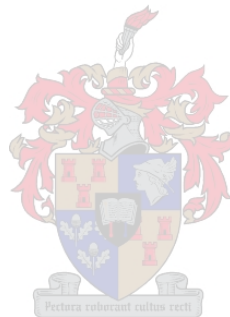


NARRATING AN UNSTABLE MEMORY: A POSTMODERN STUDY OF FICTIONAL PASTS IN THE (AUTO/BIO)GRAPHIC NOVEL

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Declaration

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.

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ABSTRACT

To write a life story the auto/biographer must reflect upon the past that was once experienced. When presented with this task of depending on memory and narrative, the auto/biographer often finds himself/herself in the position of creating and imagining, rather than reflecting or presenting the past as it was lived. Fragmentation, forgetfulness, selection, (re)construction and imagination are often inextricably connected to Memory which results in the reliance on an *unstable* memory to access the past.

This dissertation explores how postmodern auto/biographies, specifically the (auto/bio)graphic novel, acknowledges the difficulty of writing about the past when concerned with *truth*. The (auto/bio)graphic novel disrupts the notion of truth by blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction, resulting in a hybrid form where text and image, reality and imagination co-exist to create new, and often more significant pasts (that can serve the present).

ABSTRAK

Om 'n lewensverhaal te skryf, reflekteer die outo/biograaf op dit wat eens geleef was in die verlede. Deur hierdie proses, wat 'n afhanklikheid van die geheue behels, vind die outo/biograaf homself/haarself gereeld in 'n situasie waar hy/sy ontwerp en verbeel, eerder as om die verlede weer te gee soos dit beleef was. Fragmentasie, vergeetagtigheid, selektering, (her)konstruering en verbeelding is soms onskeibaar van Geheue wat dui op die afhanklikheid van 'n *onstabiele* geheue in die skryf- en illustreer-prosesse van 'n outo/biografie.

Hierdie verhandeling ondersoek hoe postmoderne outo/biografieë, spesifiek die (outo/bio)grafiese roman, bewus is van die kwessies rondom die skryf van die verlede in verhouding tot *waarheid*. Die (outo/bio)grafiese roman ontwig die idee van *waarheid* deur die grense tussen feit en fiksie te ondermyn. Gevolglik ontstaan 'n hibriede vorm van outo/biografie waar teks en beeld, realiteit en verbeelding gekombineer word om nuwe en meer beduidende verledes te skep (wat so ook die hede op nuwe maniere kan dien).

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1. Introduction

1.1 Autobiography: the point of departure

In Greek “*autos* denotes ‘self’, *bios* ‘life’, and *graphe* ‘writing’” (Smith and Watson 2001: 1).

Thus, one can deduce that writing an autobiography means ‘to write one’s own life’. Pertti Alasuutari suggests that in writing a life story “a person tells about his or her life, and the focus is on the individual’s character, as it is reflected in and substantiated by the life events told” (1997: 1). Therefore, one can assume that in order for a person to write an autobiography, s/he must look to his/her personal pasts.

The discourse of *autobiography* has been explored closely in terms of its relation to the *self* and identity¹, since writing a life story can closely be related to “the art of creating a self” which “offers the individual an opportunity to reify, to constitute, to create an identity” (Eakin 1985: 26). However, the issue I am more concerned with is what *information* the life-writer employs to produce this life story that is used for identity creation. Freeman notes that in “all autobiographical reflections [there] is the primacy of memory” (1993: 29). One can thus infer that autobiography is largely dependent on memory. Therefore, my interest rather lies in re-investigating the significance of *memory* in the process of writing a life story and the ways in which the ‘autobiographer’ overcomes working with “memory [that] is unstable, changing and unpredictable” (Vinitzky-Serroussi and Teegar 2010: 103). I am specifically interested in how this *unstable memory* influences autobiographical graphic novels in terms of narrative construction and fictional truths.

¹ To name a few: Ilené Jacobs’s dissertation, *Performing the Self: autobiography, narrative, image and text in self-representations* (2007), University of Stellenbosch; Sunell Lombard’s dissertation, *Fiction, Friction and Fracture: Autobiographic Novels as a site for Changing Discourses around Subjectivity, Truth and Identity* (2008), University of Stellenbosch; the articles *The Discursive Construction of Personality*, by Pertti Alasuutari and *National Identity or Multicultural Autobiography: Theoretical Concepts of Biographical Constitution Grounded in Case Reconstructions*, by Gabriele Rosenthal, in the composite work *The Narrative Study of Lives Volume 5* (1997), edited by Lieblich, A and Josselson, R.; and *How our lives become stories: Making Selves* (1999) by Paul John Eakin.

According to Atkinson there is a universal idea that “autobiography differs from other ‘literary’ works in that there is an autobiographical pact that assumes some degree of fidelity on the part of the author” (2010: 117). However, this study will aim to disrupt this notion of *truth* by investigating the *unstable nature* of memory.

Vico suggests three different aspects of memory that possibly indicate this instability, namely: “memory [that] re-members things, imagination [that] imitates them, and invention [that] gives them a new turn” (cited in Sprinker 1980: 329). Mark Freeman, who investigates the discourse of memory in *Rewriting the self: History, memory, narrative* (1993), notes that memory “often has to do not merely with recounting the past, but with making sense of it” (1993: 29). This verifies the “understanding of memory as something more like a faculty for imaginative reconstruction, one that relies heavily on contextual clues as it patches together an untidy collection of scenes”; it also discards the idea that memories are *true* reflections of the past (Jacobs 2007: 50). In fact, when considering Roth’s statement that “[m]emories of the past...are not memories of facts but memories of [one’s] imaginings of the facts”, one can regard memories as mere interpretations and reconstructions of the past (cited in Freeman 1993: 117). Rebecca Spiro actually indicates that the “recollection of [past] experiences is among the most unreliable and unpredictable of cerebral functions” (2012: n.p.). This indicates that memory “is neither as stable nor as continuous” as we would have thought, and can therefore affect the writing of autobiographical texts (Whitehead 2009: 56).

Anne Whitehead further indicates that “memory collapses once we enter into a state of isolation”, which suggests that “memory [is] a specifically social phenomenon” (Whitehead 2009:127,123). The idea of ‘collective memory’, a phrase coined by Maurice Halbwachs, supports the idea of an *unstable memory* because, as Olick notes in *Collective Memory: the Two Cultures*, “Halbwachs argued that it is impossible for individuals to remember in any coherent and persistent fashion outside of their group context” (1999: 334). Freeman explains that “[h]istories begin not in memory, but in stories told to us by others”, which clearly shows that memories are never only one person’s, but belong to both the individual

and to the society or the collective that the person belongs to or wants to belong to (1993: 53). Mendels further suggests that "collective memory is...fragmented memory", an idea that I support because of the impossibility of knowing one's individual past without other people's accounts of that past (cited in Barash 2007: 105).

In terms of creating an autobiography, however, the question is how we make sense of memories that are possibly unstable. Bartlett suggests that "separate memories are easier to retain when they are organized into stories with narrative structure". I would suggest that this *narrative structure* is how memories are written into autobiographies (cited in Sabbagh 2009: 62). Therefore it can be deduced that memory in an autobiography is in fact "[a] narrative [in which] the semiotic representation of series of events [are] meaningfully connected in a temporal and causal way" (Onega and Landa 1996: 3). This *narration* of past events "can be viewed as one of the primary tools of knowledge", because narrative "determines structure and aesthetic form in the presentation of a real or a fictional event" (Lützel 1992: 30). To add to this idea, Bohleber suggests that "[m]emories are conceived as narrative constructions with gaps that have arisen from forgetting, which are then filled by narrative to produce meaning..." (2007: 335). This indicates an unexpected relationship between memory and fiction, where both "[are] representation[s] of events in a narrative form, which use narrative's techniques to create artificial text[s]" (Berlatsky 2003: 111). Lynda Barry further emphasises this tension between memory and fiction, specifically in literature, by asking whether "it [is] autobiography if parts of it are not true [and whether] it [is] fiction if parts of it are?" (cited in Dong 2011: 13). This question challenges the perception of *factuality* in autobiography and fiction as literary genres, and indicates the importance of the issue of *truth* in autobiography, especially with reference to memory.

This issue is further problematised when exploring autobiographical graphic novels². The graphic novel first developed in Europe and is "seen as an art form that has grown out of

² Graphic novels are defined as "book-length narratives... using a combination of words and sequential art, often presented in comic book style" (Fletcher-Spear, et al. 2005).

and subsequently outgrown the comics genre" (Tan 2001: 31). This genre "includes numerous works of autobiography, biography... and history", and thus can be seen as a *hybrid* genre because it combines (traditionally assumed) *non-fictional* autobiography and *fictional* illustrative storytelling (Tabachnick 2010: 3). Hye Su Park notes that "[t]he growing popularity of the study of the graphic narrative as a critical literary exercise is visible in both university classrooms and many other academic venues" (2011: 146). I suggest that this is because it is a fairly understudied field with possible academic contributions to art, education, literature and the social sciences. In this study, the graphic novel is specifically significant because of its integration of both visual and literary narration, an integration "which challenges and further complicates the divisions between history and aesthetics" (Park 2011: 158). This implies that the use of illustration in graphic novels would normally complicate the *truth* aspect of a historical past. According to Andrew J. Kunka, "[g]raphic narrative suggests that historical accuracy is not the opposite of creative invention" (2011: 170). It is important to note that "the archival potential" of the graphic novel allows the "piecing together of fragments from an imagined future archive" (Coombs 2011: 3). Janice Y. Chan contributes to this idea by stating that "postmodern scholars bring forward the concept of reality as fragmented narratives [in] many autobiographical graphic novels" (2006: 47). Gardner further suggests that "comic writing is the only [medium] capable of allowing the shades of the past to overlap with and speak to the impulses of the present" (cited in Coombs 2011: 3). This is mostly because it is a medium that "offers compelling, diverse examples that engage with different styles, methods, and modes to consider the problem of historical representation" (Kunka 2011: 169). In relation to the combination of text and image in graphic novels, Charles Hatfield suggests that "pictures are open, easy, and solicitous, while words are coded, abstract, and remote", which indicates an interesting tension between the simultaneous use of text and image in graphic novels (cited in Kunka 2011: 171). It can be argued, against Hatfield's notion of *open, easy pictures*, that images themselves are often very complex and layered; nevertheless, when image is combined with

text, the juxtaposition can make it even more complex. This combination of visual and literary texts becomes, in Bahktin's words, a "consciously structured hybrid of languages" which not only blurs the boundaries between the nature of the texts, but between the *factual* representation of the past and *fiction* (cited in Bredehoft 2011: 99). In fact, in the graphic novel and comic book "there is a sense in which the past, present and future coexist", because the reader can have a sense of what is happening on the whole page before necessarily reading through it (Atkinson 2010: 112). Thus, this 'coexistence' of the past, present and future in graphic life stories certainly contributes to a study of memory in autobiography, which depends largely on representing the past in the present, and in some cases, the future.

Many autobiographical graphic novelists have struggled with representing and narrating memory. Art Spiegelman, artist and writer of the graphic novel *Maus* (1986), "continually foregrounds his story as text and not as truth, showing that memory, history, and identity are all largely [narrative] constructions" (Berlatsky 2003: 136). Spiegelman is only one of many graphic novelists who handle memory and autobiography in a self-reflexive way. In fact, the innovative collaboration of visual and literary texts that graphic novelists produce when they encounter the *unstable memory* is of considerable significance in the study of autobiography and memory.

1.2 Focus on Memory

With reference to Narelle Lemon's statement that "[m]uch research has been done on the use of narratives and how they provide unique insight[s]... that enlighten relations between self and society", I want to elaborate on the reasons why my focus is on memory in (auto/bio)graphic novels rather than on the *self* (2006: 1). The most noticeable reason, then, is because of the large quantity of research already done on how autobiography relates to identity and the *self*. Another reason would be the focus on identity and subjectivity when studying autobiography or life writing. For instance, Pertti Alasuutari states in his essay, "The

discursive Construction of Personality”, in the book *The Narrative Study of Lives*, that “life stories can be seen as a means of personality or identity construction” (1997: 2). Iléné Jacobs argues in her thesis, *Performing the Self: autobiography, narrative, image and text in self-representations*, that “[n]arrative and autobiography are considered specifically in terms of subjectivities”, thus claiming that these discourses mainly have to do with the *self* (2007: 7). Michael M.J. Fischer suggests in his essay, *Autobiographical Voices and Mosaic Memory: Experimental Sondages in the (Post)modern World*, that “[a]utobiographical voices are often thought of as deeply singular attempts to inscribe individual identity” (1994: 79). Although I agree with these statements that autobiography is involuntarily connected to the construction of a *self*, I cannot neglect considering the role that memory plays in this construction, seeing that “memory is central to our understanding of what it means to live as a human being” (Meilaender 2003: 20).

Freeman notes that “when [we are] asked who and what we are and how we might have gotten that way, we ordinarily turn to our personal pasts for possible answers” (1993: 28). Thus, it can be assumed that we “use memory as a means of identity construction” (Berlatsky 2003: 117). Locke argues that “personal identity is identical with remembering one’s own actions” (cited in Whitehead 2009: 56). Jacobs deduces that “memory is necessary in order to make meaning out of our existence and... the performance of memory is not necessarily optional, but something one does in order to be constituted as a subject within society” (2007: 53). Alasuutari contributes to this notion by suggesting that “[m]emory...[is] also [an] excellent tool in shaping and reshaping the personal self” (1997: 10). Even the memories that are given to us by other people, such as family members, “serve as a useful basis for identity” (Schiff, et al. 2011: 252). Thus, exploring the discourse of memory, specifically in terms of the *unstable memory*, this study can contribute significantly to research on autobiography and identity that aims to investigate the stability of identity construction and the reliability of autobiography.

Kerwin Lee Klein notes that "outside of experimental psychology and clinical psychoanalysis, few academics paid much attention to memory until the great swell of popular interest in autobiographical literature, family genealogy, and museums that marked the seventies" (2000: 127). I would suggest that a possible reason for this interest in memory is intrinsic in the nature of autobiographies, which gives "[t]he satisfaction... [of] being allowed inside the experience of another person who really lived and who tells about experiences which did in fact occur" (Conway 1999: 6). Olney then asks this very important question: "Is an autobiographer not utterly dependent on memory for both the shape and the details of his recitation?" (1980: 259). The answer would most certainly be yes. However, to consider the dependence on memory in autobiography one must ask how 'stable' or reliable this memory is when, for instance, re-narration takes place to fill the gaps left by forgotten and repressed memories; and what the significance is of certain memories that resurface in the present.

Freeman states that "there is ample evidence to suggest that the concept of the self is very much relative to time and place" (1993: 27). Specifically in a post-Apartheid South Africa, Nuttall notes, the "integration of the past into the present may be one stage in a process of healing, or in the making of [new] memor[ies]" which can influence new South African collective *identities* (1998: 83). "Memory's retroactive power for investigating earlier events with later understanding" marks the need for specific pasts to shape the present and future (Olney 1980: 388). For example, Osborne and Sandford note that "*race* is a concept with a disreputable past and an uncertain future, yet it continues to trouble the present, both politically and intellectually" (cited in Littler 2008: 89). Memories surrounding *race* still find themselves in the present with hopes of new meanings for the future. Sarah Nuttall states that "[i]n South Africa, the past... is being 'remade' for the purposes of current reconciliation" (1998: 73). South African autobiographies can be seen as "talking-as-healing narrative[s]; and making [new] collective memor[ies] in the new South Africa" (Andrews 2007: 175). According to Neumann, "[t]he privileges of novels within the memory culture include experimentation with new concepts of memory, giving voice to hitherto marginalized

memories” (2008: 340). Thus, the discourse of memory is a particularly interesting and relevant field to investigate in terms of post-Apartheid South African auto/biographies and stories.

1.3 Aim of Study

The discourse of memory will be investigated thoroughly in relation to autobiography³, narrative and the graphic novel/narrative, where the aim is to explore specifically how memory is used in autobiography and other life writing. The issue concerned with “readers [who] naturally assume that all autobiographies are based on the verifiable facts⁴ of a life history” leads to questions about the nature of memory which is used in autobiographical writing (Eakin 1985: 3). How stable is this memory in terms of its relation to the *real* past? Is memory not just a re-invention of past events to serve the present? And if these questions can be answered in the affirmative, “[is] autobiography [not] just another form of fiction?” (Conway 1999: 3). For the purpose of this study, then, these questions will be explored within a postmodern framework where “[p]ostmodern[ism] raise[s] a number of issues regarding the interaction of historiography and fiction [such as] issues surrounding... the intertextual nature of the past; and the ideological implications of writing about history” (Hutcheon 1988: 117); and within a metafictional framework where metafiction “seeks to dismantle... the very binary between fiction and fact” (Kunka 2011: 174).

It is essential to investigate memory and autobiography in specific relation to narrative construction, since narrative, according to Asa Berger, is “the primary way through which humans organise their experiences into temporally meaningful episodes” (cited in Jacobs 2007: 69). Thus, this study investigates how memory is constructed into narratives in order

³ Smith and Watson (2001) differentiate between the terms *memoir*, *autobiography*, and *life-writing* where “autobiography [is] synony[mous] [with] self-biography” and “memoir [means] self life writing” (2001: 2). They further state that memoir differs from autobiography because the “recollections [in memoirs] often bracket one moment or period of experience rather than an entire life span” (Smith and Watson 2001: 3). However, for the purpose of my study, I will not differentiate between these terms. I will use *autobiography* as relating to all types of personal life writing.

⁴See ‘Autobiographical Pact’ by Phillip Lejeune in *On Autobiography*, 1988 (Atkinson 2010: 117).

for the life event/story to be interpreted logically. The structural nature of narrative then produces more questions of how stable or unstable memory is. If memories are put together in structural order to make sense, can it not be said to influence the 'factuality', 'accuracy' and 'dependability' of those memories? Does the nature of *narrated memory* not suggest that "any [life-writer], acting in the best of faith, is going to produce a narrative that will have fiction in it [whether s/he] like[s] it or not" (Eakin 1985: 10)? Since "[poststructuralism] assumes that... memory and the self are created out of linguistic performances", by investigating memory and autobiographical narrative within a post-structural framework, the constructive nature of narrative will deal with questions regarding 'factuality' and fiction in autobiography (Berlatsky 2003: 112).

Another aim of this dissertation is to explore all of the above-mentioned issues with specific focus on the graphic novel. The auto/biographic graphic novel can be regarded as a postmodern/post-structural medium in which autobiographical memories are dealt with in very diverse and controversial ways, such as blurring boundaries between past, present and future, and questioning the reliability of the author by writing/illustrating self-reflexively. The illustrative nature of graphic novels produces an interesting tension between pictorial text and literary text that is commonly associated with autobiographic novels, in the sense that it questions the role of the author and the 'accuracy' of the past. "When *Maus* was first published, it appeared... under the category of fiction" because of its comics format. "Spiegelman requested that it be moved to the non-fiction list" because it was indeed an autobiography (n.d.: 302). If we consider this incident, we can also question the reader's perception of 'truthful' pasts in the autobiographical graphic novel.

The often simplified human features and environments in the graphic novel can also possibly influence the 'authenticity' of the autobiography. Hutcheon suggests that "more than a novelist, a graphic artist has to imagine, and actually visualise" the past, which indicates that the artist controls how the characters look and act, which can affect the perception of the realism/non-realism of the past (n.d.: 304). The structure of graphic novels, specifically "their

pages [that are] segmented into frames and marked by gutters, invite consideration [and investigation] of what is in and not in the frame” in terms of memory and narrative construction (Smith and Watson 2001: 173). Graphic novels are also known to deliberately distort reality and portray self-reflexivity, because most authors/artists ‘continually foreground [the] stor[ies] as text[s] and not as truth[s]’ (Berlatsky 2003: 136). For instance, Spiegelman writes “history (personal and public) as a reflexive comic book that [does] not say history is a fiction; instead [it] suggests that all accounts of that history are necessarily ‘narrativised’ accounts” (Hutcheon n.d. 30). As Davids contends: “given the constitutive intersections in these modes of inscription, we must approach contemporary graphic autobiographies as increasingly sophisticated forms of inscribing the past”, and therefore apply an investigation of the medium to the study of the *unstable* memory in autobiographical writing (cited in Chaney 2011: 27).

1.4 Theoretical Framework & Methodology

1.4.1 Postmodernism

According to Kerwin Lee Klein, “memory is the mode of discourse typical of *the postmodern condition*”, specifically because “the moments that produce it are those that... disrupt master narratives” which refer to the present’s involvement in the past’s reality (2000: 138). It is precisely this obscurity between present and past which is of importance in the investigation of memory within a postmodern framework, which questions the moments of disruption (the present’s requirement) and also the product of these moments, namely narrated memories (of the past). Susan Elizabeth Hart states that “the task of defining the term ‘postmodernism’ is not quite so straightforward [because] there is no simple definition for this term and it may be understood in multiple senses [for example] as a period of time, [or] as a style of representation” (2000: 7). However, she refers to Jean-Francois Lyotard and Frederic Jameson’s writings for a very general definition of postmodernism⁵ as that which “refers to

⁵ I want to clarify, by quoting Susan Elizabeth Hart, that “although the word ‘postmodern’ suggests a chronologic implication – that it comes after modernism – I do not use it in this chronological sense” (2000: 10).

the calling into question... the unified and universalist metanarratives of Western culture”, where modern ideas of discourses such as identity, memory, and history are dissected and challenged (Hart 2000: 8). Berlatsky states that the “postmodern aesthetic places the truth-value of memory, history, and identity into question, never claiming historical accuracy of truth telling that might allow for... essentialist constructions of history” (2003: 126).

Postmodernism regards memory, like other metanarratives, with much caution in terms of one ultimate ‘truth’, and tends to reject the claims of *real* representations of the past. This postmodern disruption and questioning of metanarratives such as memory, place much emphasis on issues regarding ‘truth’ and ‘fiction’ which need to be explored in a study that is concerned with the authenticity of life-writing and memory.

