

Graphic Testimonies: Voicing the Unutterable in Auto/Biographics of War

Andre van Vollenstee



UNIVERSITEIT
iYUNIVESITHI
STELLENBOSCH
UNIVERSITY

100
1918 · 2018

Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts
(English Studies) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch
University

Supervisor: Dr. M. Slabbert

March 2018

Plagiarism declaration

1. I know that using another person's ideas and pretending that they are one's own constitute plagiarism. I am aware of the potential penalties for this misdemeanour.
2. I have used the MLA system for citation and referencing. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this essay from the work, or works, of other people has been acknowledged through citation and reference in the text and bibliography.
3. This essay is my own work and is not the product of collaboration.
4. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Signature

Date

Dedications:

I would like to thank the Stellenbosch department of English Studies for their constant support and assistance throughout this Masters project. Their aid has been invaluable. The members of staff with whom I have had the pleasure to work over these past two years have offered nothing but the kindest of counsel and advice when it was needed.

I would also like to thank my supervisor, Dr Tilla Slabbert, for her patience and guidance throughout this research. Her advice, suggestions and challenges always improved the work and have helped immensely in shaping the project into what it is today. I thank her for the time and effort she has put into this work.

I also feel the need to mention those around me who have aided me in ways outside of my research. To those closest to me (and those who have tolerated many months of hearing about comics), Melissa, Trevor, Lauren, Reece and Armandt, I thank you most sincerely. It is easier to undertake such an arduous process when one has the support I have had. I shall never forget the many ways in which each of you in your own way has helped me see this research through.

Abstract

Since the early 1980s graphic narratives (novels) have developed into a nuanced and complex medium of creative expression. Experimentation with aesthetics, form and narrative content have resulted in a mode of expression that allows authors and artists to represent themselves and others multimodally on the page. These representations display a dynamic range through which fiction and non-fictional narratives can be shared in graphic form. This narrative strategy has been used by numerous artist-authors to detail auto/biographical accounts of historical events and lived experiences. With the aim of contributing to the growing field of literary and visual analysis regarding auto/biographic and fictive graphic narratives, this study examines a selection of contemporary graphic narratives from specific geo-political and socio-cultural spaces such as Israel, Iran, Lebanon, Palestine and Rwanda. The selected texts this thesis examines are *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009), *A Game for Swallows: To Die, To Leave, To Return* (2012), *Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda* (2005) and *Smile Through the Tears: A Story of the Rwandan Genocide* (2007). The aim is to demonstrate how the artist-authors relay individual (private) and communal (public) traumatic experiences in graphic form.

This thesis suggests that graphic narratives can convey and “utter” public and private trauma in unique ways through the interplay of verbal-visual media. By making use of aesthetic styles that may be culturally influenced or rendered in an evocative manner, the narratives are able to express narrative content to the reader, who then becomes witness to the trauma. The use of this medium also allows artist-authors to position marginalised and traumatised subjects at the forefront of the narrative, adding to the larger historical archive and understanding of historical events. This medium allows for the transmission of traumatic experiences and alternative perspectives to give increased comprehension of how trauma affects various subjects in an effort to reconfigure misconceptions of their suffering.

Opsomming

Sedert die vroeg-1980s ontwikkel grafiese narratiewe (romans) in 'n genuanseerde en komplekse medium vir kreatiewe vertolking. Eksperimentering met estetika, form en narratiewe inhoud het 'n uitdrukkingswyse teweeg gebring wat skrywers en kunstenaars instaat gestel het om hulself en ander multimodaal te verteenwoordig op die bladsy. Hierdie

uitbeeldings toon 'n dinamiese omvang waardeur fiktiewe en nie-fiktiewe narratiewe oorgedra kan word in 'n grafiese formaat. Hierdie vertellingsstrategie is deur talle kunstenaar-skrywers gebruik om auto/biografiese gegewens of historiese gebeure en lewenservarings te artikuleer. As 'n bydrae tot 'n groeiende veld van literêre analise, betreffende auto/biografiese en fiktiewe grafiese narratiewe, ondersoek hierdie studie 'n keur van kontemporêre grafiese narratiewe uit spesifieke geo-politiese en sosio-kulturele ruimtes soos Israel, Iran, Lebanon, Palestina en Rwanda. Die keur van tekste onder bespreking in hierdie tesis is: *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009), *A Game for Swallows: To Die, To Leave, To Return* (2012), *Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda* (2005), *Smile Through the Tears: A Story of the Rwandan Genocide* (2007). Hiermee word gedemonstreer hoe kunstenaar-skrywers die individuele (private) en gemeenskaplike (publieke) traumatise belewenisse in grafiese form verwerk.

Hierdie tesis betoog dat grafiese narratiewe publieke en private trauma op unieke wyses kan weergee en 'uiter' deur middel van die wisselwerking van die verbale-visuele medium. Deur die gebruik van estetiese style wat kultureel beïnvloed of verbeeld word op 'n suggestiewe wyse, is hierdie narratiewe instaat om vertellingsinhoud op só 'n wyse te vertolk dat die leser betrek word as 'n ooggetuie van die trauma. Die gebruik van hierdie medium laat ook skrywer-kunstenaars toe om gemarginaliseerde en getraumatiseerde subjekte op die voorfront van die narratief te posisioneer, en sodoende by te dra tot die breër historiese argief en nuwe insigte oor historiese gebeurtenisse te bewerkstellig. Hierdie medium, soos gebruik deur mans so wel as vroue, vermoontlik die oordra van traumatiese ervarings en alternatiewe perspektiewe om sodoende 'n verskerpte begrip te verleen aan hoe trauma verskeie subjekte affekteer, met die oog op die ontdaanmaking van wanpersepsies rakende hul lyding.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction	8
1: Rational	9
2: Theoretical Framework	10
2.1: Testimony, Trauma and Memory	11
2.2: History of “Image Texts” and Interpretative Approaches	17
3: Chapter Outline	22
Chapter Two: Abrupt and Enduring Trauma in Joe Sacco’s Biographic Reportage, <i>Footnotes in Gaza</i>.	24
1: Theoretical Framework and Outline	28
2: Snapshots of Violence: Graphic depictions of wartime trauma	31
3: (Re)presenting History: Recounting Chronic and Punctual Traumas	41
3.1 Challenging Dominant Media’s Representations of Conflict and Trauma	41
3.2 The Case of Khan Younis	46
3.3 The Case of Rafah	52
Chapter Three: Mapping Female Childhood Trauma in <i>A Game for Swallows</i>	58
1: Theoretical Outline	59
2: Illustrating the Self: Depictions of Childhood Identities	63
3: “Boxes of Grief”: Mapping Trauma and Traumatic Spaces	70
3.1 Public Space	71
3.2 Private Space	78
Chapter Four: ‘Acting Out’ and ‘Working Through’ Wartime Trauma in Two Graphic Novels about the 1994 Rwandan Genocide	84
1: Theoretical Framework and Chapter Outline	86
2: Capturing Essence: Titles as Symbolism	92
3: Representing Historical Consciousness and Mythologization	97
4: Representing of Violence and Trauma	103
Chapter Five: Conclusion	115

Bibliography.....	121
--------------------------	------------

Chapter One

Introduction

“[T]he graphic novel, has an ideal form for representing trauma...”

Brandy Ball Blake, “*Watchmen: The Graphic Novel as Trauma Fiction.*”

This thesis seeks to examine a selection of contemporary graphic narratives, a form that evolved from the original comic or comic strip, and one that has become increasingly complex in the presentation of aesthetics and narrative content. Graphic narratives allow for the nuanced storytelling of intricate and complex subject matter in image and text. I focus on (auto)biographics and (one) fictional biographic text¹ set in the geo-political and socio-cultural contexts of specific locations in the Middle-East and Africa – particularly, Israel, Iran, Lebanon, Palestine and Rwanda. The aim of my study is to demonstrate how artist-authors conceptually construct the politics of private and communal trauma in graphic narratives.

For the examination of the chosen accounts that display the intricacies and blurring of public and private traumas, I have selected the following primary texts: Joe Sacco’s *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009), a biographic reportage based on interviews with subjects who witnessed the massacres which took place in Khan Younis and Rafah, two towns along the Gaza strip in 1956. Sacco’s biographic reportage demonstrates an outsider’s attempt to call attention to the lives and traumatic (ongoing) suffering of Palestinian subjects in graphic documentation. Zeina Abirached’s *A Game for Swallows: To Die, To Leave, To Return* (2012) is her autobiographical account of a single day of her childhood at the time of the Lebanese Civil War in Beirut (1975-1990). Her self-representation gives an account of the traumatic experiences of a non-combatant female child. Jean-Philippe Stassen’s *Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda* (2006), is a fictional biographic of a Hutu teenage boy set before, during and after the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Like Sacco, Stassen is an outsider who narrates the suffering of subjects in a specific context (Hutu/Rwandan) through journalistic reportage. Furthermore, like Abirached’s narrative, it is primarily about a child’s experiences, only in this case, it is a male child who is forced to witness combat and violence. Rupert Bazambanza’s *Smile Through the Tears: A Story of the Rwandan Genocide* (2009) is a biography that recounts the story of Bazambanza’s neighbours, the Rwangas, fellow Tutsis who were all killed during the genocide except for Rose, the mother. His work also contains elements of autobiography as he is a Tutsi who

¹ My study will further elaborate on the nature of Jean Philippe Stassen’s fictional biographic, and why it may be referred to as such in the Fourth Chapter of this thesis.

survived the massacre in 1994. Where relevant in my chapters, I make use of referential texts such as Kenji Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen* (2004) and Ari Folman's *Waltz with Bashir* (2009), in Chapter Two, and Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (2007), in Chapter Three, to assist my interpretation of primary graphics through the comparison and contrast of aesthetic features. All of the narratives, with the exception of Folman's, are written and illustrated by the authors.

1. Rationale

This project was inspired by work done during my Honours research. In that project, I examined childhood traumas, silence and their vocalisation through the textual format of the epistolary medium of letter writing, this being one of the modes through which trauma is illustrated. This work fostered in me a curiosity about how other modes of literature would work to represent trauma, something which has physiological and psychological effects on the subject and yet resists easy comprehension and articulation. The combined focus on trauma and graphic narratives further developed my own passion for this creative medium. For quite some time I have enjoyed the vibrant and multifaceted way in which authors and artists use graphics to combine two modes of communication: written language and pictorial symbols (images). Therefore, this project was established out of a need to examine how traumas, causes and effects are expressed through a multifaceted construct which demands the reader's participation for the meaning of the narrative to unfold on the page. In seeking a style of life writing which enables the creator (author) to establish themselves in multiple senses affected by the complications of trauma and allows the witness (reader) of their narrative some comprehension of this complexity, I offer graphic narratives.

While my selection of texts is only a representative sample of the many graphic narratives that recount traumatic experiences, I chose these because, in my opinion, each offers a unique form of illustration and narration to represent trauma. Thus, they offer examples of auto/bio and fictive biographic narrations of victim/perpetrator and male/female childhood experiences. My final reason for choosing the texts is personal, as the varied aesthetic qualities and forms of narration engage me as a reader. My aim is to bring these texts, which deal with traumatised identities, into conversation with one another to demonstrate how public and private traumas are expressed in graphic narratives to draw attention to oppressive histories and their aftermaths, across time and space. I group the texts in each Chapter according to their shared thematic or geopolitical content/contexts and seek to present a study of how trauma is responded to, narrated and understood in numerous ways.

2. Theoretical Framework

The study of these texts, and my argument throughout, is guided by theories and relevant criticism from the disciplines of Visual and Literary Studies, especially approaches discussed in the fields of Trauma, Life Writing, Gender and Postcolonial Studies, as well as Narrative Theory. In analysing the representation of trauma, my thoughts are aided by the ideas of, for example, Dori Laub, Cathy Caruth, Judith Butler and Dominick LaCapra. To this, Richard McNally, Greg Forter and Kia Erikson add valuable insights. I will shortly elaborate fully on the relevant concepts and approaches I draw on in the body of this thesis.

For my analysis of the aesthetics of each text through the lens of Visual Studies, I make use of interpretive approaches suggested by graphic narrative theorists such as Scott McCloud, Charles Hatfield, Roger Sabin, and Paul Gravett. In addition, I refer to criticism by Rocco Versaci, Michael Chaney, Hillary Chute, Barbra Postema, Sidonie Smith, Julia Watson, and Gillian Whitlock. This scholarship informs my analysis of panel structures, illustrations, compositions, specific stylistic choices and exploration of each artist/author, as well as my use of visual strategies which allow an understanding of the nuances of graphic form through which the narratives of trauma are communicated (I elaborate below).

To interpret the dialogic between visual and written elements in the graphics, Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope, especially the motif of the road, found within literary works, assists in the projects' examination and comprehension of how time and space unfold and are created/represented in each graphic narrative. From the plethora of postcolonial theories, I draw in particular on Edward Said's arguments presented in *Orientalism* (1978) to examine how the chosen texts, set in the Middle East and Africa, serve as counter-narratives to mainstream, stereotypical Western depictions of Arab, Muslim and Rwandan identities. On the topic of stereotypical narratives about the Orient, Said suggests that "a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people [and] customs" (2-3). Said's thoughts critique the way the West, as a body of power, thought and policy, used Oriental spaces and subjects to contrast perceived Occidental culture against an exoticized and foreign other. To contest this material written by the West, I suggest that each text offers depictions of Middle-Eastern and African subjects that speak to and challenge Western forms of comprehension and representation. I

hasten to add that, although *Deogratias* is written by a Belgian citizen, the text focuses its critique on the Western colonial impact and the chronic effects of hegemonic ideologies such as colonialism from an insider-outsider perspective: a subject which has to come to terms with its own national (perpetrator) history and the inherited trauma of national shame (see Chapter Four).

In addition to Said's work, my interpretation is influenced by Stef Craps and her arguments in *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (2013). Craps disputes Western paradigms as being the only manner in which trauma is to be understood. She suggests that "traumatic colonial histories not only have to be acknowledged more fully, on their own terms, and in their own terms, but they also have to be considered in relation to traumatic metropolitan or First World Histories" (6). Her work is especially valuable to my reading of the two Rwandan texts, as I examine how each represents the nation's colonial past and the many influences which led to the violence that erupted in 1994. I examine the implications of types of violence and trauma, their causes and effects, while also discussing alternative viewpoints and representations of often externally represented spaces and cultures.

The various theoretical fields used throughout my analysis demonstrate how each of the graphic texts from differing locations characterise and display the causes and effects of public (national) and private (familial) trauma, and the difficulty of their comprehension and representability. Before I elaborate in greater detail on specific approaches to Visual and Literary Studies, which guide my reading of the narratives, I shall expand on the thinkers who inform my exploration of trauma.

2.1. Testimony, Trauma and Memory

Trauma and memory are indivisible concepts. According to life writing critics, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, "Stories of traumatic experiences focus on the narrator's reliving of a past event and emphasise a gap that cannot be closed between the narrative present and the narrated past" (283). To better understand how this gap is created by trauma, and represented in the selected texts, I will refer to Caruth's and Butler's views on how trauma operates as "unknowable", "untterable" or "unspeakable".

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson note that incorporating trauma into memory is not without its problematics. While the two cannot be separated, understanding what occurs to a victim's body and mind (and how this is remembered) is crucial to making sense of traumatic events. Caruth, in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), asserts that to make sense

of trauma it must be spoken and narrated, so that narrating trauma links itself to literary expression. Trauma, as a term, typically refers to a wound of the body – something which was inflicted upon the human body and left it damaged or scarred. In developing her arguments about traumatic memory, Caruth refers to Sigmund Freud's theorisation of the topic, especially his thoughts on how trauma must be understood as a wound "upon the mind" (3) of the subject and not merely physical harm. She elaborates, the wound is "the breach in mind's experience of time, self and the world – is not like a wound of the body, a single healable event [...] but is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to the consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly in nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (3-4). It was, and is, this shift in thinking which demonstrates a focus on the cognitive implications of traumatic instances and how they are experienced, remembered, and communicated in a variety of forms such as the creative expressions I examine.

Erikson offers thoughts towards this definition stating, "it is the *damage done* that defines and gives shape to the initial event, the *damage done* that gives it its name" (184; emphasis in original). This assertion provides an understanding that trauma is not the event itself, but instead what results from the event. Historical events, such as the ones represented in each of the selected texts (civil war, genocide etc.), can only be defined as traumatic due to their effects on the individual, physiologically and psychologically. Erikson refers to Caruth's theoretical thoughts in his work, which creates a platform for my intended analysis of how each author-artist chooses to depict remembered pasts, and the implications of what is and is not displayed. Laub and Caruth suggest that traumatic instances fall outside of understood chronological time and thus are only known and made aware of the subject after the event has occurred. I explore how these ideas manifest in each text in their illustration of immediate or repeated moments of trauma: how trauma is depicted in relation to individual subjectivity and communal subjectivities.

It is the notion of relationality that returns me to Smith and Watson's definition and discussion in *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Writing* (2001). As a form of autobiographic writing, they suggest that it is "the multiple modes of employment through which the narrating 'I' entwines a personal story with the stories of others, both individuals and collectives" (73). Their thoughts provide an avenue for my interpretation of the texts that accounts for how the narrator of the text conveys his/her narrative, as well as the narratives of those they interact with. In this way, multiple lives and accounts become entangled. This view of lives and their relation to others recalls Butler and her thoughts on mourning and violence

as discussed in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004). Butler states that, “[t]o be injured means that one has the chance to reflect upon the injury, to find out the mechanisms of its distribution, to find out who else suffers from permeable borders, unexpected violence, dispossession, and fear, and in what ways” (xii). Each of the texts in this thesis, except for *Deogratias* which represents accounts fictively, offers a reflection upon the countless real narratives of violence inflicted onto various subjects and/or on the author/narrator’s subjectivity. In addition to this, I suggest that texts such as *Footnotes in Gaza* and *Smile Through the Tears* offer personalised accounts of trauma and are educational, in that they inform, in a specific medium, readers about hostile histories of dispossession and different forms of ideological control that have been neglected in the official documentation.

In my view, all the texts seem to reflect Butler’s argument that, “it is possible to see how dominant forms of representation can and must be disrupted for something about the precariousness of life to be apprehended” (xviii). These accounts demonstrate arresting ways of depicting trauma in their emphasis on visuals and language to disrupt a concentration on either mode without the other.

In *Writing History Writing Trauma* (2014) Dominik LaCapra defines and discusses two concepts relevant to the process of dealing with trauma, namely “acting out” and “working through”. Drawing on the framework of Sigmund Freud, and especially Walter Benjamin, LaCapra engages with the concepts of *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. For LaCapra, “[t]rauma and its post-traumatic actions relive, or reenact modes of *Erlebnis* (‘experience’) that is often radically disorienting and chaotic”, while “[w]orking through is a mode of *Erfahrung*” (*Writing History* 22), a manner through which trauma is communicated and processed. According to his thinking, these modes of mediating trauma can either heal the subject or result in further pain.

These two responses to traumatic instances exhibit the struggle survivors undergo and the fact that one needs to develop methods of critical evaluation and distance to understand what occurred. “Acting out” represents in part the survivor’s inability to escape past hauntings. Traumatic events may repeatedly resurface in the victim’s psyche, through visions and in nightmares, and can lead to compulsive actions over which the survivor has no control. The subject, in this instance, lives as though the past is still very much the present. For such a subject there is no critical distance because the effects seem still so current and devastating.

In LaCapra’s terms, “working through” is understood as the victim taking hold of the past experience, rather than being repeatedly haunted by it without control, and thereby gaining a

critical distance from it. This detachment from the immediacy of the moment of trauma affords the survivor an opportunity to understand what happened in the past, and to know that it is in fact no longer in their present. While the survivors of the trauma are not fully removed from it as it has still occurred and will leave different types of physical or psychological scarring, they can begin to process what took place at the time of traumatisation and reflect on it. This reaction offers the subjects agency as they develop an understanding of something that previously was out of their control and unknown to them. LaCapra notes that “[a]cting-out and working-through, in this sense, are a distinction, in that one may never be totally separate from the other, and the two may always be implicated in each other” (*Interview* 6). Thus, while the two reactions to trauma seem opposing, they are in fact inextricably linked and are useful for interpreting how trauma is processed by survivors, and can also be used in creative expression.

My analysis of the representation of trauma is further assisted by the work of Greg Forter and Erikson (whom I have mentioned). In “Freud, Faulkner, Caruth: Trauma and the Politics of Literary Form” (2007) Forter writes about moments of magnitude and devastation which result in trauma, rather than insidious or chronic traumas, describing them as punctual traumas. He explains punctual traumas as “historical events of such singularity, magnitude, and horror that they can be read as shocks that disable the psychic system” (259). Forter speaks of moments of colossal violence or destruction, such as the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki or genocidal events which leave subjects involved, survivors of the events, severely traumatised and psychically scarred.

Erikson offers an equally helpful understanding of trauma as consisting of multiple moments and events rather than one specific occurrence. He notes that trauma “has to be understood as resulting from a *constellation of life experiences* as well as from discrete happenings, from *persisting condition* as well as from an acute event” (185; emphasis in original). Such conceptualisation aids my reading of the selected texts, as each explores singular violent instances, as well as chronic traumas which the subjects must endure daily. While it is possible for trauma to result from one sudden instance of violence or shock, Erikson suggests that trauma can also be understood as gradual, developing over the course of many smaller instances which results in chronic traumatisation. I aim to demonstrate in each chapter how gradual (chronic) and punctual (acute) trauma feature and are represented in the chosen graphic narratives.

When engaging with the complexities of representing trauma, as I have mentioned, it is crucial to remember that the accounts survivors voice (regardless of medium or form) draw on memory. In reading “autobiographic memory”, I make use of Richard McNally’s ideas (35). He suggests that experiencing numerous events of a similar kind bears implications on how those events are recalled. McNally defines this process as “repisodic memory” or “a memory constructed from repeated episodes of the same type. The more episodes of a certain type we experience, the harder it becomes to distinguish them” (36). Memories of events become clouded by the repetitive nature of the violence, threat or circumstances survivors experience.

Autobiographic memory, for McNally, is not simply direct recollection. The events are never remembered in the way a subject experienced them. Instead it functions to represent what occurred from random details the mind can recall. Although survivors of traumatic events may struggle to recall exact details, as McNally notes, “[they] will never forget what it was like to be subjected to such violence” (36). Therefore, although what is remembered is subject to questioning and scrutiny, it is in fact the human mind at work which does not recollect events perfectly. Instead the mind, of the subject/narrator/author, as the texts demonstrate, offers a representation of what such violence looked and felt like when recalled. Thus, such memory displays the damaging effects of trauma on the cognitive functions of survivors. It also demonstrates, crucially perhaps, that accounts of trauma need to be and can only be represented, but the weight of what is shared does not lose its value due to its lack of exactitude. In the analytical chapters of this thesis, I will recall and elaborate on trauma concepts identified and discussed here, while I engage with additional criticism relevant to each chapter.

Narrating trauma can be interpreted as an act of giving testimony, “an act of testifying or bearing witness legally or religiously” to “a significant life experience” (Smith and Watson 282). To testify requires recollection (memory) and such recollection can be presented in different modes of narration. Crucial to this process is the presence of a listener (reader and/or viewer). Trauma theorist and historian Dori Laub in *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992), co-authored with Shoshana Felman, suggests that during the event of giving testimony to a traumatic experience, “[t]he listener [...] is a party to the creation of knowledge” (57). Turning away from the judicial dimensions of testifying, I concentrate on creative acts of testifying and the role of the reader-viewer-listener. In this respect, creative testimonies can take on many forms and genres, such as fiction (life writing, autobiography, biography, memoir, etc.) and fiction (the novel, novella, short story etc.) My concern here is with “spoken” testimony in written and visual form, merged in the

medium of graphic (life) narratives. In my view, the selected graphic texts work to provide testimonies or “bear witness” to private/individual and public/communal trauma. The function of illustrating these testimonies is to “claim agency” (Smith and Watson 282) through the narration. In giving testimony, the author-artist of graphic narratives makes use of a medium which requires reader (listener) participation to develop the interpretation of the narrative and in this way the reader functions as co-creator of the knowledge of their accounts. The texts, with the exception of *Deogratias*, detail specific and personalised accounts of trauma. I have chosen Sacco’s work, for example, because he reproduces interviewed testimonies, of varying traumatic experiences, voiced by many subjects, which profoundly affected the life of each of the interviewees and related groups. Regardless of form and style, these texts provide a platform through which traumatic testimony can be narrated.

Laub states that, “[w]hile historical evidence to the event which constitutes the trauma may be abundant and documents in vast supply, the trauma – as a known event and not simply as an overwhelming shock – has not been truly witnessed yet, not been taken cognisance of” (57). The narratives presented in the chosen graphic novels demonstrate private accounts which have not been captured or taken notice of, for example, in media coverage of these particular historical events. I am interested in how the artists-authors create and depict traumas, whether chronic or instantaneous, as Erikson notes in “Notes on Trauma and Community” (1995), to provide the reader (their witness) with personalised knowledge of traumatic instances and their often-debilitating effects. Further I examine how the use of a fragmentary mode of writing (graphic panels) allows for a representation of events which have occurred in the past, and yet remain too real for the sufferer in the present to bring order to the chaos of traumatic memory in creative form.

It is understood that “[t]he traumatic event, although real, took place outside the parameters of ‘normal’ reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time. The trauma is thus an event which has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after” (Laub 69). Thus, traumatic events exist as moments that are problematic to comprehend and represent. I suggest that graphic narratives, as for example a mode of life writing, offer a medium through which these authors can illustrate themes and memories in multiple temporal sequences. Memory Studies scholars tell us that memory is treacherous, fallible and events are not often recalled in a linear fashion. Similarly, the artists-authors of the selected texts use their narratives to demonstrate the way time and memories overlap, disperse and converge again to recount traumatic pasts. These depictions join and disjoin recollections of events, places and times, often on the same

page or in one panel, to tell the stories of suffering. I intend, therefore, to demonstrate how artists-authors bear witness to complex past atrocities while conveying a comprehension of the fragmented nature of traumatic memory.

2.2 History of “Image Texts” and Interpretative Approaches

Since its establishment as a field of literary studies in the 1980s, graphic narratives have become more popular and more widely produced, marketed and consumed. However, it seems this mode of literary expression still struggles to be considered a reputable form of writing, worthy of study, in some literary departments. Since the creation of the comic, and the comic strip which evolved from this medium, it has always been a popular tool for mass dissemination of information and a mode of narration which operates not only within the *zeitgeist*, but also communicates with readers/viewers across multiple age-groups across numerous genres.

The use of a mode of “writing”, such as graphic narratives, which is itself inherently made up of fragmented pieces which aid in making a whole, can itself be linked to the various traumas that each selected text works to represent. Traumatic memories, like graphic narratives, are often fragmented, broken into pieces so to speak, which the survivor must continually encounter, be haunted by, and form into a shape to recreate that memory. As a medium of literature, it offers a unique mimicry of trauma, as panels are broken pieces placed in sequence on the single page, like the mind, from which order and unity are seemingly constructed. However, as I have noted, making meaning of such a graphic construction entails the artist-writer (testifying/confessing), the text (a testimony) and the reader/viewer (the listener/witness).

Given my chosen medium, I feel compelled to first elaborate on the history and formal features of the graphic narratives that guide my examination, which develops in each chapter from selected panels, before I continue to discuss approaches that enable my visual and literary interpretation. According to Roger Sabin in *Adult Comics: An Introduction* (1993), graphic novels or comics as a mode of artistic expression first appeared in nineteenth-century Britain with the introduction of printing mechanisms such as lithographs and broadsheets (13). From their early distribution, comics became a crucial medium through which to disseminate information to the masses. They were aimed not at those literate figures of the higher classes, but instead at members of the middle and lower class. Sabin notes that “comics were orientated not solely towards children, but had a mixed market in mind, with white-collar, male adults as

their main target of readership” (13). Comics offered a means of communication which “spoke” to the average citizen.

Debates surrounding the origins of comics are varied, but sources hold that religious stained-glass windows (from the Judeo-Christian tradition in particular) and other forms of religious iconography can be regarded as the precursors of this expressive medium. According to Ariane Janse van Rensburg, church windows, for example, used bright colours and symbolic pictorials to communicate scriptures to the illiterate. These depictions were an “attempt at visual mediation between the Latin scriptural narrative and a largely illiterate laity” (1). However, what is crucial about this medium is that it “reflect[ed] the church and the artist’s interpretation of scripture” (1) and in this way guided the viewer’s perception and interpretation of the message conveyed in the window. Just like modern comics, these images were representational and functional in their educational value. By placing specific images in relation to one another, and in a specific order, meaning was created and narrative progress suggested.

While many early comics, published in newspapers for example, were satirical in nature, they also operated to share information about political events and thus to inform the public. Over time comics developed in complexity and length to become graphic novels, the first of their kind being Will Eisner’s *A Contract with God* (1978).² In this text, Eisner experiments with the form to produce a narrative the length of a novel. Since then, the field of graphic narratives (novels) has grown exponentially – in both form and genre.

Graphic auto/biographies or novels, also referred to as “image texts” (Adams 35) or “auto[bio]graphics” (Whitlock 966), function as a dual emphasis on words and images, creating a space in which both systems are juxtaposed and operate in unison to communicate the significance of their narrative content. Sabin refers to the communicative power of graphic novels as “the marriage of text and image” (9) based on their ability to utilise dual mediums to announce significant meaning for the reader. Within this genre of image and texts, the “words in the balloons [are] *drawn*, and each page [has] an architecture of its own” (Chaney 14; emphasis in original). The very words themselves become images with which the reader/viewer of these narratives must engage and negotiate, alongside the “pictorial icons” (McCloud 28), to fully comprehend the meaning of what is being conveyed.

² In *Reinventing Comics* (2000) McCloud notes that although Eisner’s text was a collection of four smaller narratives, it can be termed a graphic novel.

This combination of image and text is what solicits the reader's participation for meaning to be made. Hatfield notes that "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" (xiv). It is this multiplicity of options for both illustration and interpretation which makes graphic narratives such a unique mode of creative expression. It is the reader who develops what McCloud calls "closure" (63) between panels on the page. McCloud's seminal text, *Understanding Comics* (1993), which provides an in-depth study of comic techniques while simultaneously providing a demonstration of these techniques, suggests that the reader sees the fragmented parts, the panels, on the page which make up the narrative and, through the process of closure, adds time, movement and speech to still panels, as they perceive the whole. The reader interacts with the individual symbols and coded pictorials on the page and in turn plays a part in creating the narrative. These techniques of graphic narrative writing/illustration and reading constitute a participatory event.

Auto/biographical and fictive graphic narratives, such as the texts selected for this study, are also mediated through an "Icon" narrator. This speaker functions to guide the reader/viewer throughout the story to provide the reader with a way to vicariously "live" through the narrative and images represented on the page. According to Chaney, first person "Icon" narrators "often create a retrospective temporality by making comments from an assumed present about the visualised past" (24). This function of the "Icon" narrator is interlinked with the style of illustration that depicts the narrator. The style in which the "Icon" narrator is rendered is representative of specific ideas or groups to which they are linked. An example of this is how Abirached, in *A Game for Swallows*, illustrates her young "Icon" narrator using a culturally and geographically significant style to aid her representation of a larger cultural group. Thus, the abstracted narrator becomes representative of others. The narrators of the text allow the reader/viewer to associate themselves with someone in the narrative through their abstraction. This entangled technique of graphic narrative is known as "amplification through simplification" (McCloud 30), which means that the characters are drawn in a way that allows them to be stripped down from photorealistic depictions so that the author/illustrator can focus on the most specific details of the abstracted image.

It is this technique that captures the attention of the reader/viewer³. While the assertion can be made that this abstraction could obscure meaning, the images and depictions, because of their

³ Henceforth I shall refer to either the reader or the viewer in relation to the graphic narratives I analyse.

amplification, still retain their overall essential “meaning”. It is through this method of moving away from direct and “realistic” representations of characters or images that the illustrator “ampli[fies] meaning” (McCloud 30). Iconic abstraction allows the lines and images of the drawn “pictorial icon”, which includes words as the furthestmost form of abstraction (because words, too, are images), to convey a view of the social and personal narrative from a distance. It is, therefore, the dual emphasis, not found in other forms of literature, that makes the narrative structure and representation of trauma so crucial to the genre, as these texts demand emphasised and alternative understanding.

Through this medium, which fractures time and narrative illustration, each artist/author represents their narrative to readers. These accounts of trauma are told in the present and yet represent the past which is known only through fragmented recollections. Therefore, what is significant is how the graphics negotiate time and space.

