Comics and/as Documentary:
the implications
of graphic truth-telling

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Abstract

Examining examples from a cluster of early twenty-first century comics this thesis argues that these are comics adopting a documentary mode of address. The recognition that they share a documentary ambition to visually narrate and represent aspects and events of the real world, in turn calls for a closer examination of the contribution such comics present in terms of documentary's repertoire.

This thesis challenges the persistent assumption that ties documentary to recording technologies, and instead engages an understanding of the category in terms of narrative, performativity and witnessing. In so doing, it aligns with debates and questions raised by recent academic work around animated documentary. Shared concerns include conventions, truth-claims and trust, and the limitations of representation as verisimilitude. Mindful not to overstate correspondence with animated and inherently moving image forms, however, this contribution explicitly concerns documentary in comics form: as constituted by static and silent pages.

The enquiry is structured according to concerns and themes that have been identified as central to documentary theory: the relation between documentary image and its referent; the production of archives and popular history; the social function of documentary as visibility and 'voice', and the travelogue as cultural narrative and production of knowledge. In other words, examples of comics that address actual, as opposed to imagined, persons and events of the historical world, are read through the lens of documentary. Close reading and visual analysis, engaging comics-specific frameworks, asks how comics by means of their formal qualities might offer alternative strategies and even the possibility to overcome certain problems associated with audiovisual modes of documentary representation. The thesis simultaneously extends an alternative perspective to literary frameworks, in particular the categories of memoir and autobiography, which have come to dominate in a steadily growing field of comics studies.

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations

Introduction

My fascination with comics was from the start intertwined with a burgeoning interest in academic study. Writing my dissertation on the relations between word and image as an undergraduate illustration student, I eventually realised that this dynamic plays out in particularly intriguing and interdependent ways in the form of comics. Here, images are not merely points of entry into the written texts or illustrations of its content. Instead words and image narrate interactively. Meanings arise from their collaboration and also from the ways in which they undermine, destabilise and contest each other. Over time my determination to pursue research in this area grew, and consolidated around texts taking as their subject actual, as opposed to imagined, persons and events.

To read the comics by Joe Sacco, and those by Marjane Satrapi in many ways offers considerably different experiences, not least in terms of subject matter. Joe Sacco's work depicts his travels in conflict ridden areas in the early 1990s Balkans and more recently the Middle East, while Marjane Satrapi's childhood memoirs are about growing up during Iran's revolution and transformation into an Islamic state. Aesthetically, too, there are clear disparities. Sacco's style mostly adopts a realist tenor, at least by comics standards. At times his line drawing exaggerates angles, foreshortening and characterisation. But this is countered by the naturalistic observation of detail, cross hatching to articulate shadow and form, and use of linear perspective [see FIG 1]. Satrapi's work, on the other hand, is highly stylised and selective. In addition to privileging shape and contrasting blocks of black and white over line as a means of figuration, it frequently features a flattened picture plane [see FIG 2].

However, despite their decidedly differing topics and aesthetic qualities, both Satrapi and Sacco engage the reader in narratives that are to be understood as having a particular relation to their topics; they are not, or at least claim not to be, fictions. Both texts adopt a register, or mode of address, that invites readers to de-code and make sense of them as representations of real historical persons, events and experiences. This particular reader position is also significantly constructed by, to use the terminology of Gérard Genette (1991), para-textual elements.

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE
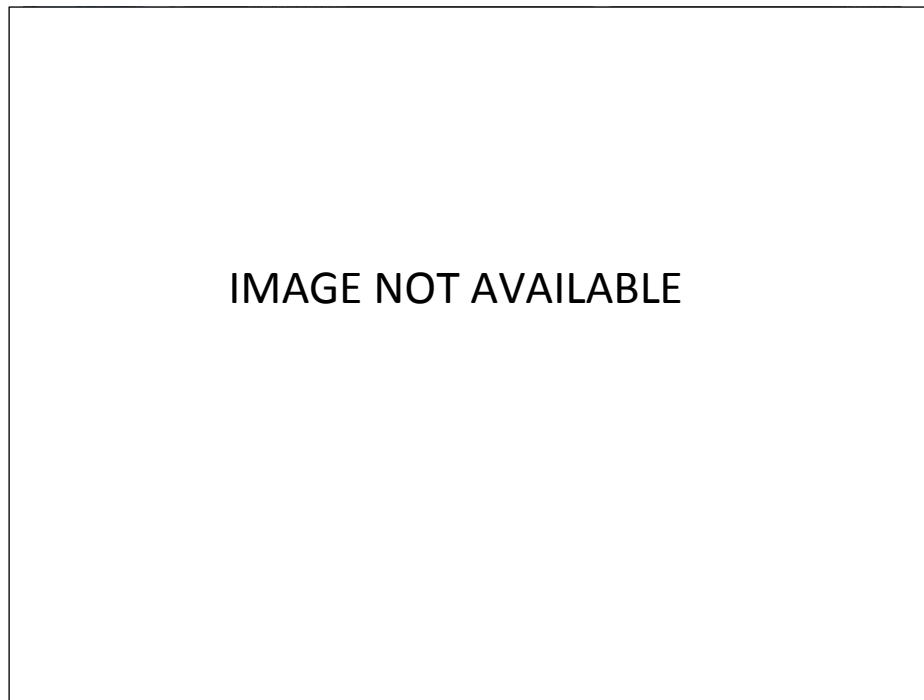
FIG 1 Joe Sacco (2009), *Footnotes in Gaza*, Jonathan Cape, p. 31: 3-5.

IMAGE NOT

AVAILABLE
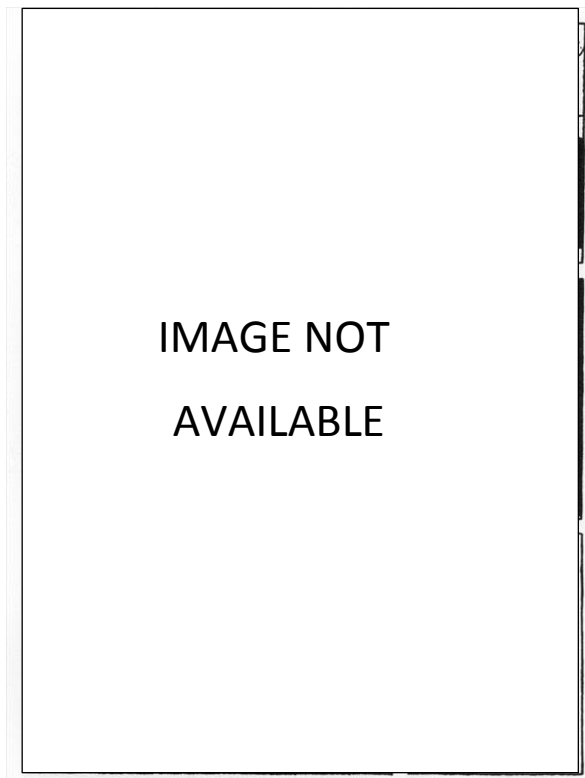
FIG 2 Marjane Satrapi (2008), *Persepolis: the story of a childhood and the story of a   return*,   Vintage,   p.   43.

These might be materially appended publisher's/ editor's descriptions, quotes from reviews on the back cover and often a substantial author statement or a foreword by somebody else[i], but also reviews, listings and advertising. So how, then, might Sacco's and Satrapi's work be located in relation to each other? Terms such as journalism, reportage and autobiography in effect create a distinction between these two examples, as by implication they become classified as belonging to separate categories. Yet, it seems significant that beyond being comics, they share the ambition to mediate actual events and the real world. Applying the term non-fiction accounts somewhat better for the commonality between these texts.

Even so, none of the above descriptions seem to sufficiently acknowledge the key significance of *visual* codes and mediating strategies that are immediate and integral to the readers' engagement with both Sacco's and Satrapi's narratives. Comics are multi-modal[ii] texts, often (but not always) using a combination of words, images and panel arrangements (Kukkonen 2011: 315) in order to communicate. Extant debates pertaining to a definition of comics can be broadly understood as divided into two positions, one which sees the combination of word and image as a crucial defining feature (Harvey 1994: 9), the other privileging sequence as an essential element (McCloud 1993: 9). Strictly adhered to, the former would exclude wordless comics (Kunzle 1990: 194; Beronä 2001: 19-39) and abstract comics (Molotiu, 2009; Baetens 2011*a*), while the latter fails to account for the possibility of single panel comics narrative (Beaty 1999: 68) [iii]. The fundamental and vital role of images in comics is however not in any doubt. Indeed, comics without images are difficult, if not impossible, to conceive of. Yet, even if it is possible to find examples of comics devoid of pictorial content, the visual arrangement of their text in and as 'lexias' (Kannenberg 2009: 309), a lexia being 'a block of text which is designed to be read/viewed as a single unit' (ibid), remains vital to conceptualising them as comics. And the spatial, in other words visual, breakdown of narrative is central to the form. Considering that visual aspects of communication are intrinsic to comics[iv], it seems remarkable that literary frameworks have occupied such a prevalent position in the discussion and analysis of comics, an issue I will examine in more depth in chapter two.

The grounds for this project emerge from the connection between nonfiction comics and the category of moving image documentary, in that both offer sequential narratives that combine iconic and symbolic systems of signification and both cue readers to understand them as 'of the actual world'. In anticipation that a number of possible problems might be raised by claiming such a connection, this initially tentatively formulated association necessitates closer examination. Nevertheless, and returning to the examples of Sacco's and Satrapi's work, it does seem that documentary might provide a useful primary description of the connection between them, one not invalidated by the fact that the former can also be thought of as reportage and the latter an autobiographical narration. The difference between audio-visual texts as disparate as, for example, Simon Reeve's *Tropic of Capricorn* (BBC2, 2008) and Jonathan Caouette's *Tarnation* (2003) does not prevent both of these audio-visual texts being listed as documentaries. In this case, too, the former combines journalistic reportage with personally inflected commentary, and the latter presents an autobiographical and retrospective reconstruction of childhood experiences through which broader social and societal concerns are raised.

To summarise, understood in terms of systems of communication that offer highly visual narratives purporting to represent referents of historical actuality, documentary and certain comics appear to have something in common. While there are undeniable medium-specific differences, the challenges, conditions, strategies (and their implications) involved with visually representing and narrating the actual historical world can be identified as shared and central concerns. This connection provides the starting point for this research, prompting the bi-part question: can comics perform in a documentary capacity and if so, what might the implications of 'documentary comics' be for documentary as a category?

Comics terminology

There are potentially several terms available for describing the texts this work will go on to analyse, but considering that the act of naming carries ideological implications and political weight the choice requires clear justification. Comics is the name originally applied to the early strips published in newspapers and periodicals,

sometimes also called funnies (Harvey 1994; Sabin 2003: 134). These names reflect the form's legacy in early print culture in satirical prints and caricature. The connection with public discourse such a legacy contains has long been overshadowed by the association with children's culture and disposable diversions, although humour has remained a prevalent feature in a large proportion of comics. The type of text I am concerned with here, however, is not intended for comic effect, at least not as its overriding purpose.

As material objects, all of the texts I go on to analyse in this thesis have been published in book-form, sometimes preceded by publication in serialised form. Are they therefore comic-books? Or are they graphic novels, if they offer an extended treatment of a topic, rather than a collection of loosely connected episodes? As they resolutely present themselves as works of non-fiction it seems problematic to refer to them as graphic novels. 'Graphic narrative' offers an alternative, but this term might be understood to include moving image texts, which is not the case here. The same applies to 'sequential graphic narrative', which is even more unwieldy. Both of these terms make reference to the visual language that has developed in and through traditions of what more generally tends to be referred to as comics. Clearly questions of cultural value and status are innately tied to both genre categorisation and the use of terminology. For writers and creators, for whom credibility and acknowledgement (or indeed the lack there of) have acute implications, the term comics might be one of dubious merit. For some, terms such as graphic novel, graphic narrative and sequential art may well signal an opportunity to be taken seriously, and to gain hitherto elusive respect, fairer conditions of employment and financial rewards[v].

For critics, however, the aspirational resonance of replacing the term comics may imply a willingness to pander to, rather than to pose challenges to extant cultural hierarchies. Much recent academic attention to comics has been overt about its position of advocacy; arguing both that this is a historically overlooked and neglected cultural form and that contrary to received wisdom comics are 'capable of the same range of subject-matter as novels, films or any other media' (Sabin 2003: 9), and indeed of tackling a variety of topics and issues in highly sophisticated ways (Versaci 2007: 12-13; Witek 1989: 3; Hatfield 2005: 36; Chute 2008, 2011). Claims

for validity are often made in conjunction with attention to texts that demonstrate the error of equating the form with a handful of genres; superheroes, 'funny animals' (Witek 1989: 11; Abell 2012: 68), adventure, horror, science fiction and romance. The capacity to include diverse genres, subject-matter and treatment is thus often an important aspect of valorising the form. This research, too, highlights work beyond well-established industry genres. Yet, referring to them as *comics* underlines that I conceive of no fundamental rupture or differentiation, in terms of intrinsic artistic or social value, between the texts being addressed in this thesis and other types of comics. The use of the term 'comics' can instead be seen to signal shared, albeit multifaceted, histories and traditions.

In terms of such traditions, comics have a distinct historical connection to the emergence of popular print cultures and retain popularity as tactile material objects; whether printed in glued and stapled pamphlets, as part of newspapers or magazines or in hardback book-form. But comics now also flourish on the Internet and digital platforms. As this forces the recognition that comics might in fact be realised through diverse media, I will be referring to comics as a form, rather than a medium.

Situating and justifying the research

The aim of this project is to instigate a dialogue between two fields; documentary and comics scholarship. Although the connection has been made previously (Adams 2008; Woo 2010), it has, in my view, not yet been engaged with thoroughly enough to explore the implications for either field, nor to warrant the term dialogue. Jeff Adams' *Documentary Graphic Novels and Social Realism* (2008) is a proficient and contextually well-grounded account of the political characteristics of several texts including Joe Sacco's *Palestine* (2003), Keiji Nakasawa's *Bare-foot Gen* (1973-1985) and Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1986). Adams expands on his use of the term documentary with reference to some key writers in the field, namely Bill Nichols and Stella Bruzzi, but this section remains largely separate from the textual and contextual analysis overall. Despite the prominence of the term 'documentary' in his title, the alignment of documentary graphic novels with the historical and political

tradition of critical and social realism is more consistent, in-depth and as a result more convincing. Moreover, by opting for this route, his work circumvents the issue of photographic and filmic media as conventionally accepted documentary means. As documentary authority and authentication ostensibly has strong associations with certain technologies and is underpinned by the 'direct' indexical link between image and its counterpart in the real world, this is an area I feel needs to be examined more closely if the argument for documentary comics is to be made. Chapter three of this thesis is thus dedicated to the issue of indexical authority in relation to nonfiction comics.

Similarly at one remove, Benjamin Woo's (2010) chapter-length and shorter contribution has suggested documentary as a potentially more apt description of Joe Sacco's work, than the more commonly applied epithet of journalism. This is based on 'an ideal-typical distinction between the reporting of facts and the communication of experience' (Woo 2010: 167). Woo raises the question of the longer time-frame of comics being incompatible with current affairs journalism. More importantly, he argues that the idea of truth-telling as a matter of complexity and negotiation that he recognises in Sacco's approach, is embedded and more prominently recognised within the documentary tradition than in the discourses of journalism. Woo does acknowledge the different qualities and relations to authenticity of the photographic and the drawn image (ibid: 175). Yet this account, too, only brings into partial view the visual, narrative and discursive representation of the real as a significant link between documentary and certain comics. While broadly in agreement with Adams' and Woo's arguments, I feel that they fail to address some considerable and significant questions, and fall short of instigating a two-way interchange. Both of these writers indicate that the literature around documentary is relevant to the understanding of certain types of comics. But considering the complexity of documentary as a category and the wide range of discourses and competing positions it has engendered, their actual use of such sources remains indicative. It stops short of engaging with such sources critically, or indeed sufficiently.

Talking about documentary comics challenges certain assumptions and expectations which remain attached to the term documentary. Despite wide-ranging debates

relating to the relationship between image and referent, the ontological truth-claims of recording technologies and the conditions and factors impacting the construction of the documentary real, the process of recording tenaciously persists as a unifying factor for otherwise complex categorisations and sub-divisions. Suggesting that comics are capable of documentary work raises questions about the theoretical basis and limitations of the category's conception as specific to such methods and means.

On the other hand, the considerable body of literature around documentary has engaged with a wide range of issues surrounding the visual representation of the actual historical world and thus offers a, hitherto largely under-utilised, resource for the reading of the growing body of non-fiction comics. This study aims to more consistently examine the notion of documentary comics suggested by Adams and Woo, in order to instigate a connection between these two fields of study. The purpose is to facilitate debate and potentially the emergence of further points of connection, in so doing making a contribution to both fields.

The premise of this research is thus to comparatively examine comics which take the real (as an experiential and socio-historical category) as their subject, with documentary, as theorised and produced primarily in relation to moving image media. By arguing for documentary comics this thesis aims to demonstrate an alternative framework to that of a literary paradigm for the reading and analysis of the comics in question. The thesis also proposes that the re-mediation (Bolter and Grusin 2000: 55-56) of documentary in comics highlights assumptions regarding documentary's dependence on recording media. Challenging such assumptions I argue that comics are capable of offering their readers a position equivalent to that of a documentary audience. And I suggest that, due to their formal characteristics comics have the potential to strategically address and to overcome certain problems of more conventional documentary modes, commonly thought to be audiovisual, moving image and camera-derived. This is not to claim that documentary comics inherently bypass such problems. In arguing for the notion of documentary comics this research also demonstrates how such texts have significant issues and challenges in common with conventional documentary forms, in spite of medium-specific considerations.

Consequently, albeit on a less specific level, this research argues for a cross-media approach to cultural analysis and for the continued critical evaluation of systems of categorisation, their foundations and effects.

Theoretical frameworks

The motivating and underlying principle of this project is affiliated with and indebted to Jacques Rancière's (2004, 2006, 2009) theoretical work on the politics of aesthetics and the aesthetics of politics and knowledge. For Rancière the commonality between politics and aesthetics is thought in terms of 'a reconfiguration of the way we share out or divide places and times, speech and silence, the visible and the invisible' (Rancière, cited in Hallward 2003: 203). Central to his ideas is that the ways in which discursive formations are delineated work to impose certain orders on how we understand, and what it is possible to connect, or indeed see and say (Rancière, 2004: 39). Therefore tracing and potentially breaching, shifting or re-configuring such lines of inclusion and exclusion has the potential to offer new possibilities of seeing and expressing, bring new subjectivities into being and, ultimately, actively produce the world.

However, although I want to acknowledge the influence of Rancière's work, in that it informs the intellectual position and methodological approach at work in this inquiry, the actual body of theory and literature that I draw on, in terms of analysing particular aspects of documentary and specific examples of comics, is far broader. Within the chapters, and in view of the cross-disciplinary nature of the project, I will as a matter of course make reference to and engage with extant comics scholarship. But with the exception of chapter two (in which I outline historical considerations and debates in comics studies relating to the social construction and cultural value of the form), literature and theoretical perspectives pertaining to the concerns of documentary will provide the overriding orientation. It should be noted that theories around documentary are less a coherent canon than a body of literature with a wide range of preoccupations, points of focus and critical perspectives. Some prioritise

audiences, while others focus on directors, specific documentary categories or historical movements, some approach industry and production contexts, while psycho-analytical perspectives and phenomenological perspectives are geared towards the relations between texts and individual viewers. Taking into account such diversity, this research can be described as engaging theoretical perspectives first and foremost concerning relationships between representation and society; image and socio-historical actuality.

Method

This research takes as its method the discursive analysis of texts, a cultural-critically oriented concept that in a social-scientific paradigm finds a counterpart in the 'case-study'. Like the case-study, this approach does not claim to be representative in a general way, yet it allows detailed examination in relation to questions and arguments. The analysis does not claim to be hermeneutic, to reveal underlying meanings of some kind of fixed nature, and speculation in regard to intentionality will be restricted to the positions offered to readers/ audiences rather than being author-centred. Nor am I exploring cognitive approaches or aiming to provide explanations of the mechanisms through which readers, real or imagined, make sense of the texts in question. Instead, and as previously stated, this project can be conceived as 'discursive analysis' (Fürsich, 2009: 249). The method engages specific texts in particular in relation to concepts and discourses identified as significant to documentary, and debates surrounding said concepts and discourses in extant literature. It is done on the understanding of concepts as intersubjective understandings that are neither fixed nor arbitrary (Bal, 2002: 22-29). This means that while it is possible to use concepts as tools for the analysis of texts, the close reading of cultural texts can likewise appraise, question and examine concepts. It is, then, not so much a question of applying theory to texts, but rather of simultaneously evaluating theory and theoretical concepts 'through a confrontation with […] the cultural objects being examined' (ibid: 24). The methodology of this research is, following Mieke Bal's model, one of flexible 'interactivity' (ibid), between the texts, the concepts and researcher/ reader.