The theoretical framework of *metafiction*⁶, which is also concerned with ‘truth’ and ‘fiction’, can therefore further support the postmodern investigation of memory in auto/bio(graphical) novels. Brian McHale suggests that in “postmodern fiction [and metafiction]... there is a questioning of fictional boundaries” (cited in Atkinson 2010: 109). I suggest that this refers to where/when stories can be classified as fictional, and also when/if autobiographies can be interpreted as fiction. Susan Onega and José Angel Garcia Landa suggest that “[m]etafiction can be defined as a way of... consciously manipulating fictional structures” (1996: 31). The concept of constructing narratives of the past, especially when creating an (auto/bio)graphic novel, leaves many questions about ‘truth’ and ‘reality’. And this “tension between reality and mimetic representation is perhaps the best starting-point for a discussion of metafiction” seeing that the (auto/bio)graphic novel aims to represent *reality* by utilising the author’s visual interpretation of the *real* past, yet presenting it partly as a work of fiction (Onega and Landa 1996: 31). Atkinson states that “metafiction depends on the coexistence of a frame of reference that is both outside the story and yet is somehow invoked or referred to from

⁶ Linda Hutcheon calls postmodern novels, such as autobiographic graphic novels, “historiographic metafiction” because of their self-reflexive natures that aim to ‘reveal both the limits and powers of historical knowledge’ (1988: 223). From a metafictional point of view it is important to recognise this term without necessarily having to explore it any further. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I am regarding (auto/bio)graphic novels as *historiographic metafiction* because of their postmodern, self-reflexive natures without deliberately stating it throughout the dissertation.

inside the story, [so] that the boundary between inside and outside is blurred” (2010: 109). Writing about memory, then, depends on the past, as well as the act of writing the story in the present; and because this boundary between past and present is blurred by the narration of memory, questions of *reality* versus *fiction* arise.

Linda Hutcheon argues that “among the many things that postmodern[ism]... challenges [there] are both closure and single, centralized meaning” (1988: 127). She further states that “it is part of the postmodernist stand to confront the paradoxes of fictive/historical representation, the particular/the general, and the present/the past”; in other words, binary opposites (Hutcheon 1988: 106). To add to this idea, Hal Foster emphasises that “[h]ow we conceive postmodernism, then, is critical to how we represent both present and past – which aspects are stressed, which are repressed” (cited in Kolin: 1998: 38). Thus, discussing the discourse of memory within a postmodern framework enables us to question the stability and value of memory, specifically in terms of autobiographical narrative. According to Alasuutari, “autobiographies are a story genre that developed along with modernisation”⁷, which implies that modernist ideas, such as *truth* and *accurate* representation of the past, are usually connected with this genre (1997: 11). It is important to note that “[w]hat postmodernism does... is confront and contest any modernist discarding or recuperating of the past in the name of the future. It suggests no search for transcendent timeless meaning, but rather a re-evaluation of and a dialogue with the past in the light of the present” (Hutcheon 1988:19).

Since memory and autobiography can be disrupted when placed in a postmodern context, specifically because of the constructed and possible fictional nature of these discourses, it is just as important to investigate the theory of narrative within a postmodern framework.

Hutcheon states that “[i]n most of the critical work on postmodernism, it is narrative – be it in literature, history, or theory – that has usually been the major focus of attention” (1988: 5). I would suggest that the reason for this is that discourse of narrative reveals the constructive

⁷ The modern idea of writing life stories “assumes that there is an object – personality or self-concept – whose historical transformation” is reflected by autobiographies (Alasuutari 1997: 4).

nature of literature, history, and theory via language. As Freeman notes, “narrative choices are inevitably circumscribed by language” (1993: 173). Christine Bold suggests that “the use of narrative has clear links with postmodern thought since narrative creation usually encourages reflexivity and acknowledges that truth and certainty are unstable” (2012: 13). Marie-Laure Ryan contributes to this idea by stating that “[m]any postmodern texts present themselves as bits of pieces of a narrative image but prevent the reader from ever achieving the reconstruction of a stable and complete narrative script” (2004: 10). Thus, when narrative is placed within a postmodern framework, its instability and ‘constructedness’ is emphasised. This is certainly significant in “narrating an *unstable* memory”, because the act of *life-writing* is questioned.

1.4.2 Narratology

Since the discourse of narrative is central to this study, it should also be explored within a narratological framework, seeing that *narratology* “is, etymologically, the science of narrative” (Onega and Landa 1996: 1). Narratology is, “in the strict sense of the word, usually associated with structuralism”, but I am rather going to apply some aspects of narratology that coincides with post-structural methodologies (Onega and Landa 1996: 4). Traditionally, according to Onega and Landa, “narratological analysis concentrates on those aspects of textual production, structure and reception which are specific to narrative: for instance, the study of plot, or the relationship between action and character portraiture” (1996: 4). However, for the purpose of this study I am exploring “post-structuralist criticism [that] is concerned with experimental fiction, [specifically] the analysis of reflexive fiction or metafiction [since it is] closely related to narratological concerns” (Onega and Landa 1996: 30). These criticisms include narratological approaches that “draw attention to formal-aesthetic characteristics of literature [which] bring into view the fictional possibilities for memory-creation” (Neumann 2008: 333).

1.4.3 Poststructuralism

According to Ben Agger “[t]here is [a] substantial overlap between poststructuralism and postmodernism” (1991: 112). He suggests that “poststructuralism is a theory of knowledge and language, whereas postmodernism is a theory of society, culture and history” (Agger 1991: 112). The importance of these two theories is obvious when dealing with memory and narrative, which are both substantially related to society, language, and history. According to Lechte, poststructuralism is “a movement that began in the 1960’s [which] is primarily concerned with the limits of knowledge and examining the notion of difference in all its facets” (cited in Lombard 2008: 4). Madan Sarup suggests that “post-structuralism found it possible to subvert the structures of language” (1988: 115). Thus, a post-structural methodology has much to do with language and the limits it poses, which points to the constructed nature of memory and autobiography, and therefore confronts the accuracy and dependability of these discourses in terms of representing *reality*. Chadwick furthers this argument by proposing that post-structuralism “exposes the role of language in deferring meaning”, which in turn suggests that “within post-structural theory, the subject is regarded not as essentialist but rather fluid and fragmented” (cited in Jacobs 2007: 5). Berlatsky also proposes that postmodernism and poststructuralism place “emphasis on the ‘real’ as inextricable from the constructed and the textual”, meaning that the *real* can never be so *real* that it is not constructed textually by humans and/or language (2003: 102). Thus, as Paul Allen Miller suggests, “[p]oststructuralism seeks not to categorize human culture and behaviour, but to define the limits of those categories per se”, challenging fixed ideas about reality, the past, and narrative (1998: 206).

1.4.4 Deconstruction & Semiotics

For the purpose of this study the poststructuralist methods of deconstruction and semiotic analysis are implemented to explore the (auto/bio)graphic novel, because “[d]econstruction is an essential ingredient in postmodern thought” (Hart 2000: 9). Sarup also states that deconstruction is “essentially post-structuralist”, with specific reference to its leading figure,

Jacques Derrida (1988: 34). Derrida regards deconstruction as “a method of reading a text so closely that the author’s conceptual distinctions on which the text relies are shown to fail”, precisely because of the *materiality* of writing the text (Sarup 1988: 37). Derrida also considers deconstructive readings to “open inevitable, unavoidable gaps of meaning that readers fill with their own interpolative sense” (cited in Agger 1991: 113). Berlatsky adds that post-structural deconstruction “emphasi[s]e[s] the impossibility of accessing a foundational or essential truth” (2003: 142). This is specifically significant for the investigation of the ‘stability’ or ‘instability’ of memory in terms of a written life narrative. Linda Anderson mentions that “deconstruction has made a significant impact on autobiography” because deconstruction reveals the ‘slippery slope’ of *truth vs memory* that is associated with autobiography (cited in Lombard 2008: 2).

Semiotics is also important when deconstructing the (auto/bio)graphic novel. By studying the signs that exist within the visual representations of a life, many questions can be raised about the stability of that narrated memory. Sara McDowell suggests that we “[use] semiotics to interpret meaning”, which can in turn produce insightful views about the specific discourse in question (McDowell 2008: 39). With semiotic theory, focus can be placed on the visual representations “to dig under surface meanings and get at the complex social and cultural narratives, which underpin how we represent things” (Carson, et al. 2005: 165). Gunther Kress suggests that “representation is never neutral: that which is represented in the sign, or in sign-complexes, realises the interests, the perspectives, the positions and values of those who make signs” (Kress, et al. 2005: 173). Thus, a semiotic analysis of the selected graphic narratives will aid the investigation of how the (auto/bio)graphic novel deals with the representations of ‘real’ characters and pasts.

1.4.5 Reflexivity & Intertextuality

Self-reflexivity, which is “another postmodern concept”, is also an important aspect that should be considered when studying (auto/bio)graphic novels (Chan 2006: 47). Not only is

autobiography considered to be a “self-reflexive, self-critical act”, but graphic novels experiment extensively with reflexivity in order to deal with memory, history, identity and authorship (Schneider 1993: 4). Hutcheon indicates that the self-reflexivity in works like (auto/bio)graphic novels “may have its roots in the modernist assertion of the autonomy of art and its separation from the contamination of life and history” (1988: 227). The author is constantly self-aware of his/her own influence and involvement in the writing- and remembering process, and (often not always directly) deliberately declares it. The combination of memory-writing and self-reflexivity then produces the acknowledgment “that truth and certainty are unstable” (Bold 2012: 13). Onega and Landa propose that “[a] discussion of reflexivity cannot be isolated from intertextuality, the theory which asserts that no text exists as an autonomous and self-sufficient whole” (1996: 32). Jacobs explains intertextuality⁸ as “refer[ing] to the fact that each text exists in relation to others and that, in fact, texts are [often] more indebted to other texts than to the author” (2007: 6). In a discussion about autobiography that insists on the importance of the author, intertextuality becomes a very important discourse to acknowledge, because issues like authenticity and dependability are problematised. The acknowledgement of the intertextual nature of signs, language and even memory will be significant, specifically for the interconnected nature of image and text in the (auto/bio)graphic novel.

1.5 Chapter Outline

In the second chapter the interdisciplinary discourse of memory is discussed, not only in terms of the hermeneutics of memory, but also in terms of the issue surrounding *accurate* memory. The *accuracy* of memory will be investigated by considering fragmentation, imagination, construction, selection and repetition, which can arguably lead to an *unstable* memory. The concept of *collective* memory is also investigated to contribute to the

⁸ According to Elaine Martin, the term *intertextuality* “was coined in the late 1960’s by Julia Kristeva, who combined ideas from Bakhtin on the social context of language with Saussure’s positing of the systematic features of language” (2011: 148).

discussion of an *unstable* memory – a memory without one definition, one *truth*⁹ or one purpose.

The third chapter, *Narrating the Past*, mainly consists of discussions about narrative; not only autobiography as narrative, but also memory as narrative. The connection between memory and narrative is quite significant, because it is argued that memory is a narrative construction, just like autobiography. The ‘constructive’ nature of narrative is investigated in terms of writing about memories and the past. I argue, that this is called autobiography. This then leads to questions about the authenticity of autobiography and other life-writing. Thus, autobiography (as a narrative of memory) is explored in relation to *fiction* and *reality*.

In the fourth chapter, the (auto/bio)graphic novel is the main focus. The rise of graphic novels aimed at an adult readership and consisting of more serious topics, is discussed with specific mention of the autobiographic graphic novel. The semiotic and post-structural aspects of these visual autobiographies, like structure and signs, are explored in depth in relation to the representation of memory, and the ways in which the nature of the medium (stylistic, simplified illustration) influences authenticity of graphic novels as autobiographies. Three graphic novels, namely Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* (1986, 1991), David B’s *Epileptic* (2005), and *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012), an (auto/bio)graphic novel about my childhood, are explored with post-structural methodologies such as semiotic analysis and post-structural deconstruction.

Lastly, the dissertation is concluded in Chapter 5 with a brief overview of what has been discussed, together with a possible suggestion that (auto/bio)graphic novels are simultaneously fictional and non-fictional, and that the specific medium is useful in blurring boundaries in a conscious and self-reflexive way in order to deal with the instability of memories. Since “South Africa is currently attentive to historical memory”, and because this

⁹ Jan Assman and John Czaplicka suggest that since “[e]very individual belongs to numerous groups...[they] therefore entertain numerous collective self-images and memories” which indicates the multiplicity of memory (1995: 127).

study includes the investigation of a South African (auto/bio)graphic novel, the significance of this study in a post-apartheid South Africa will also be considered (Govinden 2011: 288).

2. The Unstable Memory

2.1 Introduction

Gabriel Garcia Marquez states in *Living to Tell the Tale* that “[l]ife is not what one lived, but what one remembers and how one remembers it in order to recount it” (cited in Dong 2011: 13). It is exactly this human need to relive things of the past that makes memory such an important field to uncover when researching life-writing. According to Wulf Kansteiner, “memory has clearly become a central concept in the humanities and the social sciences”, whereas it may have existed only in the field of the neurosciences in the past (2002: 180). He further suggests that the “rare combination of social relevance and intellectual challenge explains the popularity of the field” (Kansteiner 2002: 180). I propose that the ‘popularity’ of memory-studies is a product of the urgency of making sense of human life via our pasts, together with the (still) limited biological/medical knowledge of how exactly memory functions.

John Locke identifies “the importance of memory for anchoring a sense of individual continuity over time” (cited in Whitehead 2009: 51). He believes that “the persistence of memory, rather than a consistency of actions, behaviours, or appearances, mark[s] the individual identity” (cited in Whitehead 2009: 51). As stated in the introduction, this study will not focus on identity per se. However, the connection between identity and memory, and that between identity and autobiography, is something that cannot be overlooked, since it contributes to the argument that memory is an important field to explore when dealing with life-writing. Alon Confino argues that memory studies have been “influenced by... new approaches to nationhood and to the ways nations construct their pasts; and by a diffused body of work called cultural studies, which often center[s] on issues of identity” (2008: 79). In fact, according to Axmacher et al., “memor[y] serves the creation of a continuous identity”, and therefore one can deduce that identity would almost be impossible without memory (2010: 6). Lyotard argues that “the singular knowledge of being here [present] is ontological

[and] derives only from the fact of remembering oneself” (cited in Kottman 1997: 34). Marita Struken elaborates on the connection between memory and identity, and states that “[m]emory forms the fabric of human life... [as] it establishes life’s continuity; it gives meaning to the present... [and] [it] provides the very core of identity” (cited in Jacobs 2007: 10). It can therefore be assumed that humans need and use memory to create culture and construct identity, because, as McDowell suggests, “[w]ithout memory a sense of self, identity, culture and heritage is lost” (2008: 42). For example, just after the end of the apartheid era South Africa needed to create a new integrated culture and sense of nationhood; therefore, “[m]emory and representation were thus of necessity put to work early for reconstruction purposes” (De Kock 1998: 57). In South Africa, then, the memories of the past came to shape that of the present, for example “through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission”, that specifically focused on repressed traumatic events that happened during the apartheid years (Nuttall 1998: 73). However, it is not only through the TRC that South African memories are recollected, but personal auto/biographies are also a significant space in which the South African past is explored, where writers depend on memory to narrate their life stories in the present. To contribute to this existence of memory in past and present, Augustine states that “[t]here are three times – a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future... [where] the present time of things past is memory”; however, we cannot neglect to ask, in relation to this overlap of the present and past, “how are we situated if memory is so uncertain or unstable” (cited in Olney 1998: 3, 7).

The question of what effect the *unstable* memory has on humans is one of the main motivations of this section of the dissertation, which is primarily concerned with how memory does and does not function. Nuttall suggests that the “rehearsal of memory... is a palpable, messy activity” (1998: 73). It is not possible for memory to be black-on-white, or simply a way of recollecting the past accurately; memory is much more complex. Nelson Mandela, for instance, states that his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994), “is a ‘memory’ which is not exclusively his”; this introduces the problem of authentic and collective memory (cited

in Nuttall 1998: 75). Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to investigate the complex and *unstable* nature of memory within a postmodern and metafictional framework by “hid[ing] and reveal[ing] contradictions”, exploring different possibilities of memory-work, and considering memory’s relation to *fiction* and *reality* (Hutcheon 1988: 15).

2.2 The Hermeneutics of Memory

Memory is normally associated with the “[recollection] of what once happened” (Olney 1998: 296). Siegfried J. Schmidt claims that “memory models have been based on ideas of storage, place, and retrieval” (Schmidt 2008: 191) which can be translated, in neuroscientific terms, as the “electrical activity in neurons [which] leads to long-lasting changes in the strength of synapses” (Lisman and Fallon 1999: 339). Generally, memory is understood as a range of “experiences [that happened in the past] that have come to us through our various senses” (Olney 1998: 60). For instance, Whitehead mentions that during the classical period¹⁰ “[m]emories were marked by pictorial devices and were stored away as images that could be ‘seen’ by the mind’s eye” (2009: 43). I would argue that it is not only in the classical period where visual interpretation has influenced memory, but throughout history and in the present as well¹¹. In the 21st century we are surrounded with images in newspapers, on television and films (documentaries and *true-life dramas*), at memorials, in museums, and even in (auto/bio)graphic novels, to archive the past and help us remember what it looks like. The use of our senses assists us when we consciously (and unconsciously) put away memorable events for later recollection. However, it is important to consider Humberto R. Maturana’s argument that “memory cannot be modelled as a storage site which is located at a specific place in the brain, but must instead be seen as the establishing of relevant and enduring cognition which serve[s] to constitute order in the brain and synthesize human behaviour” (cited in Schmidt 2008: 192). Even if there is a specific place in the brain where

¹⁰ “Belonging to or relating to the culture of ancient Rome and Greece” (Cambridge International Dictionary of English 1995. Sv. ‘classical’)

¹¹ For example, Tessa Morris-Suzuki argues that “[p]hotographs [that developed in the early 19th century] create a bridge between the self and the past because our own memories are so often embodied in photos, and historical photographs evoke memories preserved in family albums” (2005: 182).

memory is most apparently at work, Maturana suggests that memory is more than just that place in the brain in which it functions, and that it cannot be presumed to be only neurons storing the past in a specific place in the brain. There is no actual scientific evidence to prove that there is something like a storage 'room' in a person's brain; instead, Jeffrey K. Olick refers to neurological studies which have demonstrated that

“[M]emories are not unitary entities, stored away as coherent units to be called up for wholesale at a later date. Neural networks channel bits and pieces called 'engrams' to different places in the brain and store them there in different ways. The process of remembering, therefore, does not involve the 'reappearance' or 'reproduction' of an experience in its original form, but the cobbling together of a 'new' memory” (1999: 340).

This 'cobbling together of a new memory' is clearly important when considering the stability of memory, as it indicates a flexibility in remembering the past. Mandrou argues that memory is about “reconstructing the patterns of behaviour, expressive forms and modes of silence into which worldviews and collective sensibilities are translated” (cited in Confino 2008: 80). Thus, different parts of the brain are used for recalling memory: senses, emotions¹², identity construction, etc. However, according to Michael Schudson, memory should not be limited to only one individual mind, because “[m]emory is not a property [or characteristic] of individual minds, but a diverse and shifting collection of material artefacts and social practices” (cited in Klein 2000: 130). For example, in *Maus* (1986) Spiegelman's father Vladek tells of his experiences of the Holocaust during World War II, but he does not rely only on his own memories to tell the whole version of the story. Instead, he includes other people's accounts as well to tell a fuller, more omnipresent story of the past (fig.1, panel 1 and 4). Furthermore, Jeffrey K. Olick suggests that “[m]emories are as much the products of the symbols and narratives available publicly – and of the social means for storing and transmitting them – as they are the possessions of individuals” (1999: 335). Therefore, memory¹³ can be regarded as part of culture because it is simultaneously individual and social. The term “collective

¹² Werner Bohleber argues that “the precision of memory is often directly proportional to the emotional excitation caused by an event. The emotional intensity and personal significance, as well as the surprise element and general consequence of an event are key determinants” (2007: 336).

¹³ Memory can specifically be defined as *cultural memory* which “signifies that memory can be understood as a cultural phenomenon as well as an individual or social one” (Bal 1999: vii).

memory” coined by Maurice Halbwachs, which is concerned with this notion of a more social functioning of memory, will be discussed in more detail later on in this chapter.

However, the past and its connection to the present are of considerable significance when discussing the hermeneutics of memory, whether it is individual or collective memory.

Cognitive researcher Schacter describes the working of memory as follows:

“We extract key elements from our experiences and store them. We recreate and reconstruct our experiences rather than retrieve copies of them. Sometimes, in the process of reconstructing we add on feelings, beliefs, or even knowledge we obtained after the experience. In other words, we bias our memories of the past by attributing to them emotion or knowledge we acquired after the event.”

(cited in Bohleber 2007: 335)

Memory, according to Patrick H. Hutton, “consists of two moments [namely] repetition and recollection: [r]epetition involves the *presence of the past* [and] recollection involves present representations of the past” (cited in Klein 2000: 132). Whitehead notes that “remembering represents a process of reflection”, which in turn suggests that from the moment something happened (the past), the mind reflects upon it until the moment it is remembered (the present) (2009: 52). She further notes that “[m]emory is [also] concerned with holding up past and present experiences for comparison” (2009: 76). Bohleber suggests that “[i]t had long been known that memories could not be understood in isolation from their context of emergence”, which suggests that the present in which the memory emerges is significantly important (2007: 334). The working of memory relies on the recollection of events at a later stage in time, i.e. the present, and these events “are [then] represented as the memories experienced by [the] narrator” in his/her past (Neumann 2008: 335). It is evident, then, that there is a constant interdependence between the past and the present when it comes to memory¹⁴, as “[m]emory is always as much about the present as it is about the past” (Nutall 1998: 74). Freeman indicates that when one remembers, he/she “is drawing connections between [an] earlier experience and [a] present one, a connection that is only made possible

¹⁴ “The mind through memory...can recall experiences of the past, but it can also, in the present, recall itself to itself, [it] can be understood by its own thought, and this too, whereby the mind is present to itself, is accomplished through memory” (Olney 1998: 17).

by [that] present experience itself" (1993: 32). According to Olick, sociologists "have demonstrated ways [in which] the past is remade in the present for present purposes" (2007: 340). In fact, Neumann suggests that "our memories are highly selective and that the rendering of memories potentially tells us more about the rememberer's¹⁵ present, his/her desire and denial, than about the actual past events" (2008: 333). The past becomes 'past' in the literal sense of it and it cannot be fully reintroduced into the present without altering it. Therefore, it can be argued that, for the past to become part of the present, it cannot be part of the past anymore.¹⁶ Jane Tompkins refers to Derrida's argument that "anything we can think of, we always think of as in the present, as existing in time, being right there", which indicates that the past is almost always variable, specifically in terms of an *unstable* memory (1988: 745). Yet, Antonio Damasio's suggestion that "[t]he present is never here" still leaves us with an important question (cited in Olney 1998: 339). According to Damasio, the "[p]resent continuously becomes past, and by the time we take stock of it we are in another present" (cited in Olney 1998: 339).