Thus, understanding how time and space unfold in this mode of writing influences my study of each text. It is here, as I have mentioned, that Bakhtin’s work proved essentially helpful to my reading, notably his views on the literary chronotope. Although the origins of the concept are found in physics and theoretical science, Bakhtin appropriates them to describe how time and space unfold and become visible on the page, and through literary writing.

According to Bakhtin, the chronotope, meaning literally “time-space”, is “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (84). This literary chronotope, as it is called, expresses how time, progression and space develop through writing. Bakhtin notes that in “the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole” (84). Literary writing, therefore, displays time and space, represented on the page and through the progression of the narrative being told. Although there are three types of chronotopes found in literature, it is the chronotope of the road, which defines development or metamorphosis, which best assist my reading of the various graphics. This chronotope is discussed by Bakhtin as displaying how human development is shown through literary narrative. He asserts that all narratives contain the chronotope of the road in some manner, and therefore display a progression of development. This journey of the road and transformation represent “every-day life” (Bakhtin 120) and show how the subject develops.

The events, which take place in a specific space mark the transformation of the subject over a period. These transformations in narration illustrate “*how an individual becomes other than*

what he was” (Bakhtin 115; emphasis in the original). The representation of time and space becomes crucial in signifying how a character develops and is shaped by the events of their life, here specifically the traumatic events. Bakhtin’s notion, although discussed with reference to literary texts, is particularly useful in my study of graphic narratives, as they are able, as hybrid (visual and verbal), to illustrate time and space – often displaying the same figure in multiple temporalities on a singular page.

Graphic narratives, and for this study accounts of trauma, work to exhibit memories of the past which are found in the present. Left physically and psychologically scarred, the artist/authors seek to depict how the past remains in the present, as they represent multiple, layered temporal and spatial settings in their graphic narratives to demonstrate their own transformation by accounts that recall traumatic instances such as war, ethnic violence, hegemonic power structures and other different forms of subjugation (such as gender, race, ethnic, and religious discrimination). What is shared then, through the literary chronotope, is how the subject(s) became traumatised, when, where and how it occurred and is communicated in graphic form.

Along with representing narrative accounts of trauma, each text studied also demonstrates the use of the graphic narrative medium to challenge dominant and preconceived thoughts on the spaces and cultures they represent. Said’s concept of “Orientalism” functioned to challenge the stereotypical ways in which the other, and the “exoticised” East or Oriental and “dark” Africa had become known and was framed in representations of and by dominant Western and European powers and modes of thinking. Said states that “Orientalism can be discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views on it, describing it, teaching it, settling it, ruling over it” (3). The challenge offered by his theory was towards these methods of control and power which functioned to dominate and manipulate the image of the orient and its people through Western language, law and narrative. The selected texts function to re-present the spaces and lives that had been “exoticised” through representation by offering personal accounts as counter-narratives.

This challenge to Western modes of cultural production about the Orient is noted by others, who suggest that his work served to “illustrate the manner in which the representation of Europe’s “others” has been institutionalised since at least the eighteenth century as a feature of cultural dominance” (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 47). The graphic narratives I analyse offer critiques and views on the effects of colonialism, Western dominated news coverage and the

manner in which cultural groups such as Muslims, Arabs and Iranians are depicted and understood. They also examine the involvement of Western and European nations in ethnic violence, whether preventing or inciting it. These texts question the supremacy of Western and Middle-Eastern nations and those they other. In fact, they offer up profoundly (personal) counter-narratives to the dominant discourse on specific socio-cultural spaces.

Said's theorisation challenges how knowledge and power defined how certain subjects were to be known and understood. This is reflected in the graphic narratives I study, as each challenges conventions of assumed knowledge by narrating deeply personal and communal narratives of trauma and violence which lie outside the realms of common knowledge. These accounts present the effects of external influence and "reverse the 'gaze' of the discourse" (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 52), focusing instead on detailed narratives of how subjects are profoundly affected by them.

3. Chapter Outline

Following this main introduction, I move to my interpretation of graphic texts. The Second Chapter of this thesis marks the examination of graphic narrative texts that represent personal and public trauma in a biographical reportage form, Joe Sacco's *Footnotes in Gaza*. Although the focus of this chapter is on Sacco's text, I scaffold my analysis using two foundational autographics,⁴ Kenji Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen* and Ari Folman's *Waltz with Bashir*. The latter two have been widely studied, and provide useful thoughts for my reading in this Chapter that is framed through the lens of masculine recollections of trauma. The work of Nakazawa and Folman provide accounts of World War II events such as the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima and the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), affording a platform from which I can interpret Sacco's portrayal of the slaughter of Palestinian men, women and children at the hands of Israeli soldiers in two separate incidents in the towns of Khan Younis and Rafah in 1956.

As in the case of each of my Chapters, the focus on particular text(s) in each is guided by thematic content and how it narrates traumatic experiences in specific geo-political contexts. In this Chapter, however, I examine narratives written, illustrated and accounted for by men (the interviewees). I consider individual and collective accounts by men affected by wartime

⁴ Gillian Whitlock in "Autographics: The Seeing 'I' of the Comics" (2006) notes that autographics "draw attention to the specific conjunctions of visual and verbal text in this genre of autobiography, and also to the subject positions that narrators negotiate in and through comics" (966).

conditions because it is mostly men who are actively involved in warfare, whether by enlistment, conscription or because they can be identified as combatants of military age.

Chapter Three chapter builds on the work of the previous Chapters and moves to introduce a woman's (childhood) perspective of traumatic experiences in a conflict context. The primary text I explore in this chapter is Zeina Abirached's *A Game for Swallows: To Die, to Leave, to Return*. In relation to her text, I briefly mention Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (2007), which has been the focus of numerous studies, to suggest a link between the two authors' illustrative style. However, my analysis is focused on Abirached's autographic. My aim in this Chapter is to examine how Abirached uses various types of mapping (topographical and architectural) to recollect and depict her childhood trauma. Such creative conceptualisation allows her to demonstrate how public (city streets, buildings) and private spaces (homes) were affected during the time of the Civil War, and to show how trauma stemmed from it. I suggest that this mapping of her childhood trauma allows Abirached to reclaim a past that was not fully remembered as a child and this recollection challenges the erasure of the effects of the Civil War.

In my Fourth Chapter, I turn to two texts about the Rwandan genocide, Jean-Phillippe Stassen's *Deogratias* and Rubert Bazambanza's *Smile through the Tears*. Each text offers an alternative representation, from a Hutu or a Tutsi perspective, of the genocidal event, its preceding history and the aftermath. *Deogratias* is told from the perspective of a Hutu boy, and *Smile Through the Tears* narrates the journey of a Tutsi family's failed attempt for safety, leaving a sole survivor, their mother, Rose Rwanga. My contrasting and comparative analysis explores similarities and differences in the way Rwandan history is represented, shared and understood. I also examine the titles of the two texts and how they enlighten the reader about events within the narratives by symbolically foreshadowing elements, and calling attention to motifs that develop throughout. Furthermore, I am interested in how each text uses different perspectives (characters/subjects) to examine the violence of trauma induced by the genocide. I specifically focus on how each text aesthetically depicts acts of violence that occurred during the genocide, and how the traumatic effects of such brutality are conveyed without sensationalising the violence.

In the Fifth Chapter, I conclude and summarise the findings of my study. I demonstrate how my interpretation offers additional insight into the representation of trauma in graphic form. I now proceed with my analysis.

Chapter Two

Abrupt and Enduring Trauma in Joe Sacco's Biographic Reportage: *Footnotes in Gaza*.

Introduction

In this Chapter, I begin the project's examination of representations of personal and collective trauma in graphic or "image text" narratives (Huyssen in Adams 35), with a primary focus on Joe Sacco's biographic reportage of place and trauma, *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009). As a preamble to my focus on Sacco, in the first section of this Chapter, I discuss specific stylistic and thematic features of two graphic narratives of wartime events by male artists, considering how these features inform my reading of Sacco's work. These additional texts are Kenji Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen* (1980) and Ari Folman's *Waltz with Bashir* (2009).⁵ From this I move on in the second section to explore modes of narration and the use of aesthetic devices in Sacco's text. All three narratives represent public and private traumas in the context of war, and their aftermath. The aim is to discuss how war or related forms of armed conflict and social oppression, such as religious or ethnic discrimination, segregation, or violent catastrophe are narrated in Sacco's work set in Palestine. In addition to approaches from trauma studies, I draw, as I have explained in the main introduction, on the work of Bakhtin, especially on his notion of the chronotopes of war and the road (which is to say development of the subject) which explores how historic and traumatic events are represented in graphic narrative. These motifs also allow an interpretation that considers how time and space unfold in writing and pictorials (Bakhtin *Dialogic Imagination*). The texts under examination in this Chapter (from Middle and Far East contexts) also seem to demonstrate a challenge to primarily Western interpretations of particular historical events that feature thematically in the graphics and explore how the artists-authors offer, in Saidian terms, counter-narratives to Orientalist patterns in mainstream graphic narratives.

Sacco's text can be classified as biographical reportage, as the narration presented is voiced in part by Sacco, and by interviewees, as he depicts (illustrates) their accounts. The referential texts seem to blur the boundary between autobiography and biography, as I will show. I re-emphasise, as explained in Chapter One, that my rationale for the grouping of texts in this thesis is guided by the narrative and thematic content that explore traumatic experiences in

⁵ It is important to note that Folman's text, *Waltz with Bashir*, was released first as a "feature length animated film" (Viljoen 40) in 2008 and then as a graphic novel in 2009, entitled *Waltz with Bashir: A Lebanon War Story*.

specific geo-political locations and in relation to specific historical conflicts. The demarcation according to gender, in this Chapter and in Chapter Three, is purely coincidental. In this Chapter, the texts I discuss are by male writers and artists, mostly framed from the perspective of a male child or male soldier, a male victim and/or perpetrator, and male reporter. This, however, does not mean that the contents and contexts that deal with female experiences are ignored or deliberately overlooked, but rather that the narratives themselves seem to foreground such a focus. I note that Sacco's narrative, while focused on male accounts of war, does include female experiences of the massacres he investigates. This concentration on the representation of male subjectivity in war is guided by narrative content that deals with the experiences of mostly male combatants (soldiers) and targets/victims of military attacks. In this way, the Chapter slots into the larger framework of the thesis, which examines various traumatic experiences narrated from male, female, adult and child perspectives that recollect wartime contexts.

I am interested in the narrative (written) and aesthetic (pictorial) features of the auto/biographics and how they function to characterise the traumatised subjectivities of both victims and perpetrators within specific contexts. Furthermore, I aim to demonstrate how the texts transmit recognition of subjects as controlled, profoundly affected and traumatised by the violent acts of war, and how they give voice to the "unspeakable" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 1996). I argue that the creative reimaginings necessitate ontological (self-understanding) and phenomenological (knowledge) growth because personal perspectives contribute to larger historical archives, thus offering alternative creative spaces in which the effects of such imposing historical moments can be remembered and understood.

My organisational approach to this Chapter unfolds as I begin my discussion with the referential texts *Barefoot Gen* and *Waltz with Bashir* in the first section as foundational or canonical works. The texts contain helpful features for my reading of the stylistic strategies and thematic concerns in Sacco's text. I then move on to the second section of this Chapter and my analysis of Sacco's *Footnotes in Gaza*, focusing on how he uses panel structure and aesthetic stylings to represent the personal accounts of those he interviews. I further examine how Sacco uses techniques such as juxtaposition to overlap temporal and spatial aspects of trauma, while also focusing on how he relays the narratives of others by placing their accounts, and illustrated selves, at the forefront of the narrative.

As I have said, Sacco's biographical reportage deals with the massacres that took place in the towns of Rafah and Khan Younis, located along the Gaza strip, during the conflict between Palestine and Israel in 1956. His text consists primarily of representations of the personal, Sacco's travels to the two villages of Rafah and Khan Younis and the testimonies he gathers of people's recollections of these events. His aim in the interviews and biographic reporting is to source and recreate details of what transpired in each town, at the same time as these communities were attacked by Israeli soldiers. My interpretation of Sacco's aesthetic style and thematic content are informed by Nakazawa's and Folman's referential accounts, as I now briefly explain.

Nakazawa's "autographic" deals with the effects of the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima (and Nagasaki) in Japan on 6 August 1945. It is a political allegory that narrates the effects, conditions and consequences of the event on the Japanese nation, particularly the community of Hiroshima where Nakazawa, the narrator and his family lived. It is thus both a public (national and community) and private (individual/family) auto/biography. Nakazawa's text seems to critique Japanese participation in the war and the social norms and expectations of wartime Japan, as well as America's act of dropping the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. His account is informed by his own recollection of the catastrophic event and his research, and he uses media reports of the time to develop their content. His engagement with news media permits the author to separate the private from the public in his representation. Like Sacco's text, it engages with elements of reportage in an attempt to objectively narrate the historical event and its after-effects. Although their styles of illustration differ, with Nakazawa using a Manga style and Sacco embracing a style which utilises focused, defined lines and rich detail of the subject, his *Barefoot Gen* is important, as it provides a link as to how wartime politics and violence can be illustrated. Nakazawa's style, of both narration and illustration, represents a contrast to Sacco's work, and yet it provides a connection to the way traumatic events, both personal and collective, may be conveyed to a reader. By including *Barefoot Gen* in my analysis, my aim is to demonstrate how artist-authors may use the same medium to deal with brutal subject matter, while presenting their narratives in dissimilar ways. This exhibits the ability of the genre to accommodate such varying styles in the same medium.

Folman's account progresses in contemporary time. It narrates his gradual remembrance of the First Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) in which he participated as an Israeli soldier when that country attacked Lebanon in 1982. This uncovering of memory is assisted by visits to the psychologist, meetings with former soldiers he served with, and so forth, all actions set in

motion by recurring nightmares and his incapacity to remember the details of war. Like the other texts chosen, it comments on national, communal and personal trauma. It exhibits a subjective narrative, working with personal traumatic memory, narration of past events and the struggle with recollection of “unutterable” private trauma, to evoke Butler’s term. I make use of Folman’s text in conjunction with Sacco’s to relate alternative perspectives of the conflict between Palestine, Lebanon and Israel. The First Lebanese Civil War was caused in part by the influx of Palestinian refugees into Lebanon. Thus, the events that Folman and Sacco narrate intersect with each other, even if they are not always directly related.

I chose to focus my analysis principally on Sacco’s *Footnotes in Gaza* precisely because it has received less critical attention than the two referential texts or his other previous work. His other works, *Safe Area Goražde* (2000), *Palestine* (2001) and *The Fixer* (2003), works prior to *Footnotes in Gaza*, have been examined by Edward C Holland, Liz Crain and Rose Brister, amongst others. These scholars used approaches that considered features of testimonial narratives and demonstrated how Sacco’s work not only challenges dominant modes of thought, but also opens up dialogue for a post-colonial critique of the Middle East.

My interpretation of Sacco’s text builds on my existing scholarship around the aesthetics of biographic reportage. I aim to demonstrate how his ethnic and community-focused biography, constructed from the collation of oral testimonies of survivors and historic documentation in journalistic reportage style, illuminates historical events in evocative and haunting ways. In so doing, the autographic forces to the fore two massacres that have largely slipped from wider public consciousness. This interruption of knowledge, or recollection, of the two mass executions is noted by Sacco in the foreword to *Footnotes in Gaza*. He explains, in his discussion of the Khan Younis event, that all that had existed was “a short quote from a United Nations report – about a large-scale killing of civilians in Khan Younis in 1956” (ix), while on the massacre in Rafah, he writes “a couple of sentences in a U.N report were all that saved the incident from outright oblivion” (ix). By detailing individual and collective trauma, Sacco attempts to weave together a complex depiction of how people lived, and continue to live, in Kahn Younis and Rafah, thereby emphasising the legacy of ethnic conflict.

A substantial archive of scholarship exists on both Folman’s *Waltz with Bashir* and Nakazawa’s *Barefoot Gen*. Scholars such as Jeff Adams, Charles Hatfield and Paul Gravett have examined the historic viewpoints and pedagogical function of these graphic narratives. Jeanne-Marie Viljoen, Garrett Stewart and Raz Yosef, among others, have engaged with Folman’s work to

debate his portrayal of history, memory, and autobiographic focus in cinematic and textual illustration. These seminal graphic narratives have been comprehensively studied, functioning as canonical links to Sacco's work and assisting my reading of *Footnotes in Gaza*. I proceed now to my theoretical outline for this Chapter.

1. Theoretical Framework and Outline

My exploration of Sacco's journalistic auto/biographical testimony is based on the work of trauma critic Kai Erikson who, as I mentioned in Chapter One, states that trauma "has to be understood as resulting from a *constellation of life experiences* as well as from discrete happening, from *persisting condition* as well as from an acute event" (185; emphasis in original). He elaborates that

it only makes sense to insist that trauma can issue from a sustained exposure to battle as well as from a moment of numbing shock, from a continuing pattern of abuse as well as from a single searing assault, from a period of severe attenuation and erosion as well as from a sudden flash of fear. (185)

Erikson's ideas on the concept of trauma and its effects on the psyche clarify our thinking about trauma, how it is to be understood, and how it should be conceptualised as an event that is both past and present, or enduring. Traumatic moments, according to Erikson's thinking and perhaps in the context of this Chapter, should be understood as stemming from constant interactions with violence and/or warfare, and the effect on one's vulnerability. In accordance with these thoughts, trauma may result from sudden or brief instances of violence and shock. Such a "constellation of life experiences" may take the form of perpetual suffering, prolonged exposure to violence, and/or the constant threat of death or eradication of loved ones, such as those subjects whose lives are recounted in each graphic studied here. Each singular life narrated in the text(s) relates to other lives, forming a constellation of traumatised lives. Stated another way, each individual traumatic experience presents a link in an interactive chain, one that consists of personal suffering and resides within the shared communal experience.

This metaphorical description of trauma explains that it is not simply an historic event that needs to be retroactively dealt with, but rather it is a condition that persists in the minds of the traumatised subjects that mark them in ways they themselves may not be able to understand. One may then view trauma as a wound, both a visible and invisible scar. For Erikson, "traumatic wounds inflicted on individuals can combine to create a mood, an ethos – a group culture, almost – that is different from (and more than) the sum of the private wounds that make it up" (185). Sacco's text (and the additional referential texts) demonstrate individual and

collective wounds. They show how communities and communal frameworks were and remain irreparably affected. Hence, Erikson's dictum that trauma, accordingly, can be understood as acute and enduring.

I also consider Forter's definition of punctual trauma. He explains it as "historical events of such singularity, magnitude, and horror that they can be read as shocks that disable the psychic system" (259). Here, Forter's theorisation illuminates Erikson's contentions in his explanation that some traumatic moments (such as war, massacre, genocide, forced removals) are so psychologically insidious that they render the typical barriers of the psyche defenceless, resulting in the traumatisation of the subject(s). This definition of punctual trauma speaks directly to Sacco's *Footnotes in Gaza*, which recollects the singular event of the massacres of Khan Younis and Rafah, as well as the devastating consequences, over time, of this traumatic incident.

Erikson's and Forter's definitions of trauma compliment my interpretation of trauma as both past/immediate and chronic. Trauma is inseparably linked to the concept of memory, or the lack of memory (repressed, denied or manifested in amnesia). To this, Richard McNally's work offers valuable insight. His discussion of "repisodic memory" examines how traumatic instances overlap due to their recurrent nature, and result in the blurring of a subject's memories of their trauma, which is profoundly affected by the repeated intrusions of the traumatic moments and how these are recalled. McNally describes this process as "a memory constructed from repeated episodes of the same type. The more episodes of a certain type we experience, the harder it becomes to distinguish them" (36). This kind of recollection, according to McNally, is an "indistinct distortion": the memories become intertwined in complex ways and details about the exact type of violence suffered during a traumatic event, whether punctual or ongoing, then bleed into one another. I use the word "bleed" deliberately and metaphorically to imply the physical and physiological violence of trauma. These assertions on trauma and memory speak to the previous definitions of trauma, understood as punctual or enduring and as an event or events that disable the ordering of the mind. Sacco gives accounts of the suffering of Palestinian subjects, while Nakazawa and Folman recollect the suffering of Japanese and Israeli subjects respectively. The texts share the theme of "familiar" sorrow.

It is the representation of this "sorrow" that fascinates me. I attempt to remain impartial in my exploration but want to draw attention to the atrocities of war, and therefore feel compelled to

evoke Nancy Sherman's statement on the moral philosophy of war considered in *Afterwar: Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers* (2015). She writes that

[w]ar changes lives. War is the realm of the paradoxical: the morally repugnant is the morally permissible, and even the morally necessary. Killing, even enemy combatants; destroying, even legitimate wartime targets; and razing or properties and lands, even when using proportional force – all invoke taking away the most sacred and essential element of a human being – his or her life, his or her livelihood (xiv; emphasis in original)

Sacco's narrative, like Nakazawa's and Folman's, illustrates how war/struggle between various nations, or ethnic groups result in "change[d] lives". What Sherman calls to our attention here is that things that are commonly "repugnant" within everyday society, such as violence, murder, the destruction of homes, and the forced removal of people from their safe spaces, become in wartime "morally permissible" and "morally necessary". Sherman demonstrates how war produces a liminal space where general moral principles no longer apply. Such spaces are represented in Sacco's biographic reportage (and the referenced graphics), charged with many different types of radicalised ethnic and religious violence that affect ordinary people, regardless of their level of participation (such as soldiers or non-combatants, perpetrators or victims), and remove their most basic right, their right to life and livelihood.

Sherman claims that "[w]ar often creates a gap between the ideals of self image and the realities of wartime behaviour, between how things 'should be' and how things 'are'" (xv). Sacco's text, for example, evocatively captures this gap and illustrates the artist's attempt to provide a space for others to tell their stories. In turn, the reader is left to question how things "should be" and how they truly are for those who suffered and continue to suffer under conditions of occupation, dispossession and violence in Palestine.

In organising my approach to sections One and Two of this Chapter, as I have mentioned, I focus on Sacco's use of stylistic devices, but to conduct this discussion I am compelled to first engage with features in Nakazawa's and Folman's narratives that serve as examples to establish a platform for my reading of Sacco's autographic. Therefore, I first discuss the overlapping aesthetic (in image and narrative style) that aids the narration of private and communal trauma. Further, in this section I explore Sacco's use of an "iconic narrator" and I show how the persona of the journalist performs an auto/biographic act to give an account of all the testimonies disclosed in interviews. My examination of Sacco's persona in his text allows for an assessment of the contrasting visual styles used in each text, and shows how they explore similar issues. Thus, the two foundational texts serve as a basis for illustrating how Sacco narrates/illustrates histories of violence and trauma.

In Section Two, I concentrate on Sacco's biographic reportage. In this section, I make use of selected panels taken from *Footnotes in Gaza* to establish how Sacco presents traumatic experiences that are not his own in alternative ways. I choose specific panels to illustrate my interpretations, but I also explain how these events reflect the content and the style of the entire graphic. Although Sacco's text is primarily biographical (testimony), it nevertheless incorporates personal reflections in an evocative way via the figure of the journalist editor. He gathers the information that "utters" historic events, public and private traumas. These testimonies merge with the personal in an interesting, polyvocal, or many-voiced, narrational design. By interweaving heterogeneous stories from the past, the Sacco-figure focuses the reader's attention on the historic nature of human rights violations in Palestine, but he also discloses implicitly, through his illustration of personal testimonies and current events, the ongoing struggle between Palestine and Israel, thereby displaying the chronic trauma and ongoing traumatic events in the region. I propose the use of a neutral figure/narrator (namely Sacco) as literary avatar throughout the text, prompting the reader to concentrate on the many stories of the victims rather than on the avatar's personal view or experience. This figure would function as a literary/visual guide for the reader through the construction and assembly of facts and testimonial narratives. In this respect, the reader, like the narrator, becomes witness to trauma.

The depictions of these traumas do not focus on the "iconic narrator's" selfhood, but instead the selfhoods and traumatic experiences of those he interviews (victims, and soldiers or perpetrators). Thus, I examine the testimonies-within-testimonies (the testimonial archive) detailed in the text by conducting a close reading of words, pictorials and design. In conclusion, I consider the pedagogical nature of the three representations and the genre's value as an educational medium.

2. Snapshots of Violence: Graphic Depictions of Wartime Trauma

Depictions of personal recollections, and historical or public evidence (e.g. photographs, video documentation and other news media material) feature prominently in both Folman's and Nakazawa's accounts. Yet, each author's representation and style differs in meaningful ways. What follows are analyses of the performative, meaning representational and pedagogical, functions of *Barefoot Gen*, *Waltz with Bashir* and *Footnotes in Gaza*, in order to establish how each writer uses different written and visual features within the medium of image text to present the viewer/reader with an abstracted and alternative viewpoint. These accounts function as

snapshots, being a collection of informal fragmentary moments and memories, which challenge an overarching or metahistorical narrative, and which seek to provide an understanding of the power of traumatic moments and the significance of violence that enables such long-lasting effects.

Kenji Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen* was originally published as "a forty-eight-page story in a special edition" (Gravett 90) of *Weekly Shonen Jump*, a boy's comic, under the title *I Saw It* (1972). This work later formed the basis of the plot for his extended *Barefoot Gen* series, which began in June 1973 and ended a year-and-a-half later when it was published as a whole in graphic novelised form. His series of narratives, made up into volumes, follows Gen's story before and after the atom bomb, telling of his experiences and research about the atomic bombing of his hometown, Hiroshima. Gen operates as a symbolic version of Nakazawa – a fictionalised character-narrator of Nakazawa's own experiences during the war. Gen's narration is employed to represent the author's account of his life: growing up in Japan under imperial rule before the dropping of the bomb, the event of the bomb, his survival and the consequences of this traumatic catastrophe on him, his family, community and the nation. Nakazawa's Gen narrates the punctuated traumatic effects of the bomb on the citizens of Hiroshima, as well as the socio-political aftermath on their minds and bodies.

As in the case of Sacco's (and Folman's) graphic, *Barefoot Gen* also focuses on the individual and collective traumas of war, but is illustrated using the traditional Japanese drawing style of Manga (Figure 1). One definition of this form of graphic is given by Casey Brienza, who explains it as "literally mean[ing] 'irresponsible pictures', [and it] is the Japanese word for the medium of the comic strip" (105). Other critics ascribe a more political aspect to Manga and its function of critiquing the socio-political space, saying that "Manga is a [form of representation] that pierces through the societal disease. It draws on methods of exaggeration but in an organised manner" (Shimizu 10). In both definitions of the style note is taken of its abstraction, the quality Manga has when removed from "realist" depictions of life. However, it is this very same removal from realism that allows Manga to "pierce" through normalised ways in which information and historical narratives are presented.

In this respect, Nakazawa's and Folman's work share a commonality, as both move away from "realist" depictions to present alternative reflections of well documented wartime events. These depictions differ from Sacco's illustrative style as the subjects depicted in *Footnotes in Gaza* are reproduced in a photorealistic manner to fully capture the details of those he interviews (as

I will show). Manga characters such as the “iconic narrator”, Gen, and other characters in *Barefoot Gen*, with their exaggerated or highly abstracted features such as gritted teeth, pronounced shouting and dynamic lines adding emphasis to reactions, are depicted in the selected panel from early in the first volume of *Barefoot Gen* and carry the full emotional meaning of narrative without the distraction of photorealism. Such depictions are used to heighten and enhance the emotions presented on the page, reinforcing them in the reader. Comic-styled photorealistic images, such as Sacco’s text, aim to exactly capture the likeness of that which they represent, whether drawn or from photographs, and pull the reader into the immediacy of the image, unlike abstracted images or characters, which leave little room for focused attention on specific details that are present in the process of abstraction.



Figure 1. Gen defends his father’s refusal to participate in the war (Nakazawa 67).

Photorealism places emphasis on the image being that of another person/character, while abstraction may allow the reader to associate with a drawn image which focuses more attention on the narrative dimensions of the text. Here, the focus becomes the narrative, what is shared, in Nakazawa’s retelling of childhood events, rather than their detailed authenticity. It should be noted that the collection of issues which make up his narrative “stands as an only slightly fictionalised chronicle of his real experiences before and after the [atomic] Bomb” (Gravett 90). Although aspects of Gen’s narrative are fictionalised it is not done for the purpose of

exaggeration, but simply because Nakazawa narrated his childhood story later in life and had to draw on historical accounts as well as personal memories to construct his own version. Jeff Adams, in his article “The Pedagogy of the Image Text: Nakazawa, Sebald and Spiegelman Recount Social Traumas” (2008), explains that an “important aspect of [Nakazawa’s] oeuvre in this respect is the integration of familiar images, usually drawn from newspapers, prints and photographs that were produced in response to the bombing and its aftermath” (43). In this regard, Nakazawa, Folman and Sacco had to do research and conduct interviews to build upon their (and others’) fragmentary, traumatic memories so as to increase the authenticity of their work.

The inclusion of a broader sweep of information furthers all three texts’ critique of the socio-political spaces in which they experienced their trauma. By choosing to incorporate various types of texts, and making use of intertextuality in his narrative, Nakazawa increases the ability of his text to add to the existing historic understanding of the events that took place in Japan during World War II. *Barefoot Gen* offers a space for collective memory to emerge, along with personal reflection on issues that emerge in Sacco’s (and Folman’s) narrative. The narrator’s subjectivity is defined and shaped in relation to the subjectivities of others within the community or space of the event detailed. This is depicted in the image shown, and how Gen and his family are viewed by the community is directly affected by the actions of his father. Nakazawa’s text critiques the imperialist Japanese government of the time, ruled by Emperor Hirohito, who led Japan to join the Axis⁶ powers during the war against the Allies. This was one of the reasons which led to the initial attacks (for example, on Pearl Harbour) against the United States, which resulted in retaliation and the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

Under Hirohito’s leadership Japanese subjects suffered various levels of social segregation and trauma, as those seen as not supporting the war effort or accused of not contributing enough, such as Gen’s family in the text who staunchly opposed the war, were castigated, socially ostracised and punished for sedition. This is represented in the selected panel where Gen is defending his father after they have been mocked by local villagers for their refusal to assist in the war effort. Gen’s father had been hit on the head with a stone as others mocked him, which led to Gen crying out in defence of his father. The text engages with incidents of trauma which Japanese subjects suffered. It begins by tracing the effects of institutionalised trauma by

⁶ “Axis” is the term used to characterise the initial Tripartite Pact formed between Germany, Italy and Japan in 1940. The Pact later expanded to include additional nations who also sided with Germany (Beever, *The Second World War*: 2012).

displaying characters such as Gen and his family who challenged the dominant power structures and the brutal methods they used to control the Japanese populous, in this instance represented by the citizens of Hiroshima. Then it demonstrates the “punctual trauma” of the dropping of the atomic bomb, Little Boy, on Hiroshima, and its devastation and lingering physical and psychological effects depicted later in the narrative. Nakazawa’s illustration of the past provides a necessary link to Sacco’s text, which also works to depict the effects of punctual traumatic moments and its persistent effects on Palestinian subjects.

In recounting his own traumatic past with the aid of intertextual sources, Nakazawa creates a form of representation in which the suffering of those who lived with, and around him, can equally be understood through the relationality of their traumatic subjectivity. By detailing the pre-atom bomb, and post-atom bomb periods, Nakazawa’s work displays the socio-cultural and traumatic effects of wartime violence and brutality on Japanese subjects. His narrative permanently inscribes how such effects would distort and radically alter the way Japanese subjects lived and thought, affecting the average person’s life. Interpretive approaches such as intertextuality and relationality feature prominently in Sacco’s (and Folman’s) text to emphasise the personal and communal trauma. I move now to a discussion of Folman’s graphic and how his use of aesthetic devices aids my reading of Sacco’s work.

Ari Folman’s *Waltz with Bashir*, illustrated by David Polonsky, recounts his personal journey, prompted by a recurring nightmare, to piece together the violent and traumatic events of the first Lebanese Civil War of 1982, which took place 20 years prior to the present time of the text. Folman served as an Israeli soldier during this conflict. His inner search and conflict led him to consult with trauma psychologists and contact fellow soldiers who served with him. The war was a consequence of the rising tensions between certain Muslim and Christian factions of the population, following the influx of Palestinian refugees into Lebanon after the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel in 1948.