My close readings and visual analyses are grounded in the methods of art history and visual communication studies, and informed by work addressing the formal characteristics of comics by writers such as Thierry Groensteen (2007), Pascal Lefèvre (2009) and Jared Gardner (2011). Attention to composition, line, colour, tone and relationships between compositional elements and transitions between panels are paramount, as is the recognition that meanings arise not only from the sequential narrative order but through the spatial configurations of pages and double-page spreads available to the reader as visual entities. The influence of other writers, in terms of practices of close reading, should also be acknowledged. Gene Kannenberg Jr. (2001:174-197), Charles Hatfield (2005; 2009) and Hilary Chute (2006, 2010) call for particular mention. While not explicitly offering formulae or set frameworks for the analysis of comics, they nevertheless provide persuasive examples of attentive and methodical close reading.

The objective of the thesis is to probe new questions and possible formulations that emerge when connections are made across category boundaries. This first requires establishing the starting point, or starting points, of such an endeavour. Hence the first chapter examines different approaches to documentary, while the second works to situate comics as a cultural form of expression. Beyond this, however, this enquiry is formally shaped by concepts and functions I understand as central to documentary discourse. Thus chapter three examines the concepts of authenticity and realism and chapter four begins with a discussion of evidentiality in relation to archive. These are all issues connected to truth-value of documentary images. In chapter four, however, the question of archive prompts a shift in emphasis from the documentary image to the social function of documentary in the form of collective memory. In chapters five and six, documentary as public discourse is attended to in relation to the concepts of social visibility, agency and alterity.

The texts analysed and engaged in dialogue with theoretical and contextual considerations in each chapter have been chosen for their correlation with the principal concepts. I acknowledge that these examples do not fit singularly into the

structure imposed by chapter headings; there are texts one might well discuss in relation to archive that here are mobilised in relation to what I call the documentary of social concern, and ones framed in connection to archive that it would be perfectly reasonable to discuss in terms of realism. That my examples potentially qualify under more than one chapter heading reflects that the chapters deal with different aspects of documentary, and the concerns they raise are therefore not mutually exclusive. The decision to involve a group of primary texts, rather than limiting the research to one or two examples, has been taken in order to illustrate the diverse range of comics that potentially could be thought of as documentary.

Selection and scope of primary sources

In order to engage with chosen examples in depth, it has been necessary to delimit my primary sources according to certain criteria. The difficulties in assigning workable boundaries, to define or to comprehensively categorise documentary are well rehearsed (Barnouw 1993; Nichols 1991; Corner 1996). If anything, considerable attention has been given to those instances of documentary which refuse clear-cut distinction, such as essayistic films (Renov 1989; Lopate 1992; Rascaroli 2008, 2009; Harvey 2012), drama-documentaries and documentary drama (Winston 2000: 23-25; Paget 2005: 435-452, 2011; Rosenthal 2005; Ward 2008: 191-203; Bignell 2010), mock-documentary (Roscoe and Hight 2001; Juhasz and Lerner 2006; Bayer 2006: 184-178; Hight 2008: 204-216), reality-formats (Dovey 2000; Friedman 2002; Kilborn 2003; Holmes and Jermyn 2004; Bignell 2005; King 2005; Biressi and Nunn 2005; Escoffery 2006; Hill 2007; Couldry and Littler 2008: 258-267; Kavka 2008, 2012; Kraidy and Sender 2011; Skeggs and Wood 2012), speculative documentary (Wolf 1999: 274-291), 'future documentary'(Mills 2010) and autobiographical representation (Lane 2002; Renov 2004; Chanan 2007: 245-247; Lebow 2012).

As in film and broadcast documentary, the representation of the real world in comics encompasses diverse approaches. Some portray historical events as narrated and brought to life by a cast of fictional characters. Jack Jackson has produced this kind

of work about the bloody suppression of Native American peoples in *Comanche Moon* (1979), and the territorial border wars between the United States and Mexico during the nineteenth century in *Los Tejanos* (1982). Jason Lutes (2008, 2009) has similarly charted events in Berlin during the Weimar republic and the subsequent rise of fascism and Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Delhi Calm* (2010) tells of the state of emergency in nineteen-seventies India. Calling attention to contemporary issues, Ville Tietäväinen's *Näkymättmömät Kädet/ Invisible Hands* (2011) portrays the hardships and exploitation faced by North African immigrants in Spain based on field research, while the anonymously produced *Zahra's Paradise* tells of life in the current Islamic republic of Iran. Both of these comics, although grounded in actual experiences ostensibly make use of composite protagonists and plotlines in order to construct their narratives. Further removed from potential comparisons with historical or documentary drama, one might consider Phoenix Woodrow's *Rumble Strip* (2008), a comics-polemic about the lethal potential of cars and the adaptation of the 9/11 report into comics form (Jacobson and Colón 2006). And the Czech trilogy O *Přibjehi/ Stories* (2010) by cultural anthropologist Markéta Hajská, Romany linguist Máša Bořkovcová and scriptwriter/artist Vojtěch Mašek has been described by Jose Alanis (2012) in terms of comics ethnography, while Paul Davies' book *Us and Them: what do the Americans think of the British? What do the British think of the Americans?* (2004) combines words and drawing with a talking head vox pop structure. Meanwhile, creative partners Simon Grennan and Christopher Sperandio have produced comics based on oral history and local community projects, such as for example *The Bradford One Hundred* (1997) and *The Invisible City*: *stories by people who work at night* (1999).

In Japan, adult manga with pedagogical aims and factual content have from the 1980s included themes linked to politics, economics and history, some of which have become known as 'documentary manga' (Kinsella 2000: 79). Historical events such as the topic of Anglophone comics also have a long and well-established tradition, from the E. C. (Educational Comics) comics, and *Classics Illustrated* (Witek 1989: 15) to the 2008 comics adaptation of Howard Zinn's *A People's History of American Empire* (first published in 1980). Educational factual comics have been published in series such as the *Introducing…*graphic guides to a broad range of thinkers and topics covering numerous disciplines by Icon Books and various cartoon histories and

guides by Larry Gonick. These examples, although far from a comprehensive survey, demonstrate the plurality and variance of comics addressing the real and point towards multiple and diverse geographical, historical and cultural contexts of comics.

Moreover, it should be recognised that factuality, reportage and reality-based commentary in comics form also occurs in short form, in on-line publications and in an instructional and educational capacity, as parts of text-books, manuals and web-sites. However, primary sources selected here are all long enough to have been published in book form, although many first appeared in serialised format. The reason for this is that the longer narratives and sustained treatment these texts afford their topics give them more clearly defined points of comparison with moving image documentary. I have limited the scope of this project to comics that profess not to employ fictional characters as a device for narrating and depicting the real. In addition, signalling that I privilege the notion of *encounter* in my understanding of documentary, they exclude comics biographies and historical narratives that exclusively draw on secondary source materials. The examples I draw on, then, are all based on first-hand engagement with either the situations depicted, or the persons whose witness accounts inform the narrative.

Despite earlier instances of comics documenting real persons and actual events[vi], this study concentrates on 21st century comics. Comics still occupy an uncertain position in cultural hierarchies, although recognition of comics addressing adult readers appears to be increasing. During the latter part of the nineteen-eighties, the critical acclaim of Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1992) [1986 and 1991] [vii], coincided with the publication of the distinctly adult-oriented *Batman: the Dark Knight Returns* (DC, 1986) by Frank Miller and *Watchmen* (DC, 1986-87) by Alan Moore, Dave Gibbons and John Higgins. This moment has retrospectively been acknowledged as a 'paradigm shift' (Chute and DeKoven 2006: 770; see also Sabin 2003: 246-247), adding to the cultural legitimacy of comics and drawing attention to their capacity to tackle complex and serious issues. Since then, but especially in the last decade, the growth of genre-defying works, the rise of the graphic novel (Weiner 2003, 2010; Williams and Lyons 2010; Round 2010) and attendant critical emphasis on authorship (Beaty 2012: 84), changes in publishing and distribution contexts and

increasing academic and critical attention has been notable. The first decade of the 21st century thus offers an extended moment of adjustment and repositioning during which comics addressing the real as autobiography, biography and reportage – or, as this thesis will go on to argue - documentary, have asserted a notable presence. They thus offer a fertile 'cluster' for purposes of analysis.

Although my selection is not based on national origin, as such considerations are of secondary interest for the purposes at hand, the particular cultural and geographical position from which I have made it will undeniably be evident. While some of the comics have emerged from the Francophone comics or bandes dessinée publishing culture, the texts engaged with here have all been published in English and marketed to a broadly Anglophone, western public. Likewise references to both film and television documentary through examples and literature are likely to be heavily weighted in terms of a British context.

Overview of chapters

'Comics and/as documentary' imputes a certain tension, descriptive of both the undertaking and terrain covered by this project. At the same time it implies a potential shift; from approaching the two categories as distinct entities towards describing a positively configured link. The first two chapters thus set out debates and literature with regard to documentary and the cultural position of comics, respectively.

Chapter one provides an outline of positions in relation to documentary constituted in turn as a set of stylistic types/approaches, as the relation between image and referent, as practical genre and mode of address and last, but not least, in terms of its capacity as public discourse. This chapter goes on to argue that documentary fulfils a social function as a public and aesthetic discourse, and that it can be configured as a mode of address by which texts assert, by way of cues and signals, that they depict real historical persons and events. Chapter two, in turn, attends to the category of comics. Debates as to intrinsic characteristics and origins will be acknowledged, although attention will more concertedly focus on the social construction of the form. Charting

the conditions on which comics have come to receive increased critical and scholarly attention, the chapter goes on to query the alignment of comics with literature as a strategy for recognition and cultural validity, arguing that this works to obscure the connections and intersections offered by categories associated with visual media.

Chapter three probes the interwoven discourses of realism, authenticity and objectivity at play within the documentary image. Although the position forwarded in chapter one, that documentary might be described as a mode of address or reception, is one that has been taken by others (Eitzen 1995; Sobchack 2004: 261; Ellis 2005: 351; Rancière 2006: 158; Cowie 2009: 61), the often unspoken assumption that documentary is defined by its use of recording media persists. The drawn, hand-rendered visual mediation in comics thus presents a particular problem. Responding to this issue, chapter three outlines discourses of realism and authenticity in relation to recorded and hand-rendered images respectively. Through a revised understanding of Peirce's concept of the indexical, this chapter proposes that the cultural associations of drawing in combination with a documentary discourse perform and mobilise subjectivity as a marker of authentication. Moreover, this tacitly offers an alternative to visually modelling reality according to the logic of recording technologies, or 'technologies of truth-telling' (Juhasz and Lerner 2006: 10). The textual analysis of this chapter takes as it subject selected segments from Harvey Pekar's *American Splendor: ordinary life is pretty complex stuff* (2004). I propose that this text critically undermines the perceived conflation of the real and its representation that marks documentary realism. In so doing it provides an apt illustration of a crucial element of the contribution comics can offer in terms of documentary discourse.

However, chapter three's discussion of documentary realism/s still leaves unanswered how comics as documentary work in relation to the archive and collective memory. Chapter four challenges the notion of the recorded image as a privileged form of archival evidence, and argues that this assessment undervalues the extent to which meaning is dependent on multiple corroborations and the surrounding narratives through which such images are contextualised. Archival footage and other materials contribute to documentary's uses as a vehicle of popular

history. The vital function of this role, however, resides in narrating and re-narrating, constituting and re-constituting collective memory. This, too, applies to documentaries seeking to engage with events in living memory, in order to simultaneously tell, show and preserve witness accounts. Such texts contextualise and narrate at the point of documentation. In other words, documentary that draws on encounter and testimony, whether in comics or other forms, performs a dual function of narration and documentation. Close reading of two examples examines how counter-narratives to particular versions of the historical past, as constituted by witness accounts, are constructed and simultaneously documented.

Moreover, I argue that in the first of these examples, Joe Sacco's *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009), the spatial relationships and simultaneity of the static comics page allow a powerful expression of the past and present as interdependent and interactive. The second example, *Alan's War* (2008) by Emmanuel Guibert, highlights an affinity between the visual language of cartooning and the uncertainties of memory and processes of translation inherent to witnessing. Although continuing to identify how comics might bring new possibilities to documentary representation and expression, chapter four signals a shift from questions of evidentiality to the social function of documentary. Following this trajectory the following two chapters attend to two well established and prolific strands of documentary, social advocacy and the travelogue. Both of these discourses intertwine with the historical origins of documentary, and with its role as a vehicle for public discourse and knowledge formation.

Chapter five brings together two quite different texts in order to highlight the complex relations between visibility and voice. The implications of the sometime disparity between the two has been a core problematic for what I choose to call 'the documentary of social concern'. Following a review of debates regarding documentary's ambitions to effect reform, civic engagement and social responsibility, attention will turn to Josh Neufeld's *AD New Orleans: after the deluge* (2009). This analysis suggests that the opaqueness of cartoon representations, can be utilised to 'screen' subjects from the asymmetrical power relations caused by an unhindered spectatorial gaze. However, although side-stepping association with surveillance and institutionalised social control, such visibility does not intrinsically

equate with 'voice'. Even when documentary texts consciously endeavour to extend validity to their subjects, more often than not the control they might have in the construction of such systems of communication remains limited. Hence this chapter goes on to consider the connection between agency and autobiographical representation in documentary. Analysis of *Epileptic* (2005) by David B. offers the opportunity to address the speaking subject and personal experience in relation to representational aims of wider social relevance. At the same time, the employment of visual metaphor running through this text, situating it decidedly beyond conventions of documentary realism, calls for further inspection. As indicated by this introductory overview, in chapters four and five, as in chapter three, significant analytical focus is given to the documentary image as it is reconfigured by comics.

However, while the intervention posed by comics as documentary necessitates a thorough examination of matters of visual representation, it would be negligent to overlook the discursive role of narrative in representations of the actual. Consequently, attention will shift to documentary performance in relation to narrative in the final chapter. Chapter six identifies the travelogue and journey narrative as a staple narrative in documentary. Moreover, it proposes that the significance of this grouping can be sought, at least in part, in the intersection of spectacle, knowledge production and acquisition operating within documentary and analogous to particular cultural and historical understandings of travel. Drawing on tourism studies to elaborate how documentary encounter and performance might reproduce dominant cultural narrative, this chapter first examines a continuation of this kind of journey narrative in Craig Thompson's *Carnet de Voyage* (2004), and *Pyongyang: a journey in North Korea* (2005) and *Shenzen: a travelogue in China* (2006) by Guy Delisle. In order not to reproduce a narrow and Eurocentric understanding of travel, I go on to address Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis: the story of a childhood and the story of a return* (2008), an example that extends the notion of travel beyond the generic conventions of travel documentary. Such a move also works to highlight ways in which cultural narrative, in conjunction with delineations and demarcations brought into effect by categorisation, imbricate our understanding, representation and production of the world.

i Edward Said's foreword in Sacco's *Palestine* (2003) is an example of how the authority and credibility of a well known supporter can be used to frame a text and paratextually orientate potential readers.

ii Gunter Kress and Theo Van Leeuven (1996: 20) identify modes as systems of signification. Comics, utilising words, images and sequences can thus be understood as utilising multiple modes for their narration, as do film and television.

iii To overstate the polarity of these approaches would misleadingly infer that they are necessarily applied in a mutually exclusive fashion, it is nevertheless possible to discern between writers on comics who emphasise word-image relations (Carrier 2000; Hatfield 2005; Versaci, 2007) and those whose work primarily concerns narrative sequence and spatial relationships (Groensteen 2007; Peeters 2007).

iv Ian Hague (2012) argues that by privileging the visual aspects of comics other important elements; touch, smell and even sound, which likewise contribute to the experience of reading comics, are not adequately attended to, or acknowledged. He raises both interesting and valid points, although in terms of the matters at hand this debate is tangential.

v UK comics creator David Lloyd emphatically expressed this position in a talk at the *Comics Rock!* Conference in Bournemouth, June 28th 2012.

vi Miné Okubo's *Citizen 13660* (1983) [1946] is an example of a 'proto-comic' representation of actual historical events. A narration in word and image, containing 199 drawings and accompanying notes, it depicts the author's confinement in a US internment camp alongside other subjects of Japanese descent after the bombing of Pearl Harbour. This work was presented as part of Okubo's testimony to the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians during the early eighties.

vii *Maus* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize Special Award and the LA Times Book Prize in 1992.

Chapter 1

Documentary: a mode of address

This chapter argues that documentary can be configured as a mode of address by texts asserting, by way of cues and signals, that they depict real historical persons and events. While it is possible to describe documentary's social function as a public and aesthetic discourse, this is something that could equally be argued of fiction and drama. All such representations allow audiences to practice and evaluate their relationships to the world around them, to learn, to disagree and to re-position themselves in relation to the topics being mediated and the representations through which the mediation occurs (van Zoonen 2005). Yet, by proclaiming a particular relationship between its representations and the shared experiential world, the position offered to viewers by documentary is qualitatively distinct from that extended by fictional modes.

Documentary has proven perennially resistant to definition, containing a multiplicity of approaches and intentions, and writers on the topic have adopted a range of different starting points and priorities in terms of critical focus. The first task is thus to consider documentary as a category by means of a literature review and to outline salient debates and attempts to make sense of documentary by means of definitions, identifying sub-sets, policing boundaries and considering its social functions. The order in which I will engage with these questions is as follows: documentary as a set of stylistic types / approaches; documentary as the relation between image and the real; documentary as practical genre and mode of address; documentary as public discourse.

Documentary and its Categorisations

Writing on documentary has long been engaged by the evidently competing positions taken in its articulations, as artistic, persuasive or rhetorical, educational and so on (Roscoe and Hight 2001: 7). Much of it, although not excluding considerations of

social function and discursive contexts, has been principally concerned with texts and their formal characteristics. This tendency towards a textual approach is evident in a range of attempts to extract the essence, or defining attributes of the genre.

Bill Nichols (2001: 99- 138) has identified six modes of documentary in an attempt to account for the diversity of approaches within the category; the poetic, expository, observational, participatory, reflexive and performative. An influential contribution, this schema deserves closer attention for the continued references to his paradigms by other writers on documentary. Nichols organises these modes or groups in accordance with a rough chronology ranging from the 1920s to the 1980s, following the model of the likewise historically linear accounts of documentary by Richard M. Barsam (1992) [1973] and Erik Barnouw (1993) [1974]. The latter two use the roles and intentions of the film-makers as the means by which to construct their categories, while Nichols identifies modes in his analysis, described in terms of formal characteristics, in order to group texts into categories. Thus according to Nichols, the *poetic documentary* in its editing style favours a fragmented and impressionistic aesthetic and the qualities foregrounded tend towards association, juxtaposition and rhythm in a meditative manner. It is also aligned with the modernist avant-garde, suggesting a concern with formal exploration. *Expository documentary* is suggested as the most prominent of documentary modes, and one linking early to current documentary texts through a shared issue-based format and a narrative structure that follows the intention to present a case. With its trademark 'voice of god' commentary and didactic tone this mode 'emphasizes the impression of objectivity and well-supported argument' (Nichols 2001: 107). Following Roger Silverstone's (1985) account of the production process of a BBC documentary, Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight (2001: 11) argue that the expository documentary makes use of the scientific model; making an assertion which is then supported by systematic presentation of facts in order to prove the original contention. Discourses of factual evidence and objectivity certainly factor into conventions of expository documentary, and overlap with the notion of the camera as a scientific instrument. The importance of the latter is ostensibly the camera's ability to eclipse the bias of human subjectivity.

However, this comparison to some extent works to obscure the link between expository documentary and the undertakings of campaigning journalism of the nineteenth century and its reformist agenda. Sharing methods (field work) and agenda (social responsibility and political change) with the emerging social sciences, this type of journalism built on the notion of public debate and opinion as preconditions to the developing model of democracy. This is not to say that scientific and journalistic discourses were incompatible, and especially not in relation to the notion and rhetoric of objectivity. Journalism, as it developed as a professional discourse, came to share with scientific endeavour a code of impartiality, and even in its most partisan expressions, an onus on factuality. But journalism and Nichols' category of expository documentary both express and contribute to the idea of a public arena, society as a collaborative and contested configuration.

In Nichols' account the *observational mode* of documentary follows in part as a reaction to the tendency towards a heavy-handedness in the construction of arguments and the didactic tone set by the voice-over narration in the expository mode, and in part as a consequence of new and lightweight equipment becoming available around 1960. 'The camera and tape recorder could move freely about a scene and record what happened as it happened' (Nichols 2001: 109). There is wide agreement about the link between such technological factors and the quest of direct cinema and cinéma vérité to capture and 'reveal authentic moments of human experience' (Beattie 2004: 6). Observational documentary has prompted various debates, many related to ethical issues around intrusion, representation and duplicity. Observational documentary also, while ostensibly celebrating the photographic image as a direct trace of the pro-filmic real ignited debates precisely about the presumed objectivity so entrenched in documentary discourse. The aims for a transparent view of the world through a lens which would function as a neutral window, and the impossibility of such an aim, have perhaps combined to misrepresent what observational documentary film is and can be. As Stella Bruzzi (2006: 75) has pointed out, it is not uncommon that 'observation and objectivity are wrongly conflated'. It is worth noting that exponents of observational documentary such as Fred Wiseman and Jean Rouch clearly and unambiguously account for both the critical role of post-production editing and effect of the camera on the reality it aims to capture (Wisemann, cited in McDonald and Cousins 1996: 278-282; Rouch,

ibid: 268). Bruzzi argues that rather than the disinterested capture of the pro-filmic, the poignancy of observational documentary is the encounter before the camera; the collision between filmmakers, and inevitable intrusion upon, the world they are documenting. Thus she points to the legacy of observational documentary in more recent sub-modes such as docu-soaps and reality television. Other vestiges that can be made out in contemporary forms more generally include grounding the treatment of issues firmly in the experiences of individuals, an emphasis on intimacy and 'a predilection for following subjects and actions as opposed to leading and constructing them' (Bruzzi 2006: 79).