For the postmodern philosopher Jacques Lacan "the experience of temporality, human time, past, present, memory, [and] the persistence of personal identity is an effect of language" (cited in Sarup 1988: 134). He argues that "[i]t is because language has a past and a future, because the sentence moves in time, that we can have what seems to us a concrete or lived experience" (cited in Sarup 1988: 134). Mikhail Bakhtin contributes to this idea and argues that "it is not merely that individuals remember in language¹⁷, coding their experiences as language and recalling them in it [but that] [l]anguage itself can be viewed as a memory system" (cited in Olick 1999: 343). Language, specifically visual language (for example in (auto/bio)graphic novels/films), then, becomes a significant role-player in the discourse of

¹⁵ The term *rememberer* is used in this dissertation when referring to 'the person who remembers'.

¹⁶ Ricoeur argues that "central to the concept of memory...is the idea of the 'presence of the absent'...[where] the [past] itself is gone, but the memory remains and seems to retain the presence of the originating moment", but nevertheless refers to the past in the present (in memory) and not in the past anymore (Adams 2008: 58).

¹⁷ Textual, oral and visual language.

memory, because it is used in the creation of memory, and also in the interpretation and representation thereof.

While referring to language and memory, Freeman suggests that we should consider the word 'recollection' again. He indicates that

“[W]hile the *re* makes reference to the past, *collection* makes reference to a present act, an act...of gathering together what might have been dispersed or lost. Framed another way, the word *recollection* holds within it reference to the two distinct ways we often speak about history: as the trail of past events or past presents that have culminated in now and as the act of writing, the act of gathering them together, selectively and imaginatively, into a following story.” (1993: 47).

Memories can therefore not be understood as “discrete [or separate] things” that exist in our lives and unconsciously find ways to the present; memory is language that is continuous and interlaced and, I suggest it does not exist without the intention of its maker/user (Freeman 1993: 89). I agree with Jacobs that “memory can be viewed as an act” (Jacobs 2007: 52). To remember, one has to intentionally re-collect past events and then piece the fragments together by using language to make sense of these fragments. This is achieved when the memory is “broken down into smaller elements that [are] short enough to be recalled, [and are then] arranged into a rigid and logical order” (Whitehead 2009: 41). It is interesting to consider Israel Rosenfield’s opinion that “[e]motions are essential to the creation of a memory because they organi[s]e it, establishing its relative importance in a sequence of events” (cited in Olney 1998: 373). I agree that emotion¹⁸ is essential in memory creation, as “many studies have shown convincingly that emotionally arousing stimuli are better remembered than neutral images” and I do believe that more extensive explorations of emotions-in-memory-work¹⁹ can be very useful for the discourse of memory and autobiography, specifically related to trauma (Axmacher 2010: 1). However, for the purpose of this study I rather want to focus on Rosenfield’s statement that “a sense of time and order

¹⁸ “[A] natural instinctive state of mind deriving from one’s circumstances, mood, or relationships with others” (Oxford Dictionaries Online 2012. Sv. ‘emotion’).

¹⁹ Gilbert Meilaender investigates why people remember certain things and suggests that “in the formation and consolidation of memories, our emotions play a significant role. For example, the rush of adrenaline during intense emotional experience may help to form especially powerful memories” (Meilaender 2003: 20)

is essential for a memory to be considered a memory, and not a thought or a vision at some particular instant, unrelated to past events” (Olney 1998: 373). Rosenfield, therefore, implies that memory is considered to be memory because of its structured nature, due to the presence of narrative²⁰, in which it represents an actual past event. Freeman suggests that “[r]emembering is implicitly seen as a kind of writing, which, rather than being a representation of the past, refigures it in and through consciousness” (1993: 88). Vico explains how memory ends up at this point of re-figuration and order:

“The image [of a past event] is reshaped as it enters memory; it is subject to continual reshaping while it is held in memory; and it is reshaped as it is recalled from memory and as it is instantaneously reformulated as words, thence as articulated syntax, and finally as full narrative” (cited in Olney 1998: 92)

Paul John Eakin stresses this narrated nature of memory, and subsequently regards memory as “a form of storytelling that goes on continually in the mind and often changes with the telling” (1985: 6). Proust also notes that “memories [are] made literally new again by their introduction into the proleptic course of narrative” (cited in Renza 1980: 274). Thus, it can be inferred that memory is inseparable from narrative, since it makes use of narrative to exist, not only when written down or spoken aloud, but also inside the individual’s mind. The connection between memory and narrative is discussed in the next chapter, *Narrating the Past*, which specifically examines autobiography and memory-life-writing (memoir).

2.3 Memory and History

For the purpose of this study, I want to briefly discuss the relationship between memory and history. From a postmodern point of view both history and memory (collective and individual) are ‘grand narratives’, and the relationship between them is quite interesting and often contradictory, seeing that both deal with the past and its re-entrance into the present in different and (often) similar ways. Alfred Kazin notes that “[humans] tend to emphasi[s]e the self as a creature of history and history as a human creation” (1979: 76). I would argue that this is because of the perception that identity, i.e. the *self* and society, is influenced and

²⁰ This will be explored in-depth in Chapter 3, *Narrating the Past*.

constructed by the past. For postmodern theorists like Michel Foucault, who continually investigated the discourse of history, “the practice of history in the West... attempts to create unity and an order out of the past” (cited in Berlatsky 2003: 107). Linda Hutcheon observes that postmodernism has had a “controversial relationship with history [wherein] history [is] understood as both the events of the past and the narratives that tell of them” (1988: 299). Postmodernism then points to the “constructed nature” of history, and specifically questions “the truth-value of historical narrative” with the critique that “historical truth is replaced by narrative truth” (Hutcheon 1988: 299)(Bohleber 2007: 333). It is also suggested that “history cannot be ‘outside the text’ and that, rather than merely presenting the world, it ‘re-presents’ it (quite often visually, e.g. museums, statues, newspapers, etc.) substituting discourse for the real” (Berlatsky 2003: 110). Foucault even goes further by arguing that “one must give up the whole pretence of knowing the past”, as it is impossible without alterations and changes (cited in Armstrong and Tennenhouse 1993: 49). Postmodernism has “declare[d] that the past is ‘evacuated of history and... [this evacuation is] a signal of the artifice of any such account” (Berlatsky 2003: 106).

It can be argued that memory can be critiqued in a similar manner as history, because both discourses attempt to access the *real* experienced past for purposes of the present. Klein suggests that “[m]emory is replacing old favourites – *nature, culture, language* – as the word most commonly paired with history” (2000: 128). However, since postmodernist critiques have caused a slight disregard for the traditional sense of history (as a ‘grand narrative’), memory has entered the spotlight. Cynthia Ozick has emphasized “the necessity of memory in a time when memory begins to melt into history and history is discarded” (cited in Berlatsky 2003: 104). Klein adds that “[i]t is no accident that our sudden fascination with memory goes hand in hand with postmodern reckonings of history” (2000: 145). He elaborates that “[m]emory appeals to us partly because it projects a [personal] immediacy we feel has been lost from history” (Klein 2000: 129). In fact, it can even be argued that

“personal memory is often taken to be the reparative for institutional history” (Berlatsky 2003: 121).

However, it should be emphasised that even though memory has entered the sphere of discourse that history used to occupy, it does not necessarily replace it. There are quite a lot of questions and critiques, such as postmodern scepticisms of “claiming historical accuracy of truth telling”, that complicate the traditional ideas of memory, and that make it impossible to replace history as an *ideal*, more *unified* discourse (Berlatsky 2003: 126). Halbwachs argues that “[m]emory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; [while] history is a representation of the past” (cited in Berlatsky 2003: 109). This interpretation of Halbwachs (memory as *actual*) is a very modernist approach to memory, where *truth* and unity exist. Instead, I would agree with Charles Berryman that memory cannot be this ‘real’, since “memory is less a record of the past than a new fusion of image and language determined by present motives and circumstances” (1999: 6). Olney states that memory has “[a]ll the truth of narrative, [and] none of the truth of life” (1998: 290). I do not necessarily agree that memory contains no *truth*, but the presence of narrative does, however, alter the past (from the way it *actually* happened), producing a new, *present-appropriate* version of that past. Consequently memory, just like history, can be considered to be a much more unstable source of past events, because, as Hutcheons explains, “we know the past (which really did exist) only through its textualised [and pictorial] remains” (1988: 16).

This *textualised/visualised past* is then a product of both history and memory, where neither history nor memory exists without the other. According to Vico, “history is repetition” and “[r]epetition [in turn] is a function of memory”, which implies that history can be a function of memory (cited in Sprinker 1980: 328). David B’s *Epileptic* (2005) is an example of such a “contemporary history” in the form of the graphic novel, where history is a function of, an addition to, the memory of the past. In fig. 2, panel 6, Pierre-Francois, David B’s younger self, remembers historical dates of wars that he states are part of his life without him

necessarily being present at these times. Throughout *Epileptic* (2005), David B refers back to these wars, indicating how the histories that he grew up with (without physically being part of it), became part of his childhood memories. In other words, the textual and visual histories had a great impact on his own memories of childhood, even though he did not experience it himself. On the other hand, according to Nora, “history besieges memory, deforming and transforming it, penetrating and petrifying it” (Crane 1997: 1379). In this view, Nora argues that “history plays the role of invader and manipulator, a force from within collective memory that is self-destructive” (cited in Crane 1997: 1379). Fig. 3, panel 2 shows how Art Spiegelman reacted after his mother’s suicide in 1968 (Spiegelman 1986: 100). The combination of his memories of her and his unanswered questions of ‘why’ she had chosen to end her own life results in a deformed and chaotic/inconsistent memory of that time in the author’s narrative. In panel 2, he considers possible reasons for his mother’s suicide; and by stating that “Hitler did it”, he includes the traumatic effect that surviving the Holocaust may have had on her. Through his knowledge of general history, he blames Hitler, the main perpetrator of the Jewish Holocaust, for the possible cause of his mother’s depression that led to her suicide, even though Spiegelman himself never spoke to his mother about her experience. The influence of history then becomes destructive and penetrating to his traumatic memories of his mother’s death.

Regardless of what the true connection between history and memory is, it is evident that there is a constant interactive relationship between these two discourses: both deal with the past and the present representation or recollection thereof. Even though it is impossible to use the term *history* without its political and social connotations, because of the nature of language, I do want to emphasise my use of the term in this dissertation as that which signifies the past; a history which functions under memory. Certain critiques that are applied to history can also be applied to memory²¹; this will thoroughly be explored in this study.

²¹ For example, Lyotard’s notion concerning history that “one cannot tell large stories about the world but only small stories from the heterogeneous ‘subject positions’ of individuals and plural social groups” can also be applied to memory (Agger 1991: 116). See **Collective Memory**, p 38.

2.4 Unstable Memory

What has become evident in the first half of this chapter is that memory cannot just be defined as “something that [is] remember[ed] from the past” (Cambridge International Dictionary of English 1995. Sv. ‘memory’). The discussion of the hermeneutics of memory has led to questions of how stable/unstable this traditional perception of ‘recollecting the past’ actually is. In fact, the critiques of history, implying that there never was a truthful historical account, or at least not only one ‘true account’ of the ‘past’, and the implication of history as a construction and fragmented interpretation of past events, also problematise the ways in which we perceive memory. It is clear that there is an inseparable connection between history and memory, and this means that the same critique of history, such as the denial of a single history, and the issues of accessing the *truth* of the past without alteration and multiplicity, can be applied to memory. I therefore suggest that the following concepts influence the stability/instability of memory:

2.4.1 Fragmentation

When considering Halbwachs’s idea of the “partial and incomplete nature of past recollections”, fragmentation seems to become a noticeable characteristic of memory (cited in Whitehead 2009: 126). Lyotard and other postmodern theorists stress “fragmentation – of language games, of time, of the human subject, of society itself” when rejecting totalities of ‘grand narratives’ such as History (Sarup 1988: 135). Postmodernism even regards “[f]ragmentation as a universal [characteristic] of the human condition” (Sarup 1988: 103). This may be because humans “no longer have access to their full subjectivities” and therefore cannot “know the full stories of themselves” (Saunders 2008: 326). All we are left with are scraps and pieces of half-remembered past events that are supposed to be evidence of a real past. I would describe this as the “haphazard workings of memory”, where the “divergent, perspectively refracted memories mark the undeniable plurality of memory creation” (Neumann 2008: 337,339). The role language plays in memory creation is also problematic for its authenticity as a representation of real past events. Renza explains that

“language displaces th[e] past whenever [it is spoken] of to others” (1980: 276). I would argue that language plays a role, even if it is not spoken or written about, but even when and while it is created in the mind of its creator.

Freud’s theory of “screen memories” also contributes to this idea. He describes *screen memories* as that “in which fragments of both the real and the imagined become fused together into the deceptive guise of history” (cited in Freeman 1993: 87). Freud indicates that “many of us retain nothing in our memory but a few unintelligible and fragmentary recollections”, such as shown in fig. 4, page 2, panel 3, where I self-critically acknowledge the incomprehensibility of my memories (cited in Freeman 1993: 50). Matsuda then suggests that this “fragmentary, disputatious, self-reflexive nature of a past makes a series of memories” which “never stand[s] still” (cited in Klein 2000: 132, 136). Michael M. J. Fischer even suggests a mosaic working of memory, where “memory is layered in differently structured strata, fragmented and collaged together like mosaics in consciousness and in unconscious manoeuvrings...” (1994: 80). Cavarero further suggests that this “weaving-work of memory is itself discontinuous, fragmentary, fleeting and casual” (1997: 35). However, it is important to keep in mind that, as Marita Sturken suggests, “[i]t is precisely the instability of memory that allows for renewal and redemption” (cited in Klein 2000: 138). This supports the idea that the past is open to modifications, such as re-creations and re-interpretations, when it is placed in collective/individual memory. “Memories are [also] seen as selective and partial and used to fulfil individual [or] group requirements of identity at a particular time and a particular place” (MacDowell 2008: 42). In other words, it is partial and selective for purposes of the present, as is visible in fig. 5, panel 2, where Vladek tells Art not to include the story of his first girlfriend since “it has nothing to do with Hitler [or] the Holocaust”. Vladek is aware of Art’s need to know about the Holocaust and therefore feels that it is unnecessary to include things that (according to him) has nothing to do with the topic. However, Art includes this part of the story in his book despite it not having any direct relation to the Holocaust, because “it makes [the story] more real – more human” (fig. 5, panel 3).

2.4.2 'Re'

Memory is generally associated with the word *recollection*. However, when exploring the discourse of memory more closely, the prefix 're' takes on a central role. Memory can also be associated with words like re-present, re-peat, re-evaluate, re-interpret, re-member, re-flect, re-cycle, etc. As stated earlier in this chapter, the prefix 're' signifies the past. It can even be argued that it signifies a movement from past to present. Olney suggests that "[t]ime carries us away from all of our earlier states of being [and] memory recalls those earlier states" (1980: 241). For memory to *re-call* those past events it has to bring the past into the present for a second time. However, the past can never be exactly the same in memory as in the lived experience of the moment in which it happened. In fact, Olney suggests that "[i]n the act of remembering the past in the present, the autobiographer imagines into existence another person, another world, and surely it is not the same, in any real sense, as the past world that does not... now exist [anymore]" (1980: 241). Therefore, memory cannot simply be perceived as a reproduction of the past, "but [an] adapt[ation]" of it (Whitehead 2009: 51). I agree with Whitehead that the past is "transmuted even as [it is] transmitted", because it progresses over time (Whitehead 2009: 39). Olney argues that "[m]emories and present reality bear a continuing, reciprocal relationship, influencing and determining one another ceaselessly: memories are shaped by the present moment... just as the present moment is shaped by memories" (Olney 1980: 224). Nietzsche indicates very simply that "[one] can explain the past only by what is most powerful in the present" (cited in Hutcheon 1988: 99). Olney further indicates the Platonic point of view, that memory should be understood as "a faculty of the present and an exact reflection of present being that also recapitulates and reverses the entire process by which present being has come to be what it is" (Olney 1980: 241). In other words, this evident movement in time from a past event to a present memory influences the stability of the representation of that event. Memory causes the past to undergo a great deal of change of selective or edited 'truths', which means that it cannot be seen as a 'factual' or realistic report of the actual events in that past. Christine Bold argues

that memories “are not simply recounted as a remembered set of events but are evaluated and interpreted, leading to developmental changes” (2012: 28).

However, memory does not only move from the past to the present, but also from the present to the past. According to Constantine Constantius “[r]epetition and recollection are the same movement, only in opposite directions; for what is recollected had been, is repeated backwards, whereas repetition properly so called is recollected forwards” (cited in Sprinker 1980: 329). Kuhn further explains that memory “involve[s] working backwards – searching for clues, deciphering signs and traces, making deductions [and] patching together reconstructions out of fragments of evidence” (cited in Jacobs 2007: 52). The ‘re’ aspect of memory causes an ongoing movement between past and present, and in this process the memory is adjusted to fit each moment in the present. In other words, for every present, the past has a different meaning. Therefore it can be deduced that the “past and the present begin to merge”, which in turn implies that the representation/recollection of the past (i.e. the memory) is unstable (Kolin 1998: 42).

2.4.3 (Re)constructed

Bearing in mind that memory is fragmented and a re-introduction into the present from the past, one can also ask how this memory is introduced into the present. Mary Douglas observes Halbwachs’s theory that remembering is “based on small, scattered and indistinct bits of the past”, and further adds that this makes it “an activity of reconstruction in the present rather than the resurrection of the past”²² (cited in Whitehead 2009: 126). It has even been argued that the past does not exist, because “memory is no longer a recovery or repetition of physical traces, but a construction of the past under conditions determined by

²² When considering cases where memory loss is apparent, for instance in Alzheimer patients, the problem does not necessarily lie with the fragmented nature of the past, but rather with the ability to reconstruct it coherently in the present. Axmacher et al. state that “brain lesions which induce a loss of autobiographical memory may lead to an impairment of the sense of one’s self”; and I argue that it is this sense of a lost identity in the present which is problematic in these cases, rather than the ‘scatteredness’ of memories of the past (2010: 6).

the present” (Whitehead 2009: 49). Schmidt adds that memory “does not represent but rather constructs reality” (2008: 192).

I would argue that memory does re-present and re-member, but it is exactly for this reason that it can be considered to be a construction²³. It is not merely a representation in the sense that it authentically duplicates the past; however, for it to be reintroduced into the present it has to undergo certain changes or certain (re)constructions. Jacobs suggests that “memory work is an active process [in which] both remembering and forgetting... construct memories” (2007: 52). Kundera further points out that “memory is not inviolable, it is a series of selections and erasures that defines it as much by what it is not as by what it is [and] [t]hese selections and erasures earmark memory, like identity and history, as a construction” (cited in Berlatsky 2003: 137). McCarthy explains this construction by arguing that in the act of remembering, “the past is manipulated to serve the interests of the present” (cited in Eakin 1985: 28).

Now one has to consider how this construction of memory appears. Freud suggests that when the past is “pieced together, reconstructed”, it ends up as “an intelligible, consistent, and unbroken case history” (cited in Freeman 1993: 149). This does not mean that it is impossible for an individual to have contradictory sets of “case histories” (caused by fragmentation and the influence of social groups, etc.), but rather that, although we have multiple histories, they are always constructed in an intelligible way to make sense at that specific moment of remembering. Thus, memory is constructed into a structured entity that makes ‘logical’ sense, which I will argue is a narrative.²⁴ Christa Wolf then notes that

“[i]deally, the structure of the experience coincides with the structure of the narrative...[b]ut there is no technique that permits translating an incredible tangled mesh, whose threads are interlaced according to the strictest laws, into linear narrative without doing it serious damage” (cited in Olney 1998: 293).

²³ Bartlett (1932) conducted an experiment specifically to investigate constructive concepts of memory. He found that “[w]hen the subjects were afterward asked to recall the story[that were given to them] in as many details as possible they modified it according to their own cultural schemata [where] illogical elements were replaced by more coherent narratives. These studies [thus] illustrate the constructive nature of memory...” (Axmacher, et al. 2010: 5).

²⁴ See Chapter 3.

Freeman argues that “imposing unity and continuity on that which it does not deserve” (e.g. fragmented memories of the past) turns these memories into a kind of “wholistic fictionalis[ation]” (1993: 47). E.M. Forster describes this “pattern” of memory as “the most primitive kind of fiction” (cited in Olney 1998: 10). Thus, the *constructedness* of memory also suggests an unstable performance of memory, because, even though memory is narratively structured, it is obvious that it is not merely an exact, factual chronology of the past, as Foster suggests. In fact, memory is a construction of past events, “shaped to serve the needs of [the] present” (Eakin 1985: 5).