Like Folman, the narrator Folman served in the Israeli defence force during the war. Folman, and other soldiers became accomplices to the Sabra and Shatila refugee camp massacres. He gradually recollects and narrates his experience of this atrocity. Because the narrative draws on memory, development is not strictly chronological although it follows a linear plot. In detailing his own past and participation, Folman represents not only his own experiences, but also those of his comrades and the larger community. In the course of his tale, he comes to realise and understand his complicit role in the massacre of the refugees in the camps at Sabra and Shatila,

and his position as both perpetrator and victim of trauma. This piecing together of fragmentary memories, nightmares, and testimonies (by fellow soldiers) establishes why Folman suppressed memories and why he suffered from amnesia.

Folman's *Waltz with Bashir* was not originally released as a graphic novel and appeared first as an animated film. It was converted into novel form with the aid of Polonsky in 2009, a year after the film's release. To construct Folman's autobiographical account (film and graphic text), he relied on the knowledge obtained from various sources: trauma psychologists, archival footage, accounts of fellow soldiers, and so forth, which are seen depicted throughout the graphic. The title itself may refer to a moment in which an interviewee, Shmuel Frenkel, who was the commander of Folman's unit, "danced" to bullets being fired while Frenkel was in front of posters of the Lebanese president, Bashir Gemayel. This link to a half-conscious moment during a firefight for a soldier, displays the text's focus on the effects of such wartime situations, and how such trauma still haunts survivors of the war in which Folman and others participated.

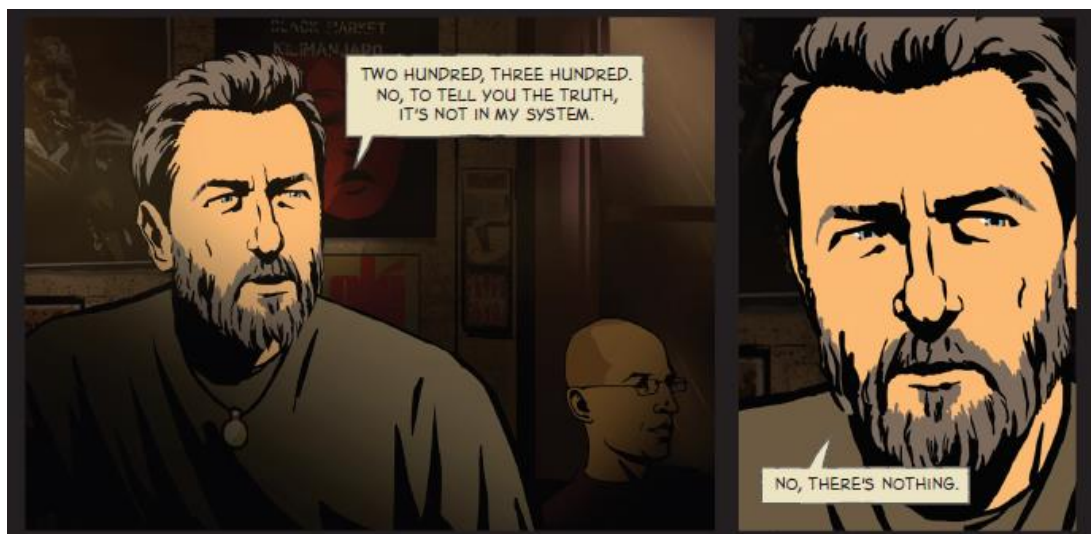


Figure 2. Folman speaks to Boaz, a fellow soldier (Folman and Polonsky 8).

Folman explains what shaped his conceptualisation in an interview with John Esther. Esther asked him about the accuracy of his personal recollection and what such a representation suggests about the culpability of the Israeli government in the massacres of the two refugee camps. To this question, Folman replied, "I was interested in different things. I was interested in the memory of the massacre as seen by the common soldier, not seen by the general" (2009). Here, Folman speaks about the conceptualisation of his work as a story shaped by memories – one that does not simply offer a voice to the larger historical narrative, which examines authority figures such as the generals who commanded the soldiers such as himself, or the

politicians who guided Israeli participation in the bloody warfare, but also the individual's recollection, and the significance of such recollection. It seems his aim was instead to give a voice to the "common soldier" who was traumatically affected by complicit acts in the line of state duty. This aim is aligned with Sacco's text which gives a narrative focus to the personal and communal accounts of Palestinian suffering. While using the larger historical framework, Sacco's narrative also places personal accounts within his own narrative, to emphasise the effects of war on Palestinian subjects.

Folman presents the recollections of his past through Flash animation (figure 2) or "cut-out cinema" (Stewart 58), known as a simpler form of animation which uses vector-based drawings to produce graphics with a clear appearance, and then presents them using the graphic novel form. Like Sacco, Folman moves away from the more typical representations of warfare and violence found in media, film and written material, as his stylistic choice challenges "realist" forms of war documentary. Unlike manga-styled illustration, this aesthetic choice emphasises the lines of the face, allowing light and shadow onto the page to convey a character's emotions. The way emotion is expressed is subtler here, and it evokes a quality of real-life interaction with others in which one would need to pay attention to subtler gestures or movements of the face. In the selected panel, Folman is depicted as in conversation with his friend Boaz, a former fellow soldier, who is not shown in this panel, but who tells Folman about a traumatic nightmare caused by their experience in Lebanon.

However, upon discussing the topic of war and their roles as soldiers, Folman states, "It's not in my system", and he adds "No, there's nothing" (Folman and Polonsky 8). Thus, Folman presents himself at this meeting as unable to recall the conflict in which he took part. His narrative offers this depiction of personal and communal trauma as similar to those experienced by fellow-soldiers, which, as a counter-narrative, challenge the dominant "remembered" past and serve as a metahistoric account of the Lebanese war. Sacco's text also represents history as it is remembered by those who experienced the event - the subjects he interviews who were affected by the massacres. At this point, Jeanne-Marie Viljoen notes that *Waltz with Bashir*, as an anti-war narrative, presents "the personal psychological struggles that the Israelis had left to contend with when considering their complicity in the war, because this was not accommodated in the greater Zionist collective memory" (67). This narration of trauma allows Folman to rediscover what happened in his past through the amnesia he suffered, but it also allows his image text to critique the larger social structure and history which has not assimilated such personal narratives into its greater framework. This is a feature of Sacco's work as well,

as he weaves personal accounts into the larger history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. He presents readers with trauma narratives not widely known, and by doing so draws attention to the way individuals and communities have suffered due to the conflict.

This kind of amnesia – traumatic memory – is, according to Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson in *Reading Autobiography*, memory that is “entangled with profound crisis in people’s lives”, and the authors add that such calamity “may be speakable only in the haunting fragments of traumatic or obsessive memory” (21). The crisis of Folman’s life was the brutal war and the atrocities he committed, which can be understood only through the fragmented memories which continuously haunt his mind long after the war has passed. His autographic accumulates and disseminates knowledge of an all too traumatic past, one which has burdens too heavy for the mind to bear, and so events are forgotten, until they are rediscovered. The detailing of a traumatic past in this manner of illustration and narration, of discovering one’s past within the pasts of others, demonstrates that “history always consists of a hybrid of public and private knowledge and that ‘public and private recollections both often work together to form what is known as collective memory’” (Viljoen 40). Unable to precisely remember his past, he needed the guidance and assistance of communal knowledge in the form of both public, historical accounts and documentation, and private knowledge, this taking the form of recollections by other soldiers.

This assembling of memories allows for the construction of “collective memory” which presents Folman, and the reader, with the traumatised past that was caused by the massacres in the two refugee camps. This collation of memories is presented in Sacco’s text through his introduction of multiple speakers, voices and memories on the same page (elaborated on later in this Chapter). He constructs a larger narrative out of the individual accounts he is offered. The events Folman endured were so violent that his mind repressed the memory, and happenings were experienced as seemingly inaccessible and alienated from parts of the mind. These two different stylistic choices of Flash animation and graphic narrative, by using the forms of present versions of the war, and its events which depict war documentation, emphasise the recreative and recollective function of such work. Both forms had to be rendered, created by hand, which allows for the presentation of the work to be self-reflexive, as neither has the supposed authority given to “realist” representations of wartime events. Folman’s text challenges these “realist” displays of war in detailing intimate, personal narratives through an equally personal creative method. These illustrative styles and conceptual narrative features

discussed with reference to Nakazawa's and Folman's texts leads me to my reading of Sacco's work, and how these appear in *Footnotes in Gaza*.

Sacco's *Footnotes in Gaza* is a journalistic investigation and reportage on two massacres in the towns of Khan Younis and Rafah which resulted in the deaths of 275 and over 100 Palestinians respectively, and the devastating aftermath of the subjects involved. It is a multi-layered narrative, drawing on numerous testimonies by victims, soldiers, and civilians who survived the massacres and attacks along the Palestine-Israeli border. Throughout the narrative, Sacco, who visits the two towns, with the aid of local guides and assistants, manages to establish relationships with soldiers and other members of the communities who share their accounts. In this way, Sacco represents the horrors of the past and, in turn, creates awareness of ongoing violence in the region. The testimonies or oral histories are captured in word and image to "utter" histories of oppression and anguish.



Figure 3. Sacco walking through the border into Palestine. (Sacco 7).

Sacco's text is composed of his recording of testimonial narratives, placing the focus on other people's stories and not that of Sacco's persona. It is therefore important to examine the way his "iconic narrator" guides the reader. This narrator, used in a similar fashion by Nakazawa and Folman, is used to further develop this central aspect of his project. His depiction of self (Figure 3), which differs in style from the two referential texts, displays the image of a partially photo-realistic self, who has features of his face abstracted, to deter focus on his reportage. The details of Sacco's drawn self, the 'iconic narrator', show a specified rendition of his clothes

and bodily features, except for his eyes, which are abstracted or whited out and made not visible by his spectacles throughout the text. This subtle illustrative feature removes the focus from what/who Sacco is looking at during his interviews and actions, and instead stresses reader participation in examining the faces, details and stories of those with whom he speaks.”

The selected panel depicts Sacco as he leaves to conduct interviews for his report. His body is placed in the centre of the panel, analogous to a medium-shot in cinematic texts. The narrator/persona is presented in a clear line style, emphasised by the sharp vertical and horizontal lines which portray his features and surroundings. This attention to detail, in black and white, and the persona’s side-view glance, draw the reader’s attention to the panel’s background content – content that recreates and suggests a Middle-Eastern setting, particularly the border between Israel and Palestine, symbolically signalled by the Israeli flag and the potentially ironic comment in the narrational text bubble, “Hope glimmers again” (7). Sacco’s crossing from Israel into Palestine suggests hope for his overall narrative and the testimonies of others to be told, as this crossing allows him entry into a boxed or closed off territory that is akin to the boxed style of the panel.

Paul Gravett describes the depiction of Sacco’s persona figure as “expressionless and enigmatic” which “conceals his own feelings and focuses on the more important feelings of others” (98). The vacancy of Sacco’s persona’s expressions generate a focus on the expressions that remain on the page whenever he conducts an interview. In removing attention from his reactions, or how the testimonies may affect his iconic self, emphasis is given instead to the emotions and reactions of the testifying subject. Free from Sacco’s emotional reaction and influence on such accounts, it is up to the reader to evaluate and react to the testimonial narratives Sacco retrieves through his interviews. This function of the ‘iconic narrator’ is further understood as the “author’s visible persona as an interlocutor and storytelling device, a means of getting at, and shaping, the stories of *other* people’s lives” (Hatfield 130).

While Sacco is not speaking to anyone in this panel, throughout *Footnotes in Gaza* he engages in conversations with citizens of Rafah and Kahn Younis to recover and accentuate the other subjects’ lives and trauma. Sacco’s function as “interlocutor” for the narratives of others is that of provider of space and, in this case, documentation throughout his collated text. His investigation into previously limited understanding of private history and suffering in the two Palestinian towns allows for the uncovering of a past that still affects those present within the Gaza strip. His visible persona, with its abstracted emotional range, focuses on the other

characters of his text, those whose testimonies he records and gathers throughout his creation of *Footnotes in Gaza*, and who have never had their story told or shaped into written accounts.

3. (Re)presenting History: Recounting Chronic and Punctual Traumas

The two texts, *Barefoot Gen* and *Waltz with Bashir*, discussed in the first part of the preceding section focus on simultaneously detailing the lives of others while providing a narrative of self and of the trauma surrounding particular conflicts. Sacco's *Footnotes in Gaza*, however, focuses primarily on the lives of others by demonstrating a merger of historic and personal narratives, and using Sacco as previously discussed, functionally as a storytelling device through which others may be heard. By visiting Rafah and Khan Younis, and detailing the lives of the citizens, in both past and present contexts, while also illustrating the interviews he conducts over the course of his stay with survivors of the two genocidal attacks, Sacco's biographic reportage, turned polivocal testimony, attempts to remain attentive to the lives of those who have been historically dispossessed by the formation of the Israeli State, and years of warfare between Palestine and Israel.

I shall now move my analysis to an examination of specific panels or a sequence of panels in *Footnotes in Gaza*. I shall analyse how Sacco details trauma through graphic reportage and how his text is able to reveal the effects of various traumatic instances (individual and communal). This section is divided into three parts. First, I examine how Sacco critiques the way media presents and represents stories of suffering regarding the Palestine-Israel conflict, and its failings. I then move to a discussion of Sacco's representation of the incident at Khan Younis, examining his use of panel and narrative structure to overlap past and present traumatic pain. Then I proceed to Sacco's illustration of the events at Rafah. I study how Sacco uses the testimonies of a number of men to represent the massacre that took place, especially the events of "the schoolyard". In all three parts I examine Sacco's illustrative style and use of narrative strategy to convey traumatic accounts.

3.1 Challenging Dominant Media's Representations of Conflict and Trauma

In a selected sequence of panels from the opening of the text, Sacco is depicted at a bar or club with fellow journalists spending their evenings away from the immediate realities of war (figure 4). Here we are exposed to how Sacco's biographic reportage begins to challenge mainstream methods of media coverage and reportage. These panels, some of which are juxtaposed, serve to establish many of the techniques Sacco employs throughout his text. As opposed to Nakazawa and Folman, Sacco does not depict characters in his text as abstract, but

instead uses a photorealistic style to present them accurately in his work, emphasising the details which make up their appearance. The format of the text, and its creative, deliberately playful use of panel arrangement and placement of gutters, contrast with the previous two texts as Sacco moves away from the typical structure of panel layout found in Nakazawa's and Folman's graphics. The referential texts place square-shaped panels in an ordered sequence, with little experimentation in their presentation, to promote a cohesive conversation between form and content. Sacco, however, contests this by presenting panels throughout the text, with information and characters which permeate into other panels, serving as contrasts or



Figure 4. Sacco recounts the function of Media, and how history is reported (Sacco 5).

juxtaposition for comparison. Because his text is recounted to the reader, using narratives from the past and present, Sacco uses gutters in the text to aid in the presentation and comparison of actions and time. These serve to separate time and space, but also to emphasise and compound the effects of trauma. The gutters may serve as borders between past and present, while also demonstrating the permeable nature of memory, which moves between temporal spaces, as characters, words and actions intersect with one another, or permeate other panels. This aesthetic style of graphic narrative challenges dominant traditional modes of graphic panelling in which panels are presented in a uniform structure with spaces (the “gutter”) left between panels to allow for easier reading. However, my reading views the function of Sacco’s style as a demonstration of how this history of violence overlaps, just as the panels do, saturating one another, allowing for little or no time or separation between instances of violence which have occurred over numerous years.

Sacco’s illustrative style differs from the that of two other graphic narratives discussed in this Chapter, establishing how the violence suffered by those along the Palestinian/Israeli border is constant and has profoundly affected lives and livelihoods. This specific aesthetic technique displays how graphic narratives “can make time stand still, overlap multiple temporalities, and productively confuse times and timing” (Brister 109). Rose Brister’s statement resonates with Bakhtin’s ideas on the chronotope in literature, which I adopt for my reading of the graphic narrative form. The chronotope functions to establish time and space as intertwined, and shows this concept in a concrete, representable form.

Throughout Sacco’s graphic text, as he draws and therefore presents time and space on the page, he shows “[t]ime [...] [as it] thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible”, and in presenting this “space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history” (Bakhtin 84). In presenting the reader with multiple instances and representations of historic and chronic violence, Sacco shows how the graphic narrative form allows for the presentation of simultaneous and interlinked moments of past and present violence in Palestine. I find this sequence of panels highly provocative, because time overlaps through the representation, blurring the exact moment of violence. This is presented on a visual level through the panels on the page, some of which have clearly defined borders (gutters) with separate information, and display the temporal chain of violent events. However, Sacco places these events in a causal chain of events connected to the larger violence which permeates into other panels. These challenge the notion of the comic gutter, to function as both a border for narrative information contained in a space, and as a way to outline clearly defined events in a

sequence. This works to demonstrate the blurring of violence and history, as the figures cannot be easily or neatly contained in panels and separated by gutters. This blurring compels readers to consider events and what is framed within the panels.

The written text “a week ago, a month ago, a year ago” (Sacco 5) suggests that what is presented in Sacco’s text is not merely what is being represented to the reader, but also what is not. What lies outside of these pages and panels are acts of violence and suffering that are not depicted but have a direct influence on what is shown. Thus, the reader is compelled to negotiate, not only the events Sacco represents, but also the larger historical context of the daily suffering Palestinians endure. The text suggests, therefore, that the violence does not cease and is as destructive now as it was in the past. Thus, Sacco displays how well-suited graphic narrative is to “confuse time and timing”, to juxtapose events and moments that may be beyond one single moment, space or temporal setting.

This page further serves to exhibit various critiques that Sacco’s *Footnotes in Gaza* seek to disrupt. The top panels of the page depict various journalists. The portrayal of their demeanour suggests that they have become de-sensitised to the daily conflict and produce repetitive stories of violence. Every journalist’s expression displays his/her lack of interest. Their expressions are further emphasised by the narrative content, or captions, of the text which frames their expressions that state, “[t]hey shake their heads/ roll their eyes/ it *does* get old” (Sacco 5; emphasis in the original). Their expressions convey their current attitudes to the situation, ironically influenced by their own media coverage of it, and how, due to its repetitive violent nature, they as fabricators of mainstream media have grown bored because all the stories are seemingly the same.

Their thoughts are in immediate contrast to the panels depicting the hand of the journalists calling a waitress, and the unfolding of a menu. The first few pages of the menu show normal items one would expect to find on a menu. However, on subsequent pages, Sacco produces menu items such as a wrecked bus, a car on fire, and a tank having just fired an explosive. The pages of the menu act like the individual panels of a comic, with each scene of violence separated and yet linked at the same time. As the menu unfolds so too do the events. The pages of the “menu” could be read individually, and yet when placed in deliberate sequence they produce meaning, just as with comic panels. By the juxtaposition of these pictorial icons on the menu, Sacco suggests that these incidents are such common occurrences in the area that they may as well be listed on a menu to be ordered. These concepts are emphasised by the

captions which state, “What’s on the menu/ Bombings!/ Assassinations!/ Incursions!/ They could file last month’s story today – or last year’s for that matter – and who’d know the difference?” (5). Here, the ongoing nature of the violence suffered by the Palestinians (and Israelis), how each item of media coverage of the events is seemingly a repetition of preceding reports, is vividly conveyed.

This specific graphic representation of overlapping temporality is continued in the seven smaller panels on the bottom half of the page. Here, in both vertical and horizontal panels, are rendered the various consequences of war: bereaved mothers, traumatised and injured families, soldiers and children. The panels, divided by gutters, display distinct acts of violence and loss, but instead of keeping the figures and the represented temporality apart, the figures overlap and thus move into other panels. This continues Sacco’s chain of violent events, seen first in the menu. The acts are separated and yet always linked. Viewed as a whole, these panels function to corroborate the escalation of war and its effects in images, moving from representations of grief to violent retaliation. Each horizontal panel represents a different attitude or traumatic account, furthered by the vertical panels that overlap with each other and with the horizontal panels. The theme of loss is essential to the narrative and it accumulates in the last, larger panel to display families in the act of grieving and caring for the wounded.

This intricate mixture of narration allows Sacco’s text to illustrate the horrific consequences of the conflict in Palestine and the dominant media’s failure to adequately represent the emotional consequences of the daily suffering. This thought is deftly encapsulated in the text: “[b]ecause they’ve wrung every word they can out of the Second Intifada, they’ve photographed every wailing mother, quoted every lying spokesperson, detailed every humiliation, and – so what?”, going on to say, “two dead!/ five dead!/ twenty dead!/ a week ago!/ a month ago!/ a year ago!/ fifty years ago” (Sacco 5). These comments about news coverage convey Sacco’s personal outrage at the ongoing conflict and the news media’s failings to report chronic personal and public trauma in favour of spectacular, sudden violent events over a fifty-year period. His use of panel placement, vertical and horizontal, as well as the merging of past and present events, force the reader to develop closure and engage with how the varying forms of violence, and temporalities of space and time fold in onto one another, so that there is ostensibly no escape from the devastation.

I further read his depiction of such chronic violence in these panels, and throughout his text, as a challenge to how such stories have been disseminated. It is through his illustrative stylistic

choices that Sacco displays the power of graphic narratives to “serve a *social* and *political* purpose as [they] counteract the *distorted images* of society continually fed to us by *mass media*” (*Understanding Comics* 38; emphasis in the original). His representation of various accounts within his text, and the history that surrounds these, move away from traditional reportage on the conflict and in so doing provide an inventive way of examining and understanding conflicted spaces and their contexts.

The panels above demonstrate Sacco’s text’s ability to “counteract” the typically rendered subjects of Palestine, and look at them anew. The narrative serves its “social” and “political” function in giving voice to accounts of lives (individual and communal) which have been overlooked or not yet heard. In these, and other moments of Sacco’s text, a critique of Western depictions of Palestinian subjects is emphasised. By doing so, Sacco demonstrates that there are innovative ways to represent punctual and chronic trauma. Therefore, when he asks, “so what?” in the caption, I read it as Sacco’s self-reflexive question aimed at the failings of the media to convey people’s experiences of trauma. By asking these reflexive questions and presenting the narrative in such a way as to critique existing forms of documentation, Sacco establishes his text’s focus as representing the effects of war on the individual and the community, and in so doing showing that there are alternative ways to represent the context and conditions of the fifty-year conflict.

3.2 The Case of Khan Younis

Following his critique of the media’s representations of the conflict, Sacco continues his investigation of the past and present contexts of the struggle in Israel and Palestine. In a selected panel from his section on Khan Younis (figure 5), he is in Palestine with the intention of discovering more about the two massacres and their consequences. The first town he visits is Khan Younis (displayed in the figure). While gathering information about the incident that took place in 1956 and caused the deaths of 275 Palestinians, Sacco stays with residents of the town. Each day he sets out to gather information through interviews with survivors of the genocidal event. The testimonies he gathers are from those who were children during this period, mothers who lost sons and husbands due to the attack, and those who were soldiers at the time and survived.

In his biographic reportage, Sacco painstakingly records the interviews he conducted while on these research outings, even those that turned out to be of little use to him. It is this focus on the subjects, regardless of the type of information they offered, which makes Sacco's text so captivating. He places the narrative focus squarely on the accounts of others – in their terms. He does not revise or edit their accounts when retelling their testimonies, thus instituting a direct link between the reader and the subjects of his text. Included in these accounts are those men who were previously part of the Fedayeen, Arab gorilla-style soldiers who fought typically against Israel and their occupation. Sacco also collects testimonies from people who were children at the time of the massacre. This multiplicity of voices gathered by Sacco represents the polyvocal nature of his work in *Footnotes in Gaza*.

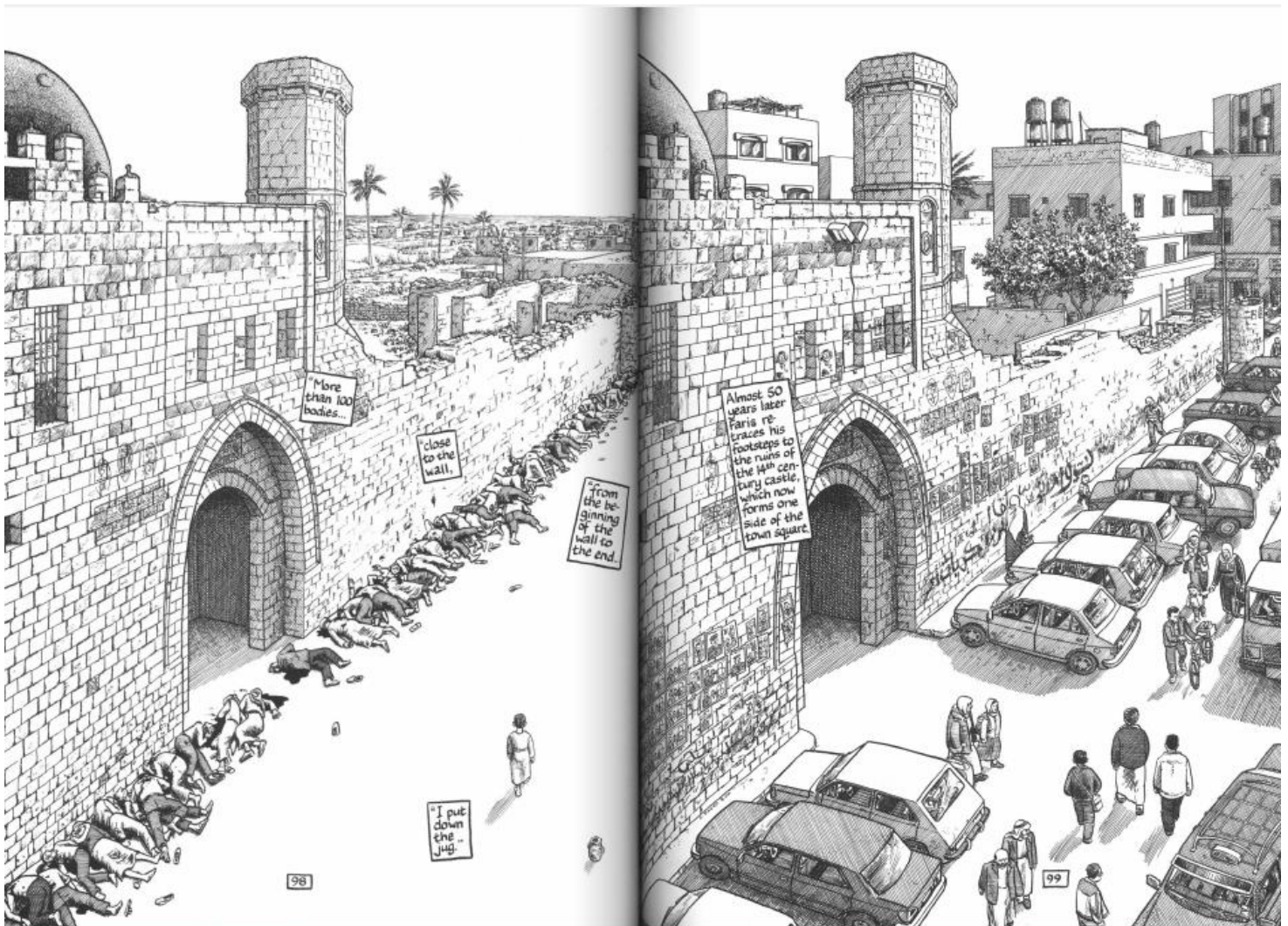


Figure 5. Displaying the massacre in Khan Yunis, and its present state (Sacco 98 – 99).

One such voice collected by Sacco, towards the end of his investigation in Khan Yunis, is Faris Barbakh's account (recollections) of the massacre that took place in his youth. In

conducting his interview, Sacco speaks with Faris as they walk through the town, while Faris is showing him where he was during the massacre. Faris describes what he saw as a child and what haunts him as an adult. This presents the information Sacco gathers as deeply personal and removed from formal settings. Sacco's aim is to transmit the experiences of others, and in so doing allow them to follow his accumulation of information, just as he guides the reader, and is crucial to the narrative. Each interview is thus defined by the person sharing their account and the manner in which it is shared.

This panel, and the section it comes from, is particularly arresting and captivating due to Sacco simultaneously rendering multiple temporalities and spaces. Of the four panels I have selected from his account, illustrated by Sacco, two of these are on a double page spread placed next to one another (Figures 5 and 6), displaying Sacco's rendition of the weight, and chronic burden of a punctual or acute traumatic event on the mind of a subject, such as Faris's. The first two juxtaposed panels depict the same place, but are set in different temporalities. They are framed from an elevated position overlooking part of the town square, showing the past (former on the left) and the present view (contemporary on the right) that mark the entrance to the "14th century castle" (98-99). Space and time are separated by the imposed gutter of the spine of the book, which places a separation between these two pages. Without a gutter, typically used to separate panels, the pages are placed directly opposite one another, working to emphasise the proximity of Faris's trauma. There is no clear transition, and so the reader is forced to distinguish the two spaces and times from each another, and thus develop closure. This closure allows the reader to separate the two traumatic spaces, but also to understand the immediacy of Faris's trauma and his inability to escape its mark.

Although Sacco meticulously illustrates the ruins of the 14th-century castle in both panels (figure 5), the reader's attention is seized by the pile of bodies that lie strewn in the street along the castle wall, contrasted with the lone figure of the boy walking past. In this context, the square has been converted into a street, lined with cars and pedestrians. The reader's eye is led from left to right in typical fashion, but the juxtaposition of the panels stresses an awareness of past and present space in Khan Younis. These two panels represent how the two spaces cannot be seen or should not be understood without each another. Presenting past and present contexts simultaneously, Sacco attempts to render and convey Barbakh's daily lived trauma. Each time he encounters this street, the main city square, he must face a traumatic past which is inextricable from his present.

In the panel on the left, one can see Faris Barbakh, as a young boy, walking past the castle, witnessing the dozens of dead bodies that start at the bottom left corner of the page, and continue in a diagonal line up to the centre on the right-hand side of the page. However, from both sides it seems that the line of those killed is unending, as its starting and its end are outside the reader's view. The illustration succeeds in communicating the callous way in which the bodies were dumped after the massacre. On a metaphorical level, the lack of beginning and end point suggest the countless uncountable deaths that are not rendered or captured in the image and therefore not granted agency, not only at the time of the attack, but also in the years that followed the violence.



Figure 6. Faris Barbakh looks at the spot where he saw bodies lying after the massacre (Sacco 100).

The visual significance and weight of the left-hand panel is expanded in the depiction of Faris's testimony placed in narrational blocks on the wall and street to draw the reader's attention. He recalls "More than 100 bodies.../ close to the wall,/ from the beginning of the wall to the end./ I put down the jug" (Sacco 98). Here, Faris describes to Sacco what he saw as a child while carrying a jug filled with water he had retrieved, despite the imposed curfew by Israeli forces. On his way, back he sees the countless dead bodies of the men who had been rounded up and shot to death at the castle. To the fourteen-year-old Faris these lifeless subjects are people he knew and grew up with, people who now lie dead and callously defiled in what was once a communal space filled with lively bodies.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the written testimony is his statement that when he saw the bodies he placed the water-jug on the ground. In this suggestion of an ordinary detail, the adult, narrating Faris, conveys at once the singular and punctual trauma, as well as the chronic after-effects he had witnessed. Faris felt the effects of a traumatic disruption to his life, and was so overwhelmed that an everyday task such as fetching water had to be abandoned in order to engage with the traumatic event that had occurred. The chronic traumatic effects on Faris, as an older man, are emphasised in the panel on the right-hand side, where Sacco's caption engages with Faris's displaced pain: "Almost 50 years later Faris retraces his footsteps to the ruins of the 14th century castle, which now forms part of one side of the town square" (99).

Faris is illustrated walking with Sacco and his aide, near centre bottom right, in this contemporary version of the same street in Khan Younis, the street being now lined with unending rows of cars imitating the same diagonal line in the left panel – cars now, instead of dead subjects. Sacco's illustrative positioning, his use of juxtaposition and placement of two full page panels next to each another, which depict the past and the present street at the castle, creates a modernised contemporary space. However, the panel placement and the visual contrast of cars and lifeless subjects suggest that no number of new objects or features can destroy the memory of a violent event which forever marks a particular space. For Faris, remembering is a reality every time he enters the same space years later – to see the castle is to encounter the memory of the bodies that once were lined up against the wall. This is emphasised for the reader, who must also confront the conflation and impact of history and trauma placed directly opposite each other. Due to the two-page spread, separated only by the binding of the book, the reader is forced to encounter the two realities and their burden simultaneously. The reader is asked to draw the conclusion that this is the same space, and then work out what is different and why. By doing this they engage with the text, and encounter the fact that for Faris, the time and trauma are inseparable: there is no real separation, just as there is no true separation between these panels.