For Nichols, however, it is in later paradigms that the affective role of the intrusion of a film-maker or crew is fully acknowledged and the *performative* aspect becomes key. According to Nichols' taxonomy the type of documentary in which the inevitable impact and intrusion of film-makers on any given situation constitutes the *participatory mode*. This mode actively involves 'the ethics and politics of encounter' (Nichols 2001: 116) in the overt acknowledgement the process of filming and inclusion of the film-maker herself as a bodily presence in the end product. The examples mentioned include works by Nick Broomfield and Molly Dineen in which the intervention of the film-maker in the documentary process constitutes a central feature. When focus shifts from the relationships between filmmaker and subject to the conventions and assumptions built into the form and productively subverting or denying them we have *reflexive documentary* (ibid: 125). Nichols finally classifies *performative documentary* as a mode which raises questions about knowledge and production of meaning, especially in response to identity politics, and a turn which embraces and engages subjectivity and the affective domain (ibid: 130-131). Although, upending conventions and assumptions built into the documentary form are likely to raise questions about the production of knowledge and meaning. In addition, considering that this is likely to involve a shift towards a more pronounced acknowledgement of subjectivity, Nichols' reflexive and the performative modes might be difficult to distinguish, calling into question the usefulness of such a differentiation.

Challenging the taxonomy Nichols sets out on a fundamental level, Stella Bruzzi (2006) [2000] has deemed the 'family tree' of documentary history (as it essentially creates a central canon) exclusive and conservative. For example, in her view the forced grouping of a vast and varied array of films under the *expository* category based on them sharing the distinct formal device of the voice-over is a coarse over-simplification (ibid: 49-50). Bruzzi's intervention highlights the problems inherent in the way Nichols, if largely by implication, conflates chronology and typology. Nichols is careful to point out that any given text might incorporate multiple modes and that the chronology pertains to the establishment of new modes rather than their hegemony in the cultural landscape. It is, of course, reasonable to recognise historical, social and technological contexts as contributing factors to particular approaches reaching critical mass. Yet, despite the effort to qualify the correlation of modes to specific time periods, and stating that while his scheme 'may […] seem to provide a history of documentary film, […] it does so imperfectly' (Nichols 1991: 100), the organisation of material suggests otherwise. In the end this 'dual-purpose' model problematically conflates formal devices and intentionality, and infers a sequential order of dominance and consequently a linear progression.

The relationship between documentary representation and the real

The question of the relationship between representation and reality, and the particular ways in which documentary distinguishes itself from its *other*, namely fictional representation, offers another avenue for getting to grips with documentary. It is impossible to fully extract this question from debates surrounding typology and modes, yet it instigates a shift in critical focus towards truth-claims and their conditions. Claims to factuality and the onus on authentic representation informing the production and reception of documentary, as it has evolved in its many forms and guises, is a central, if contested, issue. Documentary theory has thus continued to revolve around issues of representational integrity, and the conditionality and limits of veracity (Kilborn and Izod 1997: 27-54; Currie 1999; Beattie 2004: 10-20; Fetveit 2004: 543-556; Ellis 2005: 342-360; Plantinga 2005; Chanan 2007: 37-57; Winston 2008; Nichols 2008*a*).

The significance of the photographic image as a trace of the real (Bazin [1967] 2004; Barthes 2000; Currie 1999) has historically played a significant part in the way documentary is conceived. As chapter three specifically addresses the perceived realism and evidential force of the photographic image, it will suffice here to acknowledge that the mechanically, or instrumentally, recorded image has come to occupy a central position in common sense definitions of documentary, and remains a tacit assumption of much academic discourse on the subject. The inclusion of animation (Wells 1998: 24-25; Ward 2005: 88-89) and computer generated imagery (Moran 1999; Wolf 1999) in documentary has been noted, however, and seen as indicating an erosion of this indexical imperative. In debates surrounding animated documentary, recorded sound, or 'acoustic indexicality' (Renov 2004, cited by Ward 2005: 98), has been raised as a vital authenticating function (Rosenkrantz 2011: no pagination) or as a critical point that in combination with animated visual content complicates the sound-image relationship of documentary (Ward 2005: 97-99). Commonalities and differences between animated documentary and non-fiction comics will be addressed later, as part of more detailed discussions of the indexical link and the representation of sound in chapter three.

On many levels documentary has proven too complex to derive its truth-claim from a purist sense of recorded evidence (Beattie 2004: 13), even in those particular forms that uphold an idea of dispassionate and mechanical acts of witnessing (Peters 2001) as enabling privileged access to the real. The reason for the debates generated by the relationship between the real and its representation can, at least in part, be understood as the contradiction, or 'logical impossibility' (Ellis 2005: 342) of the genre. Documentaries are commonly, if not always, constructions claiming authenticity while rendering their mediation and constructed character as invisible and imperceptible as possible. Yet, notions of guileless immediacy quickly disintegrate at closer scrutiny. Film, as record of any given event, is not only 'a construction which intervenes in that reality separating out the to-be-recorded/reviewed from the seen and thus structuring an included scene and an excluded reality' (Cowie 2009: 55). Paul Kriwaczek's (1997) account, of both pre- and post-production stages involved in the making of documentaries, also makes clear that such processes do not exclude

what is known as a treatment; a written description or 'virtual film' (Kriwaczek 1997: 184) indicating how scenes begin and end, their length and other factors that impact on the viewer's experience, such as atmosphere and sound. Although film-makers clearly can, and do, respond to events as they unfold, and do not adhere rigidly to a pre-written script, this is a reminder that contrary to the effects of documentary, the reality supposedly 'captured' has already been constructed, at least partly, in advance.

In addition, we might consider how, and the extent to which, the behaviour of subjects is likely to be affected by the presence of cameras and crew. In order to uphold the illusion of direct access the subjects filmed should ideally not turn towards the camera, acknowledging its presence and breaking 'the fourth wall' (Branigan 1992: 206, cited by Beattie 2004: 16-17). This might requir either surreptitious filming, or negotiations between film-maker and subjects at the outset of a shoot. The assembly, arrangement and re-arrangement of material in order to construct a narrative further complicate the notion of mechanical objectivity. As Paula Rabinowitz (1993: 124-125) has noted in relation to direct cinema, the control over the final product, however unobtrusive and guided by the pro-filmic events the recording process may have been, ultimately rests with the decisions taken in the editing process. The crucial importance of the editing process is of course that 'the individual image, the fragment seized from reality […] is given its meaning only through combination with other such fragments, through montage' (Chanan 2007: 47). The acts of 'exclusion, inclusion, framing and linking' (Silverstone 1985: 202) are moreover circumscribed by or at least subject to competing discourses connected to both subject/ subjects and broadcasting contexts (ibid: 103).

It is well rehearsed that for the man who coined the term 'documentary', John Grierson, this did not present a problem. Grierson's definition of documentary film is explicit in its inclusion/assimilation of construction when he describes it as 'the creative treatment of actuality' (Grierson 1947, cited in Hardy 1966: 13), a definition used to mark an intentionality beyond that of newsreel and actuality footage. Documentary for Grierson signified the deliberate construction of a narrative, and the authoritative voice (underlined by the disembodied narrator) of Griersonian era

documentary shows little sign of apprehension, or sense of conflict, when it comes to either staging scenes or expressing its views as undisputed fact. But subsequent attempts by documentary makers and theorists alike to negotiate the gap between event and representation, and thus between reality and the truth-claims presented by the documentary image, have been considerably more painstaking. Confusion arises in part from the differing emphases adopted by various writers. While some search for an adequate way to distil what documentary does (how it functions), others ponder the location of the truth-claims of documentary and others still focus on the policing of boundaries and the cues by which documentary signals itself as such. When attempting to find one conclusive answer to cover multiple considerations the result can easily become more bewildering than it is enlightening.

By way of example I will briefly outline a contribution by Carl Plantinga (2005). In order to potentially include a variety of documentary modes and techniques, such as reconstruction, digital imagery and other creative tools, Plantinga (2005: 111) rejects a narrow understanding of the documentary image as a trace of a pro-filmic event (Currie 1999: 285-297). Finding problems with both the notion of veridical representation, based on the indexical record, and assertion as documentary's defining characteristic, Plantinga works towards a definition of documentary as 'Asserted Veridical Representation (AVR)':

> An extended treatment of a subject in one of the moving-image media, most often in narrative, rhetorical, categorical, or associative form, in which the film's makers openly signal their intention that the audience (1) take an attitude of belief toward relevant propositional content (the 'saying' part), (2) take the images, sounds, and combinations thereof as reliable sources for the formation of beliefs about the film's subject and, in some cases, (3) take the relevant shots, recorded sounds, and/or scenes as phenomenological approximations of the look, sound, and/or some other sense or feel of the pro-filmic event (the 'showing' part).
>
> (Plantinga 2005: 114-5)

This model, in attempting to provide a flexible definition that accounts for a variety of stipulations still seeks to ground documentary in its basic units and ambition to extend authoritative and authentic claims about the world it represents. Yet the result is a list of qualifying statements that offering the vaguest of outlines. Ultimately, the only statement that retains conviction is that documentary should be understood in terms of moving-image media.

In contrast, the aspect of negotiation that implicitly informs Plantinga's attempt to secure an encompassing definition instead becomes the explicit terms of debate for Bruzzi. The simple yet liberating clarification that Bruzzi offers is to configure 'a perpetual negotiation between the real event and its representation (that is, to propose that the two remain distinct but interactive)' (2006: 13). In this her position coincides with that of David Bolter and Richard Grusin, who assert that although mediation, and consequently re-mediation, is an integral aspect of the real, this does not necessarily lead to the real's replacement or invalidation: 'Just as there is no getting rid of mediation, there is no getting rid of the real' (2000: 56).

Bruzzi's central notion posits (all) documentary as a performative act and suggests that despite the distinction between representation and the real never becoming invisible, documentary needs to be considered as a relationship between the two. This emphasis on a process of negotiation, and a re-instatement of the notion of performance at the centre of how documentary might be conceived, re-instates connections between approaches in documentary that other categorisations and sub-divisions have worked to conceal. Moreover, by considering performativity as central, the historical and recurrent features of re-enactment (Corner 1996: 30-31; Nichols 2008*b*) and staging (Staiger 1996: 42) emerge, not merely as conditional and marginal instances, but as variations of a constitutive aspect. This is significant when considering the persistence of such practices; from the 'apparent naturalness' and scant attention to Louis Lumière's camera shown by passengers alighting from the train (Loiperdinger and Elzer 2004: 109), the recreation of obsolete hunting practices in Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922) to the multiple re-enactments in Errol Morris' *Thin Blue Line* (1988) and the prominence of staging and performance in a whole host of factual and reality television formats. It should be noted that the

sense in which Bruzzi uses the concept of performativity clearly relates to relations between subjects, filmmakers and their recording equipment, and the implied audiences. However, the idea of performance as an intrinsic aspect of documentary is important for the purposes of this project and will be elaborated further in relation to representation in comics in chapter three.

Likewise seeking to unearth an understanding of documentary beyond descriptive typology, Rancière's (2006: 157-170) approach to documentary differs from Bruzzi's, but is not wholly incompatible with it. Whereas Bruzzi's emphasis on performativity theorises the relationships between subjects and filmmakers, as well as their distinct contributions within documentary texts, Rancière's attention remains distinctly focused on the dynamic between filmmakers' creative vision and the recorded image. This formulation can partly be read as a reiteration of Grierson's early description. While Rancière reproduces the assumption of recording as a constitutive feature of documentary, his emphasis on aesthetic and subjective intervention also significantly surpasses the idea of evidentiality. It is here that a certain affinity with Bruzzi's notion of performance emerges, if predominantly weighted towards the filmmaker's performative function. For Rancière, recorded and in and of themselves more or less mute fragments gain their meaning and resonance as they are ordered and arranged, as a combination of 'heterogenous images' (2006: 159) according to the vision of the documentary maker. It is exactly this operation of aesthetic intervention which imbues the documentary with the potential to make us see the world anew, to make new ways of perceiving it possible. This analysis recalls the suggestion that '…intellectual montage achieves an unbalancing or disequilibrium in relation to norms, assumptions, or expectations that prevail for the viewer' (Nichols 1991: 131-132). However, what Nichols sees as one specific and often politically motivated type of documentary which can be conceived in stylistic terms, Rancière considers instead as the principle which underpins and informs the potential of documentary on the whole.

In terms of the particularity of documentary's relationship with the real world, as habitually articulated through an opposition with fiction, Rancière offers notable insight. He challenges the polarisation of nonfiction and fiction by pointing out that

both fiction and documentary address the real, and proposes that like fiction, documentary also creates 'a "system" of represented actions, assembled forms and internally coherent signs' (2006: 158). Rancière nevertheless concedes to the fundamental difference that while fiction 'treat[s] the real as an effect to be produced, [documentary] treats it as a fact to be understood' (ibid). A similar view surfaces in British film director Lindsay Anderson's assertion that: 'It isn't a question of technique, it is a question of the material. If the material is actual, then it is documentary. If the material is invented, then it is not documentary' (Levin 1971: 66). This position was later taken up by documentary maker and theorist Trinh Minh-ha (1993: 78), as she questions the whether documentary can, or should, be determined by extant codes and conventions. Importantly, neither Rancière nor Trinh locates documentary's perceived limitations at the point of translation or transferral between the real and its representation. Instead these theorists evoke a real that is mutable and unfixed and, like Bruzzi (2006), they stress the interplay between representation and the real in terms of performativity and transaction. Thus although the idea of veracity will inevitably be conditional, and any given perspective partial, this in no way renders documentary either a failed, pointless or unimportant undertaking. Nor does it conflate the distinction between fictional modes and documentary. In terms of this thesis it is particularly significant that despite these writers still conceiving documentary as specifically belonging to recording media, its project is located in such a way as to, at least theoretically, uncouple it from technological considerations.

Following Rancière and Trinh, I contend that documentary can be distinguished from fictional modes based on its material and the attitude it adopts to this material. This allows a core definition of documentary that is not dependent on medium specific considerations nor limited to a specified or predetermined visual language. Nevertheless I cannot, nor do I wish to deny that aesthetic codes and conventions play an important part in establishing the terms of reception of any given text, and whether it is understood as factual or fictional. This might initially seem like a contradiction, yet I hope through the following sections of this chapter to make it clear that a differentiation between the two is possible.

Documentary codes and conventions

Thinking in terms of codes and conventions directs attention away from defining criteria. Instead the question of documentary setting itself apart 'from narrative cinema by claiming its status as a truth-telling mode' (Rabinowitz 1993: 119), becomes reconfigured by considering how such claims are staged through sets of conventions and cues offered to audiences (Kuhn 1978). The issue of protocols becomes highlighted in the case of dramatized documentaries and docudramas. Such texts incorporate both registers, that of 'a record of external events (which still constitutes the basis of the documentary's appeal) and a simulated reality of acted events' (Paget 2004: 202). Docu-drama depends on audiences' ability to recognise and distinguish between these two registers, according to their 'familiarity with television's codes and conventions' (Bignell 2010: 60), in order to communicate sequences that are to understood as factual alongside ones meant to be recognised as staged reconstructions within the space of one text.

However, if aesthetic means are important for the genre's conception as a particular register and specific category, they are also crucial to documentary's rhetorical capabilities. The importance of aesthetic choices in terms of documentary's communicative functions should not be disregarded (Renov 1993: 21-22), and such functions clearly include purported claims to authority and truth-telling. 'Across its history in both film and television, work within documentary has displayed varied and sometimes rather contradictory attitudes towards what degree of freedom and prominence its aesthetic dimension should enjoy' (Corner 2005: 49). That downplaying aesthetic and affective aspects has worked to strengthen the evidential claims and persuasive force of certain kinds of documentary only underlines the importance of aesthetic cues. John Corner (2005: 52) has called this '[a]n apparent absence of style', while John Hartley has described such conventions as the means by which a text 'effaces its own textuality, its own status as discourse' (1996: 204). In the case of documentary the evidential force and apparent transparency of the recorded image is underscored by the implied lack of manipulation or intentionality within the text's overall presentation. This might indeed be understood in terms of performed neutrality.

Although we might conclude that certain codes and conventions are routinely made use of in order to present documentary claims, this is not to say that they have not been appropriated, parodied and also vehemently critiqued (see Trinh 1990; Godmilow and Shapiro 1997). Attention has been drawn to ways in which the emergence of mock-documentary (Roscoe and Hight 2001; Juhasz and Lerner 2006; Bayer 2006: 184-178; Hight 2008: 204-216) and the adoption of a documentary aesthetic in fictive texts (Renov 1993: 23; Caldwell 2002; Landesman 2008) speaks to a reflexive engagement with the codes of representation and the values of truth and authenticity beyond the academe.

Perhaps partly in response to the increasing scepticism directed at documentary's status, authority and ostensible transparency, new sets of conventions that acknowledge (at least parts of) the process of production have become more prominent with what Nichols termed reflexive and participatory forms of documentary. This too has drawn criticism, as conforming to protocols modelled on scientific enquiry and thus, rather than doing reflexive work, merely performing as standardised gestures to further textual authority.

> ...as long as the maker abides by a series of "reflexive" techniques in filmmaking that are devised for the purpose of exposing the "context" of production and as long as the required techniques are method(olog)ically carried out, the maker can be assured that "reflexivity" is elevated to the status of scientific rigor.
>
> (Trinh 1993: 103)

This critique is upheld, at least in terms of cautioning against reading overt inclusion of parts of the production process as indicators of a self-reflexive approach, by Ellis (2005). He claims that indications of construction as markers of transparency were brought in as standard features of the new factual formats in response to the public outcry in 1999 about fakery and misleading viewers in docu-soaps and other reality-

based genres and the subsequent threat to the public trust in broadcasters (ibid). The institutional policing of documentary's integrity, by codes of ethics and production, points towards the fragile and contingent character of this producer/ viewer contract. The ways in which the declarative stance of documentary is received and accepted appear to fundamentally hinge on an unquantifiable notion of trust. The imperative to maintain the 'soft boundary' (ibid: 351) between the factual and fictional on television, an issue with important implications for protecting the reputations of networks, has led to the re-classification of some reality-based programmes under 'entertainment' (Staiger 1996: 44). This, in turn, indicates the role played by cues situated beyond the actual text itself, in guiding audience expectations and framing the meaning-making processes of their engagement. The extent to which external, para-textual (Genette 1991) guides such as listings, introductory commentaries and promotional introductions inform and stabilise terms of reception cannot be overestimated.

As the word itself implies, conventions are contingent and therefore problematic to offer by way of a definition, despite the important role they play. Nevertheless, the combined effects of para-textual markers and textual cues work to establish the terms on which a text is understood. Thus, while the suggestion that if a text is considered, or marked as documentary, collectively/ dominantly within its particular 'socio-cultural milieu' (Plantinga 1989: 32, cited by Eitzen 1995: 95) might be unsatisfactory by way of a definition (ibid), it offers a starting point for another approach to the quandaries posed by documentary; the dual notion of audience response and the extension of a particular position to audiences.

A documentary mode of address

As already established, to describe the boundary between the factual and fictional as definite or stable would be an overstatement, yet in broadcasting it provides a vital distinction which 'defines two distinct regimes of response' (Ellis 2005: 351). What becomes identified here is a distinct position offered by a text to the viewer/ reader which determines the attitude with which to approach and respond to it; 'the different

relationship of the "reader" constituted by the text to the knowledge of its discourse' (Cowie 2009: 61). This emphasis on mode of reception, attention and response is likewise proposed by Dirk Eitzen (1995), Vivian Sobchack (2004: 261), and, specifically in relation to comics which present their material as distinct from imagined persons and events, Elisabeth el Refaie (2010).

Eitzen argues that distinguishing documentary from fiction on the grounds that the former is characterised by the particular functions, such as arguments and assertions is unconvincing. He offers examples of affective and emotional responses evoked by scenes in documentary films that bear little relation to either truth claims or arguments about the actual world. Instead he suggests that 'the applicability of [the] question, "Might it be lying?" is what distinguishes documentaries, and nonfiction in general, from fiction' (1995: 89). An important thing to note here is that a lie should not be conflated with a 'fake' in this context. More importantly to Eitzen's argument, 'the question that distinguishes documentaries, "Might it be lying?" is one that is posed by *viewers*, not texts' (ibid: 92) and he concludes that it thus makes more sense as 'a kind of "reading"' (ibid). Extra-textual markers and frames are one important factor in directing readings, and decisive with regard to whether the aforementioned question would make sense.

To some extent, then, to acknowledge that documentary's truth-value and authenticity is determined at the point of reception works to to uncouple such qualities from specific and technologically determined processes of production. However, constructing documentary as a mode of reception means that the way in which an audience/ reader accepts a text, and makes sense of it, is informed by extant conventions, genre-boundaries and categorisation. If the commonplace assumption and over-riding convention guiding audience perception of documentary is tied to the recorded and moving image, this does little by way of offering a convincing link between documentary and the static and printed non-fiction narratives in comics.