2.4.4 Imagined

It has now been argued that memory is fragmented, re-introduced into the present, and constructed. The unstable nature of memory is becoming more apparent by revealing the *fabricatedness* of the memory narrative in individuals and cultural groups²⁵. In fact, Confino argues that the study of memory entails an “explor[ation] [of] how people imagine the past, not how it actually happened” (2008: 80). Thus, it can be deduced that “memory is not only a reconstruction, but also a fragmentary and imaginary construction” (Jacobs 2007: 50). The imagination plays a central role in the weaving together of past events, which only further reveals the unstable and fabricated nature of memory. Freeman indicates that “the facts never just [come] at you but are incorporated by an imagination”, which can help to remember it better, as is evident in *Epileptic* (2005), fig. 6, panels 5-7, where Pierre-Francois refers to what he heard about the Algerian war by remembering his childhood imaginings of the war (1993: 117). I suggest that fragmented memory refers to bits and pieces of events that are remembered and forgotten. These can only be constructed into a whole ‘unbroken’ narrative by using the imagination. All the gaps that exist in one’s past caused by forgetting, are filled with new, imagined memories by the imagination, to make sense of what ‘scraps’

²⁵ Memory does not only exist in the individual, but in the individual’s social groups (family, ethnic or regional groups, nations, etc.) as well. Each of these social groups has their own memory-systems that influence the individual’s personal memory. This is thoroughly discussed in **2.5 Collective memory**, p 38.

are left of the past. In fact, Ingrid de Kok suggests that “the imagination operates most powerfully within the spaces of absence, loss, and figuration” (1998: 62). However, the imagination not only functions through forgetting and loss; instead, “the past is available only in new forms of present imagination” (Berryman 1999: 6). Since the past is fragmented and not coherently accessible, the imagination is also used to construct these pieces together. Ricoeur introduces the idea of the imagination “as a reconstructive mechanism within memory [that] can generate the images of memory” (cited in Adams 2008: 58). Since a constructed memory can be interpreted as a story, White argues that “[n]o one and nothing lives a story; [instead] a story is something one creates in imagination upon pausing to reflect on the ostensibly neutral events of the past” (cited in Freeman 1993: 95).

The present and its distance from the past play a central role in the imaginative construction of memory. When we look to the past “[w]e are interpreting precisely that which, in some sense, we ourselves have fashioned through our own reflective imagination” (Freeman 1993: 5). And again there is the suggestion that the past “never really existed: it has always been an illusion created by the symbolising activity of the mind”, which I will refer to as the imagination (Olney 1980: 237). Freeman further suggests that these ‘pasts’ can now be considered as “fictions, as imaginative and often artful personal creations” (1993: 31). Nietzsche sums it up by insisting that “it is never possible to render a *true picture* of the past, [instead] the [rememberer] must strive to create an *artistically true one*” (cited in Jay 1984: 110). In a way, then, “memory is the same as imagination”, and possibly just as fictional as narrative (Olney 1998: 92). Memory not only uses the imagination, but it also fictionalises events by replacing pieces and weaving them together to make a story, and it is exactly this presence of imagination that further indicates memory as unstable.

2.4.5 Forgotten/Selective memory

Freud first introduced the “concept of repression”, which is inextricably related to forgetting past events, specifically forgetting “on purpose” (cited in Axmacher 2010: 3). Repression is

normally associated with trauma, where traumatic past events are deliberately forgotten. However, the concept of *forgetting* in memory work is not reduced to trauma only. In fact, “[f]orgetting is an inescapable element in remembering”, where all recollections consist of “certain elements [that] are always highlighted, [and others that] are ignored” (Vinitzky-Seroussi and Teeger 2010: 1107). Thus, certain memories are forgotten and others are deliberately selected and then re-lived or re-told. Neumann states that “our memories are highly selective”, which implies that when we remember past events, we consciously forget certain events and select the memories that will make sense and be most significant at that specific moment (2008: 333). This influences the stability/instability of memory to a large extent, because we depend on memory for an accurate version of the past, but pieces of this past are now eliminated or ‘repressed’ to fit the present. Schudson therefore argues that “[m]emory is distortion since memory is invariably and inevitably selective”, which clearly indicates the *unstable* nature and inaccuracy of past events (1997: 348).

It is important to understand that, even though memory can be considered as unstable, it “does not deny that the past ‘real[ity]’ existed; it only conditions our mode of knowledge of that past” (Hutcheon n.d.: 119). From a postmodern point of view it is important to question the stability of discourses like memory and autobiography, which are often perceived as *true* and authentic. In Fig. 7, panel 1, Spiegelman states that he is trying to portray his father as accurately²⁶ as possible. This indicates how the rememberer or the autobiographer generally intends to present and portray the past as closely as possible to the way it had happened. However, memory has its own limits; remembered pieces do not always fit together precisely. Olney suggests that the instability of memory lies in its “recollections and imaginings,” where things that did not necessarily happen are now part of the memory; “its errors and confusions, its failures and overcompensations for failure” that stem from forgetting and selecting certain memories; and “its capacity for transformation, distortion,

²⁶ To resemble the *real*, living person as closely as possible.

ordering and reordering” that relates to the narrative construction of memory work (1998: 340).

2.5 Collective Memory

In the previous sections of this study memory was discussed mainly in terms of individual, personal memory. However, as Bold indicates, it is “difficult to distinguish whether a [person] is really reminiscing the actual event or is remembering what [others] have said about that event” (2012: 29). McCarthy proposes that “[i]t is our parents, normally, who not only teach us our family history but who set us straight on our own childhood recollections” (cited in Eakin 1985: 39). In many instances we remember certain things from our childhood, but are ‘corrected’ by our parents or elders who tell us a different version of that past. We then incorporate the new versions into our own version of the past. Thus, the influence of other people’s versions of the past on our own interpretation of that past further impact on the stability/instability of memory. In fact, Olick argues that “[t]here is no individual memory without social experience nor is there any collective memory without individuals participating in communal life” (1999: 346). On the one hand memory “can only be imagined and accessed through its manifestation in individuals” (Kansteiner 2002: 185). On the other hand “memory is a matter of how minds work together in society... [i.e.] [it] is in society that people normally acquire their memories; [i]t is also in society that they recall, recogni[s]e, and locali[s]e their memories” (Olick 1999: 334). Thus, even though memory happens in the individual, it is always a product of society/culture. Barthes plainly states that “the author is a product of society”, whether it is the author of an autobiography or just the rememberer of a memory (cited in Freeman 1993: 67). It is certain, though, that memory does not exist within the individual alone. Therefore, the concept of *collective memory*²⁷, which refers to many

²⁷ According to Olick, “[c]ollective memory has been used to refer to aggregated individual recollections, to official commemorations, to collective representations, and to disembodied constitutive features of shared identities: it is said to be located in dreamy reminiscence, personal testimony, oral history, tradition, myth, style, language, art, popular culture, and the built world” (Olick 1999: 336).

people remembering one memory, or one person remembering many people's memories, is as important for this study as any other aspect of memory.

The concept of collective memory was fully explored by French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, whose work is seen as the "primary theoretical reference point" of collective memory (Kansteiner 2002: 181). In the early twentieth century Halbwachs argued that "memory was specifically [a] social phenomenon" (cited in Whitehead 2009: 123). By this he meant that "memory is concerned not only with individual experience, but with practices of remembrance that are defined and shaped by the surrounding culture" (Whitehead 2009: 124). In *Maus I and II* Art Spiegelman clearly reveals that the knowledge we have of the Holocaust is not derived from one person's individual recollections, but it is a collective knowledge/narrative pieced together by all survivors. In fig.8, panels 3-6, Art listens to Mala's recollections of the Holocaust while Vladek (the main narrator) is resting. This indicates that the particular story of the Holocaust that Spiegelman pieces together in his book is not only reliant on one person's memories. In fact, Halbwachs further reveals the instability and complexity of memory as a social phenomenon,

"by showing not only that each of us individually reconstructs the past in light of earlier and later times, especially in light of a present that is already contemplating the future, but also that we collaborate with other family members in a collective reconstruction that has much more to do with subsequent relationships between children and parents and among siblings than with anything that could be called a historical, factual past" (cited in Olney 1998: 369).

Memory, then, depends largely on certain groups of people in society or a collective that an individual belongs to (or wants to belong to), which is evident in Spiegelman's interest (as a Jew) in the story of the Holocaust; and Vladek's memories of the past that include memories of other Jews that also experienced the Holocaust. Halbwachs argues that "[i]n the course of our lives, we enter and form a part of a wide variety of groups", and that these different

groups²⁸ each “provide the individual with framework[s] into which remembrances are woven” (cited in Whitehead 2009: 126). For example, I grew up in a home where a Tswana woman took care of me and my family every day, and even though she worked there because of the lack of money and bad living conditions experienced by most other black people in the country at that time, in the context of my family’s collective memory she was a part of our family despite her race. However, this memory is heavily contrasted with the broader South African memory of “apartheid’s maniacal racism [that] enforced a strict separation of races” (Ally 2010: 2). It is thus clear that we have different memories depending on our different groups which indicates that memory is a collective phenomenon that is inextricable from societal and cultural influences, as Wulf Kansteiner explains,

“[T]he term ‘collective memory’ is not simply a metaphorical expression. Collective memories originate from shared communications about the meaning of the past that are anchored in the life-worlds of individuals who partake in the communal life of the respective collective. As such, collective memories are based in a society and its inventory of signs and symbols...Such collective memories exist on the level of families, professions, political generations, ethnic and regional groups, social classes and nations” (2002: 188).

All people are part of such different groups in society, and each group has its own memory system; this is what Halbwachs means by collective memory²⁹ being “multiple” (cited in Crane 1997: 1377). Each different group or subculture has different memories. This means that the individual ends up with a vast range of memories from different people and places which he/she then makes his/her own. Halbwachs elaborates that “[t]he groups to which [one] belong[s] vary at different periods of [one’s] life...[b]ut it is from [the groups’] viewpoint that [one] consider[s] the past [which] suggests that *the past* is in fact multiple pasts” (cited in Crane 1997: 1376). This then coincides with the critiques of history which imply that there

²⁸ The group is inextricably connected to the individual and his/her personal memories. However, according to “cultural theorist, Constantina Papoulias, some cultural historians have suggested that the process of memory is [in turn] responsible for holding social groups together and sustaining community” (Jacobs 2007: 53).

²⁹ Wulf Kansteiner warns that it is easy to confuse the term ‘collective memory’ with the term ‘collected memory’. He states that “[a] collected memory is an aggregate of individual memories which behaves and develops just like its individual composites, and which can therefore be studied with the whole inventory of neurological, psychological, and psychoanalytical methods and insights concerning the memories of individuals” (Kansteiner 2002: 186). I suggest that collective memory has more to do with the memories of others within the individual, which later on become part of the individual’s personal memories.

is no one 'past', but many different 'pasts'. It suggests that there is not only one memory in the individual to coincide with his/her past, but multiple memories, some of which do not even 'belong' solely to that individual, but also to the group or collective that the individual belongs to or wants to belong to. The Holocaust is probably the most significant example of this phenomenon, because it is "a collective [memory] of universal scope" in which the "genocide of the Jews covers up almost all other memories in public space [today]" (Assmann 2010: 98). For example, by writing *Maus* (1986), Art Spiegelman engages with this collective memory of his family and community, even though he was not yet born at the time of the Holocaust.

Considering what has been discussed up to this point, one can deduce that the *collectiveness* of memory indicates a kind of "joint [or shared] construction" of the past (Schiff et al. 2011: 254). Schiff et al. suggest that individuals in a group often "synchronise their memories into one narrative with the same plotline" (2011: 252). This implies that, for instance, family memories are often constructed by the family members to create a coherent past in which each member has his/her own place. However, Neumann argues that 'for the individual [the] only memories [that] are possible [are those] for which the culture provides external support" (2008: 339). This suggests that only certain fragments of pasts will be remembered, depending on what is deemed important by the society or group the individual is part of, or the ruling political powers at that moment in time. Barry Schwartz further notes that "collective memory works by subsuming individual experiences under cultural schemes that make them comprehensible and, therefore, meaningful (cited in Kansteiner 2002: 189). Thus, memories that are not deemed socially meaningful, appropriate or significant are often not remembered at all³⁰ or simply 'written out' of 'History'. The present cultural and social condition influences the individual's memory to a large extent. Therefore, the collective aspect of memory adds to its instability, because it suggests the impossibility for a 'single'

³⁰ However, in some cases marginalised voices reveal seemingly 'insignificant' memories that contribute to a collective's overall memory system. For example, Tim Keegan argues in *Facing the Storm* (1988), a book on black lives in rural South Africa, that the "reminiscences of 'obscure people' [are] able to reshape our understanding of major forces of social change when set in the larger historical context" (Rassool 2004: 158).

authentic version of the past, since other people's *unstable* memories and stories become entangled with the individual's personal *unstable* memory.

2.6 Fictional/Factual Memory

Werner Bohleber notes that “neuroscientific data concerning the construction of memories [draw the conclusion] that the ‘truth’ question, in the sense of the correspondence between memories and past events, has become obsolete” (2007: 336). It is therefore necessary to re-investigate the relationship between fact and fiction in memories. But first it is important to state what is meant by *fact* and *fiction*. With *fact*³¹ I refer to the actual happening of the past events, where *fiction* refers to a more constructed version which can possibly change the accuracy of the past events. Linda Hutcheon states that “both history and fiction are discourses that both constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past” (1988: 89).

Since it was argued that memory is constructed and re-interpreted in the present, it seems impossible for a factual recollection of the past. Barrett Mandel suggested that the “past...never really existed”, because the only claim we have on the past is re-collected, constructed and imagined (cited in Olney 1980: 237). However, Hutcheon indicates that even though “[t]here are no universal claims to truth [in memory] this does not mean that no truth exists” (n.d.: 307). She states that “[t]he past really did exist [but] [t]he question is: how can we know that past today – and what can we know of it?” (Hutcheon 1988: 92). For some reason memory is perceived as an authentic way to know the past. Wright states that “*I remember* carries an assurance of continuity and the authenticity of an event whose status cannot be doubted since it has resided all this while unaltered in the protective recesses of memory” (cited in Olney 1998: 298).

³¹ If one keeps in mind that the actual happenings in the past cannot really be known from the present state of mind, the concept of *fact* becomes very problematic. However, in spite of the limits that language presents, I use this term solely to refer to the actual happenings in the past time (even though I am well aware of the limits of knowing exactly that reality) in contrast to the constructed, edited version of that past.

We know by now that memory is not situated in a protected space in the brain where it stays unaltered. Memory is constantly changed and influenced by the present and by changes in society. In fact, “[a]ll we have are memories of memories of memories; and the longer we live, it would seem, the more fictional our pasts...will have to be” (Freeman 1993: 90). The problem with memory is that there “is no natural, direct connection between the real and the remembered”, as may be assumed (Kansteiner 2002: 190). The link between memory and truth, according to Whitehead, is complicated with the “collapsing of the distinction between memory and the imagination” (2009: 62). The fact that memory is in part imagined, suggests that truth is replaced by fiction. Freeman argues that “memory cannot help but deform the reality of the past” (1993: 52). Memory is inseparable from construction and imagination, and therefore, also from interpretation. Bold states that “[e]ven in presenting a factual account, a [rememberer] provides an interpretation of the facts”; for example eyewitness accounts are often problematic because they can differ from other accounts of the same event (2012: 144). Thus, even though the past really existed, it is impossible for memory to represent it as fact, because of “the impossibility of reliable memory-evidence”, as Lyotard states (cited in Berlatsky 2003: 106).

This impossibility is inextricably connected to the “limited relationship between reality, language and memory” (Nuttall 1998: 84). Language is used to make sense of the past via memory. However, Nuttall also argues that “[l]anguage is not seen as producing a reality; instead language will manifest its ‘own’ truth” (1998: 84). This indicates language’s intertextual nature, where every recollection of memory is accompanied by several different meanings and interpretations and, therefore, several alternative *truths*. Berlatsky adds that “the shaping and presentation of reality through language (particularly through narrative) fictionalis[es] it” (2003: 111). And thus language is the only way to interpret the past and memories.

When considered from a postmodern and metafictional point of view, this then suggests that memory cannot be accurate, because it is situated in language which is also unstable

because of its intertextual and plural nature. Olney indicates that “[n]o one can say with assurance that any given memory is accurate” (1998: 371). Max Saunders adds that “all memory partakes of falsification, to the extent that it is necessarily a transformation of the remembered event or experience” (2008: 323). Does this then not magnify the instability of memory? Hume consequently implies that “memory can no longer be relied upon to be faithful and historically accurate to the past that it records” (cited in Whitehead 2009: 60). Freeman argues that, even though memories and narratives are “removed from our previous experiences, [they] still deserve to be considered real and potentially important as sources of information about ourselves and our past” (1993: 91). For example, David B’s *Epileptic* (2005) contributes in a useful (even though highly personal) manner to the body of information about managing epilepsy and the physical, social and emotional outcomes of the disease, while it also provides a socio-political ‘history’ of French society of the 1960s. Spiegelman’s *Maus* (1986) also gives new insights in the history of the Holocaust, where marginal individual memories become significant markers of the past events. Therefore, I agree with Freeman that memories play a significant role in knowing the past, or at least connecting with it in some way, despite the fact that it cannot be perceived as ‘factual’ representations of the past. There is an obvious unreliability that comes with memory, and it is exactly this fictional aspect of memory that contributes to the *unstable* nature of memory, which is of specific interest in the exploration of graphic novels and how they deal with representing the past.

Conclusion

When considering what has been discussed up to this point, I suggest that it is possible that memory can be regarded as unstable. It has been argued that humans “remember past events and communicate them collectively through language” (Barash 2007: 111). Because language changes over time and is therefore unstable, it is safe to assume that memory also changes over time; like language, the versions of the past change over time through memory and language. Pierre Nora notes that “there are as many memories as there are

groups [and individuals], that memory is by nature multiple yet specific; collective and plural yet individual” (cited in Assmann 2010: 99). The fact that there is not only *one* memory, and that memory is fragmented, means that one will never “find a subject confident of his/her ability to know the past with any certainty” (Hutcheon 1988: 117). But is the purpose of memory not precisely to represent the past; to bring the past back into the present? If the past can never be known through memory, does this then not point solely to the instability of memory work? Nuttall notes that “[m]emory theorists have often remarked on the consistency of the range of narratives that people, or cultures, employ to tell their stories. Such narratives weave webs across translations and dislocations, guiding memory, and creating seeming unity in multiplicity” (1998: 85). However, it has been determined that this “unity” in memory work (via narratives) only exists because of the construction and re-construction of past events that are imagined to fit the present. Therefore, memory may be used to retrieve the past, but it can never be wholly trustworthy. Together with the fact that memory is constructed, re-constructed, imagined, re-interpreted, re-collected, fragmented and collective, this indicates that memory is *unstable* and cannot be perceived as truthful versions of *real* pasts. This instability of memory, in turn, influences the portrayal of life histories in the (auto/bio)graphic novel that results in the creation of new versions of the past in more interesting and meaningful ways.

3. Narrating the Past

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters it was suggested that memory and memory-work are unstable because of characteristics such as fragmentation, imagination, selectiveness, forgetfulness and 'constructedness'. Freeman suggests that "the *history* one tells, via *memory*, assumes the form of a *narrative* of the past" in which the fragmented pieces of the past are constructed and imagined into a comprehensible whole (1993: 33). Mieke Bal states that "[m]emory is an act of vision of the past [which is] situated in the present of the memory", where this *act* is in fact "a narrative act [in which] loose elements come to cohere into a story, so that they can be remembered and eventually told" (Bal 2009: 150). Olney elaborates that memory and narrative are "symbiotic activities" and one cannot exist without the other (1998: 419). On the one hand "memories are the primary archival source" for life writers (Smith and Watson 2001: 7); on the other hand memory is "intimately bound to narrative [because] to remember is to be able to relate one incident to another, and thereby to produce a version of the self" (Whitehead 2009: 63). Therefore, memory is not only connected to narrative when physically writing a life story, but also while remembering an event. In fact, narrative is so inextricably connected to memory that, according to Cavarero, "[e]very human being... [is] a *narratable* self [which is] immersed in the spontaneous auto-narration of memory" (1997: 33). Jerome Bruner elaborates on this idea by indicating that narrative is "among the most widely used forms of organising human experience" (1991: 9). The possible reason for this ever-existing presence of narrative in memory work and memory-writing is because almost all historians³² "are engaged [in the] narrative[s]ing process... when they select, order, and narrate the events of the past" (Hutcheon n.d.: 300). Shacklock and Thorp thus suggest that "we build our narratives of self around our understanding of the episodic and temporal qualities of lived experience; and [on the other

³² Here I refer to people who are involved with the past, be it through history or memory.

hand] [we] live out [our] lives in ways that can be understood and communicated narratively” (2005: 157).

To understand this relationship between narrative and memory better, this chapter focuses on *narrative* as a method of inscribing the past, and/or life-writing. Paul Michael Lützeler indicates that “[n]arration can be viewed as one of the primary tools of knowledge [because] it determines the structure and aesthetic form in the presentation of a real or a fictional event” (1992: 30). However, I concur with Mieke Bal that “the existence of narrative texts is less the issue than the relevance of narrative structure for their meaning”, because the issue is not that narrative exists in memory (and vice versa), but that the structure is imposed on memory by means of narrative (1990: 729). By applying structure to memory, narrative makes space for imagination, selection, and construction of a past reality which influences the accuracy of that past. Onega and Landa indicate that “a narrative is not a series of events, but the *representation* of a series of events” (1996: 5). This suggests that the *re*-presentation of past events is all that we have left of those past events, and by now we know that the ‘re’ aspect means that these past events underwent changes from the past to the present time, as Molly Andrew explains:

“Not only do historical narratives refer to the past and mediate an understanding of the past through their form, the stories and their tellers also pass through time and are shaped by its often precipitously changing circumstances. Stories, then, comment on the passing of time and times past; they also enfold fragments of the past in themselves while they simultaneously transmute under the pressures of a changing social climate” (2007: 170).

Thus, not only does memory change from past to present, as was suggested in the previous chapter, but narratives of the past also alter their meaning over time.

I will refer to these ‘narratives of the past’ as autobiographic and/or biographic writings, since auto/biography is a genre that largely consists of memory and narrative that produce a *self*. Renza explains that when “[a person] concedes his life to a narrative ‘design’ the result [is] an autobiographical text” (1980: 270). Craig Thompson further suggests that an

autobiography “is an act of communication” with the *self* and the collective of which s/he is a part (cited in Chan 2006: 44), by combining “[l]ived experiences and collective memory” (Crane 1997: 1377). Therefore, the autobiography³³ becomes a “ceaseless process of identity formation in which new versions of the past evolve to meet the constantly changing requirements of the self [and society] in each successive present” (Eakin 1985: 36). For instance, D.B. Govinden observes that “[t]he current proliferation of South African life stories may be seen as part of the autobiographical impulse of an entire nation [that is] finally bringing its past into proper perspective” (2011: 289). However, the issue still lies with narrative structure that is imposed on the past to serve the present need of a specific memory story, because this affects the accuracy of what really happened in the past. Eakin proposes that autobiography should be appreciated “as an imaginative art”, because it is impossible to ignore the presence of imagination and creation in such a genre (1985: 3). Bohleber states that “autobiographical material could be distorted and misrepresented” (2007: 334), and therefore we are warned that “[i]f history is both a blurred and problematic genre” in its relation to *truth* and *reality* (Shacklock and Thorp 2005: 156).