This juxtaposition of time and space is again demonstrated in the following page (figure 6). Here, Sacco uses two smaller square panels, separated by a vertical gutter, to represent Faris in the past and present contexts, from different perspectives, one that takes a closer look at Faris's reaction to the bodies. The panels present a shift from a bird's eye view of the previous panels to a more intimate, cinematic long shot which displays all of Faris and his reaction to the trauma rendered in the past and present. To the left, the older Faris stands on the pavement by the wall of the castle in contemporary Khan Younis. His posture mimics how and where he stood as a

child when he looked upon the numerous dead bodies. These panels offer a closer viewpoint of Faris's reaction to the brutality he witnessed and now recalls. The first two panels, the cinematic wide shot or birds-eye view, set the tone for Faris's reaction to the panels which follow. The first two panels establish the magnitude of the trauma by displaying for the reader the endless row of bodies as compared to the now modern space. This is then emphasised and compounded by the next two panels, which display Faris's face as a mixture of horror and sadness.

Unlike the elevated viewpoint of the previous panels, which were arranged from past to present, the order is now shown from present to past. By choosing to display both depictions of Faris, one with the dead bodies in a different chronological order, Sacco plays with the temporalities on the page, and the way in which memory can be ordered. Thus, Sacco visually depicts the actual process of remembering, which does not function in a linear and systematic way. In switching between past and present in different orders, the text demonstrates how literature speaks to Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope, and on Sacco's pages time becomes fleshed out as visible to the reader as both past and present are shown, drawn and inseparable from each other. These chronological moments fold over one another as the reader is shown that trauma, and traumatic scarring, are not something that exists only in the past, but continues to haunt victims psychologically.

In both images in the second pair of panels, as before, the illustration is nearly identical, except for the contextual differences noted in the surrounding objects that have occurred over nearly fifty years. This second pair of panels has no narrative captioning. Little is needed to guide the reader by way of context. The written silence, visually shown as silence in the panels, imitates how trauma is silenced or suppressed. Like Faris, the reader is rendered speechless, forced to make sense of space, time and trauma and, as a result, becomes co-witness to his suffering. Just as Faris is depicted gazing at the lifeless bodies of people he knew, so the reader is forced to take in the image presented without the distraction of the written word. This emphasises the visual signals of Faris's reaction to the dead, and shows how his older self is still traumatised by such an image. The depiction of Faris's recollection gives utterance to the subject's experience and hauntingly grants a sense of agency to the dead. Faris's account is a personal testimony, but it is one of many in the autographic that conveys a sense of the community's shared trauma and suffering.

3.3 The Case of Rafah

Following his investigation in Kahn Younis, Sacco moves to the town of Rafah in Gaza, where the second genocidal attack took place on 12th November 1956. This incident was described by the Israeli forces as a standard military operation conducted to screen Palestinian men in the town in search of Fedayeen members, and other Palestinian soldiers. However, what occurred on this day was not a standard operation, but instead something very vicious –the slaughter of over one hundred unarmed men at the hands of Israeli soldiers. As with his investigation into the attack in Khan Younis, Sacco embeds himself in the town and interviews people who experienced and survived the massacre, in order to gather information from the women and men, and also those who were children or soldiers during the attack.



Figure 7. Men (survivors) recounting the events of 12 November 1956 (Sacco 264 – 265).

Whereas in the previous section I focused on panels that illustrate an individual testimony (Faris Barbakh), I chose, for this section, a series of panels from the graphics section titled

“Schoolyard”. These panels focus on a multiplicity of accounts (figure 7). In these panels, the various testimonies are seen to overlap. On one level, this stylistic overlap symbolises the shared experiences of the witnesses, but on another level, the depiction captures the chaos of the specific day. Sacco, through merged pictorial images and written text, suggests that the many accounts by men who survived the attack become congruous, though they also succeed in evoking an awareness of the singularity and plurality of the event. Sacco emphasises the way the multiple accounts need to be understood and viewed individually to construct a complete image of the events of that day. Each pictorial contains detailed information that needs to be examined to make sense of the fragmented and overlaid memories. The panels illustrate a link between public and private trauma, as each person’s individual testimony merges to create a more detailed communal narrative which is even larger in scope.

This section of the biographic graphic novel begins to piece together the many testimonies and memories of those men who were taken from their homes, led to the local schoolyard, and then screened by Israeli soldiers in search of enemy combatants. Throughout the process of representing these multiple accounts, Sacco details how other subjects in the town – women, children and elderly men – were also persecuted relentlessly by the Israeli army until eventually all the men were rounded up. The selected panels represent some of the interviews Sacco conducts and represents in this section of the text. His focus, however, is on the men who survived the attack, as they recount the many hours of the screening and its violence.

In the panels on the left, Sacco depicts five men, one who is not seen on the page and is represented only through written text, giving their accounts of the same event and presented to the reader simultaneously. The profile images of the men are given in similarly-sized square boxes, resembling identification photos, with their names as listed: “Zaki Hassan Edwan/ Mohammed Hassan Mohammed/ Anonymous 4/ Mohammed Zidan/ Abdel Hadi Mohammed Lafi” (264). By focusing on each male subject individually, providing detailed images of their faces, their names and giving them their own space to speak on the page, each subject is granted identity, status and agency. The names and well-drawn faces of the men allow the reader to distinguish them from one another, but it also demonstrates the polyvocal nature of rendering these accounts. Sacco’s text in this section is built upon numerous voices, all offering details of what occurred that day. Therefore, each man’s account, his voice, works with and is understood in relation to the accounts of others in order to offer a diverse reading of what occurred.

Each man says something, which together conveys the following: “Tata Rosh/ I remember a Hebrew word, ‘Tatu Rosh’/ Later on, after 30 years, I learned this means ‘heads down’/ One soldier was standing, shooting over our heads saying ‘Tatah Osh’, keep your head down/ Tatah Osh in Hebrew, yes./ Tatah Osh” (264). We are then informed, in a footnote, that the phrase for “head down” in Hebrew is actually “Rosh L’Mata” and that “when repeated quickly the words sounded as the men remembered them” (264). The reader is presented with three different spellings for the same phrase, heard differently by the men undergoing the experience. However, although none was spelled correctly, or perhaps heard correctly in the first instance, each of them clearly remembers the phrase and its significance, drawing attention to the traumatic moment. The gallery of pictorial images, framed above the images of the armed soldiers with guns, presents the reader with accounts of traumatic moments that are remembered differently. However, each subject’s account of their trauma validates the one after it, as they all remember the behaviour and intense fear of that period. These multiple accounts are depicted on the same page, as their versions of the event overlap with one another in a narrative sense, and their individual blocks themselves are superimposed on to the illustration of the past.

The bottom half of the panel includes two additional male voices which speak to the events of the day. They state, “[a]nd they were firing one or two meters over people’s heads.../ [T]hey were shooting from the roof, continuous firing, it didn’t stop/ We gave ourselves up to God/ Unarmed men against this heavy army, what could we do?” (264). With these two supplementary accounts, Sacco adds contextual detail that draws attention to the fear of violence and death the men suffered. This information and context are heightened by the images of men kneeling in the schoolyard with their hands on their heads, not knowing who would be taken and killed. What is of significant interest to me is Sacco’s choice to omit distinguishing facial features, or to show none at all in the faces of the Israeli soldiers depicted in the panels. Only the survivor’s faces are drawn in detail. Sacco’s text is therefore focused on the survivor’s accounts rather than the persecutors’.

The three framed panels of men clutching their heads on the page on the right-hand side (265) are superimposed onto a larger image featuring many men. The three men are depicted in the present, superimposed on the past, and so three panels, although individual accounts, mimic the actions of the group in the background image. In this way, the accounts intersect, narrating each individual recollection as part of a homogenous group experience. Here, two new men share their accounts, while the man named “anonymous 4” reappears to offer his account of

the incident at the schoolyard. The new men are identified as “Mohammed Yousef Shaker Housa” and “Saleh Mehi Eldin El-Argan” (265). They give evidence of the traumatising fear they experienced during this screening process. The men presented in the panels are older, which suggests that they remember the past as if it were happening in the present.

They state: “We sat like this/ All the people on the ground/ Yes very crowded, very crowded/ very pressured, very crowded/ like this/ we were sitting with each other like watermelons” (265). These survivors compare their suffering to watermelon in a crate, for the purposes of the screening. This metaphor invokes the compact and powerlessness of their position. The concentration of Palestinian bodies would have made it difficult to move or escape. The men are illustrated as trapped, powerless placed in a position with their heads down and their hands on their heads. Sacco then captures the explanations of how the Israelis systematically picked out those they suspected or knew were threats and killed them, while the remaining men, crowded together in this very dense crowd of bodies, had to listen to the gunshots – the systematic killing of their fellow-men. The layering of bodies and narratives in the image demonstrates the immediacy and shared intimacy of their traumas. Uniquely, presenting the temporal layering (past and present) speaks to the reader in many ways. One is required to look at all the details of the various pictorials and words to construct meaning and encounter the victims in the past and present. Although each image can be viewed separately, it is the amalgamated pictorial detail that empowers an understanding of the communal trauma – the relationality of accounts. It is fascinating how Sacco cleverly layers time and space over one another to demonstrate that, when recording, or attempting to understand, traumatic testimonies one must take into account both the past and the present state of the individual. Who the men are now has been shaped by who they were, and what they suffered, so in order to comprehend who they are in their present state, it is crucial to identify how past trauma has shaped this present state.

Sacco completes his text by displaying the larger historical events which took place around the time of the two incidents. He uses many pages to explain and illustrate the narrative constructed by the Israeli leadership at the end of 1956, when they agreed to pull out of the Gaza strip, and how they prevented United Nations observer vans from entering the area. This contrast between the larger historical narrative, the narrative framed by the Israelis and the accounts of those who lived (and those who still live) in Khan Younis and Rafah is what *Footnotes in Gaza* demonstrates most clearly. Although the narratives are disparate when read side-by-side, the “true” story begins to unfold. Sacco’s collection of accounts presents a challenge to the larger

historical narrative and the one used by the Israeli leadership to justify actions during that period.

In layering accounts from the subjects who suffered during, and after, the massacre in Rafah, Sacco brings to bear a multiplicity of voices. It is these intimate accounts that create room for the comprehension, and detailing, of the violent actions of 12 November 1956. In Sacco's uncovering of marginally heard, personal testimonies, these two incidents previously existing minimally as by-lines on a United Nations report for the special assembly⁷ and in varying reports beginning from the 1990's, play a subversive role in the media coverage of such heavily saturated war reportage about Palestine. Sacco's text unearths narratives that have not yet been clearly heard, and yet need to be received. His exposure, through the testimonies of others, of what happened in the towns of Khan Younis and Rafah during 1956, is also pedagogical, enlightening and shocking readers through the truth of these massacres and the traumatic legacy they carry into the present. Edward Said writes the foreword for another of Sacco's texts *Palestine* (2003), to the effect that "[Sacco's] comics about Palestine furnish his readers with a long enough sojourn among a people whose suffering and unjust fate have been scantied for far too long and with too little humanitarian and political attention" (vii). These words, while humanitarian in their nature, for me, speak to the fundamental purpose of Sacco's *Footnotes in Gaza*, as he gathers testimonies of trauma and suffering from the survivors of brutal attacks in order to educate others outside the immediacy of the conflict zone. His text has a profound political and moral quality in alerting the attention of its readers to the past and present suffering of Palestinian subjects.

Conclusion

This chapter undertook an examination of Sacco's graphic narrative, *Footnotes in Gaza*, to establish how aesthetic and narrative conventions are used within this medium to relay personal and collective traumas. I have made use of the referential texts, *Barefoot Gen* and *Waltz with Bashir*, to provide a scaffolding which illustrates how artists and writers have utilised the verbo-visual medium in the past. Their work illustrates the contrasting stylistic representations each author makes use of, depending on their personal or cultural inclinations and influences. This demonstrates that there is no fixed manner in which to present these narratives. The auto/biographics I examine here present an avenue for discussion on how one presents private

⁷ Sacco mentions in his text a report still located in the UN archive, called "Special Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East Covering the Period 1 November 1956 to mid-December 1956 to the General Assembly" (Sacco 117).

and collective narratives simultaneously. The texts show how each narrator tells his own story, or in Sacco's case the stories of others, and in so doing concurrently tells the stories of countless others who may have shared the same pain or experience. Sacco's *Footnotes in Gaza* can be examined and understood as a biographic about personal and public narratives.

Sacco's graphic narrative focuses primarily on the two massacres that occurred in Khan Younis and Rafah along the Gaza strip as examples of the larger conflict between Israeli and Palestinian forces. His investigation, reporting of accounts and testimonies are driven by the need to display and communicate the suffering and trauma of others. I have argued that Sacco's text, unlike the previous two graphics mentioned in this chapter, is not his own story as much as it is primarily the narratives of others collated and presented by him. His illustrative style differs from the work of other graphic novelists, as his aesthetic places a focus on the subjects being interviewed who detail their lives and placing himself as a character positioned on the margins of the page, functioning only as a device to lead readers to the next account. Reminiscent of cinematic techniques, panels are presented with close-ups, contrasting light and darkness, which scramble the order and coherence of panels on the page and even go as far as presenting panels with no written text at all. Sacco's work is impactful and asks the reader to look and take notice of the victims, their conditions and their accounts as one would have to when viewing a documentary.

By illustrating multiple temporalities (past and present) on a single page and layering personal accounts with historical information, Sacco works to display how past events still place a traumatic burden on the current, and surviving, residents of Khan Younis and Rafah. Sacco, in his text, demonstrates that these traumas are beyond the scope of a simple view of history, journalistic reports or a UN report. Instead, they must be understood as public and private narratives, coming together to weave a conceptual whole, so that we may better understand the suffering, both punctual and chronic, of those subjects he records. The narrative offers a verbo-visual medium to provide information of personal and communal accounts and ultimately invoke in the reader empathy for those subjects who suffered and continue to suffer. Finally, it also suggests that the task of disentangling multiple narratives, memories and facts and then reassembling them into a coherent and congruent whole is complex, but ultimately necessary, if we are to understand other traumas that are equally as multifaceted. I now move to my next Chapter which focuses on the female narration of a wartime event.

Chapter 3

Mapping Female Childhood Trauma in *A Game for Swallows*

Introduction

This chapter continues my examination of graphic representations of traumatised subjects who have suffered the repercussions of various forms of violent oppression, alongside public and private marginalisation. This oppression includes forceful policing of space and bodies, authoritarian religious practice and ethnic or gender discrimination. Therefore, I shift my focus in this Chapter to an autographic by a Middle Eastern woman artist/author. I focus primarily on Zeina Abirached's *A Game for Swallows: To Die, to Leave, to Return* (2012)⁸ in the analytical section of this chapter, but I refer to Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (2007)⁹ in the introductory section, preceding my interpretation of Abirached's work. My rationale for grouping texts, as with all chapters in the thesis, is guided by links in thematic and narrative content, style and geographic location. In this Chapter's case, I consider how childhood trauma, and specifically non-combatant female childhood trauma, is narrated in the autographic.

Underscoring Abirached's autographic is the issue of religious fundamentalism and the detrimental consequences of such practices and violence to the child narrator's and children's sense of safety and security. I am interested in the aesthetic features of the autographic, meaning how these serve to convey awareness of how bodies were/are controlled and demarcated by power systems such as religious extremism. Furthermore, because Abirached narrates her sense of self in relation to others (family, community and perpetrators), I also consider the impact of traumatic events on communal identities. My emphasis here is to examine how trauma affects both public and private spaces, thus demonstrating a link between individual (private) trauma and collective (public) trauma. Therefore, part of my analysis looks at how *A Game for Swallows* uses mapping and space to demarcate and narrate trauma, specifically the narrator's childhood trauma and the trauma of those living in her building. It is understood that the female child narrator's trauma is defined in relation to her community's trauma. Although there is a comparative element between the aesthetic styles of Satrapi's and Abirached's texts in my analysis, I choose to concentrate primarily on Abirached's *A Game for Swallows*, as an impressive amount of scholarship already exists dealing with Satrapi's texts,

⁸ Hereafter referred to as *A Game for Swallows*.

⁹ *Persepolis* was originally published in two volumes, *Persepolis 1: The Story of a Childhood* (2003) and *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return* (2004). However, my reference is from *The Complete Persepolis*, published in 2007.

notably in the field of Trauma Studies. Yet, a reference is called for by way of introduction, precisely because the two artist/authors' work have such stylistic similarities, and both appropriate the style and quality of Arabic calligraphy. In her conference address of 2012, Abirached noted that during her first year of study at the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts she was introduced to styles such as Arabic calligraphy (Abirached 71). Trina Robbins, who wrote an introduction for Abirached's text, also compares her work to that of Satrapi. Robbins notes that the autographic is illustrated "in a crisp, accessible black-and-white style reminiscent of Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*" (5). I discuss this stylistic feature in Abirached's work, as well as other comparative aesthetic features in the first part of the Chapter. In the second part I examine how Abirached demarcates and narrates trauma through the use of various maps in her narrative.

The body of scholarly work on Abirached's texts is considerable. Critics such as Alex Deuben, Felix Lang and Eszter Szep analyse *A Game for Swallows* as a text which provides accounts of the trauma suffered during the Lebanese Civil War, how it demarcates and presents the differences of space and safety during the period by examining aspects such as the "Green Line" (the divide between either side) and how identity is constructed during such a distressing period. There is also the Master's thesis of Judith Naeff, which examines Abirached's work and the work of other Lebanese authors. She examines how Abirached uses external and internal space to narrate suffering, and how the authors write about the body after such a tumultuous event. My work, however, builds upon the existing scholarship, with its focus on how the author uses mapping specifically to narrate and describe traumatic conditions, and the blurring between public and private trauma. In doing this I shall demonstrate how the use of the graphic narrative form, and the play of conventions, such as mapping, allow for an intimate description of traumatic events and effects on various subjects.

1. Theoretical Outline

My primary theoretical focus remains the lens of Trauma Studies, while I explore representational strategies and modes of self-representation. As I have said, I utilise ideas from the fields of Visual Studies, Life Writing and Gender Studies. I make use of suggested approaches from these fields to interpret my definitions in the main introduction to this thesis. However, I do expand on some additional issues below and will add these as my analysis of the autographic unfolds.

Caruth's notion of the "unspeakable" nature of trauma remains vital. Crucial to my reading of the narrative are theorisations which discuss the value of creative expression that give "voice" to that which was previously unutterable, here specifically as it relates to women writers' utterances in remembering childhood traumas. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), Caruth describes trauma as "[i]n its most general definition", as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in often delayed, uncontrollable repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (11). Providing a link to my analysis in Chapter Two, *A Game for Swallows* deals with traumas which are both punctual, and thus fall within Caruth's definition, and chronic, spread out over the years of their respective childhoods. Each text offers a narrative voice, and so to "utter" or "speak" about disastrous events offers the opportunity to express traumatic moments in creative forms which can be redeeming.

This redeeming quality of the representations of traumatic narratives is supported by Susan Brison in *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of Self* (2002). Brison states that "textual narratives of trauma [...] have healing power [and that] [s]peaking trauma pulls it from the realm of painful obscurity and hastens the process of rehabilitation" (n.p). My examination of Abirached's autographic seeks to interpret how detailing trauma in creative forms can in fact wrench trauma towards comprehensibility. To further this line of inquiry, I draw on the work of trauma theorist Dohrendwend and psychoanalyst Laub. Laub's work on the purpose and power of "giving testimony", especially female testimonies and "bearing witness", proves useful in my reading of *A Game for Swallows*, as I will demonstrate. Because I am interested in the aesthetic features of illustrations, I first focus on illustration and visual style. As previously mentioned, the selected text shares one prominent expressive strategy: illustrations in black and white with drawn lines reminiscent of Arabic calligraphy. While the text resembles this style, Abirached is in fact using it in her own way, and therefore can be read more as an adaptation of Arabic calligraphy. This textual attribute foregrounds the geopolitical contexts of the narrative (Lebanon in the Middle East) and the cultural-geographical specificities in which the narration of self is located.

For my discussion of visual strategies, I engage with views proposed by Barbra Postema and Michael Chaney, who extend valuable insight into the reading of graphic narratives, stylistic features and the general conveying of narrative and thematic meaning. Postema notes that "[p]anels in comics should be seen syntagmatically, as units creating a larger structure" (xvii). I then move to develop my examination of the self-representation of female childhood trauma

caused by oppressive power systems by considering the work of various life-writing scholars. Gillian Whitlock and Leigh Gilmore specify the significance of the narrator's position in certain oppressive socio-political contexts and discuss how this positioning can be understood to lead to a blurring of public and private traumas. Whitlock and Gilmore's ideas also prove to be important to my examination of the relational aspects of the traumas that the two artist/authors narrate.

Judith Butler's views on the concept have led to my interrogating issues of precarity and mourning in relation to how these accounts embody traumas and describe the various dangers that lead to them. Butler explains that it is "[t]hrough our bodies [that] we are implicated in thick and intense social processes of relatedness and interdependence; we are exposed, dismembered, given over to others, undone by the norms that regulate desire, sexual alliance, kinship relations, and conditions of humanness" (55). Thus, while *A Game for Swallows* speaks of the artist/author's own respective childhood, it simultaneously narrates the lives of those who lived around her, demonstrating a link between private and public trauma and pain. In terms of these conceptualisations, I explore how Butler's notions of trauma, as characteristics of identity shaped by norms beyond the individual's control or choice, inform the narrative that is then simultaneously the story of how an individual subject and relational subjectivities are affected by oppressive power systems and violence.

The notion of place (country, city, home) is interlaced with the notions of space (public and private). Place and space are crucial elements within Abirached's text, and so demand analysis. Place refers to the physical spaces which are tangible and can be occupied by various people at different times. This element remains static, regardless of who occupies the place. Space, however, is far more flexible and refers to the dynamic of those who occupy the place. A space may be hostile or welcoming, thus offering precarity or safety depending on who occupies it, and is equally as dependant on what religious, socio-political or moral viewpoints they may have. Thus, a space is viewed as fluid, constantly changing, due to internal and external events or actions. Abirached's text demonstrates how places such as home become invaded, and affected by, external violence and so transformed from a once safe space into one of danger and precarity. My exploration of public and private places and spaces does not only include physical environments, but also human subjectivity.

My thinking throughout this chapter is guided by the thought of what purpose and effect a graphic narrative that narrates traumatic events has. Although these narratives contain a healing

dimension, as discussed by Brison, the pedagogical value of the texts should be considered, especially in cases where histories – and violent histories as such – have slipped from wider public consciousness. On this function of the texts and their reclaiming value, Neaff, in her research about Lebanese writers, notes that “[t]he Lebanese authorities seem to have propagated collective amnesia with respect to Lebanon’s painful recent history” (6). While journalist Abbas Beydoun adds to this debate, saying that “to the right to forget, I don’t say no, we have every right to forget. But this right to amnesia now threatens to restart the war. Because with this right to amnesia we have failed to accomplish the transmission of our own experiences to our children and grandchildren” (6). Thus, Abirached’s autographic, which details the events of one day during the civil war via the visual-verbal medium of comics is recharacterised, by extension, in relation to both public and private histories that are threatened by power systems that “propagate collective amnesia”. Therefore, the pedagogical value of graphic narratives, which I discuss in this thesis, is crucially interlinked to their ability to share traumatic accounts. Before I proceed to my analysis, I provide a brief plot summary of each autographic.

The title of Abirached’s *A Game for Swallows*, comes from a section of graffiti that she as a child found on the walls that separated east and west Beirut. It perhaps perfectly captures the need to escape violent situations or spaces, while also demonstrating the inability to truly escape physical and psychic damage. The swallow is a type of long-distance migratory bird, which means, like the subjects of trauma who leave a traumatic incident, they will return before long to the original space. This account is set on a single day during 1984 when she was a child, during the civil war in Lebanon, living in east Beirut. The conflict between Christians and Muslim fundamentalists started in 1975. Her autographic illustrates young Zeina and follows her, her parent’s (Nour and Sami), her brothers, (who remain unnamed throughout the text) and her neighbours’ activities in the suburban area of east Beirut, the demarcated Christian side.

Abirached’s account suggests, through its visual-verbal portrayal, the tormenting realities of many years of perilous living in the time of the civil war, due to conflict from both sides. The narrative demonstrates how Abirached’s experience presents to the reader the effects of both chronic and punctual trauma. The narrative focuses solely on the experiences of young Zeina, her family and her immediate neighbours in the apartment building in which they live. Having been born during the war, and without any understanding of life without conflict, this portrayal of a “normal” day and night nevertheless encapsulates the violent circumstances of their existence and the brutal effects on the consciousness of the young subject and her community

over time. Abirached's autographic describes and represents through various illustrations the traumatic places and spaces where young Zeina and her community lived. This is presented through a variety of cartographic panels that map numerous public and private spaces (country, city, suburb and home). Here, the black and white aesthetic of the narrative functions to exhibit the austerity of the war-torn city, how spaces gradually receded and were demarcated due to the violent warfare. As is the case with Satrapi's work, the account conveys the traumatising effects of religious fundamentalism (Christian and Islamic) on public and private spaces and psyches.

2. Illustrating the Self: Depictions of Childhood Identities

Choosing a specific aesthetic style for illustration is a seminal part of graphic narrative's design and construction. Therefore, when discussing the stylistic choice used in *A Game for Swallows*, it is necessary to understand how representational strategies signify a sense of self, cultural context and the traumatic conditions that inform self-formulation. Alex Deuben notes, with reference to Abirached's memoir, that "[h]er black and white artwork, like Arabic calligraphy, is concerned with the interplay of vacuity and presence" (n.p.). Through this graphic style Abirached emphasises how bodies and spaces emerge or are edged out in a contest between "vacuity" – a blankness devoid of colour – and attention to detail. The contrasting effect of the black and white images draws attention to characterisation and content, demanding the reader's critical engagement with the detail. Arabic calligraphy allows for a seemingly simplistic pictorial image, and not in a photorealist style. Chaney in his article "Terrors of the Mirror and the 'Mise en Abyme' of Graphic Novel Autobiography" states, [t]he stark chiaroscuro of Satrapi's [and Abirached's] minimalistic drawings are always on hand to reinforce those qualities of ambivalence and disruption" (29). The illustrative style places emphasis on specific symbolically presented pictorial details rather than an exact likeness of the illustrated subjects.

This simplistic and minimalistic illustration in black and white is discussed by Postema in her *Narrative Structure in Comics: Making Sense of Fragments* (2013). Postema notes that "[t]his austerity of style helps focus one's attention". She then adds, "[c]omic images signify by establishing a code of economy, in which certain details are left out so that other details become all the more important" (2). Abirached demonstrates this "code of economy" allowing the nature of the traumatic experience to emerge gradually. This "austerity" of stylistic features shows how "[c]omic images [such as Abirached's] tend towards a minimum of detail, allowing the reader to focus on those details that are provided, so that they signify all the more strongly

in relation to the character or narrative” (Postema 6). In presenting highly abstracted versions of spaces, places and selves, the authors create an opening or signify an association with “character or narrative” and allow it to develop.

Therefore, in images such as the panels selected from Abirached’s work, the use of black and white contrasts with the emphasis on the pictorial icons and symbols depicted, while bringing attention to narrative detail, as I will show. This style allows the author to retain control over what is explicit and implicit in their narrative, and the way in which trauma and subject identity formation are conveyed to the reader, who in turn becomes a witness to these circumstances. These two texts channel reader attention to the presentation of self, and space and place in violent and oppressive circumstances.

Roger Sabin describes comic (graphic novel) panels as the “marriage of text and image”, to make meaning. He elaborates, saying, “a [comic] strip does not ‘happen’ in the words, or pictures, but somewhere in-between” (9). This dual process of making meaning denotes a creative duality so that one (text or image) cannot easily function without the other.



Figure 8. A young Zeina depicted with her mother, father and younger brother (Abirached 41).

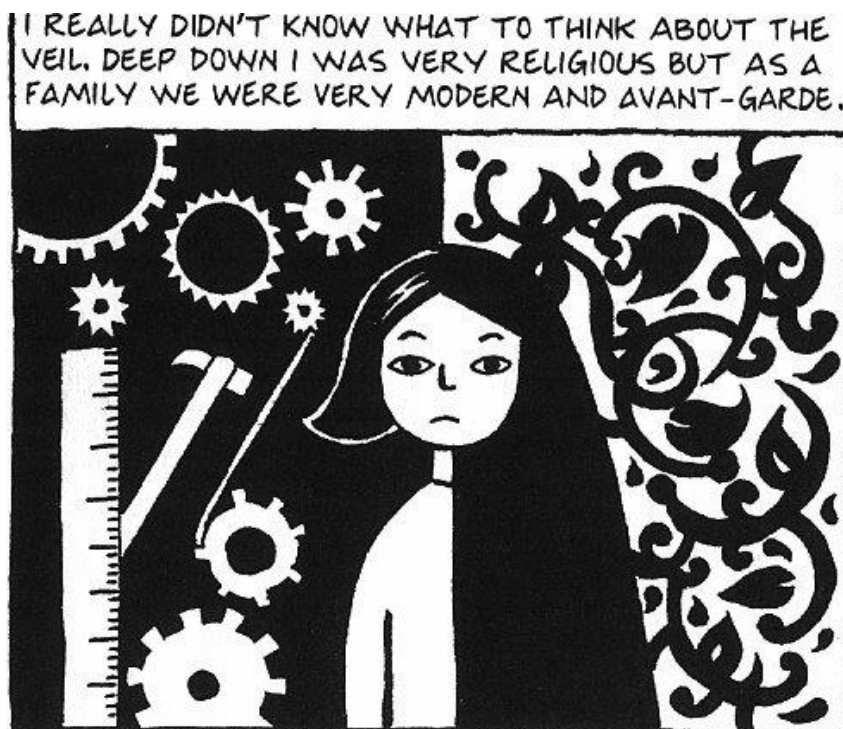


Figure 9. Young Marjane depicted with multiple aspects that inform her personal life (Satrapi 6)

This panel, selected from Abirached's text (figure 8), appears roughly in the middle of the narrative when young Zeina is reflecting on herself, and her family's safety. The image demonstrates Abirached's appropriation of the Arabic calligraphy style. As a reference and merely for comparison, I add above the image (figure 9) from Satrapi's work that also demonstrates her appropriation of Arabic calligraphy. The stark contrast of the black and white colours depicted upon a white background or black shirts allows for the manipulation of vacuity and space on the page. Young Zeina and her brother have pronounced curly hair, and the tapestry which hangs behind them on their family wall also contains various pictorial symbols and patterns drawn in an abstract manner. The hair of Zeina's mother has sharply-styled points and is prominently black in colour. This panel, which displays Zeina and her family in a family portrait, showing the children feeling safe and protected being held by their parents, is brought into being when Zeina reflects on where her parents are, which is at their grandmother's house a few streets up the road, as she wonders whether they are in danger and if she and her brother will ever see them again.

The image presents a theme which runs throughout *A Game for Swallows*, that of safety and tension during a precarious civil war in which civilians such as Zenia's family and their neighbours are caught in the middle of each day. This happy image demonstrates the hope Zeina has throughout the text that her family will come together again, despite the daily

onslaught of violence. Although she pictures her family as united, close and safe, they are in fact separated and in danger. This panel acts as a hopeful image, placed in the middle of the text. Here, Zeina ruminates over her parents and their safety, while simultaneously worrying about her and her brother's safety. But, as a child she believes that if her family is together, whole, then they can generate a feeling of safety in a precarious time of life or environment. Thus, her text works to utter the sense of trauma she suffered as a child each day driven by the worry of her family being separated or broken up due to unrelenting violence and death.

The parents in the family portrait, with their lips drawn as one small straight line, seem concerned and not as happy as their children. Their eyes meet, ostensibly locked in a concerned look about the unreliable state of safety they and their children are in, which furthers the significance of the small concerned lips with which they are drawn. Zeina and her brother, in contrast to their parents, seem happy, with larger lines for the mouths depicting smiles, with Zeina even appearing to have dimples indicative of a smile. This image speaks to the safety of young children, specifically Zeina and her brother, during perilous times. Zeina and her brother also lock eyes, as the parents do, but this is a look of shared happiness and safety due to their family being together and unharmed in this image and hopeful vision.