In order not to be bound or pre-empted by extant supposition it is necessary for this inquiry to engage with 'theoretical genres' (Todorov 1973: 13-14), rather than

categories understood in terms of discursive formations that operate through a nexus of social and industrial practices (Mittel 2004). It is thus concerned with 'positing links among texts and practices that were not previously operative, positing new categories that might later be taken up as more widespread genres' (ibid: 178). In order to account for the difference between an audience and reception-orientated study, one that would work only in relation to 'historical genres' (Todorov 1973: 13), and the undertaking of this project, I have chosen to exchange the notion of a mode of reception for a *mode of address*. This shift acknowledges that I have no way of accounting for the ways in which the texts I am discussing are actually received, made meaningful or interacted with by their readers. Although, as the question at hand is of a different order, this shift still incorporates recognition of the conditional quality of documentary. It recognises that the way we approach and understand something as fiction or not, is directed by the text and its ancillary prompts. Thus the term 'mode of address' indicates that a text might offer its viewers/ readers a particular position, and that in the case of documentary this position invites them to 'look to its images as records of the specific, not as envisioning of the possible' (Vaughan 1999: 154). Based on the premise that documentary is defined, not by technologically determined truth-telling, but a mode and approach which asserts that the events and persons represented are not imaginary, but instead are drawn from the experiential and socio-historical world, it becomes plausible to consider the theoretical possibility of documentary comics. It becomes even more viable if we heed John Corner's (2002: 258) suggestion that documentary is most usefully applied as an adjective rather than a noun, thus distancing the idea of documentary from specific forms.

In a later essay on documentary expression, Corner (2007) offers a rare acknowledgement that documentary might be configured beyond medium-specificity. Alongside painting and photography, his elaboration of the centrality of physical particularity to the documentary project also includes writing, demonstrating instances of prose employing 'a strategy of description sufficient to evoke a strong visualization in the reader' (ibid: 6). However, this extension somewhat obscures the specificities of pictorial depiction. In order to bring back to the fore the pictorial representation of documentary and to elucidate its significance, I will draw on Patrick Maynard's (1997) work on technologies of imagining.

Maynard has argued that images, as purposeful surface markings, or 'display functions' (ibid: 27), are capable of amplifying, filtering and inciting the powers of imagination. In this he takes a more precise approach than the one according to which images should be understood as both material and virtual (Mitchell 2005; Belting 2005); 'Images are neither on the wall (or on the screen) nor in the head alone' (Belting 2005: 302). Maynard recognises that technologies for imagining are many and various (from songs and dances to prose, poetry and pictures).Yet, whether photographic or otherwise, he argues that the peculiarity of images as visual representations is that they 'mandate that our act of looking at them is the act of looking at what they depict' (ibid: 104). In other words, when seeing a pictorial representation of something, we do not only imagine the subject of the depiction, but we conceive of the scene as seen by us. It appears accessible only through our own, partly actual and partly imagined visual activity. Actual insofar as we are looking at a picture, yet imagined to the extent that we imagine 'seeing' the scene the picture enables us to imagine. This process clearly pertains to both fictive and factual forms. Yet, when activated in connection with a documentary mode of address it assumes a particular resonance. Here Maynard's proposal aligns with the argument forwarded by Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas (2007) that for documentary the significance of pictorial depiction, as offering spectators a particular experience of witnessing, supersedes medium-specific and technological considerations. Before too hastily subscribing to pictorial representation as an intrinsic attribute of documentary, however, it must be remembered that Derek Paget (1990) includes radio as an important part of his discussion of dramatised forms of documentary.

My intention is not to police the boundaries of documentary or to articulate definitions, but while acknowledging a documentary mode of address as a vital mechanism that informs the terms on which a documentary text is indeed understood as such, I nevertheless consider secondary witnessing an aspect of documentary that should not go unrecognised. If we stay with Maynard's notion of imagining technologies, it is possible to incorporate both written and purely audio forms in discussions, but still account for the visual as occupying a central position across otherwise multiple and in part conflicting accounts of the category.

Corner's other examples; painting and photography, are less complicated in relation to a visual emphasis. It is commonplace to refer to documentary photography, and historically photography was in the vanguard of achieving the, however contested, discursive status as visual evidence that film and other camera derived visual material also have come to enjoy. Yet still photography as part of this discussion raises a different consideration, namely that of narrative. I will return to the issue of narrative more fully in chapter four, but take the opportunity to indicate its crucial role. By way of illustration, even when displaying recognisable conventions of documentary depiction an exhibition of photographs will only be understood as an exhibition of documentary photography if, whether by para- or extra-textual cues, spectators are extended the means to construct a narrative that gives the photographs context. Likewise, corroborating facts play an essential role in the evidentiary credibility that allows photographs and film to assume a position as archival material, and what such subsidiary information ultimately enables, is the potential for these visual texts to accrue meaning as part of a narrative. I contend that narrative is a vital, albeit at times somewhat neglected component of the construction of the documentary real. That documentary narrative can be implicit, fragmentary and loose as well as purposeful and explicit, does in no way diminish its importance.

Documentary as public discourse; the social function of documentary

Representation as a central concern of documentary cannot be confined to the relation between the image and its referent. It is equally significant as social function and public intervention; the deliberate intention of making something visible or more prominent through acts of framing and re-presentation. In a highly mediated world, decisions and debates often take place in geographically distant locations to the particular sites where the consequences are felt. Placed in this context, the idea that representation, while not being collapsible with the real is nevertheless inextricable from it, is as significant as it is in terms of image-referent relations. So moving away from issues of means and methods , 'what is at stake in representation is not so much a matter of what is shown as it is of who is authorized to look at whom with what effects' (Pollock 1994, cited by Taylor 1998: 4). To this we should also add

questions about the meanings and implications of the lack, or absence, of representation.

Issues concerning institutional contexts, funding and distribution have been carefully examined in relation to documentary and its history. The sponsorship of documentary film by government agencies and large corporations aligned the British documentary movement and its issue-based work with the establishment, adding status and respectability (Nichols 1991: 192-193, 2001: 145-148; Winston 2008: 64-67). It simultaneously supported 'a scientific doctrine which held that the solution to social problems could be created by a corps of experts' (Palmer 2003: 5), and can be seen as part of a mood and outlook which would eventually pave the way for the New Deal policy reform in the US and the installation of the Welfare State and the National Health Service in the UK (Paget 1990). More recently debates concerning documentary in relation to notions of the public domain, and economic and political effects on the kinds of programming offered by broadcasters have concerned deregulation as part of the restructuring of broadcasting, market pressures and the connection they have to new factual forms such as reality TV (Riegert 2007: 3-4). The influx of a substantial amount of reality-based programming since the mid 1990s has merited both media attention and academic debate. The policing of genre boundaries, and concerns over trust and responsibility is one part of such discussions. However, beyond anxieties about audiences' ability (or lack thereof) to navigate the increasingly more complex configurations of actuality, performance, dramatization, display and construction, it is the role of such programming that causes contention. That concerns are raised around delineations between documentary 'proper' and such ostensibly more entertainment-focused formats testifies to the importance placed on the social role of mediations and enunciations that offer their viewers a relationship with a mediated, yet shared and actual, experiential world. It also testifies to certain assumptions with regards to what form such texts should take, and what functions they are perceived to be fulfilling.

Classifying the functions of documentary, Corner (1996) identifies three different types; 'the project of democratic civics', 'journalistic inquiry and exposition' and 'radical interrogation and alternative perspective', although he recognises that they

are unstable, unfixed and historically contingent. This scheme is later revised (Corner 2002) in order to account for the kinds of factual entertainment programmes and hybrid forms, such as docu-soaps, reality shows and formats such as Endemol's *Big Brother* franchise by the additional category Corner terms 'diversion'. For Corner these variants suggest not only a shift in intention that warrants a new rubric, but that the extensive spread of such formats indicates a 'post-documentary' era. This schema prompts some questions, however, as arguably both journalistic inquiry and alternative perspectives could be construed as aspects of 'the project of democratic civics'. Furthermore, to distinguish 'diversion' as a separate category sets entertainment and aesthetic pleasures apart from the other, more 'serious' functions.

The problems with this become clear if we consider such a ubiquitous and commonplace example as the nature, or wildlife, documentary. This is a sub-genre of documentary that enjoys 'a privileged position of authority, especially in comparison to other forms of television' (Mills 2010: 193). However, while nature documentary is considered valuable with respect to its informative role, and perhaps as fostering particular attitudes towards the 'natural world', eco-systems and wildlife (Bagust 2008: 225), it quite clearly mobilises such attitudes by aesthetic means (Scott 2003). When lauded by reviewers such programmes are described with a vocabulary invoking spectacular attributes, and few would dispute that viewers also enjoy the diversion they provide.

Entertainment in the form of aesthetic and spectacular pleasure has, as Elisabeth Cowie (2009) has argued, been an inseparable constituent of factual visual discourse since the earliest lantern slide shows, travelogues and pre-cinematic exhibition of actuality footage. Entertainment, diversion and education, edification or argument, are no more discrete aspects than aesthetics and rhetoric can be uncoupled from factual representation. However, debates surrounding infotainment and reality programming, whether aligned to the view that docu-soaps and highly constructed docu-game hybrids with elements of observation such as *Big Brother* and *I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here* often relate to the issue of social function. For some, reality programming encourages audiences to develop increasing critical awareness of the constructed natured of mediated information and their reality claims (Hill

2007), allows inter-active and participatory modes of engagement (Tincknell and Raghuran 2004: 267; Hartley 2007: 21-58) and opportunities for identification (Kavka 2008: 69). For others, reality programmes present a static and foreclosed spectacle with 'little in terms of renewed public space' (Dovey 2000: 172). For the purposes here, it is significant that such debates reveal the particular stakes involved when representations assert their actual, rather than fictional, status. Thus the contested ground around documentary involves a perceived need to separate models of production based on entertainment values from those ostensibly harbouring more edifying or clearly articulated civic ambitions. This is a separate issue from debates around manipulation of content or overtly constructed formats, and one that clearly concerns the social role of documentary to discursively intersect with both cultural politics and cultural hierarchies of value.

Conclusion

Documentary offers its audience a particular position. This goes beyond contested divisions between aesthetics and factuality; spectacle and entertainment on one hand and education on the other, and occurs irrespective of the fact that its every recorded image is equally a motivated sign. However varied in style, tone or subject matter, documentary presents and invites responses to, and engagement with, particular versions and constructions of a shared real. Documentary, then, is identified by what I choose to call a documentary mode of address. This is a broader and more inclusive concept than Nichols' description of sub-divisions as modes. Instead it draws on Rancière and Trinh, for whom the critical distinction between fiction and factual discourse resides in the attitude adopted. Despite prevailing aesthetic conventions through which documentary announces itself as such these are neither the only ways in which a text can signal its documentary-ness, nor do they constitute its definition. Put simply, a documentary mode of address invites viewers to accept its representations as pertaining to the real, rather than the imagined.

In this chapter I have identified a triad of aspects that together inform an understanding of documentary, specifying it beyond a mode of address while

rebutting definitions dependent on particular technological modes of production. I suggest that pictorial depiction and its capacity to 'make us vividly imagine seeing' (Maynard 1997:104) occupies a central position. This as a result of its particular aptitude to bring about the position of secondary witnessing that documentary extends to its audiences. I also argue that narrative, albeit in a variety of possible formulations and to varying degrees of linearity and closure, is inseparable from documentary. Thirdly, performance can be seen as an innate aspect of documentary's interaction with the real (Bruzzi 2006). If we accept that '[r]epresentation is not the act of producing a visible form, but the act of offering an equivalent – something that speech does just as much as photography' (Rancière 2009: 93), then documentary representation is neither a reflection of, nor a transparent 'window' to the real, but a way of engaging with and producing a reality that nevertheless is not reducible to such representation (Bolter and Grusin 2000: 56).

Thus finally, this chapter proposes that documentary's tradition is constituted by engaging the ambiguous relationships between image, narrative and the real, an important component of which is representation as visibility and social function. Another part of its function resides precisely in offering up these complex relationships for renewed debate. As the intention of this thesis is to examine how comics might contribute to such debates, the focus in the next chapter will turn to comics. Considering socio-historical contexts alongside scholarly analysis and argument, chapter two will map legacies, transformations and tensions related to the social construction of the form.

Chapter 2

Comics: situating the form

As the etymology indicates, the cultural objects generally known under the name 'comics' (western and Anglophone comics in particular) are rarely associated with factual discourse. 'Comics are not seen as the most sophisticated of media, but then they don't have to be, orientated as they are towards the juvenile and uncritical' (Sabin 2003: 1). This assumption, that Sabin's scholarship goes on to challenge, immediately reveals two beliefs about comics that would make them seem irreconcilable with the import and value of what chapter one has identified as a documentary mode of address. From impressive sales figures in the late nineteenth century that attest to wide-spread circulation (Sabin 2003: 19), to the substantial profits of twenty-first century comics-based blockbuster movies (Johnson 2007) and merchandising (McAllister 2001: 17), comics have in one way or another held a longstanding and palpable presence in the cultural landscape. However, this does not necessarily mean that they have been held in high regard.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the contested and unstable space occupied by comics and the ways in which the recognition of comics as a cultural form has progressed, at least in part, through their alignment with literature. The factors contributing to the disputed and derivative position of comics will be mapped in relation to perceived readerships, contexts of production and concerns over the form itself. The chapter then goes on to outline the ways in which, despite the field's multi-disciplinary character, literature has emerged as a prevalent paradigm in comics studies. I propose that the alignment of comics with literature as a strategy for recognition and cultural validity works to obscure the connections and intersections offered by categories associated with visual media, and that documentary provides an alternative lens through which to consider nonfiction comics.

Beyond imaginative projection

By contrast to documentary's address, there is a longstanding presumption that comics intrinsically present imagined worlds and scenarios. This assumption

underpins Martin Barker's (1989) argument against the claims, from various ideological standpoints, of comics' harmful effects on readers. Drawing on V. N. Volosinov and Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of expression and utterances as social and always inflected in context, Barker argues that, built into the comics register, is the understanding that their worlds are set apart from the actual world and that comics offer spaces for imagination. Fundamentally, this argument engages in a different debate to the concerns of this study. However, and as I intend to demonstrate, it still raises a decidedly relevant point. Barker's defence of comics is one particular instance of a far broader discussion relating to media effects, a debate returning with cyclical intervals, that in more recent incarnations has shifted its focus variously to console games and internet content. The argument is that critics inscribe and 'read into' texts ideology in ways that do not correspond to readers' experiences and pleasures. Barker thus argues that if something is a comic, a tacit understanding between creators and readers is built around the notion that these are imagined narratives, and that their purpose in turn is to allow readers to imagine.

There is a subtle, yet critical distinction between the way 'imagination' is understood in this context, and Maynard's (1997: 89) configuration of imagining technologies outlined in the previous chapter. Maynard uses as two of his examples of graphic images a nineteenth century etching print by George Cruickshank and photographic snapshot of children in a school playground, thus connecting two quite different types of images. They differ in terms of historical context, technological means and composition, and also in the level of specificity and detail they offer. Yet, following his argument they both, in effect, are deliberately marked surfaces that, as pictorial depictions, impart both their respective subject matter (children at play) and the imagined act of looking at them (as much as looking at the images of which they are subjects). This is an imagining that does not indicate a particular attitude, and presumably would function across a variety of modes of address. For Barker, on the other hand, the point is that the social context of comics instils a particular register that distances the worlds depicted from the one readers inhabit. This is not simply a question of fiction versus ostensibly real content, but rather a suggestion that even when the subject matter is based on actuality, its very treatment in comics form invites a particular response of 'imaginative projection' (Barker 1989: 273) rather

than a witnessing function. This would suggest a fundamental incompatibility between the form of comics and a documentary mode of address.

However, by returning to the theoretical core of Barker's argument, the notion that the social context and location of any expression is vital, something crucial emerges. Namely, that since *Comics, Ideology and the Critics* was published in 1989, changes have taken place with regard to the position of comics in the cultural landscape. To some extent the profile of comics has altered, and they have come to be seen as less excluded from, or oppositional to, the institutional contexts of more recognised cultural forms than has previously been the case. I would not wish to overstate this claim, as comics still remain relatively disparaged and marginalised by comparison to more established cultural forms. But comics as a high profile source for high-investment movie productions aimed at mainstream markets, and simultaneously 'conceptualized as a sub-set of the art world' (Beaty 2012: 13), indicates an increasingly pronounced multiplicity. Hence, it seems both logical and necessary to situate the emergence of comics maintaining a far more immediate relation with what we might call 'the real world' than Barker's evaluation seems to allow for, in relation to this diversification of the 'comics world' (ibid: 37-38). As indicated by a number of examples mentioned in the introduction, comics representing actual events are not a recent phenomenon. However, the way in which they tend to tackle such topics shows certain changes, and this shift presents a particular point of interest. To illustrate this point I will offer a comparison.

In the United States *True Comics* launched in 1941 by The Parents' Institute. In addition to George C. Gallup, whose very first study ten years earlier had alerted advertisers and social scientists alike to the popular appeal of comics (Marchand 1985: 112-115; Gordon 1998: 81), it boasted professors of education and eminent historians on its advisory board. In the inaugural editorial the publisher, George J. Hecht, promised a new kind of comic to challenge expectation that comics are vehicles for 'exciting picture stories everyone recognises as not only untrue but utterly impossible'. The emphasis in *True Comics* on historical events, mostly in the form of military battles and heroic adventures from antiquity to the recent past, is comparable to the initial incarnation of EC Comics that also published educational content; bible stories and stories of history and scientific discovery (Witek 1989: 15).

The sober and edifying tone of these comics was not continued, however, in other publications also promising content based on actual events and persons that followed, such as *Crime Does Not Pay* (1942-1955), *Shock Suspenstories* (1952-1955) and *True Crime Comics* (1947-), with its subsidiary *Crimes by Women*. Here a somewhat schematic, yet dramatically animated style of representation offers melodrama, lurid sensationalism and graphic depictions of violence. It should be noted that particular visual stylistic choices do not in themselves have a bearing on whether the story told is based on actual events. Nor do they preclude the ability to confer ambivalent or even outright subversive reading positions (Barker 1984: 146-158). However, in its representation of ostensibly actual events, the drawn image, here, conveniently bypasses codes of decorum that might otherwise apply. These comics take full advantage of that '[v]iewers tend to accept more from a stylized medium than from a photographic medium' (Lefevre 2007: 9) and brutal, amoral and heinous deeds are depicted with relish. Visually embodying a tabloid aesthetic, they offer schematic character depictions and sustain a tension between gratification of salacious, vicarious thrills and a seemingly moralistic law and order message.

In a story titled 'Gladys Behmer Plans Murder' (*Crimes by Women*, issue 3 1948), the eponymous villainess, whose eventual demise in the electric chair is announced on the opening page, is portrayed as a lissom blonde lacking either morals or scruples [see FIG 3]. She repeatedly marries wealthy men whom she intends to kill off with the help of her boyfriend. As callous as she is seductive, Gladys' lithe limbs and flesh exposed through repeatedly torn clothing present the central visual motif. But beyond a combination of sexual allure, steely determination and monetary greed her persona, much as that of the lesser characters, remains at the level of a two-dimensional cipher.