In relation to *truth* in autobiography, Berlatsky argues that “[t]he very transformation of life into narrative... is a construction that asserts meaning where none, necessarily, exists” (2003: 134). The writing of an autobiography, then, does not solely depend on the accuracy of the past, because, according to Thomas M. Leitch, these “[s]tories are designed not primarily to provide information but to give their audience a certain kind of experience” (1986: 199). This influences the issue surrounding *truth* and *fiction* to a great extent, because the primary purpose of autobiography is then not only to rely on the truth, but also to rely on other factors such as imagination and narrative construction. Therefore, the exploration of narrative is very significant to this study, as it questions the traditional ideas of the non-fictional nature of autobiography, and the stable nature of memory.

³³ According to Phillip Lejeune’s early, modern definition, autobiography is a “retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality” (Eakin 1999: 57). However, in this chapter this narrow definition of autobiography will be challenged by referring to the fictional aspects of narrative, and the unstable nature of memory.

3.2 Narrative & Narrating

Susan Sontag claims that narrative “begins with the very history of mankind”, thus making narrative inextricably human (1993: 251). She elaborates that, because narrative is “[a]ble to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; [it] is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting, cinema, comics, news items [and] conversation” (Sontag 1993: 251). From this extensive list, it is clear that “the process of narrativisation has come to be seen as a central form of human comprehension, of imposition of meaning and formal coherence on the chaos of events” (Hutcheon 1988: 121). Therefore, narrative is not limited only to linguistics or memory or even literature; “[n]arrative is what translates knowing into telling” (Hutcheon 1988: 121). However, narrative is always a “language process”, which means that it is always intertextual; everything (words, sentences, images, characters, etc.) contained in a narrative carries a limitless amount of meanings and interpretations (Davis 1983: 852). This also means that “objective narration is by definition impossible because of the linguistic constraints” put upon it; and even more so the ‘pictorial constraints’ which provide the reader with visual information that might have been left to the reader’s imagination/own interpretation (Bal 1990: 732). It is for this reason that the discourse of narrative is included in this study, for the intertextual nature of narrative influences other discourses with which it is connected, like autobiography and memory that have an impact on *truth* and *reality*.

Thus, in the study of *narrative* it is essential to investigate what is generally understood by the concept. Bruner proposes, very simplistically, that “a [n]arrative is an account of events occurring over time” (1991: 6). I propose that a narrative³⁴ is a *weaving* together of events occurring in time, where the ‘weaving’ is of great interest since it supports both making

³⁴ Onega and Landa indicate that “*linguistic narrative* (history, the novel, short stories) [is] narrative in what we [call] the narrow sense of the term, that is narrative mediated in this case by the discursive activity of a narrator” (1996: 2). For a large part of my study I am going to refer to *narrative* as defined as, what Onega and Landa propose as *linguistic narrative*. However, for the purpose of this study I am not narrowing down the term to only this definition. I rather use *narrative* in a broader perspective, much like Susan Sontag’s list of narrative possibilities (1993: 251).

sense of the overall narrative, and the narrative's appeal. The 'weaving', which can be seen as a re-working of events, then results in yet another definition of narrative as "the representation of a series of events" (Onega and Landa 1996: 5).

Sontag proposes that a "narrative is a hierarchy of events" where "one event causes another" (1993:25)(Bold 2012: 30). Thus, *the representation of a series of events* refers to the careful consideration of where different events should be placed in relation to each other so that it can be conceived as an understandable whole. This indicates that "narrative [is] dependant on both its sequential and configurational qualities" to be perceived as an intelligible collection of events (Steiner 2004: 146). Tamboukou points out that the components of this intelligible collection of events are generally "[I]inearity, completeness and thematic or moral closure" (2011: 4).

However, narrative is not limited to these concepts; in fact, many narratives deliberately try to break free³⁵ from these limitations by challenging the traditional structure of coherence and completeness. For example, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012), a story about my childhood with specific reference to the influence of Mikie Machogo, a Tswana domestic worker who took care of me and my brother while working for my parents for seventeen years, is divided into memories in the form of chapters, without being placed in any coherent or hierarchical order. Fig. 9a and 9b represent small, seemingly insignificant memories that find themselves somewhere between the rest of the chapters, without having any specific space in the overall structure of the book. In terms of subject matter they relate to the *Net Bang vir 'n Slang* chapter in which Mikie gets so scared of a snake that she stays inside the house until someone comes to get rid of it. However, by placing these fragments of memories into random spaces in the overall structure, the *fragmentedness* of memory-work is echoed and undermined by narrative.

³⁵ Sontag considers this act of challenging traditional narrative structures by referring to "Dystaxia [which] occurs when the signs are no longer simply juxtaposed, when the (logical) linearity is disturbed" (1993: 290).

Prince further states that “[n]arrative moves back and forth from a beginning to an end which condition each other and this movement constitutes a very powerful motor of narrativity” (1982:158). This indicates that, whether the narrative starts and ends in a logical manner or not, there is always a movement between the beginning and the end of a narrative. In fact, Prince argues that the end “orient[ates] the beginning”, which means that the eventual outcome of the narrative influences how the narrative will start or proceed (1982: 158). Narration is almost always dependent on the knowledge of what will happen in the end; not only the knowledge of the thematical outcome, but also the knowledge of where in time the story will end.

Thus, another component of narrative is temporality, which Ricoeur regards as “the structure of existence that reaches language in narrativity and narrativity to be the language structure that has temporality as its ultimate referent” (1981: 165). Julia Kristeva explains this notion of temporality by stating that “the art of narrative resides in the ability to condense the action into an exemplary moment, to extract it from the continuous flow of time” (2001: 16).

Therefore, narrative uses time in quite a different way than the time we experience as human beings; the time-frame in narrative is “*logical time* which has very little to do with real time” (Sontag 1993: 290). Narrative depends on what seems real and logical, but it can never be as real as actual lived experience, otherwise life-story narratives would be as long as the life it represents. The purpose of time in narrative is precisely to condense the events into an edited, shorter, readable/audible version. Keeping this in consideration, it becomes clear that “the freedom of narrative... is limited”, because there are always certain rules that a narrative must adhere to (Sontag 1993: 292). Davis suggests that this is because “[n]arration is structured like language”, and it is also a part of language which has its own endless number of rules (1983: 853). He further explains that “the unconscious discourse of language and its processes are revealed in the ‘gaps’ or ‘lapses’ that appear in a narrative’s text”, which implies that, even though narrative is not always self-consciously aware of the language it uses, the presence of language often gets noticed (Davis 1983: 854). For

example, throughout *Maus* (1986), Spiegelman tries to stay truthful to Vladek's story, even recording the exact way he spoke. In fig 10, panel 2, Vladek's narrator voice states that "I remember when we were almost arrived, we passed a small town" which indicates his inability to speak grammatically correct English. The noticeable incorrect language Vladek uses provides him, the narrator of a Polish Holocaust survival tale, with an authenticity that he would not have had if Spiegelman had translated or 'sanitised' the dialogue into a more acceptable English.

Further, "[t]he translatability of narrative is a result of the structure of... language", which indicates that the narrative can only be understood if the language it uses can be understood³⁶ (Sontag 1993: 292). I suggest that this is because narrative "provides contexts and patterns through which we can read, understand, re-realise, and transmit our experience[s]" (Olney 1998: 316). Narrative creates a unity, where the smaller pieces of which it consists are better understood and makes more sense. Therefore, "meaning is not at the end of [a] narrative, it runs across it" (Sontag 1993: 259).

The question about narrative changes when we focus specifically on narrative in memory-writing. Freeman observes that, "in telling your own story, you can only work with what is available, in the way of words, genres, storylines, and so on", which means that "[t]here is... no other means of capturing the 'really real' outside of language and culture" (1993: 79). This has an implication for perceptions of memory narrative as that which refers to what 'really' happened in the past. Hutcheon further problematises this issue by arguing that "we can only *know* (as opposed to *experience*) the world through our narratives" (1988: 128). This means that the only way we can return to the past is through narrative; where narrative by its nature always changes the past through language. Karl Sabbagh points out that "[n]othing in life naturally occurs as a coherent story" (2009: 66). However, when we narrate our pasts "we tell what fits and leave out what does not. So, while our lives are not coherent,

³⁶ Sabbagh claims that the "cultural norms for story telling...reflect what is considered to be a coherent story in culture. Since, in telling one's story to others, one wants to be coherent, one has to structure one's story according to these norms" (2009: 67).

our stories are”, or at least they try to be (Sabbagh 2009: 66). Narrative can now even become a substitute for what was really experienced. For example, Richard Wright, author of the autobiography *Black Boy* (1945), notices that his memories are “what he remembers narrating rather than what he remembers happening” (cited in Olney 1998: 297). Paul Jay contributes that remembering the past “is a narrative and not a ‘life’; it is a literary creation” (1984: 16). Narrative can thus have an overpowering influence on memory, but without *narrative* remembering can also not be possible. Tamboukou explains this by stating that “we rely on the temporal structures of narrative... [when] trying to make sense of the chaos of our lives” (2011: 5).

The structure³⁷ that we impose on memory to create ‘coherent’ narratives aims mainly to “be detailed, controlled, chronological, and objective” (Jay 1984: 16). It specifically constructs events in such a way that time sequences are simplified by “compressing some years and expanding others” (Howarth 1974: 370). This is how the narrator controls which parts of the narrative are more important or interesting than others. It also means that the “order of the narrated event is essentially a function of the narration and not of the order of the event itself, since narration aims at constructing coherent stories which are accepted by the audience” (Schmidt 2008: 193). However, Shacklock and Thorp warn that “life history narratives can easily become stuck in seductive modernist assumptions about the linear and chronological in the narrative accounting of lives” (2005: 158). If narrative intends to change past events by giving them more meaning in the presence, it means that memory-narrative “is a fictional trope which mocks the possibility of any alternative, non-fictional trope” (Leitch 1986: 199). It cannot be denied that “[i]f writing and the novel share features we ascribe to fictional writing: plot, dialogue, setting, characterisation, and so on [where] they are [only] distinguished by their relationship to and claims about a referential world” (Smith and Watson 2001: 9,10). Therefore, working self-reflexively is the only way that memory-narrators and life-writers can deal with these issues. Prince proposes that “[i]f a narrator may

³⁷ “All memories, even the memories of eyewitnesses, only assume collective relevance when they are structured, represented, and used in a social setting” (Kansteiner 2002: 190).

be more or less intrusive, he may also be more or less self-conscious, that is, he may seem more or less aware that he is narrating” (1982: 12). The moment the narrator is aware of the flaws, including his/her own involvement in writing about the past, it becomes a “postmodern historical narrative [that is] a critical reworking [of the past and] never a nostalgic return” (Hutcheon 1988: 4).

3.3 Autobiography

By now the relationship between memory and narrative has been thoroughly introduced, and it is relevant to explore the discourse of autobiography. Chan indicates that “an autobiography may be based entirely on the writer’s memories, feelings and emotions” and therefore autobiography is closely related to memory-narrative (2006: 43). Olney further explains that “the prime motive in life-writing” is the idea that this act “might piece together a whole out of fragments and offer justification for a life” (1998: 291). Even though we now know that life-writing and memory-narrative cannot represent a life ‘exactly’ as it was lived, the presence of narrative indicates that there is indeed a *piecing-together* of fragmented memories to create a whole. In fact, Cavarero suggests that “we perceive ourselves and others as unique beings whose identity is narratable in a life-story” (Cavarero 1997: 33). This infers that we deem it important to write about ourselves because it justifies our being, and it gives space for imaginative and dramatic creation of our lives. Autobiography is thus often closely related to identity and subjectivity, where emphasis is placed on how the self is constructed via memory and narrative.

When investigating the origins of autobiography as a literary genre, Chan notices that “the autobiographical genre as it is now known is as old as the modern novel, since both rose out of the era of Romanticism³⁸” (2006: 43). For a long period autobiography was understood as “a recounting of the events of the author’s life as they happened, together with what the

³⁸ “[A] style of art, music and literature that was common in Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, which describes the beauty of nature and which emphasises the importance of human emotions” (Cambridge International Dictionary of English 1995. Sv. ‘Romanticism’).

author may have felt or thought at the time of these happenings, insofar as he can remember them exactly”; but by now we also know that it is impossible to remember things ‘exactly’ as it happened (Eakin 1985: 21).

Eakin explains that autobiographers are “both artists and historians, negotiating a narrative passage between the freedoms of imaginative creation on the one hand and the constraints of biological fact on the other”, indicating that autobiography is “the art of creating a self which does not exist” (1985: 3, 26). Even though the life events that supposedly constitute the subject’s being, did exist in the time it was experienced, the moment it became the past it became a narrative, and therefore it does not exist without alteration and imagination. Hutcheon’s argument that “[t]he past really did exist, but we can only ‘know’ that past today through its texts” contributes to this point, and further indicates the connection memory-narrative has to the literary (1988: 128).

Memory-narrative, as a literary genre, is autobiography where “[t]he text of the self is being rewritten”, because the subject’s past cannot only be *written* as it was (Freeman 1993: 30). Even though autobiography is based on what was really experienced in the past, through narrative it includes imagination, alteration, new associations and meanings which finally make it a creative product, a *re-written* story. Burgos concludes that “autobiography is a valuable method of investigation which yields information about life experiences, subjectivity, individual choices, the rational and conscious motives for actions, etc., but it is nonetheless a means, rather than a finished statement of the truth” (1988: 12).

Renza proposes that when we consider autobiography as an act of inscribing the past as it were, it is writing that consists of “a beginning without a middle (the realm of fiction) or without end (the realm of history); a purely fragmentary, incomplete literary project” (1980: 295). However, the use of narrative in autobiography aims to overcome precisely this issue. Even though “narrative is tentative and cannot provide certainties”, it nevertheless aims to construct unity between these fragmentary pieces of a life (Bold 2012: 17). Pendergast uses

the term 'experiential representation' in autobiographical writing "wherein the activity of memory and the activity of narration are intertwined in a non-causal way" (cited in Tamboukou 2011: 11). This suggests that, even though the main motivation of an autobiography is to write about the past life as it really happened, it cannot rely solely on memory because of its *unstable* nature. Therefore, narration is combined with memory to weave the pieces together and to fill gaps that arise in memory-work. This, in turn, indicates that "autobiographical texts do not tell us as much about the autobiographer's past history... [but] about the autobiographer in the moment of his engagement in the act of composition", because it is here where narrative is used creatively to produce certain effects of the subject's life (Eakin 1985: 22). Judith Ryan suggests that, even though "[t]ruth of fact and truth of fiction are incompatible", autobiography tends to "combine them"; this causes the 'fictitious life', which is written in the autobiography, to become the "life which is increasingly real to us" (1992: 45).

The powerful function of narrative³⁹ can even cause the narrated memory to become the only memory of the past, where the past *reality* does not exist anymore. Chan thus concludes that, "while the events of an author's life are recounted in an autobiography, there is no preten[c]e of neutrality or even truth [because] the life may be reported the way the author wishes it has been with perhaps fantastical elements, exaggerations and half-truths" (2006: 46). For example, David B exaggerates his brother's epilepsy, and illustrates it as a metaphorical creature that is not part of Jean-Christophe; instead, it becomes a sixth member of the family (fig. 11, panel 6).

3.3.1. Authorship: author vs. reader

Another important aspect of autobiography that should be investigated is the issue of the author. Bal and Bryson state that "*authorship* is an elaborate work of framing, something we elaborately produce rather than something we simply find", and this indicates another

³⁹ Olney proposes that the narrative that is used in life-writing even "destroys as it creates, it devours the life it records" (Olney 1998: 21).

problematic area of autobiography (1991: 180). The nature of the word *autobiography* itself poses the problem, because it puts the author (auto) at the centre. Smith and Watson elaborate that “[t]he identification of authorial signature with the narrator is a distinguishing mark of the autobiography”, because the purpose of autobiography is precisely to write the story of oneself, by oneself (2001: 11). In autobiography the author produces the narrative, and s/he also becomes the narrator because the focus of autobiography is to place emphasis on the author’s involvement in the narrative. Bal indicates that “[t]he narrator is the most central concept in the analysis of narrative texts”, more so in the analysis of autobiographies where “[t]he identity of the narrator, the degree to which and the manner in which that identity is indicated in the text and the choices that are implied, lend the text its specific character” (2009: 18).

However, I agree with Saunders that “autobiography is not a genre at all, but precisely a mode of reading” (2008: 321). This means that autobiography relies to a large extent on the reader’s interpretation of the text; not only what is written in the text, but also that it is written by a certain author and narrated by a certain narrator in a specific time, place and context. When the reader reads an autobiography s/he reads the text with a certain faith that what is written is to some extent true, because the author and the narrator are the same person. However, with the “new postmodern seriousness that acknowledges the limits and powers of ‘reporting’ or writing of the past”, the author of life-writing slowly starts to lose his/her authoritative power (Hutcheon 1988: 117). Sprinker argues that “no autobiography can take place except within the boundaries of writing where concepts of subject, self, and the *author* collapse into the act of producing a text”, and so the narrated nature of autobiography causes a denial of the ever-controlling author (1980: 342). In fact, Roland Barthes questions “the role the author plays in the production of meaning in the text” in contrast to the role of the reader, in his essay “The Death of the Author”⁴⁰ (cited in Atkinson 2010: 116). Freeman explains: “[J]ust as narrators tell about their lives in ways that are circumscribed by the social

⁴⁰ Barthes, R. (1977). The Death of the Author, in *Image, Music, Text*, edited by R. William. William Collins: Glasgow. p 142-148.

world in which they live – hence the ‘social construction of narrative’ – so too do readers read, bringing their respective horizons of expectation with them to the texts they encounter” (1993: 200). The author is clearly not the only powerful controller of meaning in the autobiography, but the readers also have significant influence on the context and interpretation of the text (visual and textual) – hence, *the death of the author*. Barthes argues that “it is language which speaks, not the author”, which implies that the text that is produced is “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash” (cited in Freeman 1993: 68). Thus, not only do the author and the reader bring their own knowledge and interpretations to the text, but the language which the autobiographical narrative uses has multiple meanings itself. The autobiographical text is therefore intertextual, where the meaning and interpretation of the text relies on the author (to a lesser extent), on the reader, and on the language, and possible interpretations of that language, that is used to produce the text.

3.3.2. Auto/biography: blurring authorship

Throughout the dissertation, I have occasionally referred to autobiography with a specific division between the *auto* and the *bio*. I deliberately refer to life-writing texts as **auto/biographies**, not because life-writing includes autobiographies and biographies as different genres. Rather, I make this division because I suggest that all life-writing, whether it is supposed to be an autobiography or a biography, are always already both⁴¹. In relation to the general difference between autobiography and biography, Smith and Watson observe that “[i]n biography, scholars of other people’s lives document and interpret those lives from a point of view external to the subject [and] [i]n [autobiographical] life writing, subjects write about their own lives” (2001: 5). However, what if we consider “the fact that the first years of our life become part of our own memory largely through the shared memories of others”, for instance, our parents’ recollections of our childhood (Meilaender 2003: 22)?

⁴¹ De Man pushes the idea of biography and fiction in *autobiography* by suggesting that “all books with a ‘readable title-page’ are, to some extent, autobiographical” because the author always leaves a trace of himself in his writing, even in biography and fiction (cited in Schneider 1993: 3).

I suggest that the presence of collective memory in autobiography gives a biographical edge to all autobiographies. Cavarero argues that “[a]utobiographical memory always recounts a story that is incomplete from the beginning, [which makes it] necessary to go back to the narration told by others, in order for the story to begin from where it really began” (1997: 39). I further suggest that the writer of an autobiography does not only depend on other people’s memories for the beginning of his/her life (which cannot be remembered because s/he is too young), but the autobiographer also relies on other people’s memories where his/her own memory is unclear due to forgetting. Thus, since an autobiographer uses other people’s versions of the past as well as his/her own, it becomes “impossible to conclude whose life is being written – or read” (Berryman 1999: 3). Because it is never only the *auto* that writes the text, we are confronted by the possibility of multiple voices in the autobiographical act. Vambe considers the idea that “autobiography is constructed from ‘the subjectivity of a single voice’”, but indicates that it is impossible “that such a voice can access ‘a single objective reality’” (Vambe and Chennells 2009: 5). Instead, the autobiographer depends on external versions of the past in combination with his/her own, and constructs a single reality (autobiographical narrative), that holds no real relation to the experienced *reality*. Eakin observes that we “[forget] so easily that the first person of autobiography is truly plural in its origins... [because] autobiography promotes an illusion of self-determination” where the *I* is of significant importance (1999: 43). However, we now know that autobiography always has a biographical aspect as well, because it is “a fusion of our own past experience and [versions] of our own past experience supplied by others” (Freeman 1993: 46).

In postmodern autobiographical texts, authors frequently emphasise the situations where memories are not their own, but were supplied by others. Eakin terms these situations as “the story of the story”, where *authorship* is deliberately blurred when it is indicated that someone else is telling the story the autobiographer is telling (1999: 59). The fact that Vladek is the main narrator of *Maus* (1986) already indicates the ‘story-ness’ of this auto/biographical story. In fig. 8, panels 3-8, Spiegelman further challenges the issue

surrounding authorship by also including Mala's recollections in his story. *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012) also problematises this idea of authorship by including other narrators to tell the story of my past. In fig. 12a and 12b, Mikie tells the story of *Jakkals en Wolf*, but in fig. 12a, panel 4, she tells it in the present, and in fig. 12b, panel 3, she tells it in the past. This demonstrates the multiplicity of one character, where time plays a role in who the character is interpreted to be. This presence of multiple voices in the autobiographical text, then, gives way to the idea that an autobiography is at the same time *auto* (internal/self) and *biographical*, in the sense that other people are telling the story as well. Therefore, I use the term *auto/biography* which specifically indicates that one person cannot remember a life, nor narrate his/her own life without the memories and narratives of other people.

