreams might be experienced and interpreted. Certain images, if they are well conceived and crafted, are able to tap into a kind of subconscious emotional intelligence, and I find that the act of drawing allows me to access ideas that are normally elusive to the more conscious, reasoning parts of my brain."[54]

Each word spoken by Tan rings true if we look at the way he uses the ideology of the hand-drawn images to construct panels that plumbs the interstices of subconscious.

Tan in *Sketches from a Nameless Land* admits that his drawing style is influenced by early silent cinema and Italian neo-realist films, including Vittoria De Sica's celebrated film, *The Bicycle Thief* (1948) which is aesthetically grounded in the real lives of ordinary people (Tan, *Sketches* 42). In fact, many of the photo-references are from staged photographs using real people and props. But nowhere the final artwork is slavishly phot-realistic. The use of soft graphite pencil is precisely due to its flexibility in ensuring editing, erasure and re-drawing. The sequence of pictures given below makes the process more understandable.

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[53] Shirrefs, Michael. "Shaun Tan's Tales from Outer Suburbia." ABC Radio, 29 May, 2008, http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bookshow/shaun-tan---tales-from-outer-suburbia/3/1597/42. Accessed 16 March 2014.

[54] Colin Simpson Lecture, mentioned earlier.

Fig. 150: Evolution of drawing process in *The Arrival*

The initial idea is in doodles but Tan follows it up with a meticulously staged photo-reference, with help from his friends. It allows him to understand the dynamics of light and shadow in the panel as it impinges on the characters. Once a partially completed final drawing is on the way, grey tones are built up in successive layers, with outlines of important details faintly sketched in. The final panel as we see is not an exact reproduction of the staged image, although there is a lot of similarity. It is important to look at drawing as something intimate which imparts a new range of meaning to 'photographic reality'. It is real in the sense it imitates the photograph but also magical in way, the intimacy of the pencil strokes subverts that reality into something personal. The memory of the artist colludes with his hand-strokes to produce an ambiguity which photographs cannot simply

replicate.

Ben Katchor takes the idea of intimacy further. He contrasts the ideology of the drawn image with the mechanical printing of books. Seen that way, even his book, *The Cardboard Valise* (with a nod to the word 'cardboard') is produced mechanically and part of the commercial jamboree of book-trade. However, there is still a crucial difference. The soft wash of the hand-crafted images within the book creates a pocket of resistance among the marauding use of digital tools. The imprecise strokes and the slightly messy tones are consciously part of his artistic lexicon. It evokes the memory of the artist sitting before the drawing board, struggling with his lines and tones. Katchor's incorporation of his artistic self occurs in the way he practices his art. Unlike Sacco or Tan in the works discussed, he draws directly in ink without the intermediate involvement of pencil impressions on paper, an unusual practice even among the best of comic artists. In an interview he elaborates on his unique artistic approach: "Well it's because it's drawn directly in ink. It incorporates some accidents and errors. It's autographic, it's my handwriting. In most commercial comics one person draws in pencil, another person goes over in ink and tightens it up, makes it looks like this finished thing and another person letters it and yet another person colours it."[55]

The subsequent hand-made 'imprecise' wash style within the customary 8 panel landscape page is a conscious attempt on part of Katchor to imprint his own ideology against the rapid mechanization of comic creation. Katchor hates a 'finished' job like the well-defined processes that is involved in the production of commercial comics. He is a more personal artist unlike "in most commercial comics (where) one person draws in pencil, another person goes over in ink and tightens it up, makes it looks like this finished thing and another person letters it and yet another person colors it" (Brown 106). In order to disseminate widely, it is imperative to scan the drawn images and put them to production line which takes away the immediacy of the originals. It is a process that Katchor is obliged to submit, but given a choice, he would rather be like his persona, 'Julius Knipl' who

[55] Brown, James Benedict. *The Comic Architect: Words and pictures along the line between architecture and comics.* Thesis, University of Sheffield, October 2007, p.106, https://nowordsnoaction.files.wordpress.com/2007/10/comic_architect_complete.pdf. Accessed 16 Dec. 2014.

despite being a 'real estate photographer' never makes his photographs public. Once part of the printing process, Katchor's images loses his personal 'touch'. However, the memory of hand-drawn scratches on paper lives on in those "accidental infections."[56] That is the only comfort that Katchor, the artist can draw.

CONCLUSION

Vertical mobility and memory actually opens up that space in comics (both in terms of form and content) that talks about the ideology of resistance.