By stark contrast, the comic *My Friend Dahmer* by Derf Backderf (2012) that depicts the high school years of the notorious serial killer Jeff Dahmer as portrayed by his erstwhile class mate, adheres to a comparatively low-key brand of realism as it traces a trajectory from awkward and neglected young misfit to sadistic serial killer. The marked aesthetic difference has multiple aspects, but immediately noticeable is that

while the *Crimes by Women* story presents in colour, *My Friend Dahmer*, which was published sixty-four years later, is in black and white[i] [see FIG 4]. Considering that

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE
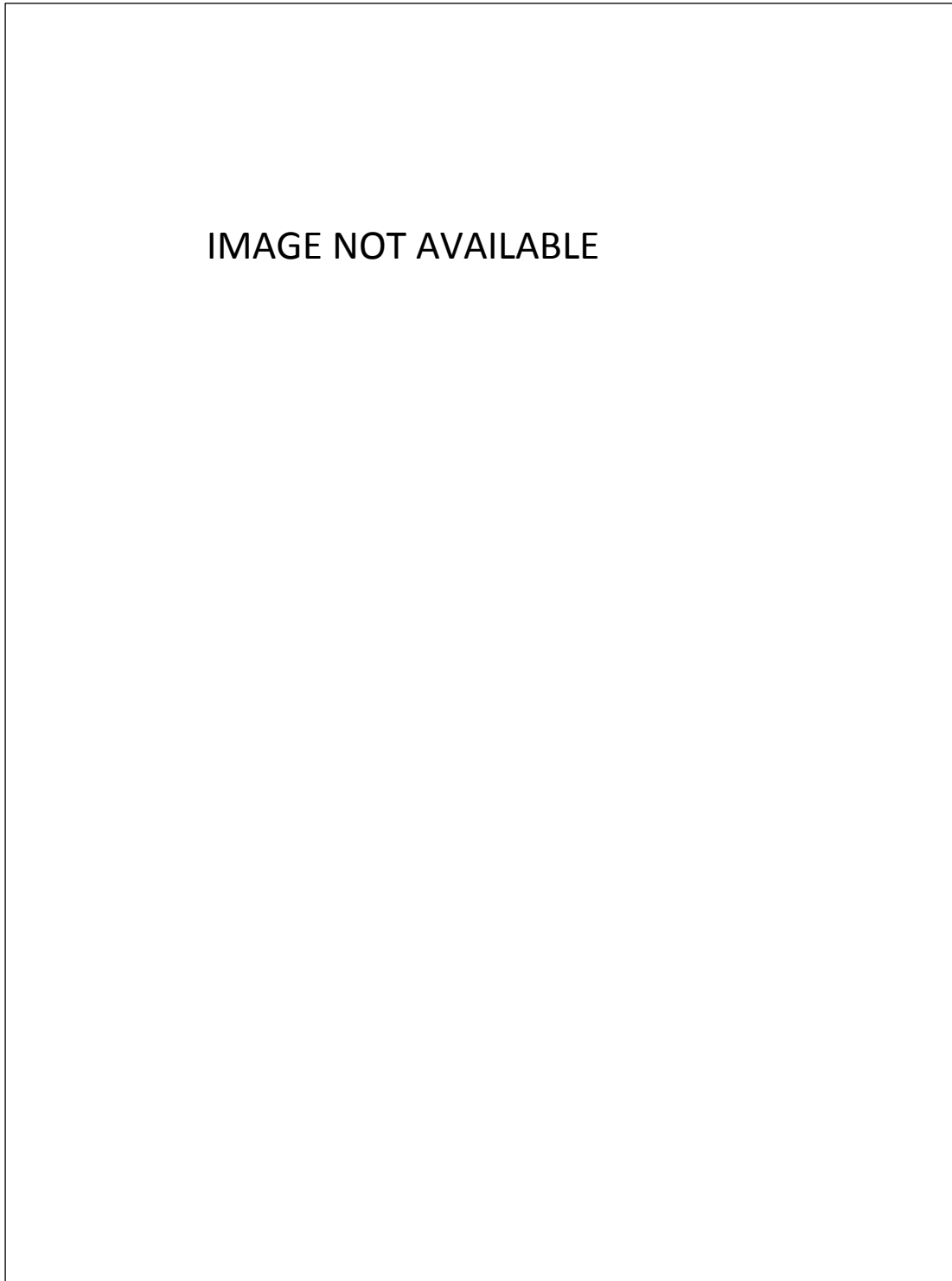
FIG 3 - 'Gladys Behmer Plans Murder' in *Crimes by Women* #3, October 1948, Fox Feature Syndicates.

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE

FIG 4 - Backderf, D. (2012), *My Friend Dahmer*, New York: Abrams, p. 33.

the former came in a trade paperback sold at the price of ten cents, while the latter is published as a hardback currently retailing at just over eight pounds sterling, it is unlikely that economic necessity counts for this shift. Although a move away from colour in some instances can be accounted for by the interference with authorial intent caused by insufficient technological capabilities (Baetens, 2011: 113), this is becoming less of an issue with increasing quality of reproduction. Instead, Backderf's choice to produce his comic in monochrome aligns with the tendency of setting apart 'the more "distinguished" form of comic art' (ibid: 112), authorial and not uncommonly foregrounding a hand crafted aesthetic, from the traditionally colour-printed comic books historically produced according to a model of divided roles and that circulate as mass culture products.

However, the opposition between a tabloid aesthetic and tone of narration in 'Gladys Behmer Plans Murder' and the atmosphere of angst-infused mundanity in *My Friend Dahmer* also signals a difference in approach and motivation. *My Friend Dahmer*, without arriving at a definitive conclusion, ponders over contributory factors and systemic failures in ways surpassing the demonising rhetoric of criminal justice and media discourses that came to describe Jeff Dahmer on his capture. Nevertheless, as much as considerations of register and aesthetics, it is the particularity that marks this account and that the earlier comics mentioned cannot be seen to share, which aligns it with documentary. The pictorial depiction in the *True Crime* comics incorporates details of clothing and interiors to locate the stories convincingly in a recognisably contemporaneous milieu. It follows a style familiar from other comics and a particular style of illustration of their time that, like twentieth century socialist realism, might be more appropriately understood as idealism (Nochlin, 1971: 226). However, it is Backderf's work, despite the curved lines and shorthand cartoon aesthetic, which through its attention to the specific as a means of contemplating issues of social and moral significance calls forth associations with the politically motivated aspects of realism (Adams 2008: 9-10, see chapter three). Like the story about Gladys Behmer, *My Friend Dahmer* incorporates speculatively reconstructed scenes, yet its overall claim to authenticity is buttressed by the creator/ narrator's witnessing position and by him openly conceding the partial nature of his knowledge and understanding of his subject. This approach speaks to the importance of the individual subject as the guarantor of knowledge (see chapter five, pp. 177-182). But

it also exemplifies how qualifying and acknowledging the limits of certainty undercuts blithe assertions of authority, yet assumes a similarly persuasive function. The shift from bluntly authoritative assertion to a display of knowingness and qualification plays a significant role in how documentary is understood and performed in a variety of iterations and formats. It is also crucial in terms of the emergent connection between comics and documentary that this research aims to make explicit.

As the social context of comics has taken on greater plurality, the form has come to encompass a range of genres, not all of which necessarily extend a position to their readers or an 'evaluative accent' (Barker 1989; 272) inviting a response of suspended disbelief. Instead of proposing 'what if…?' some of them assert 'witness this'[ii]. Despite Glady Behmer's story ostensibly originating in police files and court transcripts, its telling in comics form crucially lacks the element of witnessing that characterises *My Friend Dahmer*. As chapter one has explained, the implied address and register that representations of the real and factual (as in documentary) assume, is different from that of fiction. It does not invite us to imagine, but rather to imagine that we 'see' and 'hear', and in so doing to understand a statement, proposal or position in relation to its subject matter. This is predicated on the understanding that the world, the real that any such text refers to, is a shared and common real, despite its multiplicity, complexity and multitude of disparate aspects. Of course any such representations, or utterances, are open to challenges, yet they are often, although not always, situated within discourses themselves perceived to be both important and 'serious'.

I suggest that the ability to frame expectation and indicate this particular attitude in comics form connects to the changing and broadened contexts of comics; production, circulation and consumption. Equally, however, comics when asserting their capacity to go beyond genres of fiction, adapting a register of 'see this' as opposed to 'imagine this', can be seen as making certain claims for cultural validity. To fully understand the ways in which issues of legitimation are imbricated with such texts, and also how they have become understood in reference to particular paradigms and frameworks, it will help to first address the cultural category of comics.

What are we talking about?

The defining features and origins of this form remain subject to competing claims. There are scholarly disagreements about whether a comic necessarily needs to involve a sequence of images, whether the word and image combination is the decisive factor, and consequently also about what might qualify as the first examples of the form. In addition, critics differ on whether or not comics should be referred to as a hybrid form (as descriptive of word-image relations).

Scott McCloud (1993) has sought a lineage as far back as pre-Columbian manuscripts (ibid: 10), ancient Egypt (ibid: 14-15) and the Bayeux tapestry depicting the Norman conquest of England (ibid: 12-13), and he consequently privileges the sequential visual narrative as a definition. So doing makes it possible to include in comics history William Hogarth's painted and printed morality tales *Marriage à la Mode*, *The Rake's Progress* and *The Harlot's Progress,* as early examples of 'artist-driven' sequential and narrative work aimed at a commercial market (Goggin 2010: 21-22). Robert Harvey (2001: 75-96) represents the main challenge to McCloud's conception of comics, arguing that comics are defined by their text/ image hybridity. Both positions have their problems. Sequential narrative is a definition so broad that it potentially defeats purpose, yet excludes single panel cartoons. The insistence on both text and image on the other hand, rules out what many would consider quite clear examples of the form, such as wordless comics. David Kunzle's history of the early comic strip 'from c. 1450-1825' (1973), privileges the idea of sequence over text-image combination, as McCloud does, but requires the material to be materialised in a mass medium (ibid: 2-3). This view of comics as intertwined with the emergence of popular print culture is a position shared by, among others, Roger Sabin (2003: 13-16) and David Carrier (2000: 4). For Carrier speech balloons are a defining marker of comics, and he consequently dates their emergence to the 1890s, although a satirical print by James Gillray from as early as 1806 (Sabin 2003:14) featuring speech balloons indicates that this, too, might be a problematic claim. Beyond such debates pertaining to origins, the form's formal plasticity and multiple

variations (Sabin 2003: 6-7; Hatfield 2005: xiv) has tended to obstruct attempts to formulate a precise or complete definition based around formal elements.

Whether or not establishing a specific moment of origin, or agreeing on defining elements is a worthwhile pursuit is open to argument. Differing scholarly contexts and spheres of interest will undoubtedly inform positions to some degree. Art and cultural historians may find intriguing connections that for those, like myself, interested in contemporary media cultures risk seeming like tenuous bids for respectability by association with fêted cultural artefacts.

Questions as to whether or not comics should be considered a hybrid form have presented another bone of contention, one no less implicated in cultural hierarchies of value. Hannah Miodrag (2013: 83-107) has drawn attention to the fact that although some critics object to the notion of 'mere' hybridity (McCloud 1993: 92; Sabin 2003: 9; Whitlock 2006: 969) and others endorse it (Harvey 1996: 3; Hatfield 2005: 36-37; Meskin 2007: 378; Chute 2008: 452), when the application of this term is put to closer scrutiny it is indeed more a question of context. Those who find the concept of hybridity useful tend to apply it to describe comics' combination of word and image within a framework of semiotics. In semiotic terms both word and image would be understood as signs, the former symbolic and thus arbitrary, the latter iconic and bearing a resemblance to that which it signifies. Comics conventions include words taking on patently visual qualities and the shorthand of cartooning that (to varying degrees) pushes images further from verisimilitude and towards symbolic communication. That neither narrative nor descriptive functions can necessarily be designated to either text or images also seems to accord with the notion of hybridity.

Objections however, as Miodrag (2013: 88) has noted, more specifically concern the configuration of comics as a hybrid between art forms; literature and the visual arts. This is interesting in that it points towards the perceived need for validation, or to advocate legitimacy, as a noticeable element in academic writing on comics, and what that indicates about the position of comics. Ideas about the separate functions of the visual arts and literature had been influential in Western culture already from the eighteenth century (Wallenstein 2010). The idea that painting and sculpture are

fundamentally spatial arts, whereas literature is sequential and therefore temporal, historically thus configures each art form's claim to validity. Not only has the written word been privileged as the 'proper' channel for the transmission of education and cultural and moral refinement, but the combination of word and image has been perceived as suggesting that the quality of each is somehow compromised. This principle of separation became ever more marked with modernist attention to form, and following the idea that art forms gain validity through purity the notion of hybridity can only be seen as derogatory. The move away from representation and narrative in the visual arts brought about by modernism, as these ideals reached their pinnacle, seemingly only added to the polarisation between comics' derivative status and other, high-cultural forms Thus, the perceived adulteration of formal elements has been claimed as constitutive of comics' lowbrow status (Groensteen 2006, cited by Beaty 2012: 19-20).

However, pointing out other hybrid forms such as opera and ballet have achieved far more stable and esteemed positions, Bart Beaty (ibid: 21) has questioned the weight given to this argument. Beaty suggests that in order to understand the social construction of comics, attention needs to be redirected towards its relation to mass audiences and popular entertainment. Thus, the contentious cultural position comics have historically occupied cannot just be accounted for by the form's refusal to adhere to cultural traditions that have tended to uphold and idealise a purist view of art forms, based on their qualities and functions as fundamentally separate. In agreement with Beaty's assessment that to foreground such considerations when seeking to explain the status of comics overstates formal concerns with hybridity, and with Miodrag's observation that these debates reveal a certain defensiveness on the parts of critics[iii], this chapter will instead proceed to address issues related to the form's contexts of production and circulation. However, before moving on to these matters it is opportune to give some reflection to the perceived reading audiences of comics.

Paternalistic projections

The idea that comics are primarily suitable for children is connected to the idea that reading a story made up by images that only includes sparing segments of text is an appropriate pastime for those in the process of learning to read, but not yet competent or confident to read prose. It can fulfil a function as a pedagogic tool, and in the case of adapted literary texts be a useful entry point to 'proper books'[iv]. In societies where a relatively high adult literacy level is the assumption, this view of comics would direct marketing and presumably content at a child readership. In Britain this was the case in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. At the turn of the century comics became specifically aimed at young readerships, satirical aspects were reduced in favour of slapstick, and the amount of text became significantly reduced as a result (Sabin 2003: 22-23). Until this point, comics had been produced with a young, adult, and predominantly male reader as their target audience. The reason for this shift is not simply explained by rising adult literacy. During the nineteenth century the right to vote had been gradually extended to include working class men and concerns over the education and edification of the working-class were high on the agenda, making cultural values hot topics of debate. Such debates linked literacy with the values of industrialised modernity, while they also expressed anxieties over the effects of urban concentration and mass produced popular culture on standards, traditions and morality more generally (Vincent 1989: 73-76, 205-208). According to educationalists, the public, and particularly the working class public, should be encouraged to read 'proper books', and this meant books with no pictures. The argument that reading comics can be actively detrimental to literacy development (Wertham 1955: 140) might lack the persuasive power it once held, considering the interest in the form expressed by educational professionals and librarians (O'English, Matthews and Blakesley 2006; Heaney 2007; Scott, Kiste Nyberg and Fee 2010). Yet the notion that the value of comics is tied to a bridging function to 'proper' books and as a means of breaking down barriers for those with poor literacy or language skills persists (Worthy 1996; Bitz 2004; Ranker 2007). On such terms recognition of the form remains conditional and partial.

However, the paternalistic discourses involving class, literacy and cultural consumption that 19th century comics readers of all ages were subject to, conceivably played a part in the industry's strategic repositioning towards a child readership with pocket money to spend in the early 20th century (Sabin 2003: 22). This enabled

publishers to retain their model (and low costs) of production while hoping to avoid further vociferous condemnation by critics and the potential financial fallout from it. Yet, aligning comics with children's culture had implications beyond the ways in which content became ostensibly affected, taking on qualities in keeping with a particular societal view of childhood. Regardless of the view of children as innocent, unworldly and in need of nurture and protection, children do not tend to be valued on equal terms with adults, nor is the culture they participate in and consume. Moreover, the association with children's culture and consumption would eventually prove to be the cause of further controversies.

Media debates over the content in comics that had already begun during the 1940s turned into highly emotive campaigns, hearings and court cases, and eventually culminated as American psychiatrist Frederic Wertham published his scientific research on the correlation between the violence, lawlessness and immorality in comics and juvenile delinquency. His best-selling book *Seduction of the Innocent* instigated heated debate and led to a Senate hearing, ultimately resulting in the industry's self-regulation in the form of The Comics Code (1954). Detractors of comics had of course made themselves heard already long before this time (Lent 1999: 9-10) nor were such debates constrained to America (Barker 1984, 1989: 14; Lent 2009; Strandgaard Jensen 2010). In the UK and other European countries, the detrimental influence of comics was also seen as one particular symptom of a wider problem, namely the influence of American culture (Barker 1984: 20-35). In a 1953 UNESCO report superheroes were highlighted as a particular threat to the cultural identities and values of other countries (Strandgaard Jensen 2010: 56). But there were other issues at stake, too.

> Whereas books depicted in the comic debate were described as being consumed in spaces controlled by public employees, whose morals and pedagogical principles were guaranteed by their education and pedagogical training, comics were perceived as being consumed in uncontrolled spaces such as in the school yard, in toilets, on the street or at home.
>
> (Strandgaard Jensen 2010: 60)

The paternalistic overtones of anti-comics campaigns in their various contexts reveal particular social conceptions of childhood, and anxieties in relation to the causal effects of media texts. The association of comics with children, and with readers with impaired literacy has combined in a presumption of juvenility and general lack of sophistication. However, the historical positioning of comics as an infantile pastime, incommensurable with notions of aesthetics or highbrow culture, relates to a more encompassing; 'classed, gendered and racialized' paternalism and condescension towards consumers of and participants in mass culture (Beaty 2012: 22).

Indeed, as far as actual reading practices and readers go, it now seems unlikely that comics have at any point been quite the juvenile-only domain that these debates suggest. Examples of adult readers include 'propaganda comics for servicemen in the 1940s, underground commix in the 1960s, and publications such as Marvel's *Epic Illustrated* in the 1980s' (Round 2010: 23). In addition, many comic strips that have featured as a standard part of newspapers, more so in the US and some European countries than in Britain, are quite unambiguously directed at adult readers. Nevertheless, the adult who reads comics has long been culturally coded as reluctant to fully leave childhood behind and has 'become […] a sign of the asocial and obsessive individual' (Lopes 2006: 407). From very early on comics have extended a particularly close and interactive relationship with readers, through letters pages in particular (Pustz 2007*a*). But while reader engagement has incorporated high levels of social engagement, interaction and niche cultural capital, comics have also existed in often decidedly demarcated spaces, cultural and physical. The specialist comics shops that became part of comics fan culture in connection with the direct sales model (Sabin 2003: 65-69; Harvey 1996: 144; Hatfield 2005: 20-31) were often dingy and dark places that for a long time were perceived as intimidating and unwelcoming to the wider public, and in particular women (Sabin 2003: 228), have contributed to this notion of a ghettoised culture, simultaneously exclusive and excluded.

From mass-produced ephemera to authorial cachet

There is little question that production values and industrial process have impacted significantly on the status of comics. Early comics were produced and printed cheaply in order to enable low prices, high circulation numbers and maximising profit margins. Considering their japes and gags offered immediate and irreverent thrills materialised in the throw-away quality of cheap production values, comics unsurprisingly lacked any kind of respectability (Sabin 2003: 21). This was a model that came to characterise comics publishing for decades to come; 'quantity over quality, and production via easily duplicated narrative formulae that are instantly familiar to the readers, but give the impression of newness nonetheless' (Pratt 2009: 102).

An examination of thirty picture magazines on the newsstands in Nashville Tennessee, during the month of December, 1941, reveals that in general, the first "adventure story" in the booklet is about as well drawn as the average daily newspaper strip, while the majority of the other pictorial paroxysms look as if they had been done by high school students during their study periods. Inexpensive color processes, together with the use of cheap printing inks on pulp paper, make comic books garish and tawdry.

(Vigus 1942: 168)

Mass market comics of the kind both preceding and co-existing with alternative and underground comics have mainly been produced according to standard principles in industrialised production; maximum efficiency and profit through a process separated into discrete units; 'writing, layout, pencilling, inking, lettering and coloring (if applicable)' (Pratt 2009: 100). This process separates planning from execution and makes it possible to implement a 'piece-work' payment strategy'. These jobs were not about achieving artistic fulfilment, and as is often the case, an industry with low cultural status provided jobs for people who came from backgrounds of low social and economic status. Pay for employees was low, they were usually paid a flat per-page fee, received little acknowledgement and no royalties or rights over their material.

In stark contrast, the non-fiction comics examined in this study typically foreground their authored status. This functions as an important mechanism of legitimisation, and has implications not only for the producers but for the perception of the form itself. Authorial work commands a cultural cachet far exceeding collaborative practices hidden beneath the anonymity of an industrialised and segmented production process. This kind of projection of value, attributed by Raymond Williams as a vestige from 'the epoch of a privileged literature culture' (1981: 112), favours the individual cultural producer as a marker of authority and originality. The ways in which comics have shifted, at least partially, from the kinds of anonymous and highly compartmentalised production contexts producing comics known by their title characters rather than creators, to an authorial practice, must be seen as one indication of a shift in their cultural standing. Matthew Puzst (2007*b*) has suggested that autobiographical comics have played a significant part in this process. Such texts have drawn attention, literally and graphically, to the efforts and tribulations of those involved in the production of comics. In so doing creators have bolstered their own status as artists and the form becomes more likely to be viewed as a form of expression than mere mercantile production.

A great deal of attributes that characterise the kinds of comics that espouse authorial credentials and aim at adult readers beyond fan cultures can be traced to the influence of the American Underground comics of the 1960s and 70s. These 'underground' comics can be seen as constitutive of this turbulent period and its rejection of tradition, authority and social convention. Their irreverent and deliberately provocative stance was foreshadowed by *Mad* (1952-), co-edited by Harvey Kurtzman and eventually adopting a magazine format in order to get around the restrictions of the Comics Code. Underground comics were satirical, mutinous and covered themes directly opposed to the Comics Code; sex, drugs and radical politics. They were self-published according to a DIY-ethos, printed or photo-copied in small print runs and distributed in head-shops or on university campuses. In Britain too, an underground comics scene was spawned by the American example, with often co-operatively owned and produced comics that were printed in small runs and sold through alternative record shops, bookshops and head-shops. These comics

broke with the industry convention of not acknowledging artists and writers, and the inside cover usually displayed the name and address of the publisher.