3.4 Autobiography and Fiction

In his book, *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention* (1985), Paul John Eakin claims that “[m]ost readers naturally assume that all autobiographies are based on the verifiable facts of a life history”, which leads us to another point of investigation: fiction in autobiography (3). Olney observes that there is a common assumption “that autobiography is easy reading and that it presents no problems of understanding”, because it is based on facts, in contrast to poetry and fiction where the reader has to interpret meaning and get intensely involved in the reading process (1980: 249). Thus, another point of contention is the assumption that “autobiographies are supposed to be truthful; they are expected to be a ‘tell-all’ genre in which everything is revealed [truthfully]” (Chan 2006: 45). Earlier in the dissertation I referred to Phillip Lejeune’s *autobiographical pact*⁴², which assumes that autobiography can clearly be distinguished from fiction because the author tells the truth about his/her past. This assumption actually implies that the “autobiographer establishes authority according to subjectivity, rather than verifiable truths” which means that the reliability of autobiography relies more on *who is writing* than *what is written* (Chaney 2011: 22). Jean Starobinski states that, “[n]o matter how doubtful the facts related, the text will at

⁴² Lejeune, P. 1975. *Le pacte autobiographique*. Seuil: Paris. p 13-46.

least present an 'authentic' image of the man 'who held the pen'" because the autobiographer has the "intention [to] be as realistic as possible within the context" (cited in Eakin 1985: 22) (Bold 2012: 11). Therefore, as Chan indicates, the issue with autobiography is that it is a "genre [that] is difficult to analy[s]e, by the fact that it demands the reader⁴³ to at least, on the surface, believe that the author is telling the truth" (2006: 45).

However, we have come to realise that it is impossible for the autobiographer to tell the whole *truth* about what happened in his/her past. This is because his/her "confession[s] [are] framed by the notion of the limitations of memory and language to describe truth", where the memory that is relied upon "is always open to social revision and manipulation" (Nuttall 1998: 84) (Bal 1999: xiii). Does this then not imply that autobiography cannot be called *fact* because it relies on an unstable memory and on a narrative that is dependant on language, which makes it impossible to represent *reality*? Even though it is possible for autobiography to "contain information [that is] regarded as 'facts', they are not factual history about a particular time, person, or event", which denies Le Jeune's modernist assumption that "there is a clear-cut distinction between fact and fiction" in literature (Smith and Watson 2001: 13) (Schneider 1993: 1). We are thus confronted with the notion that there is "[a] presence of fiction in autobiography... [and] this tends to make us uneasy, for we instinctively feel that autobiography is – or ought to be – precisely not-fiction" (Eakin 1985: 9).

Marjane Satrapi, creator of the (auto/bio)graphic novel, *Persepolis*, further complicates the idea of factual autobiography by stating that:

"The main parts of the book are things that have happened. But in any story... you have to cheat a little bit, otherwise it would make for a boring documentary type book... To make any type of story you have to make it work. But to know what is exactly true and what isn't is my secret and I won't tell you" (cited in Epstein 2004: online).

⁴³ Thomas Pavel argues that the "narrational reliability is a notion that depends equally on the intention of the author and the suspicions of the reader" which shifts the authority away from only the author and includes the reader in the process (1992: 20). This again relates to the reader's importance in his/her assumptions that the autobiography is based on *reality*, because without the reader's assumptions, the autobiography will not seem reliable.

Like Satrapi, Mary McCarthy further argues that “any autobiographer, acting in the best of faith, is going to produce a narrative that will have fiction in it... [and] [t]he presence of fiction in autobiography is not something to wish away, to rationali[s]e, [or] to apologi[s]e for”, because it cannot be prevented (cited in Eakin 1985: 10).

The very presence of narrative and an unstable memory problematises the common perception of truth and fact in autobiography. In fact, Ricoeur specifically “places testimony and recounting at the problematic boundary⁴⁴ of fiction and reality, where the testimony... is called into question by the very act of narrating events; the act of creating a representation”, because, as was explored up to now, autobiography “cannot reveal the past ‘as it was’” (cited in Adams 2008: 58) (Freeman 1993: 31). Since the life writer depends on memory and narrative, and both memory and narrative cause fictionalisation, the life that is written is also bound to be fictionalised as a result. Freeman explains that “[t]he gap between experience itself and the words we employ to describe it can never be bridged” (1993: 88). Thus, for the life writer to physically write down the story of his life, he uses narrative and narrative methods, an act which transforms the actual life events into something better (sometimes more meaningful or more entertaining). Jay arrives at the conclusion that “the autobiographical text is always already a fictional history, [where] artists shape their condition as they write about it... [and thus produce] consciously aesthetic, imaginative creation[s]” (1984: 113). I therefore agree with Eakin that “it is reasonable to assume that all autobiograph[ies] ha[ve] some fiction in [them]”, and that the issue does not lie with the fact that autobiographies are not entirely based on the truth; rather, the question is how the autobiographer deals with these problems (1985: 10).

Saunders suggests that a response to these issues is for the “auto/biography to become postmodern; more conscious of its own narrativity, fictionality [and] impossibility” (2008: 328). Many autobiographies, especially (auto/bio)graphic novels, with a postmodern

⁴⁴ Doctorov challenges the idea of the boundary between fact and fiction further by suggesting that “there is no fiction or nonfiction as we commonly understand the distinction: there is only narrative” (cited in Berryman 1999: 3).

awareness deliberately blur the boundaries between fact and fiction as a way of dealing with the limitations of memory-work and narrative. For example, both fig. 13 and fig. 14 show how the *real* is deliberately combined with the imaginary to raise questions of the authenticity of that reality. In fig. 13, panels 1-3, Jean-Christophe's epilepsy is portrayed in the form of an imaginary Chinese dragon that feeds him his new diet, which is supposed to help him to get rid of his epilepsy. In fig. 14 Wolf, who is a character in the story Mikie is telling me and my brother, is present in that same reality where we are listening to the story. By portraying Mikie telling the story and comforting Wolf at the same time, the boundaries between what is told and what is *real* are blurred.

Hutcheon states that *historiographic metafiction*, which I refer to as postmodern autobiographies, "self-consciously reminds us that, while events did occur in the real empirical past, we name and constitute those events as historical facts by selection and narrative positioning", which means that it is only constructed re-presentations of *reality* (1988: 97). The autobiographer who is aware of his limitations as a *reality-writer* often chooses to "self-consciously borrow from the methodological procedures of imaginative fiction", and makes the reader aware of this (Renza 1980: 269). On the other hand, s/he may also deliberately make the text "disorganised [and] fragmented"⁴⁵ ... as a sign of the limited value of [the included] information" by means of narrative and language (Jay 1984: 102). Again, the way in which *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012) is divided into chapters without any chronological order or without an attempt at creating a coherent time frame from childhood to present, is a relevant example, because it indicates the limited knowledge of working with memory and narrative. Other examples that aim to disrupt *truth* include *autofiction*⁴⁶, which implies that the text written by a self (*auto*) is always already fictionalised; and *New*

⁴⁵ The postmodern method of disruption in autobiographies can "inevitably lead to a questioning of the stability and definability of human identity" (Booker 1994: 116).

⁴⁶ Kosinksi (1986) refers to postmodern writing as "*autofiction*: '*fiction* because all memory is fictionalizing [and] *auto* because it is 'a literary genre, generous enough to let the author adopt the nature of his fictional protagonist – not the other way round'" (cited in Hutcheon 1988:10).

*Journalism*⁴⁷, “a form of documentary narrative which deliberately use[s] techniques of fiction in an overt manner” to react against general journalism ideals that tend to ignore the author’s personal input and the possibility of fictionalising history (Hutcheon 1988: 115). Thus, as Neumann contends, “[postmodern autobiographies, specifically (auto/bio)graphic novels] combine the real and the imaginary, the remembered and the forgotten, and, by means of narrative devices, imaginatively explore the workings of memory, thus offering new perspectives on the past” (2008: 334).

3.5 Conclusion

The investigation of narrative and autobiography in this chapter has lead us to the conclusion, as Freeman indicates, that “[l]iving... [is] in fact vastly different from telling about it, as it in fact is; while the former is a fundamentally open and indeterminate project, the latter... results in there being a kind of deceptive – and... illusory – smoothness, consistency, and coherence to the stories told” (1993: 225). It has become clear that humans understand their pasts only through narrative, where coherence, structure and meaning are applied. However, the implication narrative-work has on the past has also been explored, and it has been concluded that life narratives are not exact ‘carbon’ copies of the actual past’s *reality*. Instead, we can contend that the lives that are written in auto/biographies are “fabricated at the boundary of documentary history and fiction”, because it consists of *factual* events that are combined with fictional narrative methods (Smith and Watson 2001:17). Renza argues that “autobiography is neither fictive nor nonfictive... instead [it is] a unique, self-defining mode of self-referential expression” (1980: 295). Although I am in agreement with Renza’s argument, at this point we can even further argue that auto/biography is neither fictive or non-fictive, as well as both fictive and non-fictive. The question is, however, not whether auto/biography is fiction or non-fiction, but how it is handled by the author and understood by

⁴⁷ New Journalism started as an “American phenomenon” and developed in reaction to the “Vietnam War [which] created a real distrust of official ‘fact’ as presented by the military and the media” (Hutcheon 1988:115). Thus, this form of journalism aims to question general assumptions of *fact* given by the media, by totally disrupting it.

the reader. The postmodern autobiography is well aware of the limitations that are posed by memory and narrative, and therefore deliberately emphasises the narrativisation and fictionalisation that happens in the process of creating the text. From a postmodern point of view it is clear that auto/biography consists of unstable memory and narrative practices, and therefore postmodern auto/biographies specifically aim to subvert the issues related to memory-narrative.

4. Re-picturing a Life

4.1 The (Auto/bio)graphic Novel

According to Paul Gravett it was “American critic, Richard Kyle [who first] coined the term ‘graphic novel’ in 1964” because of the problematic definition of *comics* as a term that “suggests comical [content], when plenty of comics are far from [being funny]” (2008: Online). Will Eisner elaborates that, “[s]ince comics are easily read, their reputation for usefulness has been associated with people of low literacy and limited intellectual accomplishment; [mainly because] the story content of comics catered to that audience” for a long time (2008: xv). However, the graphic novel is precisely a result of the reaction against this issue or criticism raised against comics. Stephan E. Tabachnick sums up the relationship between the graphic novel and comics by suggesting that “[t]he graphic novel is an extended comic book, written by adults for adults, which treats important content in a serious artistic [and literary] way” (2010: 3). Therefore, we can deduce that the graphic novel differs from traditional perceptions of comics in subject matter (it is generally more serious) and audience (generally aimed at more intellectual adult readers). There is a variety of definitions for graphic novels (comics with adult subject matter) such as “graphic history, graphic memoir, graphic documentary or even the oxymoron, non-fiction graphic novel” (Gravett 2008: Online). All of these terms are of great interest because each refers to the handling of the past, which is the focus of study in this dissertation.

In fact, it is specifically of interest to explore how the graphic novel deals with the stability/instability of memory and narrative because it is “a medium [that] incorporat[es] both textual and visual discourses, melding these somewhat competing aesthetics into a coherent narrative” (Coombs 2011: 1). Andrés Romero Jódar considers the graphic novel “as a hybrid genre in between the novel and the comic-book by making use of comics’ [and illustration’s] visual language, and the novel[’s] literary narration” (2006: 105). Graphic novels have also

“become increasingly respected as a genre capable of deep emotional content”, which goes against the traditional assumptions that the combination of simplified visuals and text in comics are not ‘intellectual’ enough to achieve anything beyond childlike or simple entertainment (Coombs 2011: 3). However, “[a]utobiography, social protest, reality-based human relationships and history [became] some of the subjects now [frequently] undertaken by comics” in the form of the graphic novel (Eisner 2008: xvii). The combination of auto/biography and the graphic novel, which I refer to as (auto/bio)graphic novels, is then where my interest of study specifically lies.

The reason why it is necessary to explore specifically graphic novels within the discourses of memory and autobiographical narrative is because “memory [is] characteri[s]ed by ‘the primacy of the visual’”, which can explain why “life writing... has become an integral part of contemporary graphic novels” (Kansteiner 2002: 191) (Dong 2011: 15). When one considers that “memory [is] composed of *pictures*” and that it is *unstable* and fragmented, one can deduce that the life writer has to “find a form that accommodates the mess” (Freeman 1993: 47) (Olney 1998: 282). I suggest this leads to the life writer conforming to visual representations of the past, narrated to make sense in the form of the graphic novel, because as Rose suggests, “the visual is central to the cultural construction of life”, which clearly indicates that any form of visual representation in memory-writing is of great importance to a study concerned with exactly that (cited in McDowell 2008: 39). In this case the graphic novel is of specific interest due to the abundance of autobiography as subject matter in this genre, and also because of the ways in which it deals with the “problematic relations [between autobiographies] and the ‘truth’ that they purport to represent” (Chan 2006: 43).

(Auto/bio)graphic novels are precisely an interesting field to explore since the nature of its content (auto/biographical) and the nature of its visual representation (illustrated images/comics) are frequently conflicting, in the sense that the content is commonly related to *fact*, and the visual nature is usually related to *fiction*. However, since “generic borders

are... losing their comforting defining power, as fiction, history, biography, autobiography, and other genres mix to create hybrid forms”, the hybrid⁴⁸ nature of the (auto/bio)graphic novel is specifically interesting to investigate (Hutcheon n.d.: 299). Jan Beatens states that “all theoreticians in the graphic novel field stress the added value of creative collaboration, in which the visual and the textual... interact in an open and non-hierarchical way” (2008: 79).

Since memory is often composed of the visual, and narrative aims at constructing an understandable whole, the combination of visual representation and textual narrative can have a valuable influence on how the *unstable* memory is narrated in relation to *truth* and fiction. The (auto/bio)graphic novel deals with memory-writing and narrative by exposing itself in a space that is confined by simplistic visual representation and destructive constraints of narrative structure such as panels, frames and gutters that can further destabilise the already *unstable* version of the past. By doing this it has the “power to capture character, history and place in an economy of pictures and words” that can “broaden [and refresh] people’s understanding of history and current affairs” (Smith and Watson 2001: 169) (Gravett 2008: Online).

What the graphic novel, as medium, contributes to memory- and life-writing is its comment on representation. The graphic novel does not aim to represent the past realistically, because the nature of the medium does not allow it. Instead, it embraces the fact that the past cannot be represented accurately; in fact, the graphic novel shows that the past does not need to be represented literally or realistically. Van den Berg explains that, “[by] [m]ixing artistic experimentation [and] narrativistic explorations of history and narrative, many writers tr[y] to reimagine the past by retelling the known, or discovering unknown [histories]” (n.d.: 3). In South Africa, this ‘reimagining’, ‘retelling’ and ‘discovering’ of personal pasts are valuable to a nation-building project that is attempting to reconcile and re-write the past, or multiple accounts of the past, because it can contribute to the healing and building

⁴⁸ Bakhtin considers the novelistic mode as “not limited to long prose fictional works, but [that it] includes any sort of work where a ‘consciously structured hybrid of languages’ is employed”; in the case of the graphic novel, it is a hybrid of visual and textual language (cited in Bredehoft 2011: 99).

processes of the present and future through imaginative and insightful approaches to the past.

All three (auto/bio)graphic novels that I have chosen as examples deal with memory in explorative ways in which known and unknown pasts are retold, and *real* pasts are given a new edge. The very popular *Maus* I and II (1986, 1991) by Art Spiegelman are known for their hybrid nature of being a “biography, autobiography, comic book, animal fable, oral history, and graphic novel all at once” (Berlatsky 2003: 126). In this series, Spiegelman explores the history of World War II and the Jewish Holocaust by experimenting with multiple narrators (fig. 8, panels 3-8); collective memory in terms of the telling and re-telling of personal and social pasts; anthropomorphic representation and symbolism in relation to historical representation (fig. 15); authorial *power*, and self-reflexivity (fig. 16). David B’s *Epileptic* (2005) is of further interest because of its treatment of memory/history in relation to illness and imagination. *Epileptic* explores the issue of autobiographical writing as dependent on childhood memories that causes problems of forgetting and imaginative re-constructing of past events (fig. 17, panels 2-5). Finally, my own (auto/bio)graphic novel, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012), explores different childhood memories that are composed of different people’s versions of the past. *Sewentien Herinneringe* is an auto/biographic story about the Tswana woman, Mikie, who worked for my parents for seventeen years and in that time took on the role of a second mother to me and my brother. This piece of memory-writing denies the possibility of creating a coherent life story, and therefore deliberately applies fragmentation in the outline of chapters, each of which is also then represented as a separate memory.

As writer and illustrator of this story, I am aware of the limits of memory-writing because of an *unstable* memory and the editing (of ‘real’ life) when applying narrative. Therefore, a large component of this autobiography is self-reflexive acknowledgement of my own present involvement in the past, and the impossibility of creating a narrative that reflects the past as it ‘actually’ happened (fig.18). The subject matter is another point of interest that will be

briefly looked at, especially because I am a white Afrikaans woman who also writes about Mikie, a black Tswana woman, in a post-apartheid South African space where pasts are re-written to include previously marginalised voices/stories and contribute to the current social and collective space of encouraged relationships between different races. However, it is important to note that it is nonetheless a story told and recorded by me, and not Mikie herself, which can become problematic when considering the continuing influences of Apartheid on our various living, working⁴⁹ and financial conditions. Even though I came to see her as a second mother, she was nonetheless a domestic worker who, as a result of the political and economic realities of the time, had no other choice but to work and care for my family instead of her own. By self-reflexively putting myself in the text, and indicating myself writing/illustrating the story, I emphasise the presence of my personal involvement and point of view.

4.2 Technical Aspects of the Graphic Novel

The technical aspects of the graphic novel are much like those of comics, specifically in terms of the way it is visually narrated by use of panels, speech bubbles, and (often) simplified character features. Jeanne Ewert refers to the “[t]ransitional elements that move the narrative from one scene to the next, visual elements that condense or elide information that would otherwise appear in the verbal/textual narrative, and framing devices that negotiate between the temporalities of the verbal/textual narration [as] contribut[ions] to a complex narrative method requiring a comparatively small area of the page” (2004: 179). Therefore, the technical aspects of the graphic novel include structured panels, framing, visual representation, visual/textual interplay, character simplification, temporal space, and self-reflexivity.

⁴⁹ Shireen Ally notes that “the black woman domestic worker remains one of the enduring continuities of apartheid in contemporary South Africa” (2010: 8).

Groensteen states that “[t]he notion of spatial containment is one of the primary conditions of the comic book” where each frame contains an image with its own narrative, but is “connected and yet remain[s] separated” from the next/previous framed image (cited in Atkinson 2010: 112). This suggests that there is a fragmentation of ideas that is echoed by the literal fragmentation of the narrative into panels. Groensteen further suggests that “[e]ach image must conform to the geometric⁵⁰ whole of the comic book, for this serves as the physical support for any narrative articulation” (cited in Atkinson 2010: 113). Therefore, for the graphic novel to present a space where narrative can be considered a unity, it ironically pieces fragments together while still maintaining a multi-framed page outline. In other words, even though there are always multiple framed images (with their own meanings and narratives), the over-all narrative is constructed by piecing the different panels (fragments) together by placing them next to each other in a sequence that will make sense.

The gaps/gutters between the frames, then, are also a very interesting *space* to explore by looking at what happens here and what does not. Smith and Watson state that the gutters “invite consideration of what is in and not in the frame, what has happened in between frames”, which is something that graphic novelists play around with quite frequently (2001: 173). For instance, Spiegelman plays with the gutters of the different frames by making them portray the walls of a house in which his father is hiding during World War II (fig. 19, panels 1-3). In a sense, then, it can be argued that the gutters which are part of the physical layout of the graphic novel, mirror the gaps that arise in life writing when dependent on memory. By keeping these spaces between the different panels (fragments), the adjoining panels start to “speak to each other” across the gaps, leaving space for temporal and contextual interpretation of what happens in between (Chaney 2011: 28). Most often the gaps function as temporal condensers or expanders, where certain gaps indicate a short time between panels, and others refer to a long time period between panels. For example, in fig. 20 I am portrayed eating offal, which is something that I deny ever doing when Mikie first tells me

⁵⁰ Atkinson indicates that “[t]he page [in the graphic novel] is further divided by a series of gutters in waffle format that regulate and frame the reading of the text” (2010: 112).

about it (possibly because of the selective⁵¹ nature of memory); however, she elaborates that I actually enjoyed eating it as a child, and I emphasise this contradictory version(s) of the past (the act of eating offal) by letting the different panels in fig. 20 follow quite closely on each other in terms of time.

It also frequently happens that the gaps between panels leave space for imaginative interpretation, in the sense that the reader imagines something happening in between panels without it being illustrated or stated implicitly. In fig. 21, panel 1, Mikie asks why her house is so untidy, and her daughter tells her that it is because her friends are staying there for a while (fig. 21, panels 2-3). Without portraying or saying it, the reader makes the assumption that the house is disarranged by the friends who are staying over; thus, these actions take place in the spaces in between the panels. In fig. 22 the same thing happens: Ou Soldaat calls my grandmother to come as quickly as possible because my uncle was bleeding profusely (fig. 22, panel 1). Panel 1 is directly followed by panel 2 in which my grandparents are taking my uncle to the hospital. Without portraying how my grandmother first put down the phone, then called my grandfather, and then got the key of the *bakkie*, etc., the reader is presented with only the haste of the event, leaving gaps for the reader to fill in by imagining what is taking place without it being explicitly 'shown'.

Ewert further proposes that "[t]he visual presentation of the graphic narrative may also condense information that would otherwise have to appear in the verbal/textual narrative" (2004: 181). This suggests that it is not only the spaces in between panels that condense time and meaning, but also the interactive nature between image and text in each panel. In any other auto/biography, which does not have visual representation combined with text, the author would have to elaborate on concepts like the environment, actions and character appearance, to name just a few. The graphic novel, on the other hand, uses visual

⁵¹ See 2.4.5 *Forgotten/Selective memory*, p 36.

representation to elaborate on those things without specifically having to mention them in the text⁵².