In page 117 of *Footnotes in Gaza*, Sacco recreates vintage newspaper cuttings that are staple of historical archives. Clearly, in context of the book, this headpiece is part of the UN archives that Sacco goes through at East 43rd St. in New York City. Readers can barely make out words, phrases or sentences inscribed on the document. The two columns of texts, separated by a gutter (within the document itself), are rendered in a fragmented manner, chunks of texts being 'effaced' by the bleed of the page itself. Sacco seems to suggest that these documents are incomplete, telling only part of the whole story. Hillary Chute says that

> "Sacco creates a palimpsest: he lays his writing on top of the official writing, covering it, contrasting his handwritten words with the status of the typed and filed…And crucially Sacco calls attention to oral testimony and to the drawn, the handwritten, as counter to what he identifies on the next page as 'history-by-document' — which is to say, disembodied history; his own document engages with archives but further refigures what count as archival, as documentary, by bringing the bodies and the voices of the witnesses forward" (Chute 243).

The word history as it appears in *Footnotes* is always associated with hegemonic official discourses which Sacco wants to debunk. He reveals his own methodology which starts with the official records but also questions the silences and gaps within those official documents. Sacco voices his own opinion about the discrepancies within the report — "The UN report presents two incompatible versions of the Khan Younis 'incident' and so in this case, as in many others,

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[56] Ibid.

history-by-document drops us into a muddied soup of ‘on the other hands’ and ‘possiblies’, seasoned perhaps, with a few ‘probabilities’” (Sacco *Footnotes* 118). The lower panel of page 119 (Fig. 115) creates a collage of close-ups of several Palestinians against a black background. The squares containing their close-ups are placed in an asymmetrical random order until they go beyond the bleed of the page. The floating faces are also symbols of memories of resistance to the overarching empiricism of ‘history-by-document’. Sacco effectively produces a collage of memories, as he graphically connects the floating faces, names, and narratives of the people he interviewed: a living testimony of the events mediated by his graphic language. This is a text that asks us to locate these into larger political contexts, both specific and general – the politics of seeing, the politics of empathic reading and the politics of resistance.

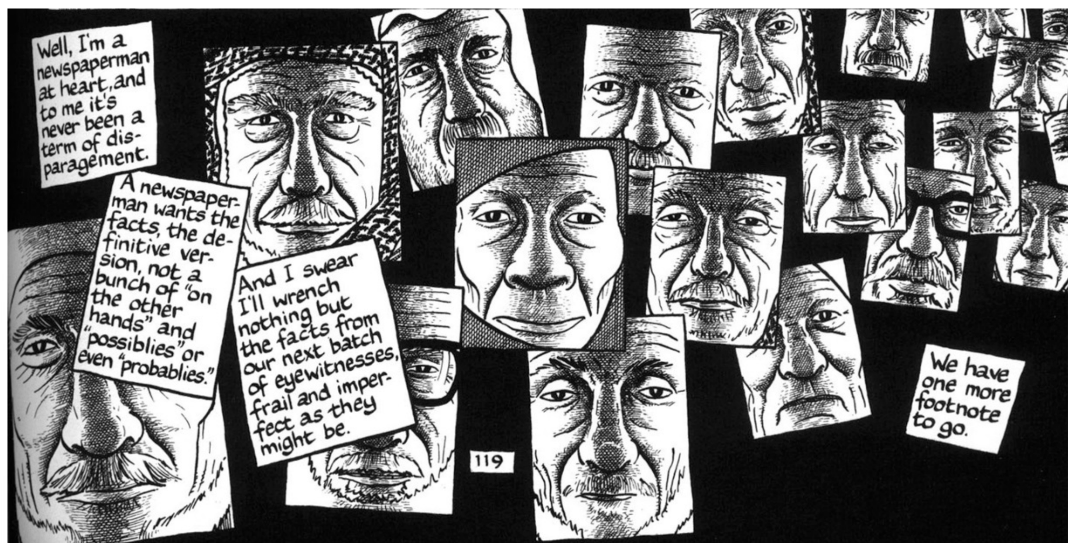

Fig. 151: *Footnotes in Gaza*, from Page 119.

A master at twisting mundane commodities into surreal objects of social significance, Ben Katchor reveals a strange aspirational world in *The Cardboard Valise* where lives are simply defined by material possessions and consumerism is regarded as a kind of spirituality. It is almost an accentuated mirror reflection of our present acquisitive society. Katchor’s comics are a powerful critique of this rampant consumer culture and the omnipotent role played by mainstream entertainment to constantly fuel it. His empathy opens up alternate spaces that generally elude the average reader. They are spaces of resistance that turn the odd minutiae of urban life into the stuff of strange, compelling and poetic narrative. Katchor pitchforks his characters in dense forests of remixed messages

comprising of nonsensical signboards, place names and non-descript shops that are slowly disappearing from memory or are non-existent in the first place. He sets them loose on directionless melancholy quests to decode the burden of sensory overload. His work is idiosyncratic, eccentric, absurd yet humane. He literally takes on the overarching capitalist enterprise with his own mundane objects. Paul Gravett sums him perfectly when he writes, "Nevertheless, he still enjoys the way his strips operate as low-level commodities, buried among classified adverts in throwaway newspapers. Each week he sets up another storefront display as he plies his trade as 'a middleman in the memory business'."[57]