From lowbrow ephemera to book form

While current self-reflexivity, exploratory practice, aesthetic style and creator prominence in comics and graphic novels may draw on the heritage of American underground comics (Hatfield 2005; Beaty 2011: 248-249) there is a gaping contrast between small editions of home-printed or photo-copied publications touted at music venues and in record shops and the whole sections set aside for thick, glossy and expensive comics and graphic novels in mainstream bookstores. This suggests a considerable shift, the reasons for which are likely to lie in a combination of factors. Critical and media recognition represents one such factor.

Comics and graphic novels have continued to command attention since the critical and media recognition generated by Art Spiegelman's *Maus* in the late 1980s. *Maus* was published in two volumes (1986, 1991) after appearing in serial form in *Raw* magazine[v]. When awarded the Pulitzer prize for literature in 1992 *Maus* caused a certain amount of controversy with its depiction of Holocaust memories in a medium associated with immature readerships and ephemeral culture and by Spiegelman's use of animal heads (mice, cats, dogs etc.) signifying ethnic and national categorisation. It was however critically acclaimed and appeared to both add to the cultural legitimacy and credibility of the medium and to draw attention to its capacity to tackle complex and serious issues. While I would be careful not to claim *Maus* as the definitive or key pre-cursor of the comics in this thesis, it nevertheless marks a significant moment. In *Maus*, the idiosyncratic and hand-crafted aesthetic of the American underground comics scene combined with a representation braiding together personal and historical issues. Moreover, it addressed readers in a tone that

defied expectations and preconceptions attached to its form. As Ian Gordon (2010: 179) has asserted: '*Maus* reinvented comic books for non-comic book readers'. Hillary Chute and Marianne DeKoven (2006: 770) likewise credit the critical reception of *Maus* when acknowledging this period as 'a paradigm shift'. They also recognise Frank Miller's *Batman: the Dark Knight Returns* and Moore and Gibbons' *Watchmen* as having contributed to comics being perceived as not exclusively directed at or appealing to juvenile readerships. Alan Moore, Dave Gibbons and John Higgins produced *Watchmen*, published by DC Comics in serialized form 1986-87. This reflexive look at the superhero genre is also a concerted effort to explore and expand narrative possibilities through exploiting tensions inherent in the image-text and panel organisation.

> The plot was more or less incidental. All of its elements were properly considered, but it's not the fact that Watchmen told a dark story about a few superheroes that makes it a book that is still read and remembered today. It's the fact that it was ingeniously told and made ingenious use of the comic strip medium.
>
> (Alan Moore, cited by Musson 2009: 29)

What is interesting about Moore's statement is the way formal reflexivity is being linked to value. Despite the observation, earlier on in this chapter, that comics defy tendencies towards text-image segregation and formalist purity; this signals a resurfacing of modernist values into the discussion. Granted, self-reflexive engagement with form is associated with modernist practices in the visual arts as in literature, has continued to flourish beyond their boundaries. But challenging predetermined distinctions between high and low culture has been part of the reaction against the self-assured certainties, and hierarchies of value, of modernist movements. The combination of incontrovertible authorial ambitions with a mass cultural form, such as the superhero genre, might be seen to exemplify such a challenge. Moreover, other traits associated with such interventions, such as *Watchmen*'s fusion of nostalgic affection and ironic distance in relation to the genre it inhabits, also provide part of its appeal. Yet, adding a certain tension to the implied

challenges to the hierarchical ordering of culture, Moore's privileging of the comic's formal self-reflexivity divulges an element of sharing at least some of the values and making claims to recognition on the terms of the self-same order. And to a certain extent, this is a tension that threads through the broader changes that comics have undergone over the last three decades.

Nevertheless, for these particular works; Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, Frank Miller's *Dark Knight* and Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' *Watchmen*, sometimes referred to as 'the Big 3' (Sabin 2003: 87-95; Weiner 2010: 7), the acclaim of their textual qualities has been equalled by the perceived effects of their critical reception. Their importance is thus often framed in terms of the instrumental role they played in promoting the graphic novel as a critically endorsed cultural product, and the partial repeal of comics' cultural stigma (see Lopes 2006) this ostensibly brought about. In fact, commonplace use of the very term, graphic novel, coincided with the publication of 'the Big 3' in album form (Sabin 2003: 235)[vi].

The definition of what constitutes a graphic novel can be contentious, especially when discussing non-fiction material, but thematic unity is considered a key consideration, which can be used to differentiate a graphic novel from a collection of stories (Sabin 2003: 237-238). Weiner (2003: xi) offers the description; 'book-length comic books that are meant to be read as one story. While the term itself extends a certain claim to recognition by association with a respected literary genre, the significance of this longer format for comics is to potentially offer more complex story-telling possibilities and sustained treatment of a topic than comic strips and shorter sequences.

However, beyond the media attention and critical cachet of the authored work and the rise of the long form comics narrative, factors such as significantly improved production values made possible by digital print technologies (Round 2010: 15) and the shifts that have taken place in terms of commissioning and circulation strategies should not be overlooked. Although specialist publishers continue to dominate the market for comics and graphic novels (for example Marvel, DC and its imprint

Vertigo aimed at adult readerships, Fantagraphics, FirstSecond, Drawn and Quarterly and Titan Books[vii]) a growing number of established literary publishers (Pantheon Books, Random House, Jonathan Cape, Penguin and HarperCollins) have taken up the publication of graphic novels. The marketing and circulation of these products has also noticeably shifted from previous marginalised consignment to comics shops and have come to include book shops; in the UK graphic novels have their own section in Foyles and mainstream chains such as Waterstones and WHSmiths. In the US, 'general bookstores […] were estimated to account for almost half - $50 million of a total projected market of $120 million – of all trade paperback and hardcover sales of comics in 2003' (Johnson 2007: 75). As Round points out, the relocation to 'the bookstore emphasizes [the] redefinition' of comics to 'associate books and comics more strongly than ever' (2010: 22). Comics broaching subjects not traditionally thought of as expected content for the form have played a crucial part in the widening, yet uneven, critical and media recognition of the form. They often constitute prominent examples of comics printed on high quality paper, published in hardback book form and sold in high street book retailers to a reading public far wider than self-identified comics fans.

Thus '[c]hanges in industry creative practices' (Round 2010: 20) consist of a mixture of material and production value upgrades, concerted investment and promotion of creators, perhaps with some bias towards authors and author/artists, and a more confident approach to courting broader and more varied readerships. But these are far from mere responses to the critical successes of individual works and the increasing scholarly attentions to comics as a cultural form. It seems clear that developments with regard to contexts of production and circulation have likewise impacted how comics have increasingly become subject to critical mention and interest. These mutually dependent developments should, then, be seen as a combination of factors that all contribute to the repositioning of comics and 'to redefining the comic book as an individual work rather than a mass-produced cultural artefact' (ibid).

However, despite noticeable shifts in attitudes towards comics, it would be hasty to conclude that the form has attained full respectability and standing either in its contemporary varieties or in recognition of its rich historical traditions and resources

(Sabin 2003: 249-250). Compared to many other cultural forms comics still occupy an uncertain and marginalised position. This can manifest itself in the form of exclusion from discourse engaging an otherwise broad section of cultural expression, or a generic dismissal of their complexities and diverse outputs. That comics as a subject of study largely lacks institutional support and often is seen as a novelty or niche topic, equally reveals a significant distance between the recognition that certain other forms of culture enjoy and how comics are perceived.

Comics Studies and the Literary Paradigm

Academic interest in comics has emerged as part of a more wide-spanning project attending to previously neglected forms and practices of popular culture. As such it aligns itself with a cultural studies approach that challenges high-low culture hierarchies and instead finds interest in the discursive formations of everyday patterns of consumption and production. But much like film studies before it, and more recently television and games studies, it is a field involved in the process of asserting itself in the wider academic context. In the case of comics studies this pursuit of legitimisation has, sometimes in ways difficult to untangle, also concerned the status of the form.

Scholars have argued that comics are not only deserving of study because they have historically been, and continue to be, a complex and hitherto under-researched area of cultural production and consumption. They should also be recognised as an art form in their own right (McCloud 1993, Groensteen 2007, Sabin 2003: 9), and for many a key aspect of such recognition is constituted by formal and medium specific frameworks for analysis. Assertions that comics should be acknowledged as a form in its own right thus both challenge the notion of comics as a form of para-literature, as well as the idea of comics as proto-filmic and directly comparable to story-boards. McCloud's *Understanding Comics* (1993) and Thierry Groensteen's *The System of*

Comics (2007) are, to date, the two most comprehensive attempts to account for the various elements and mechanisms that characterise comics. McCloud (1993: 5) takes up Will Eisner's term 'sequential art', and he goes on to address aspects such as temporality, line, iconicity and symbolic signification. In particular, McCloud's explanation of *gutters* (the spaces by which individual comics panels are both connected and separated) and what he calls *closure* (the participation required by readers to produce a meaningful narrative from a sequence of static images) has been influential. Considering this notion, that comics formally amplify the active role and participation of, the term 'closure' is particularly troublesome in the way it conjures pre-determination. Perhaps 'suture' would better express the provisional aspect of such meaning-making. Despite the prominence of the gutter as a formal element of comics, the suggestion that this kind of ellipsis sets comics apart from other narrative forms would be misleading. In both prose and moving image forms contractions, leaps and juxtapositions play an integral role.

But more importantly, McCloud's focus on sequence means that he pays little attention to other, multi-directional rather than linear, relationships between panels and elements within them. Such aspects of comics are more comprehensivly dealt with by Groensteen. *The System of Comics* (2007) expressly aimed to provide a comics-specific and fit-for-purpose framework for formal analysis, which previously had been relying on linguistic frameworks and poached from film theory when linguistics fell short of the task. In it, Groensteen primarily attends to modes of linkage and interrelationship: '… one must recognize the relational play of a plurality of interdependent images as the unique ontological foundation of comics' (Groensteen 2007: 17). Especially in comics that are not short single strips, the dimensions conventionally imposed by newspaper layouts, the relations between various panels on a page, in terms of size, shape, dimensions, are vital considerations in their contribution to narrative rhythm, mood and visual dynamic. '[P]anels can participate in webs of interrelationship that violate narrative sequence, and it is these non-linear relations that truly distinguish comics from other forms of narrative sequence' (Miodrag 2013: 112). Beyond panels themselves, other visual elements, in addition to their representational functions, likewise assume significance relationally. They might work as compositional devices that guide a reader's eye and/or generate significance through processes of repetition and modification. Groensteen's

theoretical 'system', thus, demonstrates a method for tracing what comics do differently by paying attention to complex spatial relationships and his work on the specifics of the form informs my approach to close reading and visual analysis. The purpose here, however, is not to give a comprehensive account of debates concerning form, but rather to acknowledge the contributions of McCloud and Groensteen in terms of comics emerging as an area of scholarship.

Other writers, too, have sought to address comics' formal mechanisms and elements (Baetens 2001: 145- 155; Lefèvre 2010; Hatfield 2005: 32- 52; Kannenberg 2001: 174- 197; Round 2007; Peeters 2007*a*; Duncan and Smith 2009: 127-170; Forceville, Veale and Feyaerts 2010; Miller 2007: 75-102; Miodrag 2013). Although crucially motivated by the position that models developed by literary and film studies are unsuitable and inadequate in the analysis of comics, such onus on textual qualities might be viewed as following precisely a model of literary and film studies, if not their exact schema.

However, comics scholarship takes place under the auspices of a vast array of academic disciplines and institutional departments, and not all comics scholarship gives privileged emphasis to formal elements. There has also been the tracing of the history of the form (Harvey 1973; Kunzle 1973; Gifford 1975; Inge 1978; Barker 1984, 1989; Sabin 2003; Mainardi 2007), its industrial contexts (Wright 2001: 254-281; Klaehn 2007: 27-60, 82-92 ; Round 2010), and research around readers and fan cultures (Klaehn 2007: 163-213; Puszt 2007*a*), including a special collection of comics-related research in *Participations: the online journal of reception and audience studies* (Turnbull, Ntalla and vom Lehn 2012). In addition, national and transnational iterations are emerging as a growing area of research (Berninger, Ecke and Haberkorn 2010: 85- 234). Hatfield (2010: 2) contends that 'the heterogeneous nature of comics means that, in practice, comics study has to be at the intersection of various disciplines (art, literature, communications, etc.)' and that as a field it thus 'seriously questions the compartmentalizing of knowledge that takes place within the academe'. It certainly would seem that the study of comics includes a wide range of perspectives and scholarly frameworks, and that writers on comics do not necessarily restrict themselves to one aspect of comics. However, as Hatfield goes on to

recognise, different approaches often exist side-by-side, rather than engaging each other in ways that would approach asserting pressure on delineated knowledges or paradigms.

Nevertheless, it seems that the association between comics and literature, supported by the connection of material form between graphic novels and books, as traditionally associated with literary forms and their increasingly shared marketing and distribution networks has given rise to a notable and influential presence of literary studies within comics studies. Beyond journals which attend specifically to comics and graphic narrative[viii], articles on comics appearing in journals such as *PMLA* (Modern Languages Association of America), *Modern Fiction Studies*, *College Literature* and *Prose Studies* significantly outnumber articles published in other fields. For example, special issues on graphic narrative have been published by *Melus* (volume 32, issue 3, fall 2007), *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* (volume 52, issue 4, winter 2006), *College Literature* (volume 38, issue 3, July 1st 2011) and *SubStance* (volume 40, issue 124, number 1, 2011) compared to a section dedicated to comics study in *Cinema Journal* (volume 50, issue 3, 2011). The recently announced first Graphic Novel competition in the UK (January 2012) is jointly organised by *Myriad* publishers and the English department at Sussex University, and the winning entries for the *Cape/ Observer* Graphic Short Story Prize were exhibited at Foyles bookstore in London. In the UK the first accredited course specifically devoted to comics is an MLitt offered at the University of Dundee, while the University of Florida's graduate track in Comics and Visual Rhetoric is run by its English department.

It has been noted that '[m]uch of the discussion about comics as literature is an inversion of earlier discourses about comics during the height of the anti-mass culture crusade of the mid-twentieth century' (Beaty 2012: 45), and that the interest in and incorporation of comics into research and curriculum, appears to be occurring most notably within disciplines traditionally associated with literature. Beyond departments directly identifying themselves under the rubric of Literature, this includes Modern Languages, American Studies, French departments etc. This might be due to an increasingly integrated approach that incorporates visual culture (film,

photography and architecture provide further examples) as a subject of interest. The implications, however, of comics being studied within a certain tradition, with particular methodological preferences and models, frames of reference and terminology are significant. As asserted by Beaty, we might also attribute a lesser emphasis on comics 'as a form of visual culture' (ibid: 44) to claims to legitimacy being repeatedly constructed for particular comics by insisting on their value 'as literature' (ibid). It would be unfair to claim that this has somehow diminished analysis of or attention to the visual qualities, strategies and formal attributes of comics. Yet, it seems ironic that despite the keen observations by critics (Hatfield 2005: 36-37; Carrier 2000: 28, 74; Chute 2008: 452) that comics themselves refute a historical and cultural dichotomy between words and images, and the hierarchies of value it involves, comics studies seem to privilege literary analogies over potential connections with more overtly visual categories.

Calls for recognition of the form itself have recurrently been made in conjunction with claims for the literary credentials of certain comics (Hatfield 2005; Chute 2008; Versaci 2008; Williams 2010), and thus the capacity of the form to qualify in terms of literary merit. As far as non-fiction comics are concerned, the specificity of the form has not precluded comparative analysis and reading, but it is noticeable that certain categorisations recur in the literature; autobiography, biography, journalism and so on. Before the notion of comics 'as literature' completely sets and solidifies, this thesis explores a different framework for considering these particular comics. That '[t]he mutual relation between literal and figurative levels at work in images and sequences, is […] a continuing point of focus in scholarship on film and television documentary' (Corner 2007: 11) suggests a potential for productive dialogue between the two fields.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to situate comics in terms of key stages and aspects of the social construction of the form, albeit with a self-confessed geo-cultural bias. It has also included some significant debates surrounding the form, particularly with respect to its cultural position and standing. The move from anonymously produced

throw-away commodities, dismissed as being of scant worth or sophistication or right-out condemned as harmful, to authored products, higher production values and critical recognition is far from a conclusive transformation. Nevertheless, the comics examined as part of this thesis can be located within and as playing a part in this, however partial and uneven, reconfiguration of the social construction of the form. All of them are long form comics that prominently showcase their status as authored cultural products. In their chosen subject matters and approaches these comics deal with topics and communicate on issues reaching beyond established genres and conventions.

More specifically, they insist on the capacity of comics to represent and address actual historical persons and events. Because comics have traditionally been associated with discourses antithetical to nonfiction (such as the fantastic, unreal and humorous) and an invitation to imagine (Barker 1989: 301) the extra-textual prompts that guide readers are particularly important. These range from (often considerably lengthy) forewords, quotes by critics and publishers on front and back-covers to reviews, in print and on-line, and media attention generally. Yet effectively, these texts claim a role for comics as a deliberately and explicitly discursive form of communication. This, as argued in relation to documentary in chapter one, does not exclude or contradict their capacity to entertain. Nor does it in any way diminish the importance of aesthetic dimensions.

In fact, aesthetic considerations form an important part of my argument for bringing these comics into dialogue with documentary. As this chapter has noted, comics are 'a dominantly visual narrative species' (Groensteen 2007: 7) and as such it seems inconsistent to continually align them with literary paradigms to the exclusion of other frames of reference. It is my contention that these comics, in addition to a narrative and explicitly visual character, exhibit what chapter one describes as a documentary mode of address. Important to this concept, is that such a mode of address invites readers to understand the images and accounts offered as 'of the world' rather than imagined. Although cues and conventions play an important role in extending such a position, it is not wholly dependent on or necessarily tied to

extant sets of conventions. It thus does not preclude varied and disparate aesthetic and stylistic approaches.

The aim of the thesis is to make visible hitherto neglected commonalities between certain comics and documentary in such a way that the particularities of comics are fully recognised, while resisting a narrowly medium-specific approach. By analysing examples of comics in relation to key concerns around which documentary debates cluster, I want to examine the contribution that comics might make to documentary representation; how aspects of the shared and social real might become visible in ways that correspond but also differ. But before moving on to such concerns, it is essential to attend to the very issue that the proposed convergence between comics and documentary highlights and queries. This is the assumption underpinning most of the thinking about documentary, even that of the writers who I have drawn on to formulate my core definition in chapter one. Namely, that documentary is inherently tied to specific media.

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[i] Jan Baetens (2011*b*) has proposed that colour, and by extension the choices to avoid it in favour of a monochromatic aesthetic, is an important aspect of comics that often remains overlooked. Baetens suggests that this too, to some extent has been a consequence of critics coming from scholarly contexts that do not necessarily equip them with the appropriate analytical tools or sensitivities (ibid: 113).

[ii] Barker's more recent writing in which he compares critical and audience responses to Joe Sacco's work suggests that he would not be a stranger to such a suggestion.

[iii] The issue of defensive criticism in relation to comics as a hybrid form was explicitly addressed by Miodrag in a paper presented at the *Joint International Conference of Bandes Dessinée, Graphic Novels and Comics* in Manchester, June 6th 2011.

[iv] The series *Classics Illustrated* (1941 -1971) tellingly include strong advice to obtain and read the originals at the end of titles such as *Crime and Punishment* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Schwartz [1952] 2004: 52-53).

[v] The concept had initially seen light of day in an underground comic, *Funny Animals*, published by Apex Novelties in 1972.

[vi] The description 'graphic novel' was allegedly first used by Will Eisner to invoke cultural cachet when he tried (unsuccessfully) to persuade a publisher to print *A Contract with God*, *and Other Tenement Stories* (1978), his subsequently published and well received collection of short stories set in 1930s Bronx.

[vii] 'Titan Books who had published two out of the Big 3 were now confirmed as the biggest graphic novel publisher in Britain, publishing not just American fare, but European albums as well' (Sabin 2003: 247) .

[viii] *ImageTexT;* published by the English Department at the University of Florida, *International Journal of Comic Art*, *Image [&] Narrative (*bi-lingual; French and English), *European Comic Art* (Liverpool University Press), *Studies in Comics* (Intellect) and *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* (Taylor and Francis).

'Pointing in different directions: photographic realism, hand-crafted drawings and the truth claims of images'

As noted earlier, writing on documentary largely remains grounded in the implicit assumption that documentary is a category defined by its use of recording technologies. This understanding unites otherwise plural, and at times competing, positions. It would thus seem that the most immediate and apparent obstacle to thinking about comics as documentary, concerns the qualitative differences presented by their cartoon figures and often obviously hand-rendered images, in relation to the type of images we associate with documentary. These differences include both aesthetics and processes of production. The relay and resistance between these aspects are further complicated by questions of value.

This chapter will examine discourses of realism and authenticity in camera-derived and hand-crafted images, respectively. But it will also address the way the documentary image and the means of its production interacts with the social meaning of objectivity, understood as that marked as different from the subjective (Porter 1994: 197). These concepts, and their relation to modes of representation and the production of knowledge, have been the subject of theorising and debate in fields that might seem disparate, yet converge around documentary. The philosophy of the natural and social sciences, historiography, ethnography and aesthetics all raise questions in relation to objectivity, subjectivity and conceptions of realism. Contesting the essentialist account of documentary as a product of technological invention and exempt from extant conventions (Ellis and McLane 2011: 1-6)*,* this thesis instead locates the emergence of documentary as part of a nexus of influences such as 19th century social reportage, campaigning journalism and the enquiries of the nascent social sciences, alongside the realist and naturalist movements in art and literature (Keating 1989: 303-306).