There is thus a space in which specific information is embedded visually, to contribute to the overall narrative. Bal states that this “space is not simply indicated in passing, but is an explicit object of presentation”; each visual space is laden with meaning that is deliberately incorporated to produce a specific effect. Beatens indicates that “each picture tells a story”, but elaborates that “not all aspects or elements of a picture do so[;] [the] graphic novel attempts to maintain a healthy tension between these two forces”, where an image can sometimes stand on its own and at other times cannot stand outside of the narrative whole (2008: 80).

The graphic novel therefore includes panels that are rich in signs and have their own contained narratives, as well as panels that only have narrative merit in the context of the overall narrative without meaning something in and of itself. In the process where Vladek tells his life story in *Maus I*, Spiegelman constantly refers to his father’s act of storytelling (fig. 23, panels 1-5, 9). In the outline of each page there are panels where Vladek is portrayed with only a speech bubble (fig. 23, panel 4, 9) that would not carry any meaning if it is not contextualised, i.e. placed next to other panels that make its meaning more comprehensible (fig. 23, panel 8).

Furthermore, the combination of text and image gives the medium its own “specific sign system”, a language in which the whole narrative can be understood (Bal 1990: 747). The language or sign-system that is specific to the (auto/bio)graphic novel includes image and text “with the intention of imitating or exaggerating reality” to the extent of creating a new reality; the illustrative style does not duplicate the reality of the past, but *improves* it to fit the style of the medium (Eisner 2008: xi). For instance, Spiegelman portrays all his characters as animals, which makes it possible to portray situations in which Jews camouflage

⁵² Here I refer to the traditional sense of the word which denotes *written words*. However, I am well aware, and also encourage the word to refer to *a/all* language, whether it is words, or images, or both. *Text* refers then to visual, verbal and written language.

themselves as Poles or Germans (Fig. 24, panel 2). If he would have stayed faithful to *realistic* representation, it would have been nearly impossible to portray Jewish people hiding as Poles by means of simplistic illustrations, as Bal explains:

“[T]he people with whom literature is concerned are not real people. They are fabricated creatures made up from fantasy, imitation, memory: paper people, without flesh and blood” (2009: 113).

In terms of an auto/biography, which relies quite heavily on the characters representing *real* people, the graphic novel’s illustrative style, which is simplistic and iconic, at once problematises its connection to *reality*. This illustrative constraint on the representation of *real* characters presents issues for the traditional assumptions about auto/biography as truthful and authoritative, because the “visual fictions and caricatures sustain [a] unique tension of authorial identity” (Chaney 2011: 24).

It can therefore be argued that “the form of comics places very real constraint on its content”, especially when the content is concerned with representing *reality*, as in auto/biography (Chaney 2011: 23). The fragmented and fractured nature of the page that is divided into panels problematises the need to create a coherent/linear narrative, and instead echoes the fragmented nature of memory. The temporal control, via panels and gutters, “destabili[s]es the static, and binary-based, temporal structure between past and present”, and makes space for a constant back-and-forth movement between past and present (Park 2011: 158). The presence of frames and gaps also allows for interpreting things that are not physically included on the page, which gives the reader power over the author. As Atkinson indicates, “the multi-frame structure and the co-existence of text and image temper [the ideas] that are dependent on the consistency of the authorial voice”; this involves a shift from the author to the reader where the “reader controls the speed [and nature] of perception” (2010: 115) (Tabachnick 2010: 4).

4.3 (Auto/bio)Graphic Memory

Earlier in this chapter I stated that memory is inextricably related to the *visual*⁵³, which possibly explains the current popularity of memory-writing in the visual arts, manifested in forms like the graphic novel, painting, and film especially. Daniel Sherman explains that “[s]ight is the only sense powerful enough to bridge the gap between those who hold a memory rooted in bodily experience and those who, lacking such *experience*, nonetheless seek to share the memory” (cited in Kansteiner 2002: 191). The question, however, is why memory-writing is specifically popular in graphic novels, since it is a medium that has no relation to *reality* or *truth*, unlike (documentary) film or photography⁵⁴. Kansteiner elaborates that “despite their evocative power, images depend on words to provide them with meaning because the relation between an image and its interpretation needs to be established”; and the graphic novel, then, specifically creates a space where text and image interact to create meaning (2002: 191). This is a hybrid space where textual and visual languages interact, and become an (auto/bio)graphic memory that “has to [be] imagine[d], and then actually visuali[s]e[d], before [it] can [be] draw[n]” (Hutcheon n.d.: 304).

For a memory to become an (autobio)graphic memory, the past has to undergo an unlimited number of changes before it can be presented as the author/artist wishes, because the “text cannot depend on memory alone, but must, rather, rely on the transforming power of fictional art” (Jay 1984: 144). It is not only the memory itself which is unstable, but the process of representing it in narrative form, specifically the visual narrative in the graphic novel, devours the actual past, and instead leaves the author/artist with no other option than to create a totally new construction.

Graphic novels often “resolv[e] the ontological problems of an autobiographical practice based upon ‘fact’ [by transforming it] into an artistic narrative that seeks, by its art, to transform a past which it cannot – and does not want to – represent factually” (Jay 1984:

⁵³ See page 67.

⁵⁴ Hutcheon states that we (all people not thinking in terms of postmodern criticism) possess a “naive but common trust in the representational veracity of photography” as that which represents reality (1988: 10).

118). Since memory is imagined and visualised before it is physically drawn on the page, the graphic novel denies *reality* and *truth* even more than other auto/biographical writings, because it deliberately decides to “blend fact and fiction” rather than attempting to be as realistic as possible, because the medium⁵⁵ does not allow it and because it is not possible to represent the past as it actually happened (Ryan 1992: 48).

The nature of the graphic novel leaves space for re-interpreting the past, making it new and more accessible to a present audience. For instance, in fig. 24 the anthropomorphic representation of actual people in *Maus* (1986) “resists identification with the Holocaust by erasing any particular ethnic characteristics and stereotypes [which] in turn, makes history more accessible to a broader audience” (Park 2011: 160). Graphic novels thus create spaces where text and image interact in such a way that the past can be manipulated to be more useful to the present. It also leaves a space where “the imagination of the author/artist and the imagination of the reader who must complete the narrative” can collaborate (Smith and Watson 2001: 169). Smith and Watson sum it up by considering the (auto/bio)graphic memory as “a space of collage and counterpoint” where *truth* and fiction meet, not only in what is written, but in how it is written and illustrated as well (2001: 173).

Therefore, for memory to become (auto/bio)graphic memory, in other words, visually presentable in the graphic novel, it relies on visual fictionalisation and imagination which disrupt the boundary between *fact* and fiction. By investigating the “visual ways of storytelling that semiotics enables one to consider”, the specific ways in which the graphic novel as medium handles memory-writing, via “plurality and unpredictability... in context of reception”, will become evident and result in better comprehension of what these stories aim to offer (Bal and Bryson 1991: 176, 186). Jacobs suggests that “the intertextual relationship between image and text, both of which are languages of discourse, can be used simultaneously to suggest and disrupt the seamless sense of cohesion of linearity that is

⁵⁵ The graphic novel usually represents characters (and places) in a very simplistic and iconic way that lacks *real* features, but rather uses imaginative characteristics. The strategy of dividing the page into frames also leaves space for fragmentation of narratives that can problematise coherent narrative construction.

associated with narrative”; meaning that (auto/bio)graphic memory does not aim to provide us with the *real* past, but deliberately edits it through the use of the graphic vocabulary of the graphic novel (2007: 85). For instance, in fig.3, panel 2 and 7-9, it is evident that “*Maus* fictionalises as it narrativizes, imagines as it recounts actual, remembered events” (Hutcheon n.d. 308).

Artists and authors of graphic novels, like Spiegelman in *Maus* (1986), write and illustrate their life stories with the idea that “[*l*]iterature and *h*istory are not separate or separable categories of discourse”. They embrace this notion by imaginatively re-constructing the past to entertain and fabricate new meanings and interpretations of the past (Hutcheon n.d.: 308). Park explains that the graphic novel’s form precisely “refuses to restrict [history] within any narrowly defined logic of narrative structure”, by referring to “[*t*]he postmodern tendency [*to*] emphasiz[e] construction *through* destruction or formation through the very formlessness of a text” (2011: 157). Instead, the form encourages, through its very hybridity, new interpretations of the past, and comments, in its own way, on the impossibility of representing the past accurately via memory, narrative, and graphic representation.

The methods of handling (auto/bio)graphic memory have been explained by referring to many examples in Spiegelman’s *Maus* (1986). However, I specifically want to elaborate on this topic by analysing and deconstructing my own (auto/bio)graphic novel, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012), since memory and narrative were the main issues I constantly struggled with in writing this book, and they motivated the focus of this dissertation. Like *Maus* (1986), *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012) is “[*d*]oubly mediated – by memory and by translation into a visual allegory”, which makes it a personal story based on *true* events, that nonetheless incorporates fiction to enhance a personal past as something attractive to present audiences (Hutcheon n.d. 304).

The structure of the book is the first place where the *unstable* memory presents problems. Since it is almost impossible to create a coherent life story from the beginning of one’s life

until the end, I rather kept my discordant memories separate from each other and divided them into chapters. Thus, the structure of the book, which is separated into seventeen chapters/memories that do not follow each other chronologically, mirrors the *fragmentedness* of memory and the impossibility to remember in any coherent fashion. Within each different chapter, the memories are bound together by narrative, whether it is via the narrator, or by letting events flow into a coherent timeline via panels, even though it did not really happen 'exactly' in that way. However, the bigger life events are still kept apart from each other and deny any linear placement in the overall structure of the book. The struggle to place my life events into a linear storyline caused the deliberate fragmentation of structure to echo the process of remembering a life.

Another contributor to the fragmented impression that is evident throughout the book, especially in terms of the structure, is the multi-voiced aspect of the memories that are included. When I decided to write this book I struggled to remember all the things that happened in my past; I experienced the classic *forgetting* aspect of remembering, as mentioned by Vinitzky-Seroussi and Teeger⁵⁶ (2010: 1107). I therefore had to turn to the other members of my family to get the story straight, which means that it was never a personal autobiography, but always an auto/biography written and told by a collective (i.e. my family). In fig. 4, panel 1, I tell Mikie about my plan to write this book, that I don't remember everything and that I want her to tell me what happened (fig.4, panels 5, 7). She then takes the role of the narrator, which subverts the traditional concept of the author and the narrator being the same person. Instead, I (the author) occasionally become, in the form of a child, an "episode in someone else's narrative", which denies me the authorial power that the autobiographer usually has (Eakin 1999: 53). The child that represents me is merely a character that is "brought into being for particular purposes"; for example, in fig. 14 the childlike tendency to blur the boundaries between imagination and reality becomes evident when *Wolf* becomes a part of the reality I am in at that moment (Eakin 1999: 53).

⁵⁶ Also see **2.4.5 Forgotten/Selective memory**, p 36.

Sewentien Herinneringe (2012) is a collection of interactive, hybrid stories with different narrators, a situation which indicates that memory is not only an individual phenomenon, but rather a collective one. To deal with the *collectiveness*, and the multi-voiced nature of memory, there exists a “type of breaking of the frame and the status of the image” that disrupts this authorial issue, as is evident in fig. 25, panel 4, where the story that is told is framed in panels, and only the act of telling the story in the present time is left without a frame, making it not only different from the rest of the illustrations, but also giving it more power and freedom (Atkinson 2010:118). In fig 12 Mikie plays the role of narrator in telling the story of *Jakkals en Wolf*, but on one page she is telling it in the past (fig. 12b), and on the other she is telling it in the present (fig. 12a). This indicates the constant movement between past and present, and that supports the notion that “[m]emory is always as much about the present as it is about the past” (Nutall 1998: 74).

This (auto/bio)graphic memory (figures 12a and 12b) handles it by contrasting the same character with different clothes and ages. This allows the character to take the reader with her to the past and back to the present. In each chapter there is a constant movement between the past and the present, and in between chapters there are also jumps from one time period to another and back again. As I have stated earlier, the chapters do not follow each other chronologically, but are rather placed randomly to mimic the *fragmentedness/instability* of remembering. The book does not end at the most recent moment in time, but instead ends when Mikie stops working for my parents, further supporting this denial of a coherent, finished memory-system. In reality this is a few years before I started writing the book and asked Mikie to help me remember what happened in my past. As Tamboukou contends, “[t]he story does not have an end, but it makes the author and the narrator complete, which is what really matters” (2011: 9). The reader, therefore, knows that the last chapter is not a reflection of the actual end of the story, because s/he is constantly reminded of the later occasion in which Mikie and I meet to talk about the past. Instead, the reader is made aware of the impossibility of separating the past

from the present and vice versa, and s/he accepts it because there are no other expectations of knowing 'exactly' when what events happened.

The subject matter of the (auto/bio)graphic memory that is presented in *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012) is of further interest, since "what we remember is... bound up with what we are supposed to remember, what the social order tells us is significant" (Freeman 1993: 51). The subject matter of any auto/biography, then, is important, since it reflects what the present need of the past is; and in a post-apartheid South Africa, life stories occasionally reflect upon the "pre-1994 cultural and socio-political history... [that] has been described as a collective trauma" because of racial prejudices (Van den Berg n.d.: 1). Since the collective memory of pre-1994 South Africa is mostly constituted from the "Truth and Reconciliation [Commission] as new master narrative", the memories of our past reflect trauma and racial prejudice (Van den Berg n.d. 5).

As a reaction to this master narrative, I returned to my own personal past and tried to remember the important mother-and-child relationship that developed between my Tswana childhood caregiver and myself. Even though "literature [specifically autobiography] written in Afrikaans has been in the difficult position of confronting [the] traumatic past... [because of] the moral implications of writing from the position of the [apartheid] perpetrator", I proceeded to write this memory because it reflects my personal past, and does indeed have a role to play in the present South Africa (Van den Berg n.d.: 1). It is a story in which Mikie, who was previously called by the prejudicial name Meidjie, because "it was easily pronounceable by white people" (see fig. 26, panels 2), takes care of my brother and I, and eventually fulfils the role of a second mother to us (Jansen 2008: 53).

In this book I have collected seventeen memories, one for each of the seventeen years that she took care of us to the extent that she became part of our family. In fig. 27, panel 2, my mother recounts when she first reali[s]ed that Mikie was a part of our family: it was when her own brother died and Mikie was as sad about it as my mother was (fig. 27, panel 1).

Throughout the book it is implied that the role Mikie played was much more than 'just' a domestic worker. Instead, this (auto/bio)graphic novel tells a racially significant story that many South Africans can relate to; and it tells it by experimenting with an *unstable* memory and narrative to deny any expectations of *reality* representation, and rather focuses on creating a new and meaningful story of the past that serves the present.

4.4 Graphic Novels and Fiction

I have considered memory and autobiography in terms of their relations to *reality* and fiction, and it was suggested that the presence of fiction cannot be denied in both memory and autobiography. Since the graphic novel is also regarded as a fictional literary genre, it can be assumed that the combination of auto/biography and the graphic novel is always already some form of fiction because of the combination of the *unstable* memory and the "crude, simplified [comic] style" of the graphic novel (Adams 2008: 10). In terms of the graphic novel's illustrative style, I have proposed that the connection between *reality* and imagination is blurred⁵⁷; that which represents the real is already a fictional creation, and thus the distance between the real past and the fabricated one is considerably large. For example, Art Spiegelman writes the story of his father (fig. 28, panel 1) who lives through the Holocaust, and instead of representing only his father's story, he also recounts the story of the storytelling process. Spiegelman constantly reveals how his father narrates the story (fig. 28, panel 5) by moving back and forth between the present Vladek (as his elderly father), and the past Vladek (a young man – before Art was born). In a way, then, this process "dismantles history and memory's authority by acknowledging the ways in which they both become deeply textual 'stories' without direct access to 'truth'" (Lombard 2008: 64). The story-within-a-story-within-a-story process that is presented in *Maus* indicates the textual nature of telling about the past, which further demonstrates the impossibility of presenting the past "as it was" without including intertextual influences on that past. This does not suggest that it is impossible to ever know the past; it rather suggests that it is impossible to

⁵⁷ See page 76.

reproduce the past 'exactly' as it happened at that time and place without it being transformed in some way, because the only way we can reach this past is by recounting and/or recording our memories of it.

As a reaction to this, the nature of the graphic novel then "empowers the writer to manipulate his/her creative discourse and challenge traditionally-accepted discourses by registering diverging ideological perspectives" (De Rodriguez 2001: 102). In other words, graphic novelists deliberately subvert processes of interpreting the auto/biography "by mixing genres, by fictionalis[ing] [themselves], and by giving the fictionally constructed and narrated characters privilege over historical narrative" (Berlatsky 2003: 121).

David B's *Epileptic* is a good example of privileging fictionalised characters over 'real' people. Even though most of the characters in the book represent actual people, to some extent realistically, David B portrays Master N, the Japanese healer who takes care of Jean-Christophe's epilepsy, as a cat (fig 13, panel 4). Thus, not only does the graphic novel present the chance to "draw characters as [the illustrator] desires them to look" (which gives the illustrator/author power over reality), it can also deliberately distort reality to produce more symbolic meaning (Tabachnick 2010: 4). Throughout the book, Jean-Christophe's epilepsy is represented as an imaginative Chinese-type dragon (fig. 13, panel 5) that is separate from Jean-Christophe as character/person. By blurring the boundaries between "the horrible density of reality and the vast possibilities of the human imagination", David B exaggerates his brother's condition by producing a metaphor for the illness in the form of a dragon (Gravett 2005: 28). It can even be suggested that, "[b]y parading the falseness... [he] reconfirms the power of [his] autobiographic novel to convey something like truth"; the imaginative and fictive interpretations of epilepsy provide a much deeper and more emotional understanding of the illness than a literal representation would have (Lombard 2008: 29). Thus, the past that David B recounts is not the literal/'actual' one that was experienced at that time in his life, but it is presented as a past that has undergone emotional and spatial change to fit the narrative of the present.

The issue of reproducing the self (the author) in an (auto/bio)graphic novel is another point of concern, because of the Carlylean notion that “literary self-representation is always already a form of self-fictional[i]s[t]ation” (Jay 1984: 35). Mieke Bal’s proposition⁵⁸ that, in autobiography, the *self* becomes a *paper person* that is created from imagination rather than from *reality*, again questions the role of the author. Atkinson suggests that, by “creat[ing] a fictional double [of the author] in the text”, the author is “killed” because this *fictional double* “undermines the author’s position as an invisible, guiding principle for the text as a whole” (2010: 116).

In most (auto/bio)graphic novels the problematic state of the author is visible; in fig. 17, panel 2, Spiegelman sits in his drawing studio and thinks about how he wrote the first *Maus* book. For the first time in the *Maus* series he presents himself with a mask – the mask of a mouse - revealing his human features underneath, suggesting a double identity (Jew and/or artist). Up to this point Spiegelman anthropomorphised every character in his books, even himself as author. However, in showing this process of actually illustrating the book, he hints at his own humanity, letting go of his metaphor in the slightest way and by doing that, presenting the metaphor as being a metaphor or mask. In a sense then, Spiegelman “threatens to obscure [the] truths” of his situation by deliberately revealing the *truth* about himself (Chaney 2011: 22). Up to this point, the anthropomorphic style placed the book in a somewhat fictional sphere because every character, even the author and narrator, was simplified and drawn as an animal. Here (fig. 17) Spiegelman reveals himself, in only a few panels, as a ‘real’ human character with an animal mask. This sudden disruption of boundaries (that were already set in the first book) makes the reader aware of the self-fictionalisation of the auto/biographer in the process of writing/illustrating an (auto/bio)graphic novel.

However, one still has to bear in mind that, even though these representations of people are images, they “are still to be considered *imaginings*” (Freeman 1993: 89). The illustrative style

⁵⁸ See page 74.

in graphic novels, it has been indicated, often simplifies features of actual people, and in some cases, like in *Maus*, they are completely 'devoid' of the features of 'real' people. The reader of an (auto/bio)graphic novel, then, is aware of this *fictional* aspect from the moment s/he starts reading, because the characters, even though they represent real people, are illustrated images that do not necessarily resemble the people they are representing.

However, both *Maus II* and *Sewentien Herinneringe* problematise this assumption of the reader by slipping a photograph (of the *real* people) into the graphic novel (*Maus II*: 134, *Sewentien Herinneringe*: last page). In fig. 29, panel 6, we are presented with an old photograph of Vladek, Art's father. Up to this point in the *Maus* series, Vladek has been the main narrator, but he was always represented as an illustrated mouse. The sudden appearance of a photograph, specifically one depicting the ('real') main character of the narrative, comes as a slight shock to the reader who became used to the simplified, iconic and anthropomorphic characters of the graphic novel. The photograph is unexpected because it portrays the character in a life-like and possibly even *factual* way that once more leads to questions about the boundaries between fact and fiction, and it reminds the reader of the 'actual' historical realities of the past, as well as the 'real' mortality of the illustrated characters.

Like *Maus*, *Sewentien Herinneringe* presents the reader with a photograph (fig. 30) of Mikie, my brother, and I, who are the main subjects of the book. This photograph is placed at the end of the book and leaves the reader with the option to reconsider his/her assumptions about the narrative after the story has been read. In both cases, the reader gets used to the fictional representations of characters and in some way accepts their dual nature, being both fictional (visual representation) and based on fact (actual, living person). However, when the reader is presented with photographs of the 'actual' persons involved in the story, the traditional view "that photographs are unmediated copies of the real world" problematises their acceptance of the presence of fiction in the graphic novel (Bergland 1994: 50). The photograph, which is assumed to be "an attempt to freeze time; a material substitute for the

real”, implicates that the fictional aspect of the narrative can possibly be accepted as *real*, because the photograph serves as “evidence” of the *real* past (Freeman 1993: 91).

The presence of photographs, however, does not necessarily make the story more *real* than it would have been without it. Instead, the presence of photographs comments on “the difficulty of separating the real from the representation” and makes the narrative “at once real and imaginary” (Berlatsky 2003: 143) (Ryan 1992: 45). Therefore, by including a photographic representation of one or some of the characters, together with the illustrative, iconic representations of those characters, the authors present their readers with the powerful choice between the fictional and factual values of the stories.

Therefore, since memory and auto/biography present their own problems with regard to fiction, the (auto/bio)graphic novel deliberately blurs “the line between fiction and history”, because of its postmodern awareness that the one (history) cannot be separated from the other (fiction) (Hutcheon 1988: 113). Through the examples presented, it is clear that graphic novels do not deny or lament the existence of reality; instead they “[problematise] the entire notion of the representation of reality” (Hutcheon 1988: 223).