This panel from *A Game for Swallows* becomes representative of Zeina's thoughts about the dangers she, her family and their neighbours face each day, and the sense of mutual support which brings various people in their building together to aid one another and the children, as they wait for Zeina's family to become whole again. Therefore, while this panel alludes subtly through the parent's expressions to the dangerous situation Zeina and others find themselves in, it also expresses the hope embodied in her narrative. The hope and sense of safety are also shown by the various neighbours who visit Zeina and her brother while their parents are stuck at their grandmother's house due to shelling. Each neighbour offers the other friendship, assistance and protection. They visit Zeina's home because it is least exposed to the shelling, but while they seek safety and protection, each visitor also offers a sense of well-being to the two young children. Therefore, while panels in Abirached's text work to represent the trauma she felt as a child caused by the civil war's violence, they also present the possibility of escape and security from such a dangerous space, showing that her childhood was not purely traumatic but in fact made up of numerous emotional experiences.

In another image (Figure 10), this time taken from the beginning of the narrative, Abirached represents another memory of a childhood event when her parents visited her grandmother's

house which was only a block away from their own. On this particular day, they were trapped at the grandmother's house because troops shelled the eastern side of the city. Abirached uses straight and curved lines in these selected panels to capture three images of young Zeina's grandmother, who is concerned about her own and Zeina's parents' safety, but more so about the safety of her grandchildren who stayed at home. In other panels, as I will show, Abirached often uses only straight or only curved lines.



Figure 10. Young Zenia's grandmother contemplates concern over their position in the city (Abirached 23).

The grandmother in the panels is talking to Zeina's parents, who are out of frame but positioned to the right of the grandmother, shown in subsequent panels later. She displays both visual and verbal concern about the safety of her grandchildren. Unlike Sacco's text examined in the previous chapter, Abirached does not make use of photorealism, but instead as seen in figures

9 and 10, she makes use of abstraction within her images. The drawn pictorial images and figures in the panels rely on pictorial icons and text to convey emotional register (in this case Zeina's grandmother's). These panels (along with others discussed later in this chapter) contextualise a specific personal event while signalling the context of the public (wider) historical event in a politicised and policed Middle Eastern space.

The three panels, in which the grandmother features, are divided by a narrow white horizontal line creating separate moments and a gradual development of emotion and growing anxiety. The first panel is further, partially separated by a straight vertical white line, which is in fact the gas stove the grandmother uses for light due to the constant shelling and lack of electricity. This gas stove as a simple object becomes a pictorial icon used by Abirached to cleverly represent the subtle ways in which the civil war affects everyday living. Due to the years of conflict, the citizens no longer have reliable amenities such as electricity. Thus, this one object conveys significant meaning in the life of Zenia's grandmother and other citizens within Beirut, as all are suffering due to wartime conditions.

The partially empty space to the right of the grandmother underscores the separation from her grandchildren, containing only chairs and the gas stove. There is an absence of parental figures (excluded in the frames), and it is also suggestive of *their* separation from their children. This separation is noticeably invoked by the over-powering black shading of the background in all three panels. The use of black, along with the white gas stove, signals other events excluded here, this speaking to the larger historical narrative of the civil war, events which would explain why there is no electricity. The whole city is therefore in darkness. The style further conveys a sense of doom and the psychological consequences of war and of a time when moving between places – only a residential block apart – results in various forms of parting, of those both alive and blocked off, and those who have died.

The use of white lines on the black background demands focus on what the pictorial icons display. Both the grandmother's facial expression and the speech bubbles exhibit a growing concern as it develops throughout the three panels and the following pages, thereby developing tension in the reader. In the first panel, the grandmother smiles, shown by the upward curved line, and her eyes seem alert but tranquil. However, in the second and third panels her increasing apprehension is overtly conveyed through her downcast eyes, with worry lines underneath and her mouth is no longer smiling, but instead is depicted as a straight line. The illustration of her hand in the third panel confirms this interpretation. Her right hand clutches

her face, further drawing attention to the troubled expression, emphasised by the lines under her eyes. These subtle details and development of narrative capture Zeina's grandmother and her unseen parents' powerlessness and inability to help young Zeina and her brother.

Narrative development in the speech bubbles also draws linguistic attention to the growing concern about safety. Where, in the first panel the grandmother pacifies the parents with a comment. "Don't worry" (Abirached 23), by the third panel her own uncertainty is fully revealed in the hesitation of her expressions indicated through the ellipses. The use of such words as "maybe" and "more or less" in the third panel display the conjunctive effect of the visual-verbal medium, reflected in the body language of the iconic character and written speech. These panels aid Abirached's contextualisation of the danger and inability of loved ones to move freely when threatened by violence in a time of extreme conflict. Because the panels do not depict Zeina's parents, the absence implies the precarity of life for ordinary civilians (especially children, as the rest of the graphic novel develops), in times of war.

Precarity relates to vulnerability, as Judith Butler tells us in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004), most notably when caused by systems and events outside the individual's control. Butler states: "That we can be injured, that others can be injured, that we are subject to death at the whim of another, are all reasons for both fear and grief" (xii). Abirached's text works to demonstrate this "fear and grief" at the hands of dominant power systems and fundamentalist groups by showing the separation caused by such violence, and the manner in which it affects daily living. The grandmother and parents separated from young Zeina and her brother are left to wonder if either group will remain safe, or survive to cross the few streets that keep them apart. Abirached's panels (specifically the ones I select for analysis) establish that injury and pain are beyond the control of ordinary citizens such as Zeina and those she lives with, and thus they are unfortunately subject to the whims of others.

Abirached's interpretation of Arabic calligraphy offers the reader not only a minimalist version of the author herself, but abstracted versions of other people, spaces and places which they inhabit. This emphasises the representative act of their narratives as they depict their pasts. The narrative therefore presents the reader with the socio-political and cultural contexts of what constituted Zeina's childhood self, and how this self was understood in relation to others around her and the turbulent spaces in which they lived. I examine *A Game for Swallows*, displaying links to Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, to demonstrate how it challenges the reader, in its stylistic renditions, narrative framing, use of icon narrator and thematic concern to pay attention

to traumatic events that shaped individual lives and, in particular, the young narrator's sense of self. Abirached provides an alternative narrative when the choice of aesthetic style is considered in relation to Western traditions. Because the narrative is told from a child's perspective, the tone is innocent and honest, strategies that drive home the personal trauma of identity formation the subject experienced. I move now to my discussion of Abirached's use of mapping to illustrate and represent her childhood trauma, and the trauma of others.

3. "Boxes of Grief":¹⁰ Mapping Trauma and Traumatic Spaces

I have selected panels from Abirached's graphic to elaborate on how her use of cartography represents public (city/suburban) and private (home) spaces and evokes the historical contexts of conditions that caused public/communal and private/individual traumas. The traumas Abirached details in *A Game for Swallows* are those that affected her as a child, and those she lived with, meaning her family and neighbours. In *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (2013), Athena Athanasiou and Judith Butler state that we may understand "dispossession inasmuch as it encompasses ways we are performatively constituted and de-constituted by and through our relation to the others among whom we live, as well as by and through particular norms that secure cultural intelligibility" (92). Abirached's text details her childhood, her own narrative, but it simultaneously illustrates the lives of others, those who lived with and around her, and it also describes the conditions which led to the traumas they suffered. Her text works to demonstrate the various ways in which she and others were dispossessed daily of safety and security. Her traumatic experience is therefore linked to the socio-cultural spaces at the time of the civil war.

In her narrative, Abirached shows that fundamentalist actions from both Christian and Muslim groups led to large-scale violence in Lebanon, which resulted in numerous subjects feeling unsafe. This focus on self-representation as it relates to others and their experiences is mentioned by Gilmore. She writes, "[such] performances draw on and produce an assembly of theories of the self and self-representation; of personal identity and one's relation to a family, a region, a nation" (157). Abirached's narrative, although speaking about specific traumatic events that influenced her conceptualisation of self, and subject formation, voices the traumas and traumatic conditions of multiple subjects. Her graphic displays how individual and communal suffering and traumas are inextricably linked together. Abirached simultaneously

¹⁰ This phrase is taken from the work of Leigh Gilmore in her article "Limit cases: Trauma, self-representation, and the jurisdiction of identity" (2016), who writes about how graphic narratives frame the identity of the traumatised subject.

creates a space in which the traumas of her icon narrator (self), the narrator's family and community, and by suggestion all subjects influenced by the civil war conflict in the geographical space, are disclosed or inferred.

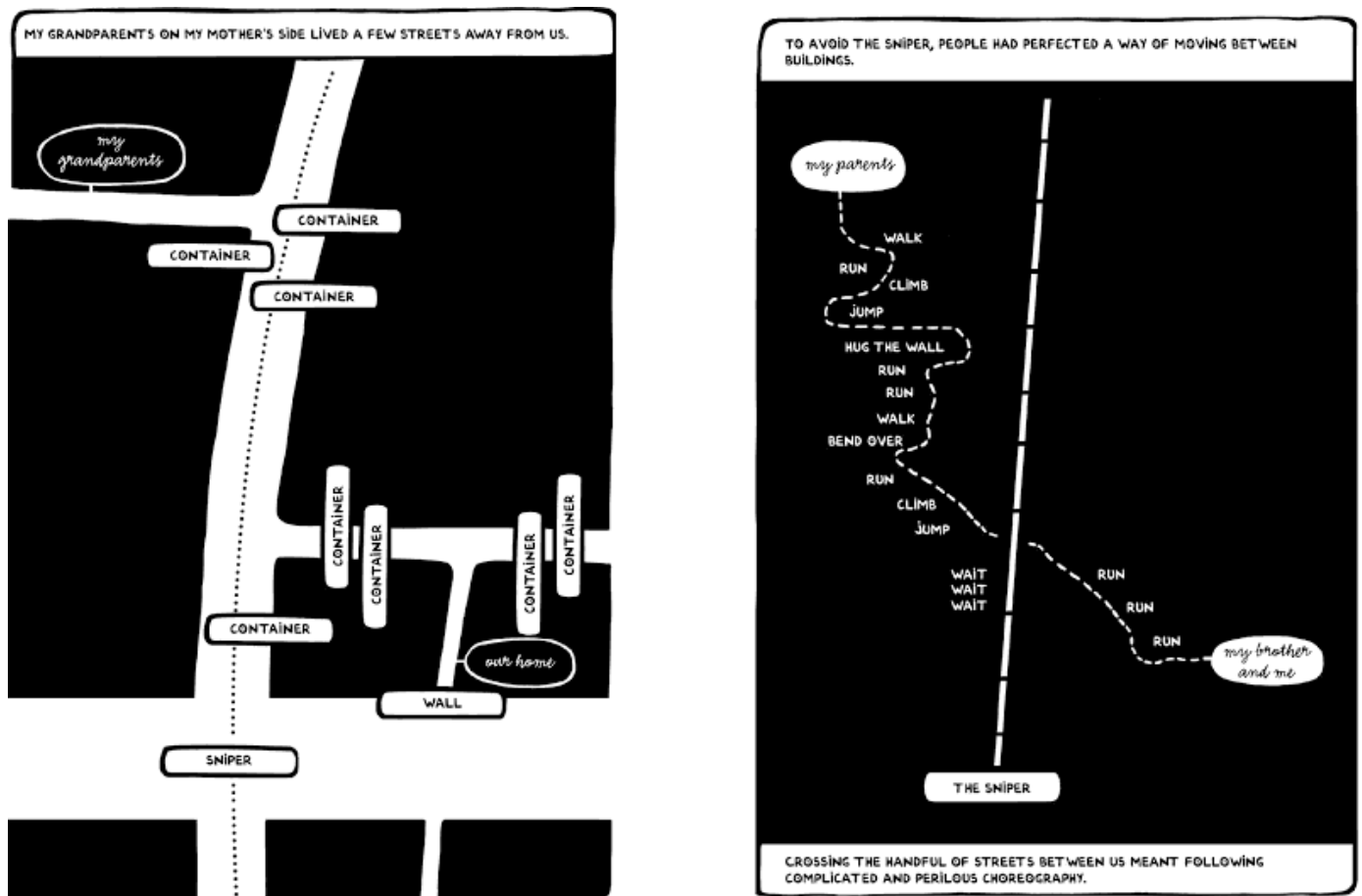
As Paul Gravett notes, "[a]utobiographical comics have that story power to admit us into the sometimes problematic or distressing lives of others, people who we may otherwise never know, and to find perspectives for our own" (88). These depictions grant alternative ways in which to envision and understand the violence and traumas subjects experience, and their relation to others who experienced suffering during this specific Middle Eastern conflict. Abirached's unique use of cartography in her text differs from graphic styles that rely on "realism" or "realistic" photography and assumptive or stereotypical media reports (this is a similar challenge to Sacco's text, which offers a traditional media representation of conflict in the Middle East). Her rendering, a deeply personal and intimate account of tumultuous and violent events, shows the influence of particular occupations and symbolises private and communal traumas.

3.1 Public Space

I will now discuss selected panels (Figure 11) to demonstrate how Abirached gives expression to her use of cartography and various diagrams, to the insidious traumatic experiences and historical contexts that defined the young child's (Zeina's) sense of self. Having previously referred to Judith Naeff's comment about "propagated amnesia", and how the work of modern Lebanese writers suggests this sense of loss of memory, she further argues that "it is up to the artists to record and preserve memories to fill the gap that official discourse has created" (7). This assertion is supported by Felix Lang, and he suggests that Abirached's graphic, like the work of many second-generation Lebanese writers, seeks to counter "[the] 'state-ordained amnesia' following the end of the largescale fighting" (490). Abirached's artistic conceptualisation and illustration uses various maps and types of mapping to demarcate trauma of the past. These graphic cartographic maps become a form of "official documentation" that records the geographical and spatial manifestations of war, and shows how this violation of place, public and private, translates into the violation of individual and psychic spaces. In this way, the account is a public and private document that "preserve[s] memory."

Human characters do not appear in the selected panels which are illustrated maps, but their presence is outspokenly evoked in the content and comparative perspectives (narrating I vs the narrated I). These perspectives are given to the reader by the author Abirached, who is the

narrating I. This means she is the “I who tells the autobiographical narrative” (Smith and Watson 72). The older woman, Abirached, is in control of what the reader is shown and told, selecting to share only specific parts of a much larger personal narrative. The younger reimagined Zeina depicted in the autographic is the narrated “I”, which is “the object ‘I’, the protagonist of the narrative, the version of self that the narrating ‘I’ chooses to constitute through recollection for the reader” (Smith and Watson 73). This is the imagined “I” through which Abirached reflects upon her history and shares her testimony.



(Figure 11: Street maps and diagrammed routes envisioned by young Zeina). (Abirached 16-17).

The maps that Abirached illustrates suggest how constant danger in a space can shape a subject in relation to the experiences of other humans (and objects). Butler comments on this effect of danger and shared trauma when she states, “[o]ne insight that injury affords is that there are others out there on whom my life depends, people I do not know and may never know. The fundamental dependency on anonymous others is not a condition that I can will away” (xii).

Abirached's childhood, and the experiences of others, was subject to the influence of those around them and the power structures which were responsible for the violence they encountered daily. Her use of mapping demonstrates a reflection on the injuries she, and others, suffered during this period and upon the conditions in which they lived. By staying together and forming a secure and supportive group they could have some respite from the onslaught, but the violence they encountered and its frequency is always out of their control.

Abirached recalls a history that reclaims in narrative form the traumas suffered by individuals such as Zeina and her family. This movement between perspectives recalls Caruth's comments that "[trauma is] experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to the consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly in nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (4). Caruth argues that when traumatic instances occur, whether punctual or chronic, victims (such as the young reimagined Zeina) are often too overwhelmed to fully comprehend the severity of the incidents. Therefore, the contrasting panels illustrate how the narrating "I", the adult artist/author, compares perspectives of space. In reconstructing her own and other's actions during the civil war, Abirached seeks to demonstrate how they negotiated the daily threats that produced trauma during her youth.

In the two selected panels, Abirached depicts how she and her family had to navigate a terrain that was constantly under fire. *A Game for Swallows* only deals with one day of the civil war, a representation of an "ordinary day", which is significant because it signals the numerous other days of her childhood during the war. But, at this point the narrated "I", the young Zeina, is not aware of future dangers they will face. Abirached confirms that she was unaware. She clarifies: "I was born in the middle of a war, and for the first ten years of my life there was war. Not having known anything else, I found the situation normal. It was only when the war stopped that I realised [...] that it is not normal to be afraid" (*Statement* 70). At first glance, the content might seem mundane – mere maps of how to get from one place (their family home) to another (their grandmother's home). However, upon closer reading the pictorial signs vividly signal the horrors of war and the constant threat of death.

Here we see (Figure 11) how Abirached approaches, plotting the traumatic spaces she defines as "normal" during her childhood. The images she illustrates, the maps, are in topographical form, meaning that it is a type of mapping which displays large-scale information, natural and man-made structures, and typically distinguishes features such as pathways, and various buildings or facilities. Just as with Abirached's maps in the two panels, topographical maps

often work in a series of two or more maps to create an entirely distinct other map. This necessity to examine multiple aspects to understand holistically the entire image across numerous panel divisions is something Abirached's text demands of the reader. Therefore, like the various forms of mapping she uses throughout *A Game for Swallows*, the reader must scrutinise the multiple aspects that had an effect on producing her childhood trauma in these specific panels to better understand the larger temporal and special dimensions.

Each map functions to provide details of routes, buildings, and man-made structures. The maps also demarcate the positions of safety and precarity, as the map on the left-hand side shows where Zeina's grandmother's home is positioned in relation to their home, while the map on the right-hand side displays the positions of Zeina's parents, after they left to visit their grandmother, and Zeina and her brother. These similar-styled maps demarcate the precarious positions that the narrator and her family live in, and are also stuck in throughout the narrative until the end. These pictorial symbols project Zeina's awareness of the danger and gulf of space between her and her brother and their family. It outlines not only the traumatic space itself, but the countless hazards that she and others need to negotiate to safely see loved ones.

Placed alongside one another, the maps present how war infringes on behaviour daily, and impacts on ordinary acts, such as visiting relatives. The two maps represent the same area in Beirut, depicted twice for the reader. However, each map differs in content, style and pictorial signs. The reader, as listener to the "testimony", is forced to linger on the detail to fully comprehend content and tone. The map on the left presents iconic markers not typically found in topographical maps to demarcate spaces. Instead of the more traditional buildings, such as shops and others, signs that would mark the suburban space where young Zeina lived, the landmarks in these maps become symbols of trauma and war. The pictorial markers are named "containers", "a wall" and "sniper". Two of the significant markers are the references to their homes: "my grandparents" and "our home". It is only after examining the icons on the map which refer to the homes in relation to "sniper" and "wall", and then in relation to the second illustrated panel with "containers" in the first map, that significance is established. This shows that these are objects that provide cover from sniper fire – a constant threat of death every time the expanse between either of the homes had to be navigated.

The sniper's position and his line of fire is illustrated on the black and white map (left) with a white bubble and black border. The straight dotted line symbolises the middle lines of the road, but also has the implication of the straight line a bullet may travel once fired by the sniper. This

meaning is emphasised by the redrawing of this line of fire in the panel on the right. In this panel on the right-hand side, the line is more pronounced, with longer, broader straight lines, this time in white on a black background. That the child assumed this was a “normal” situation, as Abirached notes above, is illustrated in the deceptively naïve drawings which suggests the swerving route (right), which is described as “choreography”, in the bottom narrational text in which Zeina speaks to the reader, taking us from one destination to another, in contrast to the straight line. This results in a tragic irony, as retrospective testimony and illustrating maps in a simplistic style instils an unpleasant understanding of the dangerous conditions the narrator, her family and community had to live through at the time of the civil war.

The left-hand panel is captioned with the written narrative text that offers a description of what occurs in the panel. This single panel’s inscription reads: “[M]y grandparents on my mother’s side lived a few streets up from us” (Abirached 16). Here, the narrator offers not only possible graphic coordinates for the map, but also gives a genealogical chart by adding “on my mother’s side”. The maps demarcate the homes, the distance between them and the dangers experienced by young Zeina and others. This familial link helps to establish how her traumatic experience from childhood is related to the experiences of her grandmother “a few streets up from them” and her larger community, showing how the sites they visited and the residents’ positions are specifically located, both spatially and genealogically. The pictorial signs assist the reader in understanding the maps, thereby demonstrating the distance between relatives and others, during a period of heightened danger, on the day and night in which the graphic narrative takes place.

Placed in conjunction with the panel on the left, the pictorials in the panel on the right provide more information about the suburban landscape. However, the precarious nature of daily living is reinforced by the written text on the right, most notably by the repetition of “run run run” and then “wait wait wait”, followed by actions such as “run[ning]”, “climb[ing]”, bending over” and “hug[ging] the wall” (Abirached 17). Each of these actions displays the danger they lived with daily, and the precision of movement required when navigating spaces and crossing the street to visit others. The frenetic and perilous journey demonstrates how each action and movement was carefully planned to avoid the threat of death. The two maps which alternate the way the space is represented in the text allow the reader to form a sensible entirety of the traumatic area. The travel demarcated on the map is representative of the daily, or “ordinary” nature of such a hazardous journey.

The iconic marker of the sniper signals a particular, single, defined (visible) threat to life, but the icon of “the wall” suggests even more symbolic meaning. By stating that it was “the wall”, emphasis is placed on the definite article, where singular, for example, suggests the means of survival as of crucial significance. One of the actions which aided daily survival was “hug the wall” (Abirached 17). Here, the life of those making the trip back and forth depended crucially on “hugging” *the* wall for safety. The wall that young Zeina and others were required to “hug” for safety distinguishes the boundary, being borders that separated safety from danger and life from death. Just as with the opening panels of the autographic, where containers which marked the eastern side of Beirut from the western side (also called the Green line), such as sandbags, and oil drums, are shown as riddled with bullet holes and forming a demarcation line, the wall is also deliberately outlined and displayed to present the reader with the man-made structures which functioned as devices of safety.

The residents are reliant on intimate objects around them for protection from extremist violence on either side. They need to cling to the wall (and other objects) as they cling to their own lives to complete the journey safely. For this panel, there are two captions of narrative text. The first says, “[t]o avoid the sniper, people had perfected a way of moving between buildings” (Abirached 17) and, this caption emphasises how their free movement is constantly undermined by the threat of death. This movement between buildings is displayed by the dotted, non-linear line (right) exhibiting the haphazard movement between spaces and objects. The precarity of the journey is reinforced by the bottom caption, which reads “crossing the handful of streets between us meant following complicated and perilous choreography” (Abirached 17). The juxtaposition of the words “perilous” and “choreography” ratify the tragic irony of what seems to be an ordinary route that instead has become an intricate collection of movements to avoid the threat of death and violence. These precise movements become complex and hazardous to young Zeina, and others who navigate the streets, because to get even a single movement wrong might have meant death.

Abirached, in an address, explains, “Because we could not cross the street, it was necessary to be crafty, so we passed through buildings, through inside courtyards, through breaches made between buildings, the shops, to be able to walk alongside the street without ever being outside” (*Statement 7*). She later adds, “We had to wait for the right moment ... and then run ... a short walk of two streets could take half an hour. My grandparents lived very close to us, but when I was a child I thought that their apartment was at the other end of the city” (*Statement 7*). The expanse between homes is thus measured not in meters but instead by the traumatic undertaking

of the journey itself, with the goal being to circumvent danger or death. These movements became ingrained in Zeina's and others' means of survival, and by representing her past in this stylistic manner Abirached demonstrates how intricate and perilous their daily lives were during the civil war.

These maps function as one example of how the narrator reconstructs the dispossession of her freedom of movement, and the freedom of those within her community through violence and trauma. In using maps to demarcate spaces of trauma, the narrator reflects on how such spaces were understood by those who lived there. A written text which frames these panels and offers a suggestive context for their reading is described by Sabin as "[appearing] in a box at the top of the panel, usually to introduce a situation depicted within" (5). The written text and the pictorial parallels in the pair of panels present the reader with a way in which to understand the traumas of war, as depicted by someone who survived it. The fact that such acts were a daily occurrence can be read in terms of Dohrenwend's comment that hazardous threats are "uncontrollable life-threatening, physically exhausting, [and] extremely disruptive of the person's usual activities" (n.p.). Zeina's deliberate act of mapping the events and spaces in which her childhood traumas were induced, laying it bare, and displaying its connection to the lived space, is examined by Croisy, who notes that "trauma and history [can be seen as] an intermingled web in the midst of which individual lives can become interconnected" (95). This thinking, thus, allows for some comprehension of how these representations of traumatic experiences are used throughout Abirached's autographic.

What becomes a dominant feature throughout Abirached's narrative, in terms of mapping and the various diagrams and illustrations, is the way in which she uses square lines to indicate the limitations enforced, on numerous levels, by the conflict. This framing recalls Whitlock's arguments in Art Spiegelman's graphic narrative *Maus*, where she notes that this genre allows one to sort through grief and violence of the past because "comics offer a unique mediation of trauma in 'boxes of grief'" (968). It was in fact this phrase which inspired my section heading. Abirached's panels resemble boxes in which her traumatic past is creatively contained and retrospectively organised. Abirached supports this by noting about her style at a symposium that "the bubble is an illusion. The war is everywhere. It invades everything" (The New York Comic and Picture Symposium, online). Her narrative allows her to "impose her trauma again", but as Caruth noted, this grants her control as to how to present memories and liberate the mind from traumas.

Subjects such as Zeina, as children, lack true agency or control over such dangerous spaces and events which causes trauma. As adults and artist/authors, however, they can give voice to the unsaid through their creative expressions. Narratives such as these bring awareness to the many vulnerable subjects, in diverse contexts, across the globe. The icon narrator in *A Game for Swallows* conveys a sense of this vulnerability. Butler's ideas about vulnerability can be seen in the ways in which the narrator describes her daily traumas, one which communicates "fear and grief", which arises from the threatening situations. Each text, therefore, while narrating the life of its author, simultaneously calls attention to the lives of those also profoundly affected by daily violence and limitations.

3.2 Private Space

The vulnerability of life is implied in all the demarcations and illustrations of space in *A Game for Swallows*, but evocatively so in the panels that capture Zeina's home – the private space (Figure 12). In this series of panels, eight of the nine individual squares represent the house, interior rooms, the living room around which the other rooms were built and the adjacent street. Instead of a topographical map of the suburb, Abirached focuses on the interior of the home and shows how the conflict invaded private spaces, and thus how public violence affected private spaces.

She makes use of architectural design, illustrated again in a simplistic style, to present her home space. The style is simplistic, to represent the sense of how an innocent child would understand the loss of dimension in her world. The maps that proliferate in the earlier part of the graphic differ from these framed squares now presented to the reader. The progressively diminishing living – the safe space of the rooms inside – are depicted as white blocks set against a black background. As the panels progress, the squares in white begin to lessen, this being symbolic of the effects of the war, which was in the public space, and now moves into the private space of the home, one room at a time.

This stylistic choice emphasises the safety of the white rooms against the encroaching danger suggested by the constantly enlarging black background. The first square contains only written text: "With the street barricade just under the windows, the living room was soon deserted. Bit by bit the bedrooms, kitchen, and dining room were sealed off..." (Abirached 36). As the reader's eye is guided from left to right, following the progression of the panels, the text offers an understanding of how each room of her childhood home was slowly lost to the effects of war. The slow progression of panels, which adds to the representation of the long-lasting effects

of war, moves from a representation of her original home (safe space), the second panel to display the eventual consequences of war in the last panel. Here, the repeated squares act as pictorial signs of her childhood home which give focus to the loss of private space, safety and freedom. It also represents the chronological loss of safety, as the traumatic dangers and the places in which they could occur increased.

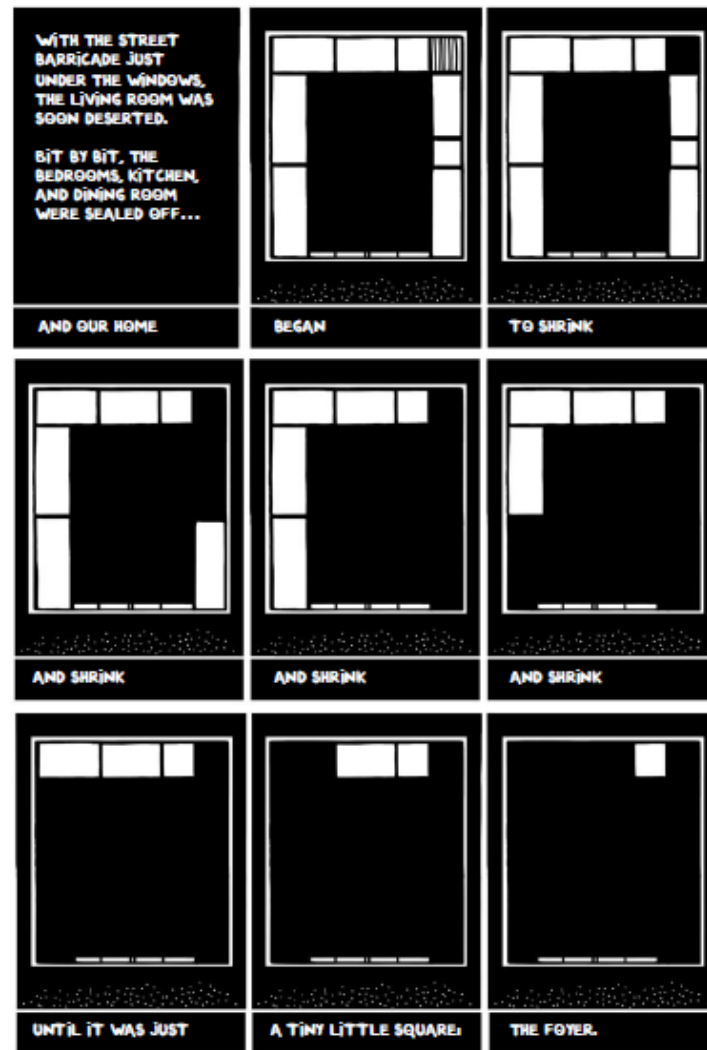


Figure 12. Mapping of her childhood home. (Abirached 36).

This loss of the home, private space, as it also began to exhibit the marks and effects of war, is developed by the text written in the panels. This narrative assists the reading of how the effects of war undermined the safety of Zeina, her family and neighbours. Unable to escape the violence of the civil war, they were forced to relinquish rooms, one at a time. The depiction of this loss becomes mesmerising in Abirached's text, as the safe spaces are surrendered until only the foyer remains. The growth of the black, and disappearance of the white squares, is

haunting in its effect of drawing the reader in through their progression. The panels depict this on a literal level, unfolding before the reader's eyes. Parts of her home, and therefore aspects of her lived experience, became no longer accessible and therefore have been replaced by spaces of threat. Their home has become similarly cut off and marked by boundaries and barricades, like the ones which are shown throughout the autographic to represent the spread of war.

All the parts of their lives had to be enacted within one solitary space in her childhood home, as the other rooms no longer offered the safety from violence they once did. The slow movement is emphasised as the narrator places the written words one-by-one within each separate panel, gradually displaying the loss of another point of safety. Unlike her earlier autographic, when Abirached presented the loss of public space, here the privacy of the home is deliberately shown as under unrelenting threat. This forfeiture becomes perhaps more sinister, due to both its slow progress and because it represents spaces which are typically removed from warfare. It is this stylistic representation of loss which allows the narrator to demonstrate the impact of childhood trauma. The repetition of "and shrink", like a children's rhyme, signifies the loss, and establishes how much Zeina, her family and community have lost during the civil war.

This loss of private space, and the illustration that public violence bled into private areas of living, which resulted in increasingly intimate traumas, support the "[v]isual images [and do] more than *represent* scenes and experiences of the past: they can communicate an emotional or bodily experience to us by evoking our own emotional and bodily memories. They *produce* an effect in the viewer, speaking *from* the body's sensations" (Szep 2014; emphasis in original). In this sequence of panels, the "emotional or bodily experience" communicated to the reader by the narrator is one of the deficiency, of public and private space, and of safety in general. The forced diminishment, anxiety and entrapment of Abirached's childhood trauma is communicated evocatively in these panels to evoke painful sensations in the reader.

Although these panels (Figures 11 and 12) represent the trauma and loss of Abirached's childhood, and in the lives of those she lived with, they also show how lives continued to be lived, regardless of the limitations placed on them. Although they were left with only a single room of safety, the foyer, in Abirached's building neighbours all came in to seek shelter whenever shelling occurred, as is depicted throughout the text. This imbued the singular room with a sense of fraternity and safety, as the children are visited by, and cared for, by various

neighbours arriving separately. Their home became a safe haven for them and their neighbours, as all were looking to escape the violence and effects of war. But their vulnerability was shared, despite their age or gender, and each subject was rendered powerless, dispossessed of freedom and safety.