For this reason, the chapter opens with a brief outline of the multiple contexts and the at times competing meanings inferred by the terms realism and naturalism, in order

to understand how they might converge at the point of the recorded image. It then examines the notion of the recorded image as visual evidence. The causal or, in semiotic terminology, *indexical link* between image and the real it depicts, has been held as the underpinning principle of the visual document and tacitly motivates documentary's claims to truth (Winston 1995: 6; Vaughan 1999: 189; Fetveit 1999: 787; Roscoe and Hight 2001: 6, 39). I will endeavour to unpick the complex and intertwined aspects of this notion by dealing with, in turn, debates concerning the photographic trace function and discourses of objectivity, including ways that institutional uses have validated the authority of recorded images. However, I argue that, as it derives from contingency and excess, the notion of authenticity that imbues and is specific to photographic realism can be extricated from a discourse of evidence and proof. The chapter then goes on to address the equally culturally contingent, albeit differently configured, ways in which discourses of authenticity play out in relation to hand-drawn cartoon images (Dexter 2005; El Refaie 2010), before entering into analysis of Harvey Pekar's *American Splendor* (2004). I will argue that the plurality and visual diversity of *American Splendor* drastically de-familiarises visual conventions of the documentary image, but that it nonetheless persuasively performs in a documentary mode. This is a text that thus offers a particularly germane example of comics as documentary, and of the intervention staged by documentary comics.

Realism/s

'[Realism-] both as a practice and a critical concept – is the subject of never-ending contestation.'

(O'Sullivan *et al,* quoted in Kilburn and Izod 1997: 44)

At the outset of *Social Realism and Documentary Graphic Novels* (2008), Jeff Adams qualifies his use of the term 'realism' in line with arguments according to which particular realist representational schema mask, reproduce and naturalise bourgeois ideology: 'The term realism is frequently conflated with mimesis, or 'likeness' of depiction; in this book however, realism refers to political critiques of

beliefs and values, as opposed to the correspondence of depictions to (pre-existing) ideas about lifelike representations' (Adams 2008: 9-10). Here realism used in association with the terminology of art history is pushed closer to the concept of critical realism. According to this understanding reality cannot necessarily be accessed by scrutiny of appearances, surfaces or disassociated facts. Following Marxist analysis, the superstructure of cultural production and commodities is underpinned by a base of economic structures and relations. In order to make sense of phenomena and events in the social world, underlying structures, power relationships and frameworks must be given recognition; hence the critique of the seemingly 'natural', self-evident or common-sense which Adams refers to.

Yet realism has culturally and historically been tied precisely to ideas of representational likeness. This relation between the close observation and representation of physical realities and realism is acknowledged by Adams, if only in order to distance his own approach from it. Considering the central, some would argue constitutive, role of photographic realism in documentary, and the disruption to this convention posed by comics that take as their material the real, I propose that this is a topic that deserves closer scrutiny.

With regard to literature, naturalism is a more inquiring extension of mimetic realism (Furst and Skrine 1971), whereas realism in art is tied closely to social observation, beyond the verisimilitude of naturalist painting (Nochlin 1971). In film studies, too, realism and naturalism are considered competing concepts (Beattie 2004: 14), it would seem in accordance with the literary and dramaturgical model rather than the genealogy of painting described by Nochlin. The connection between nineteenth century French realist painting and the Griersonian documentary sought by Brian Winston (2008: 31-33) is an exception in this regard. More often, however, realism stands for the believable construction of a world, in terms of surface attributes and detail, while naturalism infers an inquiry beyond plausibility and likeness. Realism in fictional films aims to make the portrayed world, its characters and events, seem plausible while documentary realism operates in order to make its argument or claim about the real world convincing (Beattie 2004: 14). However, this application of the terms emphasises the functions of narrative, character and mis-en-scene. In terms of

documentary the equivalent would concern the kinds of choices and decisions taken by its producers at the level of construction. In what follows, focus will shift to the image itself. At this point I want to make clear the recognition that documentary representation is not restricted to visual matters alone. The complexities of comics' representation of sound will be addressed later in the chapter, as part of the discussion of specific comics.

Photographic realism

This research attends to visual texts that, crucially, do not mobilise the close association between pictorial naturalism and realism that characterises documentary film, TV and photography. Instead they extend an invitation to trust their representations as truthful depictions of real events and experiences, whilst using varying degrees of abstraction and stylised representation. It may, indeed, be precisely the element of hand-drawn imagery that constitutes the most apparent obstacle to understanding such texts as documentary. This is why, while Adams has aligned his frameworks with critical realism from the outset, I find it necessary to explore in more detail the implications of photographic realism as a component of documentary and consequently the effects of its displacement.

It seems reasonable to suggest that, in the particular context of documentary, camera-derived imagery has been employed according to 'its trivial realism – its meticulous, objective and impersonal representation of the surface attributes of matter' (Slater 1995: 222). However, this quote demonstrates the commonplace conflation of two, quite separate aspects of photographic realism that in combination provide certain images with considerable persuasive force; the representation of external attributes and surfaces in ways corresponding to human vision and the idea of objectivity. Both these aspects are complex enough, in and of themselves, to warrant separate examination. Leaving the issue of objectivity to one side for the moment, I will first attend to the pictorial characteristics of photographic realism.

The kinds of narrative and character-driven realisms at work in moving image forms, with the exception of animation[i], seem to be fundamentally underwritten by the optical correspondences offered by the photographic or electronic image. And, as the concern here is specifically visual, in that it relates to the characteristics of the image, it makes sense to adopt the term 'realism' in accordance with art historical terminology. For their analysis of how meanings are generated in visual communication, social semioticians Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen (1996) borrow Genette's term *modality* from literary theory for the expression of 'the truth value or credibility of ... statements about the world' (ibid: 155). They note that naturalism privileges the correspondence between the visual representation of something particular and how we would normally see it with the naked eye. This informs what we might, in a final twist of the complex interactions between naturalism and realism, think of as photographic realism.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen, the dominant measure for judging an image truthful in contemporary Western culture is its proximity to a particular type of photographic image. 'We judge an image real when, for instance, its colours are approximately as saturated as those in the standard, the most widely used photographic technology' (ibid: 159). This describes a kind of feed-back loop, through which recorded images not only bear a particular likeness to the real, but simultaneously inscribe, constitute and configure particular culturally held conceptions of the real. According to Sobchack (1994: 84): 'historical changes in our contemporary "sense" of temporality, spatiality, and existential and embodied presence cannot be considered less than a consequence of correspondent changes in our technologies of representation'.

Consequently, there are those who argue that the preponderance of photographic and film imagery circulating through mass media cultures has garnered an understanding of reality as essentially photographic or filmic (Sontag 1979: 87; Black 2002: 7-11; Dittmer 2010: 226); 'over the course of the last hundred and fifty years we have come to accept the image of photography and film as reality' (Manovich 2002: 200). The implications of this have been interpreted variously as the erosion of actual events (Daniel Boorstin's 1992 concept of the 'pseudo-event' and Jean Baudrillard's

contentious assertion in 1991 that 'the Gulf war never happened'), that vision has become essentially pornographic (Jameson 1992: 1) or that people conditioned to all-pervading technologies of vision, instead of seeing more, accrue a 'sightless vision' that in turn effects a 'waning of reality' (Virilio [1988] 1994: 49). Along similar lines, although engaging a more modest remit, others (Andrew 1997: 293; Black 2002: 6) have noted that visual media (in particular film) content, as well as the conventions they employ, generate comparisons and references in ways that have come to contribute to and create social expectations. In particular, that the significance of events we experience becomes marked and authenticated through recording by visual and/ or audio-visual means, to the point that the act of recording and the resultant products have come to overshadow the events and experiences that occasion them.

Contesting alarmist tendencies in relation to what is often described as an increasingly image-saturated real, W. J. T. Mitchell (2005) argues that the potency of images precedes the exponential increase in image circulation brought about by photography and graphic reproduction. For Mitchell the culturally felt and expressed tensions in relation to images can instead be traced to the unstable and indeterminable combination of ideation and iconicity they represent. Jacques Rancière (2009: 96) likewise rejects the idea that the contemporary accumulation of images should be perceived as a particular cause for concern. More explicitly relevant here, however, is the observation that the ubiquity of certain kinds of recorded images, in particular those that through technological endeavours and advances aspire to proximate human environmental vision, have not engendered some kind of 'new' mode of vision, so much as it has impacted conventions of realism and of pictorial depiction (Maynard 1997: 191-199). Photographic realism might be one particular kind of pictorial depiction, yet in terms of the visual representation of reality it constitutes the culturally dominant paradigm. However, rather than accredited to a particular capacity for likeness, or resemblance to visual experiences of the world around us, the significance of recorded images tends to be figured in relation to the idea of a direct relationship between image and referent.

The question of the indexical

It has been said that the photograph promises privileged information (Sontag 1979: 22) of its referent in the world without which the photograph would not exist; 'Every photograph is a certificate of presence' (Barthes 2000: 87). This is the photograph understood as the potent correlation of iconicity and indexicality, and that which apparently underscores documentary's evidential capacity at the level of the image, and ultimately rebuts the uncertainties raised by processes of selection, construction and the imposition of narrative described in chapter one.

> Only a photographic lens can give us the kind of image of the object that is capable of satisfying the deep need man has to substitute for it something more than a mere approximation, a kind of decal or transfer. The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it. No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discoloured, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction.
>
> (Bazin 1967: 11)

This valorisation of the trace of the real can be understood as elemental particularly to the work of the *nouvelle vague* directors associated with Bazin and the Italian neo-realist film-makers he wrote about (Williams 1973). It also holds a particular resonance for direct cinema and cinema vérité, but in addition informs understandings of documentary more generally. Documentary's claim to authority has been repeatedly linked to the indexical link between its images and the real that it addresses (Winston 1995: 6; Fetveit 1999: 787; Vaughan 1999: 189; Roscoe and Hight 2001: 6, 39), even if often in order to challenge it.

There are, on the other hand, also those who accentuate the information-carrying trace as the defining feature of documentary. Gregory Currie's (1999: 285-297) alignment of the photographic image with the footprint and death mask, thus, works to distinguish documentary from testimony through means such as writing, painting and drawing. Important for this distinction is that the former, as traces, are 'belief independent' (ibid: 287) and that 'only real things can leave traces of themselves' (ibid), while it is possible through verbal and other kinds of pictorial means to represent wholly imaginary events and scenarios. For Jonathan Rosenkrantz (2011: no pagination), too, the photographic image is crucially set apart from drawing in that it 'requires and gives evidence of its referent'. The idea of evidentiality as the ontological quality of imaging and other recording technologies, and as a result a requisite for documentary, has shown itself to be persistent despite numerous critical voices. Currie's (1999) staunch assertions of documentary authenticity by virtue of incorporating a trace of the real drew criticism from, among others, Carl Plantinga (see chapter one). Yet recent contributions to the field (Rosenkrantz 2011; Ellis and McLane 2011) continue to invoke the notion of documentary as offering a privileged access to events in the real world due to the trace function of its recorded material. I find such arguments insufficiently account for the role played by contingent codes of representation and processes of negotiation, and as I have already made clear, my understanding of documentary instead aligns with positions taken by writers such as Trinh (1993), Bruzzi (2006), and Rancière (2006). Nevertheless, the guiding assumption that documentary is determined by particular technologies remains, even in these more nuanced configurations of the category. The idea of camera-derived images as a precondition for documentary is profoundly incompatible with thinking in terms of documentary comics, thus instigating further consideration of its theoretical grounding.

Any examination of the oft-repeated evocation of the indexical, and its relation to the notion of photographic proof, calls first for a basic introduction of this concept. According to a most simplistic and basic description the symbolic sign is arbitrary or conventional (such as an alphabetic letter or a traffic light), the iconic sign bears a resemblance to that which it signifies (a painted portrait, an image from a fiction film

or an imitative gesture) and the indexical (a footprint in the sand, smoke from a fire and an analogue photograph) has a direct, causal or existential, connection with its signified. Daniel Chandler (2007: 44) has observed that signs are not necessarily of one type or another, but can encompass various combinations of the above characteristics. The photograph has been deemed a prime example of this; often iconic and indexical simultaneously. Its iconicity constitutes the basis for photographic realism, while the attribute of indexicality seemingly gives rise to the notion of proof that gives photographic realism particular sway. Yet, the dual notion of the photograph as the paradigmatic instance of the indexical sign, and indexicality as the most salient aspect of the photograph, is fundamentally problematic. The evocation of a direct relation between the analogue, and supposedly truly indexical, photograph and its referent overlooks the multiple electro-chemical processes involved in the production of such an image, 'the very process of *all* traditional photography always has the potential to cause a massive haemorrhaging of the supposed indexicality of the medium' (Hainge 2008: 717, original emphasis). Yet, the integrity attributed to the index as physical trace in analogue photography forms the base on which digital technologies have been cast as a threat to the credibility of image making. As the documentary image and its status as document are ostensibly at stake when contemplating comics in a documentary capacity, some of these discussions around digital means deserve brief mention.

For documentary, debates around digital imagery fall into two distinguishable categories although the debates themselves have sometimes overlapped. First, those concerned with images created by means of computer programmes, often displaying high levels of photographic realism but without specific pro-filmic counterparts. For some, this precipitates the erosion of documentary credibility (Metz 2008). For others the inclusion of subjunctive material in documentaries such as computer image 'simulation […] concerned with what could be, would be or might have been' (Wolf, 1999: 274), is occasion to critically re-evaluate the privileged position of indexical correspondence (Wolf 1999; Moran 1999). At this point a certain slippage occurs towards the connection between a perceived erosion of credibility and the digital image more generally (Vaughan 1999: 189; Winston 1995: 6; Roscoe and Hight 2001: 39; Fetveit 1999: 787).

Digital information is essentially malleable and consequently, through techniques of electronic montage and manipulation, can radically alter the reality it represents. What we once trusted as 'pictures of reality' can be seamlessly and undiscernibly edited and modified.

(Biressi and Nunn 2005: 32-33).

Here anxiety surrounds the lack of fixity in images recorded and stored as data. However, more optimistic evaluations have included the possibility of considering anew the boundary territories connecting fact and fiction (Landesman 2008), and the impetus to finally separate 'the project of realism from ontology of the medium' (Mitchell 2010: 23). Of course not only digital means have generated these kinds of debates, some twenty years ago similar discussions occurred around the electronic image and, in particular, the impact of video (Jameson 1991; Bauman 1995; Sobchack 1994: 99-104).

However, late twentieth century debates concerning the ubiquity of visual reproductions have tended to make little distinction between analogue film and electronic images, nor have discussions about documentary credibility. It does not seem to matter greatly whether the excess of images we supposedly are swamped by are mechanical and electro-chemical reproductions, electronic or digital. Nor does a documentary immediately raise suspicion by being recorded and broadcast using digital cameras and cables. Even passport photographs are now routinely taken using digital cameras. Thus the concept of a 'paradigm of recording' (Lelong 1988, cited by Ricoeur 2004: 162) offers a useful description that gives due acknowledgement to the role, and potential affect, of technological means of production, yet does not overstate medium-specific considerations. Moreover, it includes both audio and visual representation. Conceding that (some) hand-drawn images also record and that technological processes of recording by no means preclude interpretation, I will nevertheless from now on use the term 'recorded image' as a way of differentiating a technological process of transferring information from that of interpretative pictorial representation. This serves to acknowledge that while interpretative representations

might also use technological means, such as computer software, they nevertheless eschew the paradigm of recording.

Nevertheless, while adopting varied stances in relation to the weight and consequence of the indexical link, the aforementioned debates still largely build on the assumption of the index as a trace function. Conversely, and in a move that informs the broader argument of this chapter, Mary Ann Doane's (2007) and Tom Gunning's (2007: 30) respective re-evaluations of Peirce's concept of the index argue that in his original theorisation this incorporates far broader meanings than that of a physical trace. While Peirce's examples of the index that have become most reiterated are those that can also be described as traces or imprints, his own favourite instance was that of the weathervane (Hoopes 1991: 12), and others included medical symptoms, a ringing phone, non-synthetic odours and flavours (Chandler 2007: 37) and utterances that shift attention in particular directions, such as a pronoun or the word 'this'. 'Peirce's discussion of the index includes a large range of signs and indications, including "anything which focuses attention" (Philosophical 108) and the general hailing and deixic functions of language and gesture' (Gunning 2007: 30). In other words, although trace-type indicality might incorporate iconicity[ii], other indices have a symbolic dimension (Doane 2007: 2). While this might hint at an unhelpfully broad definition, the tendency to understand the indexical sign specifically as a trace function is both reductive and misleading (Gunning 2007; Doane 2007). Moreover, instead of thinking in terms of types of sign a more apt conceptualisation would be 'modes of relationship' (Chandler 2007: 44). Having sufficiently disturbed any assumption of privileged truth-value at the level of the documentary image as a quality intrinsically linked to particular technologies, I want to instead make use of the notion of the indexical as a pointing function. In what follows I will consider the difference between the drawn images in comics and 'the paradigm of recording' (Lelong 1988, cited by Ricoeur 2004: 162) in terms of culturally held understandings of truth and knowledge they respectively gesture towards. The intention is not to construct a binary model, but rather to understand the associations involved in the social construction of these different kinds of images.

Discourses of objectivity

Despite photography's intrinsic truth-value having been the subject of recurring contestation, even by those critics who uphold the privileged status of the trace, the credibility of recording technologies remains wedded to the notion of objectivity in ways seemingly impervious to rational argument. 'The photograph has acquired a symbolic value, and its fine grain and evenness of detail have come to imply objectivity; photographic vision has become a primary metaphor for objective truth' (Daston and Galison 1992: 120). Socio-historical concerns with objective representation, of importance not merely for documentary but in journalistic and scientific discourses, too, are thus embedded in the mechanically recorded image. In order to fully understand the sway held by such images, and the reasons why, it is useful to briefly outline some historical factors that have shaped, and continue to inform cultural meanings attached to the recorded image.

As the nineteenth century unfolded, knowledge achieved by empirical methods and its dissemination through means that underlined transparency and a belief in 'facts speaking for themselves' cut across emerging disciplines and professions from journalism (de Burgh 2000: 35-36) to the natural and political sciences (Poovey 1998: 29). This conception of knowledge, that simultaneously sets significant store in instruments and the relationship between 'observed particulars and general knowledge' (ibid: 307) is vital to understanding the development of the camera, and the social functions it came to fulfil.

Winston (1993: 39) has explained the affiliation of the camera alongside scientific instruments (such as the thermometer, barometer etc) as signalling '[p]hotography's scientific ability to produce an image mechanically is the earnest of its accuracy as a copy of the original'. Considering the considerable disparity between the images produced by early cameras and the way their subjects would have looked to the human eye, or spectator, the term accuracy is misleadingly pointing toward the idea of precise likeness. Moreover, lens-based vision does not necessarily correspond with what the human eye can see, x-ray and infra-red photography surpass the capacity of the human eye. Again this bears no particular relation to photographic

modality as understood by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) or verisimilitude according to human sight. Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison (1992: 120) have asserted that '[n]onintervention, not verisimilitude, lay at the heart of mechanical objectivity'. But when mechanical vision accords with human vision and grants iconic recognition, its simultaneous recording of minutiae beyond intention invokes a completeness of vision. The status and value of this particular type of realism is significantly bolstered by a perceived inscription of objectivity that fuses mechanical objectivity with aperspectival objectivity (ibid). Daston and Galison suggest that in a contemporary understanding of objectivity these two separate aspects have become amalgamated; the mechanical objectivity that ostensibly remedies the interpretive impulses and subjective distortions of human interference is one that simultaneously has come to imply aperspectival objectivity, or 'a view from nowhere' (Nagel 1986). Such a fusion, of course, belies the inherently specific perspective any such lens based image constitutes. However, this anomaly appears to be off-set by the emblematic weight of idealised objectivity. In other words, the recorded image embodies a symbolic index function (Doane 2007: 2).

To understand the authoritative status of proof that photographic images have accumulated, their instrumental uses must also be taken into account (Tagg 1988: 60-102; Virilio 1994; Taylor 1998: 8). This status has been significantly 'produced and reproduced by certain privileged ideological apparatuses, such as scientific establishments, government departments, the police and the law courts' (Tagg 1988: 160). Photographic means of reproduction initially developed as part of a culturally pervasive emphasis on scientific enquiry. Soon, within a configuration of reformist currents, speedy technological innovation 'in perfect keeping with the ongoing processes of industrialization' (Kracauer 1965: 5) and the establishment of bureaucratic state apparatus, photography was adapted and incorporated into strategies of systematic surveillance and control (Sontag 1979: 22; Tagg 1988: 60-102). Yet it would be wrong to treat photography as a singular or unified practice. From its inception photography has performed multiple functions in a variety of contexts- commercial, domestic and institutional (Wells 2009: 19). Often different functions are co-present, for example a photograph can function as social record and aesthetic expression simultaneously (Tagg 2003; Rancière 2009). Nonetheless the scientific and institutional authority embedded in the recorded image significantly

contribute in terms of its associations with the social meaning of objectivity; that which is marked as different to the subjective, understood as 'fundamentally personal, and often, from the standpoint of an outsider, arbitrary' (Porter 1995: 197). This cultural tendency towards binary oppositions as a way of making sense produces its own consequences.