The Arrival foregrounds the displacement of a decentred exile who tries to adapt to life outside the habitual order of his original home. The political relevance of his memories with respect to migrant incorporation is also reflected in the trope of nomadism[58] as outlined by Rosi Braidotti. In her influential study *Nomadic Subjects*[59], Rosi Braidotti proceeds to develop the concept of nomadic consciousness. Braidotti defines the nomad as a heterogeneous minority subject position that rests not on fixity but on mobility and contingency, and as such, is able to free the activity of critical thinking from the hold of dogmatism (Braidotti 8-31). In her words, "Though the image of 'nomadic subjects' is inspired by the experience of peoples or cultures that are literally nomadic, the nomadism in question here refers to the kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behaviour. Not all nomads are world travellers; some of the greatest trips can take place without physically moving from one's habitat" (Braidotti 5). Braidotti highlights the political agenda behind such an alternative subject figuration, asserting that it is a form of active resistance to hegemonic rule. She states that "What is political is precisely this awareness of the fractured, intrinsically power-based constitution of the subject and the active quest for possibilities of resistance to hegemonic formations"

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[57] Gravett, Paul. "Ben Katchor: A Middle man in memory Business." *www.paulgravett.com,* 31 March, 2009, http://www.paulgravett.com/articles/article/ben_katchor. Accessed 4 April 2012.
[58] Khailoya, Ladislava. "Politics of Postmodern Multiculturalism in Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*: Reconfiguring the Subject as a Nomad." *Papers, Explorations into Children's Literature*, 23.1, 2015, http://www.paperschildlit.com/pdfs/Papers_23.1_2015_1-16.pdf. Accessed 16 Dec. 2016.
[59] Braidotti, Rosi. *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. Columbia University Press, 1994.

(Braidotti 35). Specifically, through its postmodern narrative devices, *The Arrival* presents an inspiring vision of characters forming a multi-ethnic cultural milieu that paradoxically combines mobility and multiplicity. By fictionalising accounts of immigration that seem to associate them with turn-of-the century immigration waves, *The Arrival* encourages readers to radically re-imagine such immigration journeys and consequently to critically revaluate hegemonic views of migrants as intruders.

I end the thesis with the work titled "Untitled" by Frederique Rusch.[60] It literally converts Mondrian like two-dimensional primary-coloured grid into three-dimensional space. The metamorphoses foreground the central thesis regarding the depth of the panel space. It becomes the metaphor for the comics form itself. It depends on the way we choose to 'read' it, more than anything else. Either we get stuck with two dimensional structural constructs or plumb deeper to excavate spaces of resistance embedded within. The choice is ours to make.

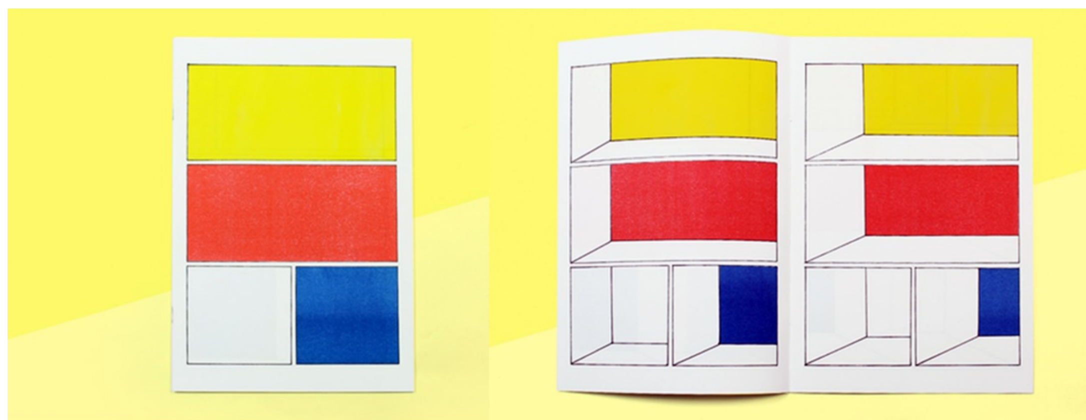

Fig. 152: Frederique Rusch's *Untitled (Comic Book)* (2013)

[60] Rusch, Frederique. *Untitled (Comic Book)*. Editions Du Livre, Hato Press, 2013.

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