This links to Butler's statement that "we make ourselves, if we do, with others, and only on the condition that there are forms of collectivity that are struggling against the norms in similar or convergent ways" (Athanasίου and Butler 67). She later adds, "that 'my' struggle and 'your' struggle are not the same, there is some bond that can and must be established for either of us to take the kind of risks we do in the face of norms that threaten us either with unintelligibility or over-intelligibility" (Athanasίου and Butler 67-68). The daily risks that each member of Zeina's family and their neighbours face are those simply associated with living. They continue to live their lives despite the unyielding threat of death. By coming into the foyer and home of Zeina, the neighbours and her family maintain a kind of community, regardless of the violence outside slowly making its way to them. Abirached's text shows them cooking, sharing stories of the past and hopes for the future together, all the while making sure that young Zeina and her brother are safe. Although each neighbour, be they man or woman, has their own struggle during the war, they share a bond and therefore take risks to be together in the face of the "unintelligibility" of death.

In presenting the reader with this unique and personal understanding of her lived experience, Abirached creates room for her testimony to be understood by others who act as listeners to her traumatic tale. The use of her specific style of mapping to convey pictorial codes functions as an "intertextual code, by making the sources of various visual registers significant in relation to the narrative" (Postema 11). These various instances of mapping that occur throughout the narrative function to relay to the reader various symbols of signification to draw parallels for emphasis. Thus, the reader is forced to pay attention to the personal (childhood) details the narrator adds to these maps and spaces.

Abirached's autographic "[r]egisters the shapes and names of streets and houses which have disappeared or are threatened with disappearance by the redrawing of urban space; they register dates of deaths and massacres which are passed over in silence in the hope that they might be of use in a future process of coming to terms with the past" (Lang 491). Her narrative is more than a detailing of trauma, it is also a personal memoir and a record/biography of her family and community. This memoir, "situate[s] [young Zeina] in a social environment" (Smith and

Watson 274) with the focus of the narrative placed on her and others, rather than functioning as exclusively her testimony. This reclamation of names, dates, bodies and spaces which were lost during the conflict, her childhood, is an act of resistance, utterance and healing which allows her to say what was previously obscured.

Conclusion

In summation, this chapter focused on Abirached's *A Game for Swallows*. I examined how the author details the memories of her childhood experiences during wartime and the threat of death at the hands of extremist or fundamentalist powers. I suggested that Abirached's goal in her text is to attempt to develop catharsis through the utterance of trauma and traumatic moments, to make visible traumatic experiences. Her aesthetic style and thematic content are used to relay her traumatic experiences, allowing them to emerge. This means that trauma which was once "too close" to comprehend, is now being spoken and worked through.

My discussion of the illustrative style of Abirached's text, making use of two panels, demonstrated how such aesthetics are used to display a cultural context representing specific subjects. Following this, I developed my analysis of Abirached's autographic and selected panels from it to discuss in the use of topographical and architectural maps and diagrams in *A Game for Swallows* to establish the loss of public and private spaces, and the trauma which resulted. This trauma and loss were caused by conflict on both sides of the civil war. In examining these panels, I argued that by mapping the areas which generated childhood trauma, Abirached could better utter what was previously unknown, or unspeakable. Her autographic serves as an expression of bearing witness to her childhood trauma, and the trauma of those around her, her family and community.

Her work puts emphasis on "[t]he ability to use the space of the page to interlace or overlay different temporalities, to place pressure on linearity and conventional notions of sequence, and progression, [and for this] reason comics can address [the] self powerfully to historical and life narrative. And if comics is about mapping, it is also about bodies – locating them in space and time" (Chute 297). Abirached's narrative in its use of various types of mapping and diagrams indeed seeks to map and place bodies in space and time, in some cases a space and time which threatens to be forgotten. Her text locates a child's remembrance of traumatic events and circumstances through a historical lens (space and time) that focuses on a particular day in the life of the icon narrator. Therefore, in mapping the spaces of her childhood, she is simultaneously mapping the bodies that were, and have been forever affected by the trauma of

war and the effects of fundamentalism. Her autographic serves as a platform for the sorrows and joys forgotten, suppressed or ignored in public and private spaces.

Therefore, her narrative focus is, as Lang states, “to [re]construct a temporal and spatial framework of reference to contain the experience of war which remains essentially inexplicable” (488). Her graphic narrative, therefore, may offer itself up as a memorial for the war, to become a symbol of what happened and demonstrate how various individuals were affected by it. *A Game for Swallows* is a text which creates the space through which, and in which, discussions of trauma can be presented and understood in retrospect. Her personal narrative offers an intimate, alternative history to the one shown by media, or understood historically. In the next chapter I move to examine two graphic narratives dealing with trauma induced by the Rwandan genocide.

Chapter 4

‘Acting Out’ and ‘Working Through’ Wartime Trauma in Two Graphic Novels about the 1994 Rwandan Genocide

Introduction

In this chapter, I conclude my project’s examination of personal and collective trauma in graphic texts, with a contrasted reading of two texts about the 1994 Rwandan genocide.¹¹ I continue to explore the politics of narration and aesthetics through the lens of trauma studies, drawing on specific concepts such as Dominick LaCapra’s notions of “acting out” and “working through”. In this chapter I consider how the representations communicate insights into histories that produced ethnic and social divisions/conflict in the region, as well as engendering the immediate events and aftermath of the genocide in individual and communal lives.

The texts I deal with are Jean Phillippe Stassen’s journalistic, biographic fiction graphic narrative *Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda* (2006)¹² and Rupert Bazambanza’s biographic *Smile Through the Tears: The Story of the Rwandan Genocide* (2007). Although Stassen’s text is biographic fiction, narrated from a Hutu perspective, the content is based on Stassen’s journalistic research. In “Biographical Fiction to Historiographic Metafiction: Rewriting Clara Shumann” (2011), Julia Novak defines biographic fiction as “texts which transgress the boundaries and renegotiate the relationship between history and fiction” (145), adding later that “such texts question the knowability of an individual life and of history as a whole, as they reflect upon the partial narratives of life writing and consequently, their own status as literature” (157). Stassen’s text therefore demonstrates a mode of biographic writing which attempts to account for, and represent, multiple lives and historic facts. Bazambanza, who is a Tutsi, narrates this story on behalf of fellow Tutsi, Rose Rwanga, the sole survivor of a family killed during the massacre. As a result, both texts offer interesting ways to compare and contrast the representation of events before, during and after the genocide. While Bazambanza’s graphic illustrates a more strictly linear, historical, timeline of events, Stassen’s is non-chronological.

¹¹ The 1994 Rwandan genocide was the horrific act of ethnic cleansing led by the Hutus against the Tutsis, and moderate Hutus too. I specify the 1994 genocide because it was not the first act of its kind in Rwanda. According to Karin Samuel, in 1959 Hutu leaders came to power in what was known as the Rwandan Revolution (Samuel 8), and this led to the first act of violence and purging against the Tutsi population. Hence my specific reference to 1994 in the title of the chapter.

¹² *Deogratias* was originally published in Belgium (in French) under the same title in 2000. In my study, I work with the English translation published in 2006, hereafter referred to as *Deogratias*.

My inquiry further considers how each text seems to challenge popular Western depictions of the Rwandan genocide and the nation's history.¹³ Each text works to display the suffering of African bodies without commodifying them or depicting them as savages. Both graphics offer a post-colonial critique of European interference in Africa, the aftermaths of colonial policy, and global responses to the massacre.

I have selected these two graphic narratives because, to my knowledge, at the time of writing these texts are two of three productions that represent the genocide in a graphic narrative. The third text I am aware of is a two-part novel by Congolese writer, Patrick Masioni, titled *Descente en enfer* and *Le camp de la vie* (2008), not available in English translation. Further, I have chosen both texts for the analysis because they offer alternative representations of traumatic experiences (Hutu and Tutsi), and their artist/author's nationalities bring interesting dimensions to a reading of the narratives. Stassen is Belgian, from the country which overthrew German colonial rule in 1916 to recolonise Rwanda with an ideology similar to that of Germany, which favoured pro-Tutsi policies. Bazambanza, as mentioned above, is a Tutsi from Rwanda. Thus, the two graphics offer contrasting perspectives in their representations that attempt to deal with historical, transgenerational trauma (Stassen) and the lived experience of brutal, relentless traumatic violence and victimisation (Bazambanza). Both narratives address the trauma and experiences suffered by both ethnic groups, the Tutsis and the Hutus.

To clarify, although discourses about the Rwandan genocide generally grant the status of victim to the Tutsis and the status of perpetrator to the Hutus, this binary is blurred in the selected narratives, as I will demonstrate. The texts present the complexity of being labelled perpetrators and/or victims, as in these "narratives of [inflicted] trauma the parties [Hutu and Tutsi] label each other aggressors and themselves victims" (Kosicki 12). Both groups have cause to think of themselves as victims and the other as perpetrator, and so the narratives demonstrate a challenge to delineations regarding the genocide. Karin Samuel, when speaking about Hutu militias, suggests that perpetrators, like victims (from either side), were mostly civilians, "ordinary people [who took] up arms and [joined] up with the organised death squads to kill neighbours and friends" (75). Each text illustrates the legacy of violence in Rwanda, the circumstances that led to the genocide, as well as the harrowing brutalities and traumas induced

¹³ It should be noted that Western cultural productions produced outside of Rwanda, such as the films *Shooting Dogs* (2005) by Michael Caton-Jones, *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) by Terry George, memoirs by General Romeo Dallaire's *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (2004) and Phillip Gourevitch's *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: Stories from Rwanda* (2000) are examples of other representations that deal with the genocide.

by the event in perspectives from both sides of the conflict. However, each narration attracts attention to the plight of subjects/characters without sensationally aestheticizing violence.

I will present a comparative reading that focuses on the Hutu and Tutsi perspectives represented in each text. To further my interpretation, I concentrate on pictorial details and textual events that recall Rwandan history, and the mechanisms/propaganda used by political powers to influence or indoctrinate citizens. To this end, I have selected panels that depict the role of Rwandan colonial history, and the history of ethnic violence, to demonstrate their causal link to the 1994 genocide. My analysis will alternate between the two texts, discussing representational strategies in each in relation to specific panels in a horizontal manner. This allows for a focus on the illustration and narration of the traumatic violence represented in each text.

As for existing scholarship on the chosen texts, *Deogratias* has received academic attention, notably in the work of Jade Munslow Ong, Michelle Bumatay, Hannah Warman and Suzanne Keen. These critics read Stassen's narrative as a critique of Rwanda's historical past, and evaluate the use of stylistic features to depict a survivor/perpetrator experience of the genocide. My contrasting reading engages with these criticisms. *Smile Through the Tears*, however, has received minimal attention, mostly in passing in the work of Ong and Michel Chaney. They refer to the graphic's unique style, approach to narrating trauma and its pedagogical function. While my interpretation follows a similar line of inquiry, I hope the contrasting analysis of both graphic texts will add to the existing debate. Paying attention to both perspectives (victim and perpetrator), I suggest, as I will demonstrate, each text evocatively depicts how propagandistic rhetoric and mythologization shaped the ethnic genocide. I now elaborate on this Chapter's theoretical outline.

1. Theoretical Framework and Chapter Outline

In this chapter, my examination of the chosen graphics and the representation of trauma develops primarily from approaches suggested by trauma theorist Dominick LaCapra. In *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001)¹⁴ he defines and discusses the notions of "acting out" and "working through", with reference to the Holocaust as mechanisms of response to traumatic pasts. His theorisation, in turn, is informed by the ideas of both Sigmund Freud and Walter Benjamin in their work on trauma. Benjamin's concepts of *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* in

¹⁴ *Writing History, Writing Trauma* was originally published in 2001. I use the 2014 edition with a new preface by LaCapra. In it, he reflects on developments in his work and in trauma studies since the first publication.

particular shape LaCapra's assertions. LaCapra explains that "[t]rauma and its post-traumatic acting out, reliving, or reenactment are modes of *Erlebnis* 'experience' that are often radically disorienting and chaotic" (22). To this thought he adds, "[w]orking through [trauma] is a mode of *Erfahrung*" (22), suggesting that acting out in relation to trauma appears in moments which

[threaten] to disarticulate relations, confuse self and other, collapse all distinctions, including that between past and present, are related to transference and prevail in trauma and in post-traumatic acting out in which one is haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes – scenes in which the past returns and the future is blocked or fatalistically caught in a melancholic feedback loop (21)

"Acting out" differs, but relates to what LaCapra defines as "working through" traumatic moments. He describes the process:

Working though is an articulatory practice: to the extent one works through trauma (as well as transference relations in general), one is able to distinguish between past and present and recall in memory that something happened to one (or one's people) back then while realising that one is living here and now with openings to the future (21-22)

In "acting out", the subject has yet to "work through" the trauma or take steps to do so. When "acting out" occurs, the subject is repeatedly and relentlessly haunted by the past in visions, nightmares and re-imaginings of the traumatic scenes. These psychological manifestations may prevent the subject from moving past the traumas, and he/she may enact that same trauma (even unintentionally) onto others around them. "Acting out", therefore, may take on many manifestations, but LaCapra outlines how the predominant signs of trauma evoke such effects in a subject thereby preventing them from assimilating the past and entirely understanding past events.

"Working through", however, counters the ways in which "acting out" affects subjects. Subjects who are working through their trauma, for example, in discussions about their past, create a narrative of the trauma. LaCapra also suggests that the use of forms of healing, such as creative writing and drawing, different from methods suggested by Western psychiatry, may allow better understanding of the traumatic events the subjects were a part of and create a coherent and chronological narrative of their past which differs from their present. Thus, by utilising various forms of expression, subjects who work through their trauma can process and prevent the visions, nightmares and traumatic scenes of those who are "acting out". This would also allow subjects to grasp what happened, contextualise and chronologically order events, and in so doing aid the management of the traumatic event.

There is evidence of “acting out” and “working through” methods at work in both chosen narratives, as I will illustrate. For example, in *Deo gratias* the protagonist, Deo gratias, is unable to escape the past and his complicity in the brutalities of the genocide. He constantly relives or acts out the events which traumatised him. *Smile Through the Tears* is a biographic narrative constructed by a survivor who, in “working through” his trauma, structures a comprehensible and sequential timeline of the events of the genocide in which he was directly involved. This creative expression in the form of a graphic novel allows Bazambanza to process the traumas of his personal past. The project is therefore cathartic. I assert that in the context of this thesis, this cathartic action should be understood as a response to trauma, as a manner through which traumatic memories and lived experiences can be sorted through, ordered and shared, to be better understood. This allows artists/authors, such as Bazambanza, to utilise a form of art to capture the lived experience of violence, and therefore begin to come to terms with such horrific events. He can work through and place to rest his traumatic memories on the page. My reading therefore engages with portrayals of “acting out” and “working through”, as suggested by LaCapra.

As I have mentioned, the texts bear indications of post-colonial critique in their approach to “the effects, [both physical and psychological], of colonisation on cultures and societies” (Ashcroft, Griffin and Tiffin 186). Colonial politics regarding ethnicity directly affected divisions within Rwanda. For example, both Hutu and Tutsi citizens were compelled to carry identity cards which publicly demarcated their ethnicity. This colonial policy was largely responsible for developing the hierarchical power structure which stigmatised the Hutus, with Tutsis being favoured by colonial policy due to their lighter skin. These mechanisms are often cited as the cause of antagonism and ethnic violence. Post-colonial trauma theorist Stef Craps, in her text *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (2013), challenges predominantly Western paradigms of understanding and studying trauma, arguing that trauma is often assumed as something universal, and therefore easily understood: “[i]f trauma theory is to live up to its promise of cross cultural ethical engagement, traumatic colonial histories not only have to be acknowledged more fully, on their own terms, and in their own terms, but they also have to be considered in relation to traumatic metropolitan or First World Histories” (6). Craps contests modes of thinking that ignore historical trauma caused by colonialism in spaces such as Rwanda, where an event such as the genocide was the result of a multitude of former traumas and effects.

Another trauma critic, Lauren Berlant, referenced by Craps, promotes a mode of understanding trauma which develops from “a model of *suffering*, whose etymological articulation of pain and patience draws its subject less as an effect of an act of violence and more as an effect of a general atmosphere of it, peppered by acts [...] but not contained by the presumption that trauma carries, that it is an effect of a single scene of violence of toxic taxonomy” (338; emphasis in the original). Berlant’s assertions add to Craps’ work. They demonstrate that trauma should also be understood as caused by a chronic element, that of numerous “acts” which result in a climate of suffering. This manner of examining trauma evokes the work of Erikson, mentioned in my Second Chapter. Here, colonialism, its ideologies and consequences, can be examined as the chronic root cause of the ethnic violence in Rwanda.

Each of these critics offers an alternative approach to Western interpretations of trauma that neglect colonial histories (toxic violence) and their role in subsequent traumatic/violent events. Both *Deogratias* and *Smile Through the Tears* represent, in part, the legacy of colonial history and its influence on Rwandans. It is thus crucial to view historical traumas in the context of these narratives through a (post-colonial) lens. In my view, Berlents’ thoughts on trauma that “carries” and the “violence of toxic taxonomy” are essential to understanding the genocides as atrocious consequences largely caused by the chronic effects of Rwanda’s colonial past. Each graphic narrative offers an alternative viewpoint on a long history of political trauma and its effects.

To define genocide, I make use of Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn’s definition, which differs from the one offered by the United Nations Geneva Convention¹⁵ in being more inclusive. Genocide, according to Chalk and Jonassohn, is “a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group, as that group and membership in it are defined by the perpetrators” (93). Their definition does not only refer to nationality, ethnicity, race or religion, but is inclusive of “groups that have no verifiable reality outside the mind of the perpetrators” (Chalk and Jonassohn 93). This means that those simply seen as “enemies” or “threats to the nation”, without belonging to a particular defined group outside of those terms, can also be included as victims in acts of genocide. This definition is key to understanding the events of 1994. Although the genocide was largely aimed at the systematic decimation of the Tutsi population in Rwanda, it also resulted in the deaths of many moderate Hutu citizens who did not side with the dominant power or take part in the genocide, as the

¹⁵ The Genocide Convention of 9 December 1948 defined the term as acts “committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic racial or religious group” (Chalk and Jonassohn 92).

selected graphic narratives demonstrate. Finally, my theoretical interpretative framework makes use of ideas from psychologists Karen Brounéus and Piotr H. Kosicki, who studied the effects of genocide on the population a decade and more after the event.

The Chapter is divided into three parts. In the first, I discuss the titles of the two texts. Each is symbolically significant and serves as framing devices for its thematic content and characterisation. In the second part, I analyse how each text represents Rwandan history, illustrating its colonial influences and also the ethnic violence that preceded the 1994 genocide. Since each graphic text features the history of Rwanda in evocative ways, it is crucial to examine historical traumas and their causes. I demonstrate how this history, and its narration, is contrasted in the specific panels I have chosen from each text. Essential to my interpretation here is also how the issue of an understanding of past violence and ethnic mythologizing feature in the narratives. In the third part, I again concentrate on panels from both graphics to demonstrate how each author presents and represents the violence of genocide in pictorial illustration and written text.

Aesthetic stylings and representation shape the tone of each graphic text. *Deogratias* uses direct and insensitive language throughout, while capturing pictorial images which depict the atrocities in frightening, haunting ways. *Smile Through the Tears* relies extensively on a pedagogical tone. The illustration style uses sharply drawn outlines, while presenting pictorials without refinement. This illustrative technique underscores the harsh reality of the historical event. Although violence is central to both narratives, in my opinion, neither sensationalises the brutalities of the massacre. Nevertheless, the traumatic events are strikingly portrayed – for both victim and perpetrator. I move now to provide a brief plot summary of each text before proceeding to the first part of my analysis.

Jean Phillippe Stassen's *Deogratias* was originally published in Belgium in 2000. As I mentioned in the Introduction, the text falls into the category of "*bande dessinée de reportage*" (Bumtay and Warman 332; emphasis in the original) or the genre of journalistic graphic novels. *Deogratias* follows a single character, a teenage Hutu boy named Deogratias. It illustrates events before, during and after the genocide, but (as I have mentioned) the narration is fractured and non-linear. The text portrays the psychological trauma of the boy, while also displaying the traumatic experiences of community members – Hutus and Tutsis. The narrative examines the traumatic repercussions of the genocidal acts on perpetrators, those who committed or condoned violent acts. This framing allows for an interpretation of Deogratias' personal

internalised trauma, representing also those who have not been considered victims but who may have been affected by mass violence. I also consider how Deogratias interacts with other fictional, allegorical figures. These figures function as Stassen's representation of specific Rwandan and international (Hutu, RPF and France) bodies who were a part of the event. The narrative begins in the present, after the genocide, and retraces the past in overlapping temporalities allowing for a conflation of time and space throughout the presentation of the text.

Deogratias encounters different people who survived the genocide and survived. Among them are Julius, who was a leader of a militia of Hutu men, a French Sergeant who failed to prevent any of the violence and, in fact, protected culpable Hutus such as Julius, Bosco, who was a Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) soldier and Brother Phillip, a priest who knew Deogratias and the two young Tutsi women, half-sisters Appollinaria and Benina. It is for the deaths of Appollinaria and Benina that Deogratias feels responsible.

Throughout Deogratias is addicted to the local banana beer called "urwagwa" (Stassen 20). This addiction is a coping mechanism to deal with the traumas he witnessed and in which he participated. Whenever he is without the banana beer, Deogratias is ceaselessly haunted by memories of the past. In these hauntings, he is depicted as a type of transmogrified dog. Deogratias proceeds to poison Julius, the French Sergeant and Bosco with a chemical used to treat parasites on cowhides. In the retrospective part of the narrative, before the genocide, Deogratias attempts to win the affection of each of the half-sisters, succeeding only with Benina. During this time he meets Brother Phillip and encounters the French Sergeant. The night the genocide begins, Deogratias and Benina have a sexual encounter, separating her from her half-sister. To prevent Julius and a Hutu militia from searching his home and finding Benina, Deogratias joins Julius' group. Benina escapes and is reunited with Appollinaria, but this same group later discovers both women and proceeds to rape and murder them. It is shown that Deogratias took part in these horrific actions. Upon fleeing the militia to retrieve Appollinaria's and Benina's bodies, he finds them being chewed and attacked by dogs. Bosco, who also comes across this scene, shoots the animals. This entangled past and present narration conveys a vivid sense of the inseparability of the trauma which haunts Deogratias, drives him to kill and then culminates in his eventual arrest by police for murder at the end of the text.

Rupert Bazambanza's *Smile Through the Tears* offers a counter-perspective from the perspective of Tutsis or victims. This (bio)graphic focuses on the troubles of the Rwanga family

and their community. The text exhibits the insidious nature of the ethnic-based violence in which the Rwangas' neighbours turned on them and took part in the mass violence. Therefore, the narrative allows for an examination of the aesthetics that demonstrate how public trauma and violence seeped into the private family space. Bazambanza is himself a Tutsi and is a survivor of the genocide, though this is not his story. Bazambanza, in a foreword to the text, states that he wrote the narrative about Rose to "honour [the] woman's calm courage" (Preface 1), paying tribute to those lost and those who survived. The narrative illustrates the lives of the Rwanga family before and during the genocide. At their school, the children of the family are educated about the differences between themselves (Tutsis) and their Hutu neighbours. The parents, Rose and Charles, are subjected to foul language and abuse from Hutu neighbours and other citizens when they go to the market.

The narrative contains moments of exposition where Charles explains Rwanda's colonial history to his son, Degroot, which resulted in the 1959 slaughtering of Tutsis that shaped the political climate of the 1994 genocide. The text follows events as they transpired historically, recounting where the Rwangas were when President Juvénal Habyarimana's plane was shot down on 6 April 1994 – the event that functioned as a catalyst for the terror and trauma of the ensuing days. The Rwangas eventually end up in a church sanctuary known as CELA ("the Centre d'éducation de langues africaines") (Bazambanza 40). This provides them with temporary safety but, unfortunately, the area is overtaken by Hutu soldiers and civilians who proceed to seize Charles Rwanga and his son Wilson. They are later hacked to death with machetes on 22 April 1994. These events lead to the climax of the text, as Rose Rwanga attempts to keep her daughter Hyacinthe safe. However, during an argument with Hutu soldiers Hyacinthe is shot in the head and soon afterwards Rose is rescued by the incoming UN peacekeeping troops. Although the text recounts the travesty of the events which affected the Rwanga family and other Tutsis, it ends in a hopeful tone, with Rose Rwanga reflecting on the country's troubled past and the possibilities the future and a peaceful Rwanda might hold for a young child. I now proceed to my discussion and analysis of the two texts.

2. Capturing Essence: Symbolic Titles

The titles of creative texts act as framing devices to alert the reader/viewer to the thematic content. This is true of *Deogratis: A Tale of Rwanda* and *Smile Through the Tears: The Story of the Rwandan Genocide*, as I shall demonstrate in my analysis of the symbolic and performative functions of the titles of the two graphics.

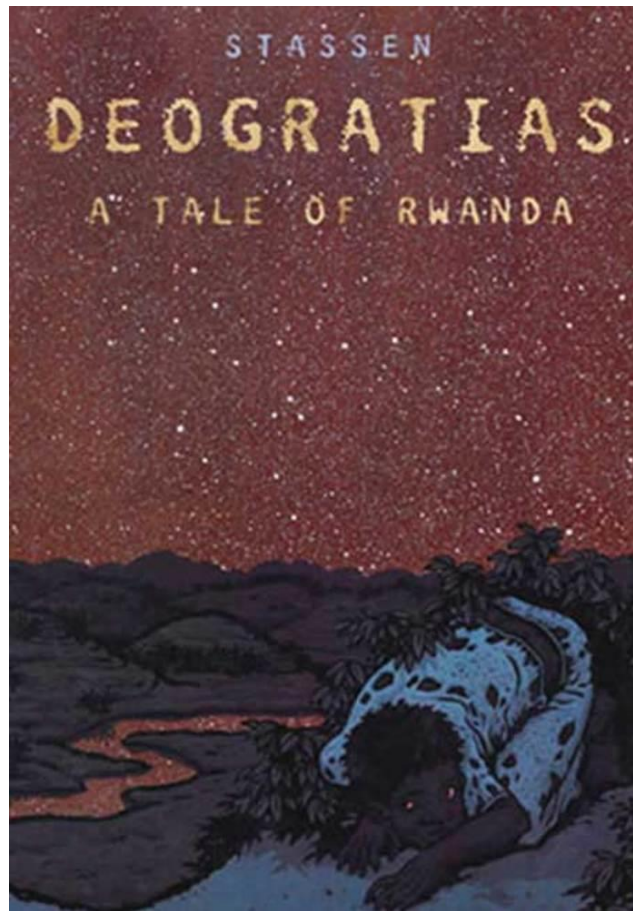


Figure 13. Cover image for *Deogratias* (Stassen)

“*Deogratias*” is Latin for “Thanks be to God” (Ong 219). This precursor possibly displays Stassen’s critique of the ironic failure of the church to assist during the Rwandan genocide. Members of religious bodies and other organisations, as well as political envoys who were embedded within Rwanda at the time, fled when the conflict erupted on 7 April 1994, and the mass slaughter began. Deogratias, the character, is an assistant in a church and yet he is neither spared the horrors of the genocide, regardless of the church’s power or influence. In fact, the title correlates to moments in the text which depict the dilapidated church where Deogratias used to serve. By evoking such meaning, the narrative comments on the fact that during the time of the genocide, churches were not in fact a haven for those fleeing the slaughter.

Sadly, many of the mass killings happened within the grounds of churches. Moderate Hutus and Tutsis sought refuge there, but instead found only violence, brutality and death. These moments are also illustrated in *Smile Through the Tears*. On the contrary, Bazambanza depicts

how Hutu militias stormed into church grounds and shot or hacked to death those refugees who fled to “sacred ground” to escape the slaughter. This special correlation between the two texts demonstrates the horror of murder on holy ground, a motif which serves to emphasise the brutality of these acts. The religious strongholds were thought to provide refuge, but members of both ethnic groups, Hutus and Tutsis, sought safety and yet were hunted down and killed there. Thus, the shared theme of the church and massacres illustrated in both texts displays the relentless brutality of the genocide and shows how religious bodies did little to aid those who tried to flee. This offers a critique suggesting that external world organisations were also culpable of genocide.

Jade Munslow Ong suggests another reading of the first part of the title (figure 13), as “d, o and g appear in the first four letters of the protagonist’s name” (219), which corresponds with the first four letters of the text’s title. Reading the letters of the title in this way correlates with the figures of the dogs that appear as real animals and manifestations of trauma for Deogratias. This foreshadows events in the text, as Deogratias struggles to prevent his transmogrification into a “dog” when he recollects the violence he enacted, and his witnessing of dogs feasting on the bodies of Appollinaria and Benina. The cover foreshadows Deogratias’ depiction with torn clothes, and in the text where he is represented and hiding in a bush. What is striking about this cover image is the fact that he is hunched forward on all fours, similarly to how he is eventually illustrated in the text when he undergoes his traumatic transformation.

The image symbolically captures the fear and violence which the text represents. Such a depiction may in fact mimic “one of the most enduring images of the [genocide, which was] of UN and RPF soldiers shooting the dogs that feasted on huge piles of Tutsi corpses” (Ong 218). This haunting image recalls events shown in Michael Caton-Jones’ film *Shooting Dogs*, and further demonstrates the maddening scenes witnessed in Rwanda. It, therefore, makes use of a conventional Western trope employed when detailing events of the genocide, but does so to comment on and explore the psychological damage of the genocide. The striking imagery persists, not only in the psyche of Deogratias, but in the collective imagination of those who know about the genocide. Thus, it functions as a symbolic reference to the extreme violence that took place. Due to the placement of the letters in the title of Deogratias’ name, his transformation into a dog-like entity mimics the famous images mentioned by Ong captured during the genocide. Deogratias’ transformation or psychic slippage each night, or when he runs out of “urwagwa” to prevent the nightmares from taking hold, demonstrates his culpability

in the events where dogs feasted on the bodies of the two half-sisters he initially attempted to save.

His slow transformation into a dog when he is overtaken by his trauma can be interpreted as him “acting out” trauma. Deogratias is unable to “work through” his trauma, as he is “haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes” (LaCapra 21). Repeatedly haunted by past images (for example, in his nightmares), and his accountability for the violence, Deogratias is depicted as transforming into the dogs he witnessed. Although he retains aspects of human features, such as his black skin and his clothes, when the transmogrification occurs the artist/author Stassen draws him as hunched forward on all fours. His eyes are terror-filled, pleading. It should also be noted that the style in which Deogratias is illustrated is similar to that of the dogs who feasted on the bodies of Appollinaria and Benina depicted elsewhere in the text. *Deogratias*, therefore, on the one hand, serves as a gesture to comment on the failure of political and religious bodies to intervene in the genocide. On the other hand, it creatively implies the horrific revelation that links the event at the centre to Deogratias’ traumatic memories.

The subtitle of the text, *A Tale of Rwanda*, suggests the texts’ fictional, journalistic element. The second part implies that this is a fictionalised account about the events in Rwanda, and makes no claim to biographic truth. However, this also links it directly to the geographic space and historical events. The graphic illustrates the story of a Hutu boy, and the genocide itself, in a compelling and challenging manner. In offering a fictional account, Stassen’s text does not rely on auto/biographic perspective, but instead makes use of historical information to provide a complex narrative that grapples with historic violence and trauma. This subtly frames the text as a creative response to a horrific moment in human and Rwandan history.

Smile Through the Tears: The Story of Rwanda is similarly symbolically charged (figure 14), as reading “smile” and “hope” in relation to one another suggests hope and pain. However, Bazambanza explains in the preface that the title is dedicated to and inspired by Rose Rwanga. She “hasn’t lost her smile, a smile so captivating that people in the street stop to look at it”, and he adds “[i]t was to honour this woman’s calm courage, and to affirm our resolve to overcome our despair and live normal lives, that I chose to include the word ‘smile’ in the title of this spine-chilling tale” (Preface 1). The title therefore captures the primary theme of *Smile Through the Tears* - hope despite the travesty – that emphasises the didactic and pedagogical nature of the text.

The title also serves to foreshadow one of Rose's character traits – always striving for a unified and better Rwanda. Bazambanza deliberately depicts the final scenes and Rose's dialogue as hopeful and in a manner that conveys her vision. The final scenes of the text are linked to the title, as Rose is able to see a possible future despite the hardship and loss she has suffered. Bazambanza's dedication demonstrates the intention of this text to illustrate the violence of past events while simultaneously advocating for a better Rwanda.