4.5 Self-reflexivity

Derrida argues that “there is [nothing] outside the text”, which implies that “there is no vantage point external to text, or discourse, that would give us an unmediated access to truth;... [t]he world is always ‘mediated’, always-already textuali[s]ed” (cited in Burman and MacLure 2005: 284). Since no representation of the past will thus be able to bear any accurate connection to the *real* past, because reproducing/representing the past means it is immediately textualised, the (auto/bio)graphic novel handles the issue with representation in a postmodern and metafictional manner, where the “quest for a memory-scape pushes the narrating ‘I’ toward self-reflexivity” (Smith and Watson 2001: 170). The author is always already aware of the limits of memory and narrative in writing about and illustrating his/her life, and therefore turns to “[r]eflexivity [which results in] a more personal dimension, a

thoughtful self-awareness” of the textualising process of narrative and the limited authorial power that goes with it (Bold 2012: 3). S/he embraces her/his limited control over representing *reality*, and instead “invest[s] heavily in the engagement of the reader” by deliberately making the reader⁵⁹ aware of the author’s investments in the writing- and remembering processes (Kolin 1998:43).

Neumann suggests that “[m]any contemporary novels [such as (auto/bio)graphic novels] problemat[i]s[e] the processes of remembering on a meta-level and foreground the ways in which memories are constructed”, as is evident in fig.4 where I tell Mikie about the difficulty of putting together my own childhood memories (2008: 337). In panel 2, I state that I cannot remember the events from my childhood, but I make clear that I only remember bits and pieces of what happened, which is problematic since I want to write a coherent story (fig.4, panel 3). In this image, then, I self-consciously acknowledge the limits of my own memory in the process of writing a coherent narrative of my childhood, which signifies the issue of depending on an *unstable* memory as the main source of information for an auto/biography. By self-reflexively making the reader aware of my inability to remember the past as it ‘actually’ happened, the auto/biography “subvert[s] th[e] very view of history” that assumes a coherent, chronological movement in time (Hutcheon 1988: 160). As I try to solve the problem of fragmented and forgotten memories by turning to Mikie for stories of my past (fig. 4, panel 4), I self-consciously inform the reader of another problem concerning the *unstable* memory: Halbwachs’ theory that memory is always already collective⁶⁰ and open to multiple possible interpretations of the past.

Freeman asks the problematic question: “Is autobiography itself – the telling of our **own** life story – really possible?” when there is a considerable chance that we, as individuals, cannot have control over our memories and pasts (1993: 79). When considering that we constantly turn to others to complete our memories of the past, we can deduce that the telling of a life

⁵⁹ Atkinson argues that “[t]he reader of a comic book is less likely to be surprised by a metafictional device” such as self-reflexivity (2010: 121).

⁶⁰ See **2.5 Collective memory**, p 38; or Kansteiner 2002: 181.

will always include other people's versions of it as well – and it is never entirely our own.

Fig. 31, panel 2, illustrates how I (the author) again depend on other members of my family to help remember past events. Here my mother tells me how Mikie cried at my uncle's funeral – something I could not remember at all. However, the fact that it is included in the book makes the story or retelling of an 'actual' event more complete, but with the self-awareness that it was not my own memory, but based on my mother's account of what happened. By deliberately including my mother's version of that event, it "openly assert[s] that there are only *truths* in the plural, and never one Truth; there is rarely falseness *per se*, just others' truths" (Hutcheon 1988: 109).

Fig. 18 is another example of self-reflexively acknowledging the plurality of the past. In panel 1 I am portrayed illustrating the novel which the reader is busy reading, which is in its own way already self-reflexive, because it attracts attention to the textual/fictional nature of the memories that are included in the book. My brother then walks in and watches while I illustrate (fig. 18, panel 2); he then stops me and claims that I am telling the story wrong, since it did not happen the way I am telling it (fig. 18, panel 3, 4). Instead, he tells another version, which, according to him, is the "more *real*" version of the past event (fig. 18, panel 7). This scene deliberately depicts him telling me his version of that event, instead of visually depicting what he believes happened. By doing this, the scene "systematically flaunts its own condition of artifice and... [thus] probes into the problematic relationship between real-seeming artifice and reality" (Onega and Landa 1996: 31). In other words, the reader is made aware of memory's problematic relation to actual past events. The scene further comments on the plurality of the past in which different people remember different versions of one event: as Paul de Man explains, "[t]he binary opposition between fiction and fact is no longer relevant;... [instead] it is the assertion of the space between the entities that matter" (cited in Hutcheon 1998: 113). This means that multiple versions of the past do not make the memory or version of the past more or less real or valid; instead it suggests that we are

concerned with the fact that there are multiple versions of the past which complicates the set boundary between fact and fiction.

In fig. 16 Art Spiegelman portrays himself in his drawing studio, busy writing *Maus II*. This is the only page in the *Maus* series in which he “interrupt[s] [his] narrative of self-coherence with another self” – the self which is actually writing and illustrating the book (Chaney 2011: 30). He constantly moves between the subject matter of his book and the present act of writing it (fig. 16, panel 2), which indicates the textual nature of narrating the past. Even though he writes the story of a story (his father’s life story and version of the Holocaust), he makes the reader aware of his hand in the narrative process by portraying himself in the act of *narrativising*. Berlatsky observes that, “rather than attempting to resolve th[e] tensions between personal memory and institutional records and authority, Spiegelman foregrounds them through metafictional self-reflexiveness”, by which he makes the reader aware that he (creatively) manipulates the information, commenting on, and subverting history as a ‘true’ reflection of the past (cited in Park 2011: 157).

In panel 4 Spiegelman’s character looks at the audience and comments on *Maus I*’s “commercial success”. This self-reflexive act of literally speaking to the reader from within the text “draws attention to its status as an artefact...[which further] pose[s] questions about fiction and reality” (Atkinson 2010: 109). It makes the reader uncomfortable with accepting the information as fact; however, by including dates (fig. 16, panels 1-3) the reader is also forced to reconsider the assumptions of fiction. In other words, the self-reflexive act does not deny the presence of *reality* or *fiction* in the story, but foregrounds the difficulty of separating the two, since the author is telling stories that are based on truth, but it nonetheless remains a story.

Hutcheon proposes that “writ[ing] history (personal and public) as a reflexive comic book is not to say history is a fiction; it is instead, to suggest that all accounts of that history are necessarily ‘narrativis[ed]’ accounts” (n.d.: 306). The *narrativised* nature of recounting the

past is noticeable in *Sewentien Herinneringe*, as seen in fig. 32, panel 3, where my own hand is portrayed drawing the last panel (fig.32, panel 2). By interrupting the storyline with my inability to remember details of my past, and attracting attention to it by specifically depicting my own hand, “the hand or aesthetic autograph of the author/artist that draws”, the *textuality* of my account is foregrounded (Smith and Watson 2001: 169). The reader is deliberately overwhelmed with the artist’s hand, giving the page an authorial edge, while simultaneously destructing the author’s power to be omnipresent and have control over all aspects of the story. By further placing the image of the hand (fig. 32, panel 3) on the page without a frame, in contrast to panels 1-2, the act of drawing/writing is given an autonomist edge, a freedom of some sorts. Will Eisner suggests that “unframed panels open up the tightness of a narrative sequence and suggest an unlimited empty space” (cited in Ewert 2004: 180). This space simultaneously gives and takes authoritative power, because even though it produces a free, more authentic space than a frame, it nonetheless reveals the textual and narrativised nature of writing/illustrating.

4.6 Conclusion

Tony Venezia indicates that the strength of the graphic novel is “to function as an archive of cultural artefacts, cataloguing and utilising various cultural elements within the confines of the work itself”, which makes it an appropriate archive for memory- and life-writing (cites in Coombs 2011: 2). The nature of the medium enables the author/artist to work with the limitations of memory and narrative and, instead of trying to overcome those issues, to rather use them productively. As Chan indicates, “their postmodern nature of being ‘fragmented’ and ‘unreliable’ distances them from establishment – that which has been traditionally seen as the mainstream voice” of history (2006: 48). The way in which graphic novels deal with postmodern concepts like “deconstructing the tendency to universalise experiences, [commenting on]... the irrational and unreliable as being as valid as the rational, the emphasis on a pluralistic conception of reality, and the reaction against

establishment”, makes it an appropriate medium in which the *unstable* memory and life stories can be experimented with (Chan 2006: 47).

We have considered the “difficult[y] to reconstruct [life] after the fact”, because memory and narrative simultaneously create a mess that the life writer must try to “accommodate, not den[y]” by means of constructing, creating, imagining, and narrating (Kansteiner 2002: 195) (Olney 1998: 282). Thus, the (auto/bio)graphic novel is an explorative medium of discourses like memory and history because it “does not aspire to tell the *truth*” but rather aims at subverting and commenting on it as something that is problematic and cannot be clearly separated from fiction (Hutcheon 1988: 123). Hutcheon elaborates that “[p]ostmodern art, [like the graphic novel] merely foregrounds the fact that we can know the real, especially the past real, only through signs”, which leaves space for fictionalisation (1988: 230). Therefore, we can conclude that the (auto/bio)graphic novel does not deny *truth* or *reality*, but by means of its illustrative and hybrid nature it questions, subverts, disrupts and comments on the instability of life writing in a self-reflexive manner.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary

The process of writing about one's past, writing about a life, involves a dependence on memory and recollection which cannot be dismissed. This dependence on memory, which is unstable because it is always already fragmented (as Freud suggests in Freeman 1993: 50), constructed (as Schmidt states in Schmidt 2008: 192), imagined (as Jacobs suggests in Jacobs 2007: 50), and selected (as Neumann asserts in Neumann 2008: 333), is one of the main postmodern concerns related to the discourse of autobiography and life writing. "The postmodern view is that contradictions are inevitable" when memory is concerned with accurate presentations of *reality*, which addresses the issue of really knowing the past as it happened (Hutcheon 1988: 227). Thus, where memory is generally believed to be concerned with presenting the past as it happened, the postmodern view denies the ability of memory to do this, as it is too unstable to ever present *reality*. Baudrillard explains, from a postmodern point of view, that "it is not that truth and reference have ceased to exist, [but] it is that they ceased to be unproblematic issues" (cites in Hutcheon 1988: 223). What further problematises the truth-of-the-past issue in terms of memory is that memory is also always individual, while at the same time it is a social and collective act of remembering.

There is never only one past; therefore the past *reality* is always plural, making it impossible to reach the past *reality* from the present without borrowing bits and pieces of other people's memories. The implication of this for the representation of a life is that "[i]ndividuals are... capable of ignoring even the best told stories, of injecting their own subversive meanings into even the most rhetorically accomplished texts – and of attending only to those ways of making sense of the past that fit their own" (Kansteiner 2002: 192). Therefore, by relying on memory to write a life, the possibility of finding gaps in the past, and filling them with imaginary reconstructions and borrowed collective version(s) of the past, is inevitable. These glitches in memory-work results in a dependence on narrative for structure and significance;

in other words, a *story* of the past is created where the “speaker [is turned] into [the] subject of narrative who can exercise some control over the meaning of [his/her] li[ffe]” (Da Silva 2005: 472).

Narrative immediately enables the life writer to have control over his past, but this also suggests that s/he can manipulate it, removing it from the sphere of *truth*. This then leads to the postmodern view that “[memory], [h]istory, biography, autobiography – no less than fiction – are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems”, in which narrative controls the structure and meaning of that which is represented (Hutcheon n.d.: 308). The graphic novel, then, is frequently referred to as a postmodern medium precisely because it is aware of the restrictions and limitations of history and auto/biography, as is evident in figure 4, where the fragmented nature of the past is acknowledged. It is a “postmodern [form of] art [that]... is doubled and contradictory”, and it exposes the same plurality of the past by means of its technical structure and hybrid combination of text and image (Hutcheon 1988: 119). Smith and Watson indicate that “[i]n Japan, France, Canada, the United States, South Africa, and elsewhere, the telling of autobiographical stories through cartoon books [and graphic novels] has produced multimodal stories with the potential to intervene directly in social and political debates”; not only because of the way it questions history and memory’s stability, but also because of the way in which it disrupts those discourses and comments on the current social and political issues of those particular countries and other societies in flux⁶¹ (2001: 168).

The necessity of investigating specifically how life writing and memory-work is handled by the (auto/bio)graphic novel is found in its current rise in popularity and also in the significant ways in which it comments on divergent accounts of the past.

⁶¹ Israel, for example, also has a strong comics/graphic novel tradition that comments on political and social issues. For example, Rutu Modan, who is an established comic artist from Israel, who wrote/illustrated the graphic novel, *Exit Wounds* (2007).

5.2 Final Thoughts

Hutcheon states that an important aspect of the postmodern point of view in relation to comics and graphic novels, specifically related to what has been discussed about the reality of the past, is that “[p]ostmodernism does not deny that [the past] existed; it merely questions how we can know real past events today, except through their traces [of memory], their texts [e.g. visual artifacts], the facts we construct and to which we grant meaning [via narrative]” (1988: 225). In other words, the point of this study is not to deny the past reality, but to investigate memory and narrative, and to conclude that they make the past *textual/visual* and remove us from it so that we are unable to reach the past reality as it was, ever again.

The (auto/bio)graphic novel embraces this postmodern point of view and, rather than trying to conform to ideals about representing *reality* or ‘fact’, it deliberately subverts it, commenting on the hybrid nature of any life story, and utilising the unstable nature of memory and life stories. Therefore, in Hutcheon’s words, the (auto/bio)graphic novel has crossed “[t]he most radical boundaries;... [that] between fiction and non-fiction and – by extension – between art and life”, indicating that, while it is both fact and fiction, it is at the same time neither (1988: 10).

This study, like postmodernism, then, does not deny the auto/biography’s factuality, its fictionality or the dichotomous relation of fact and fiction. It rather explores and disrupts the boundaries between the two, and provides an awareness of the plurality of being both factual and fictional, and of possibly being both textual and visual. The ability of the (auto/bio)graphic novel to “seize upon what exists and imaginatively transform it, through [visual and textual] language[s], such that we, the readers find ourselves in the position of seeing [the past] in a new light”, is where this study’s interest of working with an unstable memory and narrative lies (Freeman 1993: 230).

Relying on an unstable memory and narrative to write and illustrate a life story, enables the author/artist of the graphic novel to present new, plural meanings and leave space for divergent interpretations of the past. In a post-apartheid South African context, then, the (auto/bio)graphic novel presents an “opportunity to undertake a strategic repositioning [of] a Southern Africa of the future”, where the purpose is not in denying the trauma of the past, but in including new ways of seeing the past and giving voice to previously marginalised stories that are significant in promoting healing and nation-building in the present (Da Silva 2005: 472). Govinden believes that this can lead to “a freeing up of our understanding of the past, in which apartheid was seen as the defining element” of the country’s history (2011: 290).

The (auto/bio)graphic novel, *Sewentien Herinneringe*, tells a particular individual version of a South African collective past that provides another point of view of the “defining memory” of apartheid, as Govinden calls it. Here a collection of memories from various sources portray a close relationship between a black woman and white children, that contrasts with many often-told life-stories in the present (and past) South Africa. However, even though this relationship developed into a loving, intimate familial one where white and black existed together, Mikie was nonetheless a domestic worker who could not take care of her own family, but ironically cared for and loved a white family because of the unceasing and tragic political and social realities of apartheid⁶². By means of the graphic novel, and because of the unstable nature of memory, this intricate story can be told in an alternative and significant way, without specifically elaborating on the ‘official version’ of the past, but leaving space for the reader to interpret his/her own meanings. By focusing on the result of being partly brought up by a black woman, this story embraces the main character’s naivety of not knowing everything, and comments, via the hybrid, unstable nature of the medium, on a version of the past that contributes to a collective memory of South Africa.

⁶² The “iconic apartheid live-in African woman ‘servant’ attending to the lifestyles of white, middle-class suburbia” developed out of racial discrimination and racial separation during the Apartheid years (Ally 2010: 7). Even years after 1994 (when democracy started), these women are still doing these jobs because of the lack of money, and/or bad living conditions.

Figures



Figure 1. Art Spiegelman, *Maus I* (1986).

(Spiegelman 1986: 33)



Figure 2. David B, *Epileptic* (2005).

(David B 2005: 32)



Figure 3. Art Spiegelman, *Maus I* (1986).

(Spiegelman 1986: 103)



Figure 4. Marike le Roux, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012).
(Le Roux 2012: Jy Vertel)



Figure 5. Art Spiegelman, *Maus I* (1986).

(Spiegelman 1986: 23)



Figure 6. David B, *Epileptic* (2005).

(David B 2005: 14)



Figure 7. Art Spiegelman, *Maus I* (1986).

(Spiegelman 1986: 132)



Figure 8. Art Spiegelman, *Maus I* (1986).

(Spiegelman 1986: 92)

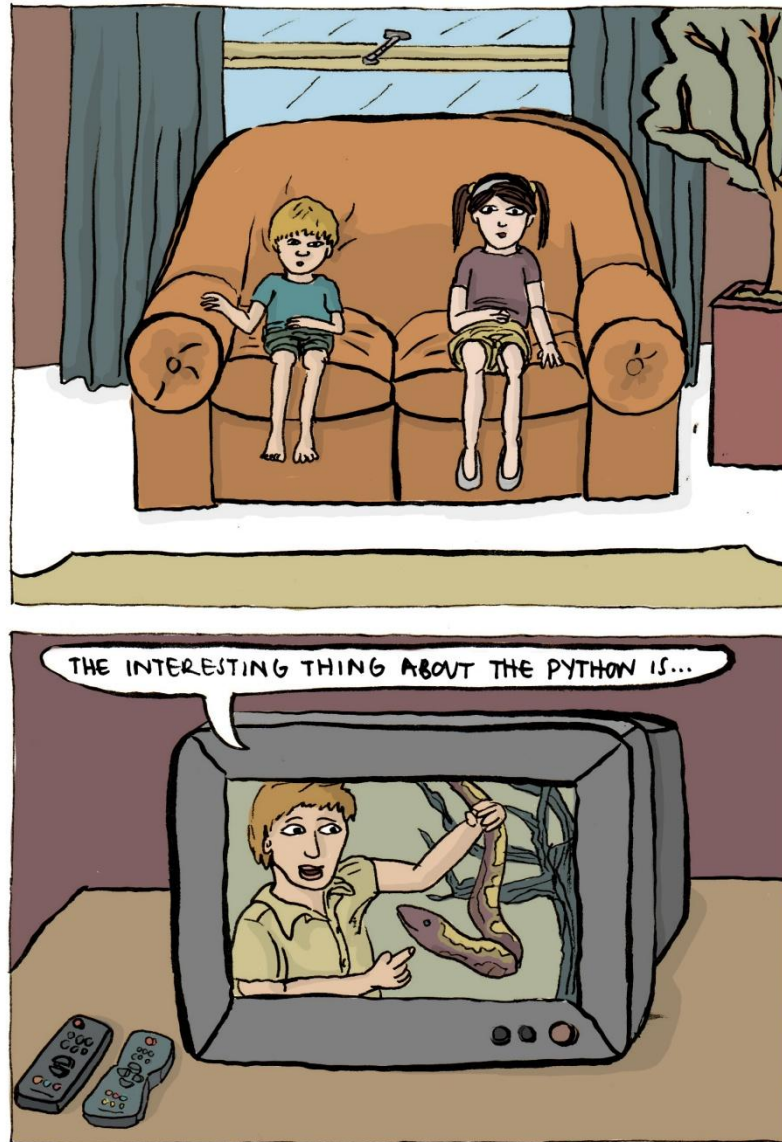


Figure 9a. Marike le Roux, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012).
(Le Roux 2012: n.p.)



Figure 9a. Marike le Roux, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012).
(Le Roux 2012: n.p.)



Figure 10. Art Spiegelman, *Maus I* (1986).

(Spiegelman 1986: 32)



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Figure 11. David B, *Epileptic* (2005).

(David B 2005: 79)



Figure 12a. Marike le Roux, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012).

(Le Roux 2012: Jakkals en Wolf)



Figure 12b. Marike le Roux, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012).

(Le Roux 2012: Jakkals en Wolf)



Figure 13. David B, *Epileptic* (2005).

(David B 2005: 52)



Figure 14. Marike le Roux, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012).
(Le Roux 2012: Jakkals en Wolf)



Figure 15. Art Spiegelman, *Maus II* (1991).

(Spiegelman 1991: 11)

Time flies...



Figure 16. Art Spiegelman, *Maus II* (1991).

(Spiegelman 1991: 41)



Figure 17. David B, *Epileptic* (2005).

(David B 2005: 77)



Figure 18. Marike le Roux, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012).

(Le Roux 2012: Mý kinners doen nie daai dinge nie)



Figure 19. Art Spiegelman, *Maus I* (1986).

(Spiegelman 1986: 111)



Figure 20. Marike le Roux, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012).

(Le Roux 2012: Afvalpot)



Figure 21. Marike le Roux, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012).
(Le Roux 2012: My huis, Jou huis, Ons huis)



Figure 22. Marike le Roux, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012).
(Le Roux 2012: Oom Fanus se Begrafnis)



Figure 23. Art Spiegelman, *Maus I* (1986).

(Spiegelman 1986: 146)



Figure 24. Art Spiegelman, *Maus I* (1986).

(Spiegelman 1986: 155)



Figure 25. Marike le Roux, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012).

(Le Roux 2012: Jy Vertel)



Figure 26. Marike le Roux, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012).

(Le Roux 2012: Mikie, nie Meidjie)



Figure 27. Marike le Roux, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012).

(Le Roux 2012: Oom Fanus se Begrafnis)



Figure 28. Art Spiegelman, *Maus I* (1986).

(Spiegelman 1986: 13)



Figure 29. Art Spiegelman, *Maus II* (1991).

(Spiegelman 1991: 134)



Figure 30. Marike le Roux, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012). Photograph.
(Le Roux 2012: n.p.)



Figure 31. Marike le Roux, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012).

(Le Roux 2012: Oom Fanus se Begrafnis)



Figure 32. Marike le Roux, *Sewentien Herinneringe* (2012).
(Le Roux 2012: Kerk, Koor, en ZCC)

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