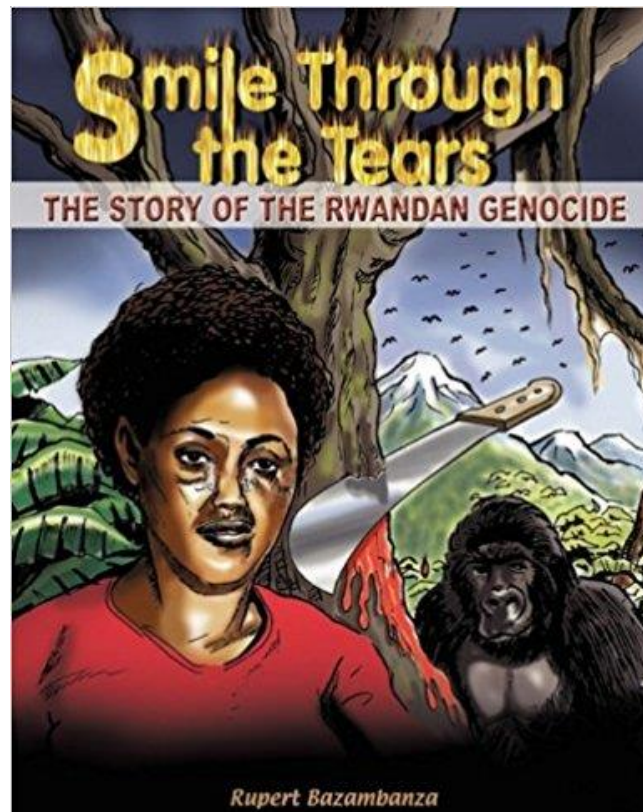


Figure 14. Cover image for *Smile Through the Tears* (Bazambanza).

The act of crying is symbolised in the image of the woman, Rose Rwanga, on the cover. Her eyes display sadness and fear, while tears stream down the corners of her eyes. Pictured behind Rose is a bleeding tree with a machete in it. Both pictorial signs evoke the violence of the genocide. The depicted machete foreshadows the weapons used throughout the campaign of violence. Therefore, the tree, the weapon and the blood suggest the damage to the nation and the impact of the killings. Depicted further behind Rose is an image of a gorilla framed against a landscape with a mountain range and flying birds. The mountain gorillas of Rwanda and neighbouring states are familiar wildlife attractions. Bazambanza uses the figure of the gorilla to critique the way national symbols were co-opted and commodified for foreign consumption. This image is then ironic, as Bazambanza notes that “visitors only seemed to care about the country's natural beauty” (1), demonstrating that the wildlife received more attention and care

from foreign media than the ethnic violence that Rwandan inhabitants endured. The birds in the background of the cover provide a link to Rwanda's wildlife, while they also possibly function as a symbolic representation of attempted human migration from the violence. They also possibly suggest the birds of prey depicted later in the text that devour the numerous dead.

3. Representing Historical Consciousness and Mythologization

Central to each text is the recollection and representation of colonial influence and events that resulted in the ethnic violence of 1994. Each text communicates, in fascinating ways, the complexity of Rwandan history and the policies that mythologised and reinforced stereotypical perceptions of Hutus and Tutsis. Each text depicts aggressors and victims from either side, while also offering a critique of Belgian colonial rule and its consequences. In this section, I examine how Rwanda's history is represented in each graphic while focusing on selected panels from each text to explore how the characters/subjects understand and share their knowledge of Rwandan history.

The pair of panels (figure 15; 19) examined here are from the opening section of *Deogratias*. In the panels the main character is depicted as seated next to Bosco, the RPF soldier, after the months of genocidal acts. Deogratias is illustrated as wearing a tattered white shirt (previously clean and whole as other retrospective panels demonstrate), drinking 'urwagwa'. He is in the presence of Bosco, who is wearing his military uniform, smoking and talking to Deogratias. Prior to this scene Deogratias ran out of 'urwagwa' and so he goes in desperation to find Bosco to obtain some. It is Deogratias' traumatised condition that prompts Bosco to speak about culpability for the violence, and the colonial origins of the ethnic conflict.

Bosco's thoughts are depicted in written dialogue. In the panel on the left, he says, "Hutu, Tutsi ... The whites made up those differences between us! They wrote those words on our ID cards!". He continues speaking in the panel on the right, "Before they came, before they sowed the seeds of division, before they enslaved us, we lived peacefully here..." (Stassen 19). To this Deogratias replies in a tone of bitter insincerity, "...in a land of milk and honey" (Stassen 19), as if to complete a well-known adage. In the panel on the left, Bosco's contempt for colonial rule is displayed as a close-up is given of his face which shows him frowning, while smoking, with a look of anger. This unhappiness is also illustrated in the panel on the right. While not as close, his face is still illustrated with downward eyebrows, and a grimacing mouth. Here, the shadows on his face reinforce the boldly illustrated lines, further demonstrating his unhappiness. Deogratias, in the panel on the left, however, is pictured sitting next to Bosco.

His face is depicted with a blank expression, while he stares vacantly and listens, drinking his beer through a straw. In the panel on the right, Deogratias is illustrated looking down to the left and away from Bosco as he completes his sentence.

Bosco (an RPF soldier and Tutsi) assigns the origins of Rwandan issues to its colonial rulers, with such panels being Stassen's critique of his own national history and a nation's inherited culpability. Bosco's argument and his resentment are not based purely on speculation. Mahmood Mamdani, in *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (2001), clarifies that "the origin of the violence is connected to how Hutu and Tutsi were constructed as political identities by the colonial state, Hutu as indigenous and Tutsi as alien" (34). Bosco's exposition on Rwandan history to Deogratias, "[t]he whites made up those differences", belatedly conveys the notion of how Hutu and Tutsi identities were constructed as a colonial tool. Although Rwanda was first colonised by Germany, it was Belgium's rule, which started in 1916, that had a profound effect on the country. Under Belgium's influence Tutsis were elevated to a higher status within society because of their lighter skin tone, and it was the colonial power that introduced the "ID cards" to which Bosco refers.

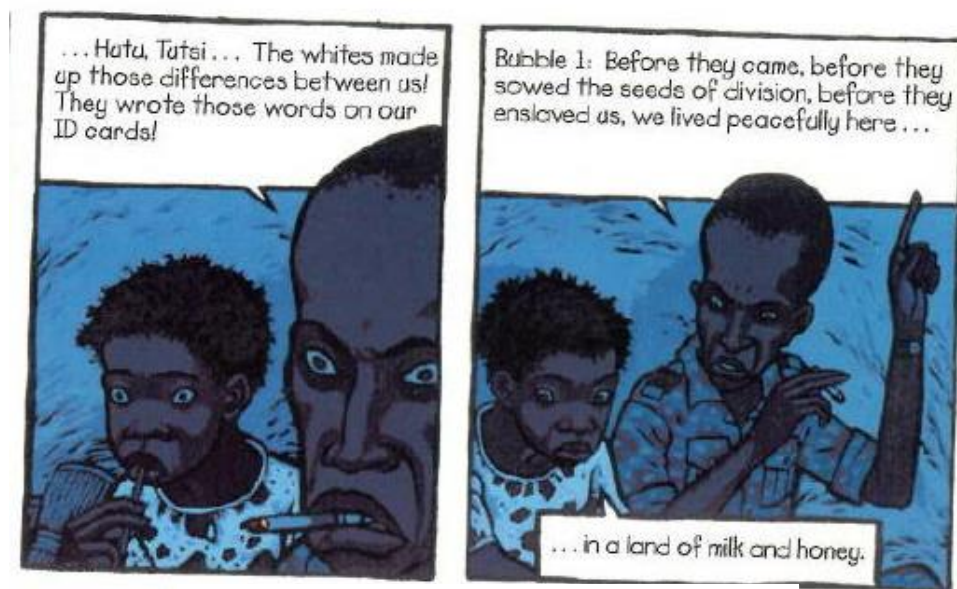


Figure 15. Deogratias and Bosco (Stassen 19).

These panels represent one way in which Stassen's text engages with the historic violence and trauma. The historical information is portrayed in a subtle fashion and demonstrate Stassen's critique of post-colonial Belgian history and influence in Rwanda. Bosco becomes a representative of this critique in the images. His anger features in Bosco's look of disdain in

the first panel, and is further emphasised in his use of exclamation marks in the dialogue boxes. However, Deogratias' downward gaze and final words suggest that he might have heard all this before, and does not believe it. In his present traumatised state, such repeated phrases seem useless. These words cannot change the horrific past. Deogratias' final comment – "land of milk and honey" – can be read as a bitter jab at Belgian colonial rule which captures his present fate, filled with guilt and severely traumatised. He is therefore literally without milk, honey or the beer he needs to drive away the past.

This sharing of a collective history or memory by either ethnic group is defined by Piotr H. Kosicki in his article "Sites of Aggressor – Victim Mentality: The Rwandan Genocide, Theory and Practice" (2007) as "*aggressor-victim memory*" (12; emphasis in the original). This type of collective memory allows for a collocation of either side's narratives, and a wider understanding of the causes of violence and how it developed. Kosicki states that "*aggressors* induce trauma, and *victims* suffer trauma, but in their narratives of the trauma the parties label each other aggressors and themselves victims" (12; emphasis in the original). In *Deogratias*, Bosco explains one side of "aggressor-victim memory" in which Belgium were the aggressors, having profoundly negative affects through the implementation of ID cards on the population, while Rwandan citizens were the victims. The narrative he shares is one in which the trauma they (Rwandans) suffered has a clearly definable root. However, this narrative or collective memory omits certain factors that also played a role in the violence. Bosco, interestingly, does not seem to place blame on the Hutus responsible for orchestrating countless deaths in 1959 or 1994.

In *Smile Through the Tears*, however, Bazambanza directs culpability towards external (Belgian) and internal (Hutu) causes, displaying the complexity of such violent acts. Throughout his text, the detailing of his "aggressor-victim memory" labels Tutsis as victims, and Hutus and Belgians (and other international organisations) as aggressors. Their collective memory is a history shared by Tutsis who were driven out in the initial purge of 1959 and those who survived. Later they were made to suffer atrocities again in 1994. The text shows Rwandan children, while their father is educating them on the history of the country. He shares this collective memory and reiterates historical discourse performatively, which displays how such events are shaped and remembered. This narrative, however, omits the long-standing resentment held by Hutus, who feel that Tutsis came into the land (prior to colonial rule) and were then later favoured by Belgian policies due to their lighter skin tone. Therefore, it is crucial to understand that when collective memory is recited, it, like all memory, may lapse

and lack details that aid in understanding the larger history. So, “[a]ggressor-victim memory [functions as] an intergenerational web of multiple narratives derived from ‘aggressors’, ‘victims’, and the outside world” (Kosicki 14; emphasis in the original). Events such as genocide are the results of a steady increment of factors, such as colonial rule and pre-existing intra-ethnic resentment. Thus, accounting for how collective memory operates is remembered, influenced and shared, should allow for a comprehensive understanding of the causes of the genocide, and consequently how it is represented in narrative form.

The critique of internal and external causes of the genocide is also examined by Bazambanza. Early in *Smile Through the Tears*, he devotes a series of panels to representing a brief summary of Rwanda’s history. In these panels, he illustrates the arrival of Belgian soldiers, the influence of colonial thought and policies, and the politics of eugenics. He then proceeds to recall and represent the 1959 Tutsi massacre during the Hutu uprising.

In an abstracted (not photo-realistic) and simplified aesthetic style (figure 16; 7), making use of short and sharp lines, Bazambanza illustrates a series of events all of which had an impact on Rwandan history and led to the 1994 genocide. Using such an aesthetic style does not emphasise photo-realistic depictions of Rwanda and those whom he illustrates (such as Sacco’s depictions of Palestine in *Footnotes in Gaza*). Instead it focuses attention on the representational quality of his depictions. In the first three panels, Bazambanza depicts Belgian troops arriving in Rwanda who bring with them goods for trade. This is suggested by the Belgian flag included in the upper-right corner of the wide horizontal panel. The colonial troops are dressed in military uniform and they present a wooden crate to “King Musinga”. The written narration below this panel reads, “King Musinga refused to accept Belgian colonization. But he didn’t have the last word... The Belgians split the Twas, Hutus and Tutsis in different ethnic groups” (7). Here, Bazambanza also offers a subtle critique of the Belgian colonial policy that served to exacerbate any differences between ethnic groups. This colonial influence, using Western science such as eugenics, is depicted in the next three panels representing the profound effect such radical thought and colonial mechanisms had on the Rwandan population.

The discriminatory practices of eugenics are captured in the two panels showing how two Rwandan men’s noses are measured. Based on this physical calculation they are classified as either Tutsi or Hutu. The pictorial signs, the “tools” used for measurement, represent the imposing impact of external authority, and are emblematic of Western mechanisms of control used to divide and conquer African nations. The two men are supposed to illustrate different

facial structures, with their mouths and noses differing from each another. However, these bodily differences became concretely and politically defined through colonial policy. This colonial definition of difference is further reinforced by events in the fourth panel, where both men are handed identity cards. The Belgian official tells them, “These identity cards we’re giving you will state your race. Your children must keep to this classification” (7).

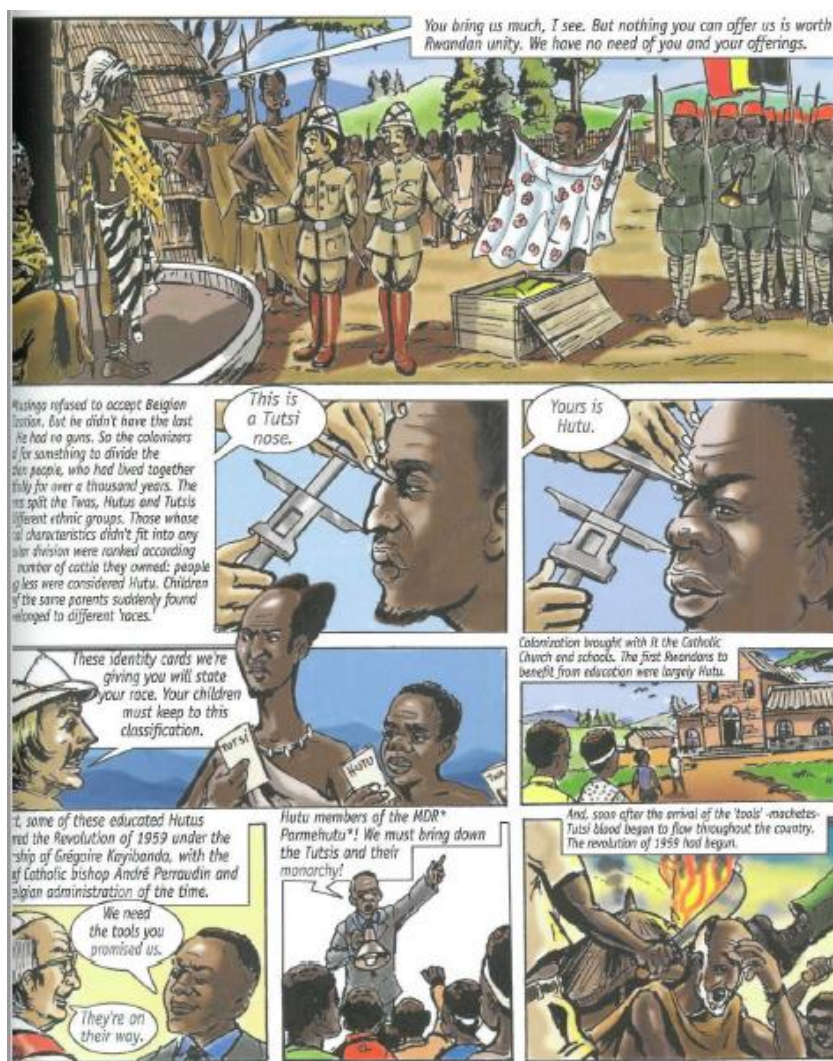


Figure 16. Colonial impact on Rwanda (Bazambanza 7).

These few panels serve to illustrate how Bazambanza encapsulates colonial history and its consequences on future Rwanda generations. In the fifth panel, Bazambanza depicts a Catholic church, symbolic of religious institutions imported by colonial rule and accompanied by a written description: “Colonization brought with it the Catholic Church and schools. The first Rwandans to benefit from education were largely Hutu” (7). Together the images and text function as an alternative historical account of events that led to Hutus seizing control in the 1959 uprising. Bazambanza narrates Rwanda’s past, ordering events that led to the violence he

experienced. Through the creation of this historical document, he narrates his (and Rwanda's) traumatic past, therefore working through the trauma he has suffered. Here, Bazambanza creatively outlines the mechanisms that led to the genocidal violence. Of further significance in this panel is how the symbol of the church foreshadows other events in the narrative, such as the massacre of both Tutsis and Hutus on church grounds. This symbol becomes ironic, as the institutions that colonial rule introduced would serve as sites of damage once more for Rwandans in 1994.



Figure 17. The 1959 Tutsi Massacre (Bazambanza)

In the final three panels on this page, and in a panel on the following page (figure 17; 8), Bazambanza represents the Hutus' rise to power in 1959 under the leadership of Grégoire Kayibanda (illustrated in the sixth panel). These images depict the collusion between Hutu leadership and Belgian officials, specifically "Catholic Bishop André Perraudin" (7). Bazambanza asserts that it was this partnership which led to the initial slaughter of Tutsis in 1959, portrayed in the last panel of the page. The consequences of the violence is developed in between panels, as Bazambanza depicts the result: dozens of dead, bleeding bodies strewn along the ground, hacked apart by spears and machetes still stuck in them. The bodies are piled on top of each other, while some are depicted without limbs. Birds of prey, presumably vultures, hover near the bodies. The birds of prey evoke a symbolic link to the dogs depicted in *Deogratias*, as they too loitered near dead bodies which were callously dumped. The background features houses on fire. The fires from the houses blend with the colour of the sunset in the backdrop, as if to suggest that the entire nation is burning, threatened by such violence. Even the sun is depicted as halved, suggesting the symbolic fissure in Rwandan society. The clear and bold lines that illustrate the bodies and weapons, and the natural colours of the landscape, display the violence of this scene as offset by the picturesque quality of the sunset. This contrast between violence and beauty is something *Smile Through the Tears* shows

throughout, as Bazambanza critiques the horrific violence now occurring in a place of such natural beauty.

In my view, Bazambanza's view is not above critique. In Bazambanza's retelling of the Hutu rise to power, he does not shy away from displaying the violence that took place. However, his emphasis on Hutu culpability runs the risk of revealing bias against those who were perpetrators. There is no disputing the fact that the Hutu leadership led the killings of Tutsis in 1959 and 1994, and Bazambanza places emphasis on this fact through his illustrations of Hutu characters. For example, his depiction of Grégoire Kayibande features the man with contemptuous, malicious smirks or a gaze that can be construed as aggressive. Therefore, while his text recalls the tragedies survived by the Rwangas (and himself), it also overtly depicts the villainy of the Hutu leadership and soldiers. Stassen's text is also not above critique, as his narrative focus from a Hutu perspective may be interpreted as an attempt to re-examine historical guilt. However, *Deo gratias* likewise unflinchingly illustrates the violence enacted by Hutu leaders and their followers, working to display the consequences of such brutality.

The two histories, or collective memories, detailed by Stassen and Bazambanza in their texts demonstrate the course of events that led to the 1994 genocide. By examining and contrasting modes of representation utilised by either text to retell Rwandan history, one is offered a larger scope through which actions and events of the 1994 genocide, and prior events, can be understood. The role of political, racial mythologizing is profoundly captured in the classroom scenes each text depicts. Here, educators become representative of the larger social and organisational systems which served to emphasise and administer the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa differences to children. Such scenes in the texts foreground how the multi-generational ethnic divide was reinforced. They provide a link to the rhetoric and thought which empowered the slaughter of Tutsis at the hands of Hutus. I move now to my analysis of selected panels in each text and how they demonstrate trauma and the responses to it.

4. Representing Violence and Trauma

Deo gratias and *Smile Through the Tears* do not only differ in their representation and textual narration of Rwandan history. They also differ in their treatment of traumatised subjectivities/characters. I read these two illustrations of trauma and responses to it through the work of LaCapra. Each text depicts subjects'/characters' responses to traumatic events. I shall demonstrate how the subjects/characters "act out" or "work through" their trauma.

In *Deogratias*, Stassen depicts how the Hutu boy, Deogratias, gradually unravels psychologically after the events of the genocide. Repeatedly haunted by memories of the past, he struggles to sleep at night without the aid of ‘urwagwa’. This alcohol acts as a suppressant and coping mechanism that restrains his traumatic memories temporarily. Without it he is haunted by the hallucinations of the dogs who are the bodies of Appollinaria and Benina. I now focus on panels that depict Deogratias’ distressed (figure 18; 27). In two of the three panels, Stassen illustrates the Rwandan sky at night with shining stars above a mountain range. In the third panel, we encounter the terrified boy, hiding. These panels relate to, and are reminiscent of, the front cover of the text where Deogratias is bent over forward under the night sky, similarly frightened. The second panel on the page features Deogratias hiding in a shack where he sleeps at night, separated from the nearby village and other people. Deogratias cannot easily be situated around others at night due to his increasing paranoia and his encounters with his traumatic memories after the events of the genocide.

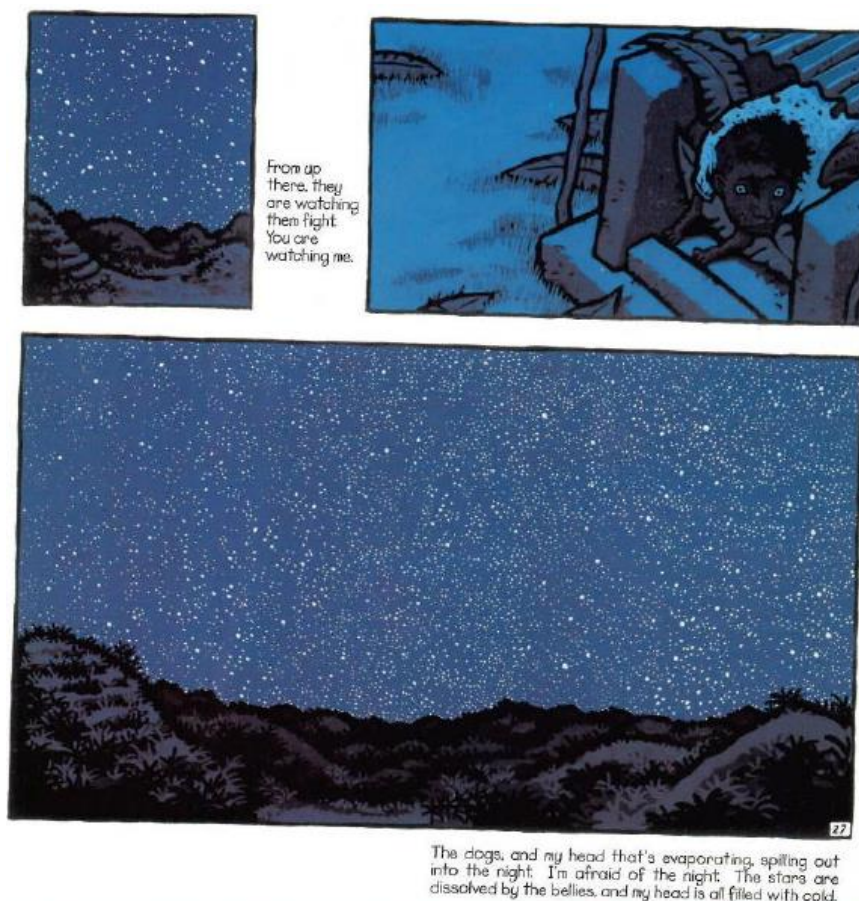


Figure 18. Deogratias haunted at night (Stassen 27).

Between these three panels, Stassen frames a narrative text that describes Deogratias’ thoughts to the reader. This internal reflection reads, “From up there, they are watching them fight. You

are watching me” and, “The dogs, and my head that’s evaporating, spilling out into the night. I’m afraid of the night. The stars are dissolved by the bellies, and my head is all filled with cold” (Stassen 27). Deogratias’ thoughts captured here echo themselves through the text. The use of the pronoun “they” refers to the stars above him, but metaphorically suggests the countless people killed during the genocide who may be watching from heaven. Stassen adeptly reworks the popular belief that the souls of the dead become stars in the afterlife. The use of “you” suggests Appollinaria and Benina, and by extension other victims. This is evidence of a spiritual fear - of judgement after death. Deogratias’ paranoia, his fear of being watched and judged for his crimes, are illustrated here, and in other moments throughout the text. The written narration further conveys an understanding of the particularities of Deogratias’ repeated haunting by his trauma, with reference to “dogs”, the threatening and isolation of the night sky “spilling out” over him. Dogs, as previously mentioned, are the real and symbolic agents of Deogratias’ trauma. I return to these traumatic manifestations, and states of transfiguration shortly, but first I consider how the representation of Deogratias’ traumatic struggle can be read as “acting out” in relation to trauma.

LaCapra notes that those who “act-out” their trauma “have a tendency to relive the past, to exist in the present as if they were still fully in the past, with no distance from it”. Traumatized subjects, he argues “tend to relive occurrences, or at least find that those occurrences intrude on their present existence” (*Interview 2*). Deogratias is depicted as incapable of escaping his traumatic memories, except when he drinks alcohol. In the second panel (figure 17; 27), he is portrayed as hunched over forward, with tattered clothing and showing the first signs of his transfiguration. The trauma that plagues Deogratias acts as a cognitive schism which renders it impossible for his mind to separate either reality, past or present from one another. The hallucinogenic manifestations of his trauma, the dogs, intrude each night into his mind as he finds himself unable to process his trauma.

Psychologist Susan Kaplan, in her study of Rwandan boys after the genocidal event, provides insight into Stassen’s narrative about the young Hutu boy, Deogratias. Kaplan refers to Deogratias’ experience as an “Affect invading” response to trauma, defined as “refer[ing] to wordless emotions – such as body movement or a cry – preceding contents of traumatic moments. Victims repeatedly re-experience the events in their imagination, thereby re-experiencing their trauma” (95). These thoughts provide a link to LaCapra’s ideas on “acting-out” and how it affects traumatized subjects. Such responses to trauma may often lead to actions of revenge, alongside the repetition of past events. Therefore, when Deogratias poisons Bosco,

Julius and the French Sergeant whom he feels are culpable, it becomes another aspect of his “acting-out” of his trauma. This reaction further demonstrates his inability to process the event properly and move forward.

By the end of the graphic, Deogratias becomes irrevocably traumatised by the events of his past, to such an extent that he can no longer find solitude and safety in daylight from his fear of judgement (figure 19; 52). At this point in the narrative, Deogratias is depicted as having lost all control over the coping mechanisms he used to keep his trauma at bay. As LaCapra implies, it has enveloped Deogratias’ mind and becomes manifested through his body and his actions. As his mind becomes enveloped by traumatic thoughts, his slow transformation into a dog is depicted as coinciding with this. In the second panel (figure 19; 52), his steady transformation is shown. His face is depicted as elongated, while his ears are pointed and his mouth mimics that of a canine. His gaze is panicked and it seems to be directed towards the reader, as if pleading for assistance. In this panel he says, “Night-time... but it’s day” (52), adding in the third panel, “It’s at night that I’m scared... What’s happening to me? I’m not afraid of the day... But my head is spilling out, it’s spilling out in the day!” (52).



Figure 19. Deogratias' transformation (Stassen 52).

Deogratias' incapacity to properly "work through" the traumatic events have led to him being possessed by his trauma and therefore "acting out". The traumatic intrusions have progressed so far that he is no longer able to keep them at bay. The words "my head is spilling out" echoes the same words spoken earlier in the text and provides a link to the chronic nature of his traumatisation.

His transformation and fear are illustrated as developing throughout the panels. This is reflected in his speech as it becomes increasingly rambling, incoherent language. He recites the words "no bellies" repeatedly. His paranoia and guilt, due to his trauma, have developed to the extent that he can no longer escape fear of judgement during the day, saying in the final panel "I'm even afraid of the daytime... The stars are here... I see stars in broad daylight..." (52). His traumatic regression is acted out by his body and his mind. He is depicted as hunched forward on all fours, with his face, ears and mouth reminiscent of a dog, while his arms and legs become like dog's paws. In the final panel his transmogrification has progressed so far that he is depicted as having a tail, which grows from his ragged white pants. He now looks completely like a dog, emphasised further by his tongue hanging out of his mouth. His trauma and guilt are embodied through his transformation. Due to the advancement of his trauma throughout the text, he no longer displays only certain features of a dog. Now the trauma has enveloped his mind and actions, to the point where he has now becomes like the dogs which torment his mind. The traumatic hauntings have affected his language, and his conceptions of self. Deogratias thought he could find solace in alcohol, and in acts of revenge, but these were only temporary respites from his trauma. Having not worked to process the traumatic events he witnessed and was a part of, he remains haunted and subject to cumulative effects. Stassen's gritty illustrative style captures Deogratias' transformation as he becomes consumed by his trauma. As Kaplan suggests, this reaction to trauma is in part wordless, as his body acts and behaves in a particular manner in response to the trauma.

Deogratias' culpability haunts him, and his response to such trauma is to repress it and take revenge upon others. Symbolically, when Deogratias is captured in the end by the police for his murders, he is taken away in his dog form. Thus, even though he will be found guilty of deliberate murder, he may never be able to completely process his past actions of having played a part in the deaths of Appollinaria and Benina. Stassen's text, therefore, offers insight into the trauma suffered by those who were themselves responsible for the traumas endured by others. It attempts to reframe how historical trauma is endured, and its effects on subjects. It suggests that those who commit crimes can be profoundly affected by a past that refuses to be ignored.

Stassen, through the use of *Deogratias*, suggests that unless historical traumas and acts of violence are adequately spoken and narrated they run the risk of generating future violence.

While *Deogratias* offers an understanding into the ways in which trauma can affect those who “act out”, I read *Smile Through the Tears* as a testimony to the ways in which it aids the management of “working through” trauma. Bazambanza’s text records, and speaks for, numerous Tutsis and moderate Hutus who were killed during the 1994 genocide. It functions as a creative historical record which utters the traumas of the past. Bazambanza shares his and others’ trauma through the narrative and his response to trauma can be read in the light of LaCapra’s suggestions on “working-through” trauma. LaCapra notes that “[i]n working-through, the person tries to gain critical distance on the problem, to be able to distinguish past, present and future” (Interview 2). Published in 2007, *Smile Through the Tears* was produced just over ten years after the genocide and as such it functions as a creative mechanism through which Bazambanza processes his trauma to gain “critical distance” from it. Bazambanza states that he worked on the text for “two long years [...] imagining the scenes, drawing the characters, designing the backgrounds, selecting the colours...until the frame was finished” (Introduction). His work becomes his method of “working-through” his trauma, allowing him to distinguish the past from the present. Rather than be repeatedly haunted by visions and nightmares, Bazambanza makes use of a cathartic method to manage trauma.

His text reveals the reality of the violence that was suffered by many Rwandans during the genocide. His images and panels do not contain gratuitous violence, but instead through their simplicity, I argue that they emphasise the meaning of violence that is depicted. This can be seen in a series of panels selected from near the end of the text. Here, Bazambanza recounts the deaths of numerous Tutsis, including Wilson and Charles Rwanga, who were taken away by the Interahamwe¹⁶ (figure 20; 52). The series of panels functions to represent the violence that occurred, but also demonstrates Bazambanza’s focus to biographically capture the lives of the Rwangas and others who died.

Throughout the panels, various types of violence are depicted. The Hutu soldiers abuse Tutsi men who were taken away from a church where the Rwangas had sought shelter. The church area is raided and many men are captured, while women and children are left to be killed. Narrational text describes the characters who are illustrated in the panels. The reader is

¹⁶ Interahamwe means “ ‘those who work together’ or ‘those who fight together’, as the *interahamwe* are the Hutu militia responsible for most of the killing during the 1994 genocide” (Samuel 15).

informed and shown by Bazambanza, whether the subjects survived or were killed. The first three panels (figure 20; 52) depict a Tutsi, “Albert”, attacking an Interahamwe soldier and being killed in the process of grabbing his gun. The first panel shows Albert being fired upon from multiple directions as he grabs a Hutu soldier from behind to relieve him of his weapon. Bullets are depicted flying past Albert, and into him, while blood spills down his back. In the next panel he is shown lying dead from countless gunshot wounds, on top of the soldier he attacked while still clutching the gun.

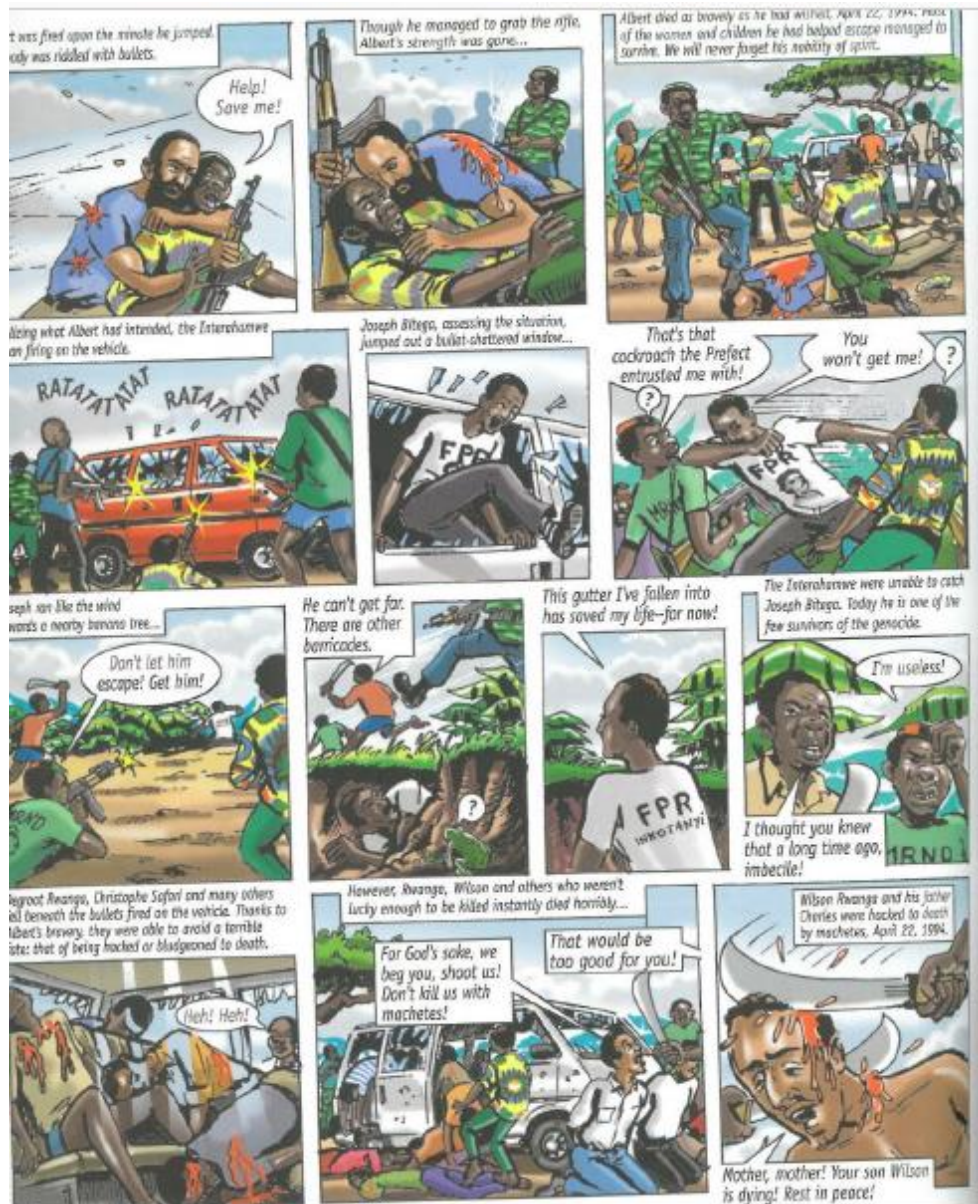


Figure 20. Tutsis killed during the massacre (Bazambanza 52).

The scene is narrated by Bazambanza, saying, “Though he manages to grab the rifle, Albert’s strength was gone” (52). In the third panel, Albert’s body is being stood over by Hutu soldiers as they point towards the van containing the other Tutsi men. As if to offer a retrospective obituary of Albert’s death and defiance, Bazambanza writes in narrational text, “Albert died as bravely as he had wished, April 22, 1994. Most of the women and children he had helped escape managed to survive. We will never forget his nobility of spirit” (52).

In the three panels Bazambanza recalls and pays tribute to a man who risked his life to save countless others. His graphic text offers itself as a historical testament of Albert’s actions that day, while simultaneously depicting his brutal death. Notably, the use of the pronoun “we” in the last sentence suggests that Albert’s actions are honoured by communal memory, one which ensures that those lost in the genocide, such as Albert, are not forgotten.

“Joseph Bitega” is another subject remembered and honoured through Bazambanza’s narrative. In the fifth panel, he is depicted as leaping out the van window as broken glass flies out around him. The following panels display Joseph fighting off Hutu attackers while making his escape, running away, and then hiding for safety. Throughout these six panels the Hutu soldiers are shown as relentless in their attempts to capture and kill Joseph. They are depicted firing guns at him and chasing after him with machetes. These forms of violence displayed in his escape evoke thoughts of how such methods were used against countless Tutsis. Bazambanza offers a narrational text in the tenth panel saying, “The Interahamwe were unable to catch Joseph Bitega. Today he is one of the few survivors of the genocide” (52). In Joseph’s fortunate escape, like Rose Rwanga, he becomes a recorded survivor. Bazambanza illustrates that those who survived still suffered severe violence and trauma though they escaped the genocide. In these two brief narratives of death and survival Bazambanza links the scenes to the symbolic title of the text. He offers images of hope, despite the pain that many had to undergo.

It should be noted that Joseph is depicted wearing a white shirt with the slogan “FPR Inkotanyi”. This shirt is alluded to earlier in the text when Joseph puts it on, and is harassed by Hutu soldiers for wearing the slogan of their enemy. The FPR stands for Rwandan Patriotic Front, which is currently the national political party of Rwanda. Joseph’s escape while wearing the shirt could represent a symbolic act of defiance against Hutu authority. It also foreshadows the freedom which was to come, once the FPR took power in Rwanda.

In the final three panels of the page, Bazambanza depicts the deaths of two of the men in the Rwanga family, Wilson and Charles. The panel at the bottom left displays bodies piled all over

the van with bullet holes in them and blood pouring from the wounds, as sunlight shines through bullet holes. The sunlight is perhaps symbolic of the light Bazambanza sheds on the deaths of Charles, Wilson and many other Tutsis. This panel has links with an earlier panel in which Hutu soldiers are shown firing on the van, thus displaying the consequences of such violence. Bazambanza narrates the horrific image saying, “Degroot Rwanga, Christophe Safari and many others fell beneath the bullets fired on the vehicle. Thanks to Albert’s bravery, they were able to avoid a terrible fate: that of being hacked or bludgeoned to death” (52). The bodies are illustrated in an abstract manner, meaning that no distinct features are given to any of the figures. What is of importance, however, is what the bodies highlight. They demonstrate one of the forms of violence enacted upon Tutsis. In his narration Bazambanza specifically mentions “Degroot Rwanga” and “Christophe Safari”, making sure to record their deaths, insisting they be known and remembered.

The last two panels of the page depict the use of machetes to kill Tutsis. Here, Wilson and Charles Rwanga are displayed kneeling on the ground begging not to be killed by the machetes. The second-last panel also depicts Tutsi bodies on the floor, while some are being pulled out of the van and one hangs out of the window. This functions as a display of the carnage that occurred during the genocide. In the final panel Bazambanza says in narrational text, “Wilson Rwanga and his father Charles were hacked to death by machetes, April 22, 1994” (52). While in panel Wilson cries out, “Mother, mother! Your son Wilson is dying! Rest in peace!” (52), as he is hacked in the neck and head by machetes. These final panels refocus biographic attention onto the Rwangas and their narrative, while also illustrating how they were brutally slaughtered by Hutu soldiers. Reminiscent of a cinematic close-up, the viciousness of the act is displayed in the final panel, emphasised by the use of the machete, which as a bladed weapon demands physical closeness between killer and victim. The act of violence arrests the reader’s attention as it depicts the brutality of the genocidal killings. By placing Wilson alone in a panel displaying his death, with his killers out of sight (shown only by their arms), Bazambanza calls attention to the violent deaths of Wilson, and his father, deliberately framing their deaths so that they cannot easily be forgotten. Focusing on Wilson rather than his attackers places emphasis on his death, allowing Bazambanza to record the tragedy.

Bazambanza’s text offers a testimonial outlet for the traumas of the past, simultaneously recording personal and communal loss. By “working-through” past traumas in a creative way, he is able to depict the countless lives that were lost, while simultaneously offering a historical record and the personal account of one family. By recording the exact dates of events in his

text, such as the start of the genocide and the days when the Rwanga family members were killed, Bazambanza provides personal and communal histories that were previously outside the scope of a larger historic narrative, inserting these accounts into the larger narrative of the Rwandan genocide. Roberta Culbertson, on the topic of testimony, suggests that “the survivor must tell what happened. This is the function of narrative. The task then is to render body memories tellable, which means to order and arrange them in the form of a story” (179). Bazambanza, as a survivor, is compelled to share his narrative, and simultaneously the narratives of others, to “work through” trauma, aid its healing and management. Creating a biographic record of the genocide is a way one can “work through” trauma to make sure that past and present can be distinguished. Using a linear narrative structure, Bazambanza orders and arranges trauma in the shape of a story, so that what occurred can be understood and remembered. His text is a narrative of death and survival, of loss and hope. Ultimately, *Smile Through the Tears* makes known those lives that might have been forgotten in such a tragedy. It creates a space in which a personal narrative can be understood to be equally as important as the larger historical narrative of the genocide, as the two cannot be separated.

Conclusion

This chapter has undertaken an examination of two graphic narratives which depict the Rwandan genocide from either side of the conflict, Hutu and Tutsi. This was done to demonstrate how both fictive and biographic graphic narratives relay personal (private) and communal (public) traumas, while adding to known historical information about the event. Each text makes use of symbolic terms to capture the essence of the narratives and foreshadow events that will be illustrated. Jean-Philippe Stassen’s *Deo gratias*, uses its title to call attention to the text’s critique of colonial influence in Rwanda, suggesting that the effects led to and carried on into the genocide. A Latin word meaning “Dear God” displays connections to the church, and thus colonial institutions which offered no help to those trying to flee the violence in 1994. The title also foreshadows the trauma the main character suffers, as he not only fears dogs he sees in hallucinogenic visions, but at times transforms into one when enveloped by his guilt. Rupert Bazambanza’s *Smile Through the Tears* is a title that links to the biographic focus of the text. The smile and tears referenced in the title are those of Rose Rwanga, the only survivor of the family in this text. As Bazambanza suggests in his introduction to the graphic narrative, the title displays the hope that is possible even during times of hardship and loss.

By contrasting these two graphic texts my aim has been to demonstrate how either side of the 1994 genocide could be narrated and understood. Each text provides a narrative of Rwandan history and the causes that led to the genocidal acts. The varying ways these histories are recounted displays how collective memory is understood and distributed. The texts offer a way in which “aggressor-victim” memory can be understood, as Hutus and Tutsis have slightly different accounts of why such violence developed over time. They both, however, focus on Rwanda’s colonial past and the influence of Western thought and policy on their citizens. Stassen’s examination of this history allows for an understanding of the functions of historical traumas and their effects. As a Belgian author, he interrogates his country’s culpability in creating and exacerbating the divide between Hutus and Tutsis. His text also examines Hutu culpability and the effects of witnessing such violence.

The two graphic texts make use of different illustrative styles to render the narratives. While dissimilar, each works to emphasise the violence which took place and demonstrates the loss of life. By making use of Dominick LaCapra’s thoughts on “acting out” and “working through”, I read each text as a response to trauma. *Deogratias*, through the protagonist, depicts a character “acting out” in response to his trauma. Haunted by his culpability in the deaths of Appollinaria and Benina, he grows increasingly paranoid about his judgement, and finds himself followed by dogs that are figments of his traumatised mind. In an attempt to deal with this, he numbs himself with alcohol, but eventually even this no longer works and Deogratias becomes overwhelmed by his trauma. Even his acts of revenge to poison Bosco, Julius and the French Sergeant cannot ease his mind. I suggest that because he fails to adequately process his trauma, he “acts out” by attacking others and regressing into a feral state.

Smile Through the Tears, however, is Bazambanza’s own method for “working through” his traumatic past. By recollecting the genocide and making use of a creative method to illustrate and narrative the lives of a Tutsi family, the Rwangas, he is able to communicate the traumatic ordeal. In creating an alternative historical document which conveys the public and private traumas of the 1994 genocide, Bazambanza “utters” the past and provides accounts of lives lost that may never have been known.

By working with two graphic narratives that have received limited scholarly attention, I have sought to demonstrate that although they are fictive and biographic, and so differ from one another, the alternative perspectives offered in each can provide an increased understanding of the genocide itself and its consequences. Illustrating the violence suffered and committed, both

graphic texts, read in contrast to one another, suggest that for a complete understanding of a complex historical event such as the genocide and its causes, both sides of the conflict need to be studied. These texts suggest that while it is crucial that we understand how the victims of the genocide suffered, it is also important to consider how generational violence is perpetuated and how culpability affects the minds of aggressors. I proceed now to the conclusion of my examination of graphic narratives and how they detail public and private traumas.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In this thesis I have examined the use of the graphic narrative medium as a means for conveying different types of public and private trauma. My study of these concepts focused on how auto-biographic and fictive graphic narratives depict, represent and “utter” trauma. Each of the texts selected for analysis, from varying geo-political locations, offers an alternate avenue for understanding the complexities and the multifaceted nature of trauma and its effects. While written by men and a woman from different socio-cultural and geo-political settings, the narratives work to position individual subjects or groups at the forefront of their narratives, instead of focusing on the larger historically linear and often factually confined understanding of events. Crucial to this study was the use of texts set outside of Western spaces, in which this medium was initially developed, which position Arab, Japanese, Palestinian, Lebanese and African bodies in the foreground, serving to disrupt common misconceptions and understandings.

The primary texts studied, *Footnotes in Gaza*, *A Game for Swallows*, *Deogratias* and *Smile Through the Tears*, contribute to the archive of narrations of trauma, and my analysis aimed to add an understanding of the ways in which violence and brutality affect lives and multiple generations, and can be narrated. Each artist/author makes use of their own unique style, aesthetic choices and illustration to depict and represent the events of the past. Some of these styles, such as Abirached’s interpretation of Arabic calligraphy in *A Game for Swallows*, are a reworking of a culturally significant style or influence on their work, allowing the text to take on specific socio-cultural qualities. This adds a layer of complexity to the texts, and positions the work as counter to traditional modes of illustration found in graphic narratives. Through the use of this medium, the artists-authors adopt a fragmentary mode of writing, to embody concepts such as trauma, which itself results in fragmentation of memory and self for its subjects. By using such a style of writing the authors of each text draw attention to the non-linear way in which trauma is suffered and remembered by various subjects, while simultaneously demonstrating its chronic and immediate effects.

Graphic narratives as a medium of literature demonstrate an opportunity for artists-authors of auto-biographic and fictive texts to present themselves, others and events in arresting ways. Each of the texts I examined served to represent bodies and subjectivities in counter-narrations to conventional (Western) depictions and paradigms, evoking Said’s arguments in *Orientalism*.

I note that Sacco and Stassen offer viewpoints from the perspective of outsiders to the regions they document, giving voices to subjects who have suffered. The texts offer interpretations of personal (private) and public (communal) history and trauma that have not been assimilated into the larger historical or cultural narrative, and therefore afford us new insight into the effects of war on men, women and children in various conditions. The aesthetic choices also display alternative representations of Arab, African and Palestinian bodies which serve to subvert the manner in which such subjects have previously been represented. These illustrations focus on the representational quality of such drawings, calling attention to subjects and their suffering. Such images demand attention be placed on the human aspect and lived experience of such historical moments. The graphic narratives also provide a reference point for how we may better understand the traumatic experiences of those who live(d) in spaces such as Beirut, Palestine and Rwanda, and thus function to elevate the human dimension of these events.

Each of the auto/biographics studied, and the wider scholarship that exists, demonstrate the crucial importance of how counter narratives challenge hegemonic discourse. The texts focus on narratives, and lives, which face the threat of erasure under dominant systems of power. The visual representation of the auto/biographics underscores the importance of such texts to present the depiction of lives and suffering which run the risk of being eroded or erased due to dominant propaganda and political discourse in areas such as modern-day Rwanda and Israel. These testimonies present an avenue through which artists/authors may challenge the obfuscation of lives and personal/nation suffering by ruling powers, and detail past and present suffering to a global audience.

By focusing on an individual, or a group, the texts function to draw our attention away from the larger scope of the historical event and instead ask us to examine those who suffered, continue to suffer and just how they were subjected to such anguish. The texts command our focus on the bodies, both alive and dead, illustrated in the graphic narratives showing us that the consequences of such historical events are far greater than merely facts and figures. The medium allows each author to *frame* events or history as they have understood it. Because of the malleable nature of such a literary medium, the authors can juxtapose, overlap or deliberately fragment panels presented to the reader, allowing for an unconventional transmission of accounts. This plasticity demonstrates an alternative method of representing trauma and demonstrating its effects.

My analysis has demonstrated that just as memory is fractured due to traumatic encounters, so too can its presentation reflect this. Time and space may unfold on the page in several ways, as texts such as *Footnotes in Gaza* and *Deogratias* demonstrate an overlapping of contemporary and historical space and time. These multiple temporalities, often depicted on the same page, offer an illustration of how the past cannot be thought of as separate from the present, just as trauma lingers and is never truly removed from the mind or body of a subject who has suffered it. This multiple layering of time and space also presents how traumatised subjects must frequently and repeatedly encounter their past as though it existed in their present. With no separation from their past, whether physical, spatial or psychic, the subjects must repeatedly endure the horrors of their past. Such graphic narratives work to present the magnitude of such traumatisation to the reader. *A Game for Swallows* and *Smile Through the Tears*, however, display narratives which present a past told by the ‘narrating I’ who exists in the present. And so, the past, ‘narrated I’, is depicted while the voice from the ‘narrating I’ speaks to the reader. This exchange between forms of narration furthers the interplay between past and present, as each graphic narrative seeks to illustrate past atrocities and suffering, while having to reconcile with them in the present.

On the importance and power of utterance, and the capacity of testimony I made use of, were among others, Caruth’s (1996), Butler’s (2004), Laub’s (1992) and LaCapra’s (2014) theories. Typically thought of as “unspeakable”, I attempted to demonstrate how each graphic narrative served to illustrate, both aesthetically, through pictorials, and with written text types of private and communal trauma. My work with Sacco’s *Footnotes in Gaza* showed that in removing himself (although not completely) from the foreground of the narrative’s focus, functioning as an iconic narrator, he was able to draw attention to the details of the subjects he interviewed and the accounts they shared. His role as artist and mediator of accounts allowed Sacco to evocatively and hauntingly represent past events on the page and induce reader response by placing illustrative and narrational focus on the lives and suffering of others. In bringing to the foreground seldom “heard” information and accounts, he provides an utterance of long-held traumas to question the role such testimonies may play in preventing future violence. As an outsider bringing the testimonies of others to light, his text asks the reader to bear witness to the suffering of subjects, so that the larger historical and socio-political period may be understood.

In comparison, Abirached’s *A Game for Swallows* depicts a significantly smaller group of subjects. However, my analysis also showed that while she narrates a memory of a day in her

childhood, she simultaneously narrates the lives of her family, neighbours and community. Her experience of the civil war is representative of what others also suffered. My work with Abirached's text demonstrated an account which used the graphic narrative format to play with vacuity and space on the page. By making use of various maps throughout her narrative, Abirached presents not only how a child experienced such a traumatic period, but the way private and public space intermingled. This household (private) space is typically thought of as "a space of passivity and neutrality, outside of the turbulent currents of history and politics" (Naeff 85). *A Game for Swallows* demonstrates how external and internal spaces became precarious over time, as war and the traumas it brought enveloped the lives of those she depicts. Through her mapping of trauma inflicted by the civil war, Abirached presents a testimony which displays how hazardous public (communal) space became, and displays how the domestic (private) space was infiltrated by external effects. Her account presents an alternative way to illustrate past chronic trauma while simultaneously narrating it. This allows the reader/witness of the text to comprehend the chronic nature of her trauma, and the trauma of others. Her account, therefore, furthers the understanding of trauma suffered by non-combatants during war, and presents how civilian bodies were affected daily.

My examination of how communal and private traumas are represented was then further developed through my analysis of *Deo Gratias* and *Smile Through the Tears*. By making use of LaCapra's (2014) theories on "acting out" and "working through", I attempted to demonstrate how each text represents the complexities and trans-generational effect of traumas suffered during the 1994 genocide. By contrasting the two narratives, one being fictive and told from a Hutu perspective, while the other as biographic, is from a Tutsi perspective, I endeavoured to draw attention to the multiple ways such an event can be understood, while also demonstrating how varying subjects on either side were affected. These specific texts read in relation to one another demonstrate the complexities of such a significant and traumatic event on multiple subjects. The two narratives create a larger scope through which the traumatic events of the genocide and methods of coping with it may be understood.

Deo Gratias positions a perpetrator of violence as the titular subject and demonstrates the manner in which traumatic guilt, or witnessing brutal violence, can plague the mind. Deo Gratias, without any cathartic method of "working through" his trauma, is shown as haunted by his past, fixated on revenge. The narrative, while displaying Tutsi victims, considers the role Hutus, specifically teenage Hutu boys, played in the genocide and what psychological damage this has done. Such brutality marks the mind and body of a subject, and Deo Gratias

demonstrates that without a proper means for communication of such trauma, he is left to repeatedly “act out” his past. *Smile Through the Tears* offers a contrast to the genocidal trauma through a biographic account of the event. Bazambanza, by representing the lives of the Rwanga family, demonstrates a cathartic “working through” of the traumatic past. Taking time to shape, frame and depict the events his text demonstrates the ability of such communication to allow traumatic events to be understood in an increasingly linear fashion and thus presents a healing function. His narrative considers the plight of the Tutsis during the 1994 genocide but also acts as a site of memory and memorial, as some panels represent the exact date and circumstances of a subject’s deaths.

By contrasting these two texts, an event that was widely publicised after its occurrence can be dynamically represented to present both sides of genocide. By working with both texts, I consider the implications of how not only victims are traumatised by violence, but how such violence began. Each graphic narrative focuses on the suffering of African bodies, and examines their historical causes. Thus, the two narratives provide a necessary contrast for examining and understanding the socio-political dynamics of genocidal violence and its public and private effects.

My study, therefore, interpreted an assortment of graphic narratives from specific regions to demonstrate the malleability, and capacity, of such a medium to present its readers with the magnitude of trauma. My regional or area specific focus takes its cue from José E Limón’s comments in “Border Literary Histories, Globalization, and Critical Regionalism” (2008). Limón suggests that examining regional representations allows for the “rendering of the complexity of local cultures in comparison to the world, while recognizing that all are in constant but critical interaction with the globe (168). Thus, while representing traumatic experiences of subjects from specific areas/regions of the world, the chosen texts also display how they simultaneously communicate thematic concerns with the larger global space.

The research presented some challenges. I initially intended to work with more texts, but soon realised my ambition exceeded the limitations of this project. Previously chosen narratives had to be forfeited to offer more nuanced cross-textual conversation. Another challenge presented itself on the level of interpretative skills. As a literary studies scholar, I initially struggled with terminology and analysis of the visual elements, and attempted to come to terms with the required skills. One of the most worthwhile aspects of the study was working with graphics

about the Rwandan genocide. I have discovered a wealth of African graphics, which certainly offer interesting avenues for future research through a diversity of critical approaches.

To conclude, I have demonstrated that each artist/author utilises creative expression in remarkable ways, allowing them to render their account, and/or the accounts of others, in evocative ways. My engagement with visual-verbo literature remains a rewarding one. As reader (witness) I take heed of the previously unsaid testimonies I encountered.

Bibliography

Abirached, Zeina. *A Game for Swallows: To Die, To Leave, To Return*. Minneapolis and New York: Graphic Universe, 2012. Print. Translated by Edward Gauvin.

Abirached, Zeina. "Artist's Statement." *European Comic Art* 8.1 (2015): 69-86.

Abirached. *The Rumpus*. 20 September 2013. Web. 24 October 2016.

Adams, Jeff. "The pedagogy of the image text: Nakazawa, Sebald and Spiegelman recount social traumas." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 29. 1 (2008): 35-49.

Ashcroft, Bill and Ahluwalia, Pal. *Edward Said: Routledge Critical Thinkers*. 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, Helen. *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.

Athanasiou, Athena and Butler, Judith. *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*. Cambridge: Polity. 2013. Print.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Austin: University of Texas, 1981. Print.

Bazambanza, Rupert. *Smile Through the Tears: A Story of the Rwandan Genocide*. Jackson's Point: Soul Poetry, 2007.

Beevor, Anthony. *The Second World War*. New York and London: Little, Brown and Company, 2012. Print.

Berlant, Lauren. "The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy, and Politics." *Traumatizing Theory: Cultural Politics of Affect in and beyond Psychoanalysis*. Ed. Karen Ball. New York: Other, 2007. 305-347.

Blake, Brandy Ball. "Watchmen: The Graphic Novel as Trauma Fiction." *ImageText: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies*. 5.1 (2010). Dept of English, University of Florida. 31 October 2017.

Brienza, Casey. "Producing comics culture: a sociological approach to the study of comics." *Journal of Graphic Novels & Comics*. 1.2 (2010) 105-119.

Brison, Susan. *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2002.

Brister, Rose. "Sounding the Occupation: Joe Sacco's Palestine and the Uses of Graphic Narrative for (Post) Colonial Critique." *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 45.1-2 (2014): 109-129.

Bumatay, Michelle and Warman, Hannah. "Illustrating Genocidaires, Orphans, and Child Soldiers in Central Africa." *Peace Review*. 24:3 (2012): 332-339.

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London and New York: Verso, 2004. Print.

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1996. Print.

Chaney, Michael.A. "Introduction." *Graphic Subjects: Critical Essays on Autobiography and Graphic Novels*. Ed. Michael Chaney. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011. 3-9. Print.

Chaney, Michael.A. "Terrors of the Mirror and the "Mise en Abyme" of Graphic Novel Autobiography." *College Literature* 38.3 (2011): 21-44.

Chalk, Frank and Jonassohn, Kurt. "Genocide: A Historical Overview." *Social Education*. 55:2 (1991): 92-97.

Chute, Hillary. "Comics form and narrating lives". *The Routledge Auto-Biographic Studies Reader*. Ed. Ricia Anne Chansky and Emily Hipchen. London and New York: Routledge. 2016. Print

Craps, Stef. *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds*. Great Britain: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013.

Croisy, Sophie. "Re-imagining Healing after Trauma: Leslie Marmon Silko and Judith Butler Writing against the War of Cultures." *Nebula* 3.2-3 (2006): 86-113.

Culbertson, Roberta. "Embodied memory, transcendence, and telling: recounting trauma, re-establishing the self." *New Literary History*. 26.1 (1995) 169-195.

Dallaire, Romeo. *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*. London: Arrow, 2004.

Deuben, Alex. "Graphic Novelist Zeina Abirached on Remembering and Forgetting Beirut." *Arabic Literature (in English)*. 12 August 2015. Web. 24 October 2016.

Dohrendwend, Bruce. "The role of adversity and stress in psychopathology: Some evidence and its implications for theory and research." *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* 41.1 (2000) 1-19.

Erikson, Kia. "Notes on Trauma and Community." *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Ed. Cathy Caruth. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995. 183-199. Print.

Esther, John and Folman, Ari. "Waltz with Bashir: An Interview with Ari Folman." *Cinéaste*, 34. 2 (2009): 67.

Felman, Shoshana and Laub, Dori. *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. London: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Folman, Ari and Polonsky, David. *Waltz with Bashir*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009. Print.

Forster, Greg. "Freud, Faulkner, Caruth: Trauma and the Politics of Literary Form." *Narrative* 15.3 (2007): 259-285.

Gravett, Paul. *Comics Art*. London: Yale University Press, 2013. Print.

Gilmore, Leigh. "Limit Cases: Trauma, self-representation, and the jurisdiction of identity." *The Routledge Auto-Biographic Studies Reader*. Ed. Ricia Anne Chansky and Emily Hipchen. London and New York: Routledge. 2016. Print.

Gourevitch, Philip. *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: Stories from Rwanda*. London: Picador, 2000.

Hatfield, Charles. *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005. Print.

Hotel Rwanda. Dir. Terry George. Perf. Don Cheadle, Sophie Okonedo, Nick Nolte. Kigali Releasing Limited, 2004.

Janse van Rensburg, Ariane. "Mediating between tradition and meaning in stained glass windows." *South African Journal of History* 25.1 (2010): 1-13.

Kosicki, Piotr.H. "Sites of Aggressor - Victim Memory: The Rwandan Genocide, Theory and Practice." *The International Journal of Sociology*. 37:1. (2007) 10-29.

LaCapra, Dominick. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2014.

LaCapra, Dominick. "Interview on Acting Out and Working Through Trauma." *Shoah Resource Centre*. (1998) 1-8.

Lang, Felix. "Ghosts in the Archive—Lebanon's Second-Generation Post-War Novelists and The Limits of Reconstruction." *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 18.5 (2014): 487-495.

Limón, José E. "Border Literary Histories, Globalization, and Critical Regionalism." *American Literary History* 20.1-2 (2008): 160-182.

Mamdani, Mahmood. *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics*. New York: Harper Collins, 1993. Print.

McCloud, Scott. *Reinventing Comics*. New York: Harper Collins, 2000. Print.

McNally, Richard. *Remembering Trauma*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 2003. Print.

Naeff, Judith. "Bleeding Walls: Novelistic Representations of Homes in War Torn Beirut." MA Thesis. University of Amsterdam, 2010, Print.

Nakazawa, Kenji. *Barefoot Gen*. San Francisco: Last Gasp of San Francisco, 2004. Print

Novak, Julia. "Biographical Fiction to Historiographic Metafiction: Rewriting Clara Schumann." *Brno Studies in English*. 37.2. (2011) 145-158.

Ong, Jade Munslow. "I'm only a dog: The Rwandan Genocide, Dehumanization and the Graphic Novel." *Commonwealth Literature*. 51:2. (2016) 211-225.

Postema, Barbra. *Narrative Structure in Comics: Making Sense of Fragments*. New York: RIT Press. 2013. Print.

Sabin, Roger. *Adult Comics: An Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993. Print.

- Sacco, Joe. *Footnotes in Gaza*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009. Print
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books, 2003. Print.
- Said, Edward. Introduction. *Palestine*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2003. Print.
- Samuel, Karin. "Bearing Witness to Trauma: Representations of the Rwandan Genocide". MA Thesis. University of Stellenbosch, 2010. Print.
- Satrapı, Marjane. *The Complete Persepolis*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2007. Print.
- Stassen, J.P. *Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda*. New York and London, 2006. Translated by Alexis Siegel.
- Sherman, Nancy. *Afterwar: Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Print.
- Shimizu, Isao. "*Nihon*" manga no jiten. "*Japanese Comics*". Tokyo: Sanseido, 1985. Print
- Smith, Sidonie and Watson, Julia. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Writing*. 2nd ed. London, Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2001. Print.
- Shooting Dogs*. Dir. Michael Caton-Jones. Perf. John Hurt, Hugh Dancy. CrossDay Productions, 2005.
- Stewart, Garrett. "Screen Memory in *Waltz With Bashir*." *Film Quarterly* 63.3 (2010): 58-62.
- Szep, Eszter. "Graphic Narratives of Women in War: Identity Construction in the Works of Zeina Abirached, Miriam Katin, and Marjane Satrapi." *Interdisciplinary Political and Cultural Journal* 16. 1 (2014): 21-33.
- Viljoen, Jeanne-Marie. "Representing the 'unrepresentable': The unpredictable life of memory and experience in *Waltz with Bashir*." *Scrutiny2: Issues in English Studies in Southern Africa* 18.2 (2013) 66-80.

Viljoen, Jeanne-Marie. "Waltz with Bashir: between representation and experience." *Journal of Cultural & Media Studies* 28.1 (2014): 40-50.

Waltz with Bashir. Writ and Dir. Ari Folman and David Polonsky. The Match Factory., 2008.

DVD

Whitlock, Gillian. "Autographics: The seeing 'I' of comics." *The Routledge Auto-Biography Studies Reader*. Ed. Ricia Anne Chansky and Emily Hipchen. London and New York: Routledge. 2016. Print.

Whitlock, Gillian. "Autographics: The seeing 'I' of comics." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 52.4 (2006): 965-979.

Wiedeman, Sophia. "The New York Comics and Picture-Story Symposium: Zeina Abirached". [N.D].