Much as early photographers struggled to attain recognition as artists as a result of using mechanical means of pictorial production (Winston 2008: 21-22), so hand-crafted visual representation became marginalised within factual discourse. Notwithstanding traditions of technical (Veltman 1979) and scientific (Daston and Galison 1992: 81-128) drawing based on values of precision and verisimilitude, the mechanical objectivity offered by the new technologies of vision in the nineteenth century substituted hand rendered images both in the visual communication of scientific research and also gradually replaced them in newspapers and illustrated magazines (Barnhurst and Nerone 2000; Brown 2002: 239). This ostensibly contributed further to the positioning of drawing as a polar opposite to the notions of objectivity and empirical transparency, as they became increasingly associated with the recorded image.

The authenticity of incidental detail

The idea of certain technologies as constitutive of documentary, and of such means as 'technologies of truth-telling' (Juhasz and Lerner 2006: 11), is in no small part reinforced by their association with institutional and scientifically orientated discourses of objectivity. However, their centrality to the project of visually and narratively representing and engaging with the world in a documentary mode can nevertheless not be reduced to a naïve faith in the transparency and authority of lens-based images. Nor does the dismantling of the idea of a direct bond between image and referent seem to lessen the particular fascinations of pictorial naturalism afforded by various recording technologies. To a certain extent it might be explained by the idea that, whether as still or animated images, photographic realism offers a certain approximation of human environmental vision that strengthens the imagined act of seeing that images facilitate (see chapter one, p. 40).

In order to adequately address this question it is helpful to return, once again, to Bazin. There is no doubt that his proclamations, regarding a direct bond between certain types of images and their referents, have provided a significant point of reference in debates around the evidential function of photography and film. Yet, Bazin was alert to the idea of artifice and aesthetic means constituting realism in art; 'There is not one, but several realisms. Each era looks for its own, that is to say the technique and the aesthetic which can best capture it, arrest and restore whatever one wishes to capture of reality' (Bazin 1948, cited in Williams 1980: 41). What he did attach importance to and valorise, nevertheless, was the ability of photography and film to capture the contingent and that which exceeds intentionality; the idea of photographic realism as a pictorial depiction of minutiae and fleeting impressions. Like Siegfried Kracauer (1965), and Barthes in his later musings on the *punctum* of photographs (2000: 47-60), Bazin cherished that which exceeds narrative function, allowing the real to emerge in 'its unpredictable heterogeneity' (Margulies 2003: 9). Similarly for Kracauer, the fascination of film lies in 'the establishment of physical existence' (1965: 41-59), but despite the tone of this pronouncement his interest appears more focused on affect, than in any process of verification. He, too, particularly valorises the, partly inadvertent, retention of 'the refuse' (ibid: 54) of reality; that which would perhaps be passed by or overlooked by human perceptual vision, as well as the capacity to render strange and new that which familiarity and habitual seeing might pass by without further notice (ibid: 55-56). This emphasis on incidental detail is elaborated further by Maynard (1997: 199-216, see also Ellis 2000: 19), for whom the particular appeal of photographs (and this would equally hold for moving image recording either on film or by electronic means) resides in the potential to retrospectively detect details, nuances and relationships. So doing, Maynard claims, ameliorates 'a well-known sense of always missing something that attends our lives (missing either in the sense of not noticing or of noticing but underestimating)' (ibid: 207). Despite a certain loose affinity between the idea of detection and notions of 'truth', this capacity of recorded images seems to me to bear a more convincing relation to an imprecise notion of authenticity than it evinces a purposeful evidential force. The vital aspect that both Bazin and Kracauer highlight is the incorporation and retention of that which exceeds intentionality. This particular

kind of realism hinges on excess; the incidental and the contingent, and it of course operates both in fiction and texts that adopt a documentary mode of address.

However, whether or not such images are the closest and most trustworthy representation of reality would also depend on the extent to which one configures reality as an external entity, with its own, independent existence. Bazin, although aware of the contingent character of aesthetic realisms, was in a metaphysical sense a committed realist; for him reality is 'out there' (Rosen 2003: 44). Thus the idea of capturing the fleeting and elusive real, and in the case of film, the ability to re-animate an event, is the seductive promise offered by particular technologies. This is a stance increasingly seen as beset with problems, as narratives of objective knowledge, universal truths and the possibility of neutral representational practices have become subject to critical scrutiny, theoretical scepticism and political pressure. These wider cultural shifts and issues around representation are clearly of significant importance in terms of the encounters between reality and its representation in documentary. Or rather, the terms on which documentary texts are understood. As chapter one has indicated, documentary's inconsistency has perpetually been its most consistent feature. A documentary mode of address spans across texts that are wildly diverse, making delineations according to themes, approaches or, indeed, aesthetics a thorny task. To anchor such aspects to particular time periods is particularly problematic. Combined with the inevitable filter of the present through which texts from an earlier time-period are coloured, this would make an attempt to historicise a correlation between documentary practices and an increased cultural scepticism of claims to objective and neutral knowledge beset with difficulty.

Neverteless, issues of veracity, manipulation and the limits of truth claims are expressly related to discourses of objectivity. The very prominence of such issues in debates around documentary speaks to an ideal founded on the purportedly neutral and evidential character of recorded material, and 'document-ness' of such images. If not necessarily in documentary practice, then at least in the theorising surrounding it. More recent contributions have come to recognise that subjectivity can be discerned as an ingredient in documentary throughout its history (Renov 2004: xviii- xxi), and that documentary does not necessarily, nor has it historically, seen as its ideal the

production of some kind of duplication of the reality it depicts (Bruzzi 2006: 13-14). What once was perceived to be problematic is now more likely to be conceived of as a condition of credibility. Thus, instead of trying to identify changes in documentary itself, shifts can be more usefully traced in the attitudes towards and expectations of this category. Thinking about documentary seems to be undergoing a discursive shift, from how truths about an objective reality might be captured (in line with Bazin), and indeed constructed, to identifying the role of conventions and a greater emphasis on partial perspectives, encounter and performance. However, this does not alter, or diminish, the capacities of recorded images to offer up the affect of the incidental and excess detail that marks their particular authenticity.

The drawn image: from objective ideal to overt interpretation

Having outlined the authenticity of photographic realism as at least theoretically distinguishable from socio-historical and institutional discourses of objectivity, it is now time to consider drawn images, and particularly the drawn images in comics. In her attempts to come to terms with the truth claims of autobiographical comics in relation to their visual representations, Elisabeth El Refaie (2010) has argued that Kress and van Leeuwen's concept of visual modality, relying as it does on specific socially constructed codes in relation to visual style, is insufficient. For El Refaie the notion of a naturalist modality that correlates to the way the human eye, and apparently by extension photography, fails to account for comics visualities. Thus in place of modality she offers the concept of authenticity, as a more suitable way to negotiate between cartooning and the earnest register of autobiography. As comics that exhibit significantly differing degrees of pictorial naturalism, this concept of authenticity offers a more convincing explanation for their truth claims by being 'producer-oriented' (El Refaie 2010: 169) and 'relates to the specific narratives surrounding the origins of images' (ibid: 165). El Refaie is rightly cautious in expanding on this producer-oriented concept and its remit. Nevertheless, as her writing concerns autobiographical comics it would be tempting to interpret this authenticity as dependent on the artist and narrator being one and the same person, and the examples she raises indeed comply with this. However, there are prominent

examples of comics adopting what I have called a documentary address for which such a model becomes problematic.

Harvey Pekar's *American Splendor* (2004) offers a particularly fruitful case study for examining the particular claim to credibility staged by the hand-drawn imagery in documentary comics, and how their multiple iterations and varying degrees of pictorial naturalism radically intervene in debates around the relationship between documentary image and referent. In terms of genre, critics (Witek 1989: 121- 156; Hatfield 2005: 108- 127; Sperb 2006; Hight 2007; Wolk 2007: 203-204; Gardner 2008; Beaty 2009; Tabachnik 2011: 102) have tended to consider *American Splendor* in terms of autobiography, although Pekar's collaborative practice complicates the notion of authorship in ways not adequately reflected by such a label (Bredehoft 2011) and its formal diversity makes it resistant to categorization based on stylistic markers. Thomas Bredehoft particularly queries how the collaboration with an artist whose visual style is well-known and widely recognized (in this instance Robert Crumb) complicates the notion of authorship, an issue that in turn has implications for the work's status as autobiographical.

Another comic, Emmanuel Guibert's *Le Photographe/ The Photographer* (2009), has similarly caused debate, over whether its autobiographical story-telling, mediated through the script and drawing of another, can still lay claim to autobiographical status and authenticity. Jan Baetens' (2004, cited by Groensteen 2010: 18) concludes that such collaboration should not be rejected as non-authentic 'when a collaboration works well'. Setting aside the arbitrary criteria in question, Groensteen goes on to qualify the story-telling as autobiographical and the image-making as allographic. Nelson Goodman (1976: 113) has distinguished autographic arts (such as painting – which can be forged) from allographic arts (music, drama etc. in which a two part operation involving writing and performance enables multiples of the work to exist). The use of a typewriter or keyboard can thus be said to produce an allographic alphabet, whereas handwriting by contrast is an autographic form. In the context of Groensteen's discussion I take the term 'allographic' to mean a performance based on a prior account. The solution to the problem of authenticity is here sought in a further splitting and classification, as the generic assignation of autobiography

appears to demand. Shared authorship is not a concern when aligning these texts with documentary; what is at stake, however, is the cultural meaning of the recorded image and its drawn counterpart, respectively and in relation to each other.

> [The] elaborately cultured aspect of drawing, [is] *not* based upon a theoretical or philosophical understanding per se, but on the areas of human experience that drawing has come to be associated with: intimacy, informality, authenticity (or at least with authentic inauthenticity), immediacy, subjectivity, history, memory, narrative.
>
> (Dexter 2005: 5, original emphasis).

When discussed in relation to painting, for which drawing according to convention is considered a preparatory stage, 'openness' and incompletion tend to be foregrounded as distinguishing traits. But drawing can of course exceed such an instrumental role. That 'the relationships between drawing and time and space, being and becoming, figure and ground, and completion and incompletion have consistently led artists to see drawing as *an art of process*' (Dexter 2005: 6) [my emphasis], nevertheless indicates that drawing occupies a space comprising both representation and ideation:

> The marks of a drawing have only a symbolic relationship with experience; it is not only that line does not exist in nature, but the whole relational construct of a drawing is a conceptual proposition by the artist - even when it is of a natural phenomenon – to be completed by the spectator through an act of ideation.
>
> (Rose 1976: 10)

The cultural understanding of drawing as an autographic mode of expression and the visible connection to its making, characterising certain kinds of drawing further adds to a perception of embodied subjectivity, especially by contrast to photographic technologies. The sense of authenticity mobilised by the hand-drawn image also

invokes an indexical connection, albeit that between the mark made and signifier offered and the particular human being whose gesture inscribed it. Like hand-writing, drawing suggests a link to the individual who wrote it, as a trace of an idiosyncratic gesture. For Jared Gardner (2011: 57) the idea that 'the act of inscription remains always visible, and the story of its making remains central to the narrative work' is an often overlooked aspect of comics.

However, styles that feature 'rigorously handmade' (Chute 2010: 11) qualities, or trade on an unrefined and faux-naïve character as deliberate markers of immediacy and authenticity (El Refaie 2012: 138) are far from unusual. They are particularly evident in comics wishing to draw attention to their authored status. This is a commonplace feature of graphic novels, fiction and non-fiction, sold in high street book stores. Jan Baetens (2001: 152) has warned against a reductive conflation of the art-work, the drawn 'trace' with a 'symptom of self-expression'. He emphasises the fact that although drawing and hand lettering might appear spontaneous, personal and 'hyper-individualized', they are culturally coded and bear traces of cultural and historical influences. Thus, 'we know the line of the graphiateur is no more "natural" than are the words of the author (lines do not exist in nature, any more than do words), and yet the line compels a physical, bodily encounter with an imagined scene of embodied enunciation' (Gardner 2011: 66). Whereas for Gardner this invocation of a physical act is not just attenuated, but 'effaced in print' (ibid), Chute (2010: 11) particularly values the way print enables such crafted and idiosyncratic expressions to become available to wider and more varied audiences than singular art-works would be.

Nevertheless, it is the individual and authorial qualities that are brought to the fore by both writers. Chute (2010: 11) suggests that '[t]he subjective mark of the body is rendered directly onto the page and constitutes how we view the page', imparting 'visual quality and texture' (ibid). This, essentially performative aspect discussed by comics scholars calls for a re-consideration of Bruzzi's (2006) assertion of the centrality of performance to documentary. Certainly, as already acknowledged in chapter one, for Bruzzi performance concerns actions by and the relations that occur between filmmakers and subjects, so that although certain questions regarding

authentic access to the pro-filmic become moot, the act of recording functions as an intrinsic element of such interactions. However, in comics the element of performance is instead articulated through the expressive qualities of mark-making, characterisation and the implication of an overt process of selective construction materialised in the organisation of the narrative and the various elements on the page. Although the material might ostensibly be actual, its representation is suffused with the performance of subjectivity. El Refaie (2012: 140-143) draws on dramaturgic approaches to authenticity to address the performance element of graphic memoirs, stating their rejection of the idea that 'we all possess a unique, true, unchanging inner self, which can then be expressed "authentically" in our everyday actions' (ibid: 140). The alternative model offered is one that accounts for communication and social interaction as encompassing both those expressions that are consciously given, and ones "given off" in ways we are less able to control.

I have argued that the notion of the authenticity of photographic realism draws on the incorporation of contingent information that exceeds intentionality. In other words, here too authenticity has to do with not only what is given, but unintentionally given off. It would seem that the interplay between signals given and given off constitutes a key fascination in documentary's performance as highlighted by Bruzzi, both as recorded interpersonal and social actions, and as constructed systems of communication, representing and depicting reality according to a specific internal logic. In comics, too, the overall system of communication is part of the performative enunciation. The drawn images and compositions of comics, on the other hand, are expressly filtered by subjective consciousness, and moreover lack the rapidity of registration that 'promises a reduction of mediation between "event" and beholder' (Roth 2012: 179).

However, in view of the diminished plausibility of the hope for representation to ever simultaneously achieve meaning and neutrality, this need not necessarily be a hindrance. The very self-consciousness in comics with regards to the separation between reality and its representation, that they 'call attention to their own making' (Versaci 2008: 12), might be perceived as gratifying precisely for this reason. That the illusion of a neutral or transparent representation cannot be upheld, even at the

level of the image itself, paradoxically perhaps, opens up a different register of authenticity. This, of course, does not preclude that these texts incorporate communication that is both 'given' and 'given off', in line with El Refaie's (2013) reference to dramaturgical theory.

As the contributions by Gardner (2011) and Chute (2010) have attested, the perceived immediacy of the drawn image as a trace, not of the object it depicts but rather as an inscription of the physical presence and gesture of its originator, in this instance assumes a valorised position. 'The visual form of all comic elements is considered a "trace", that is a reflection, a symptom, an index, of the subjectivity of a narrator' (Baetens 2001: 145). In this statement, the concept of a trace once more imparts a suggestion of a physical relationship. However, and importantly, the qualifications that follow indicate a more nuanced interpretation; neither a reflection nor a symptom intrinsically denotes a direct physical link, and subjectivity is an ephemeral concept. The relationship that is referred to here should certainly not be rendered in simplistic terms, and does not necessarily exclude technological means. Computer programmes have extended the range of tools available for drawing and image-making in a way which arguably parallels the variety of tools available to the writer; 'pen, typewriter, laptop' (Hyland 2001: 7). As in the case of the recorded image, the fragility of the index as trace is spotlighted by digital technologies. This suggests that in the case of drawing, too, it may be more productive to instead think in terms of a deixic, or pointing function; the idiosyncratic line pointing towards its producer and the response (as both bodily gesture and ideation) it indicates.

Neverteless, the inherent abbreviations, contractions and ellipses that characterise cartooning, and describe the type of drawing most commonly associated with comics, are indicative of undeniable processes of selection and translation. 'For the comic creator, the removal of realistic detail allows for other aspects to be emphasized or imposed upon the images, such as line, shape, colour, orientation and composition. These attributes in turn accentuate connections or relationships that are less apparent in realistic images' (Medley 2010: 68). The cartoon, selective and deliberate, is thus oppositional in relation to the photograph, as the latter's capacity to include the contingent inveigles a certain completeness of vision. The interpretive

character and cultural associations of subjectivity attached to drawing vividly contrast with the connotations of a neutral view; the concept of objectivity symbolised by the photograph. The ostensibly clear signalling of subjectivity and interpretive agency that drawing affects, by way of a specific and idiosyncratic voice that suffuses its 'telling', instead appears to resonate with the idea of 'situated knowledges' (Haraway 1988: 581).

As part of feminist academic inquiry the concept of objectivity has been subjected to revaluation, challenge and deconstruction (Haraway 1988; Rose 1997; Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis 2002). Donna Haraway particularly expresses a desire 'to insist on the embodied nature of all vision and so reclaim the sensory system that has been used to signify a leap out of the marked body and into a conquering gaze from nowhere' (1988: 581). This is not a position informed by antagonism towards technologies of vision, however. Haraway proclaims that 'these prosthetic devices show us that all eyes, including our own organic ones, are active perceptual systems, building on translations and specific *ways* of seeing, that is, ways of life' (ibid: 583, original emphasis). This attempt to reclaim modern imaging technologies and place the subject at their centre is sympathetic, yet somewhat idealistic. It discounts the inscription of institutional authority and potential problems associated with the positions of seen, as opposed to seeing, subjects that such technologies are implicated in. In terms of documentary these are issues of considerable import.

However, Haraway's repeated emphasis on 'location, embodiment, and partial perspective' (ibid: 584) finds a particular resonance in the alignment of the acculturated properties of drawing and documentary discourse. It is not my intention to claim that such cultural meanings are inherent, any more than I would claim that objectivity and realism are intrinsic to photography. Yet the appeal and perceived authenticity of documentary comics can be understood in terms of a counterpoint to the paradigmatic visual representational device for ostensibly value-free, disinterested and rational knowledge about the world; the recorded image. This is emphatically not an essentialist proposition. It is, rather, a suggestion that following the social construction and meanings attached to these different image types the cartoon drawings of comics might offer ways of seeing that circumvent the totalising

and institutional aspects of visualising the real (Mirzoeff 2005: 115). Moreover, when comics adopt a documentary mode of address, they by implication query the hegemony of photographic realism as the privileged model for visually depicting reality.

Both recorded moving image documentaries and comics that adopt a documentary mode of address share the aspect of offering their audiences/ readers a position of secondary witnessing by means of their respective pictorial depictions. However, the differences between these kinds of documentary texts, while not being differences in terms of intrinsic truth-value, revolve around the location and source of what marks their authenticity. Photographic realism, that characterises recorded images of various kinds, is imbued with authenticity through the incorporation of information that exceeds intentionality. Drawing, on the other hand, finds its counterpart in the relation between producer and enunciation. Consideration of the cultural meanings attached to drawing, and feminist theories of situated knowledges, has made it possible to extend El Refaie's (2010) notion of authenticity beyond purely being a validating factor specific to autobiographical comics.

As previously noted, the foregrounding of subjectivity and the disruption of certainty it introduces have increasingly become a point of interest, rather than figured as a problem to overcome, in thinking around documentary (Nichols 1994: 1; Renov 2004; Bruzzi 2006: 85, Lebow 2012). This does not necessarily mean that all documentary has abandoned authoritative stances underwritten by their ostensible neutrality. Nor has it seemingly undermined the position of recorded images as the privileged means of documentary. Yet subjectivity, its expression and articulation, has been identified as a growing consideration for documentary studies (Renov 2004; Lebow 2012), in line with the notion of situated knowledges. As I aim to demonstrate with the following analysis, comics adopting a documentary mode of address contribute to and intervene in such debates by their articulation of subjectivity at the very level of the image and its production.

Harvey Pekar's *American Splendor*

The American comics writer Harvey Pekar (1939–2010) produced a substantial body of work, including *The Quitter* (2005), drawn by Dan Haspiel, the web-comic *The Pekar Project* with *Smith Magazine* online, as well as *Harvey Pekar's Cleveland* (2012), drawn by Joseph Remnant, and *Not the Israel My Parents Promised Me* (2012), a collaboration with J. T. Waldman (both published posthumously). But he was, and continues to be, most widely associated with the irregularly published comic *American Splendor* (1976–2008). Pekar's work defies neat categorization; too singular to be considered mainstream, yet acknowledged and familiar across a cultural spectrum broad enough to render 'cult-status' a questionable description. In terms of comics traditions, his output is antithetical to dominant genres: superheroes, adventure and high-jinx, or the whimsy and humour of cute animals, wayward kids and other figures of fun. It is equally at odds with the high-octane satire and carnivalesque provocations of the American underground tradition. The subject matter of the vignettes in *American Splendor* is nothing if not diverse; ranging from observations about queuing in supermarkets and work-place interactions, the compulsions of collecting (jazz records), anxiety over relationships, minor ailments and existentialist musings, to the implication of the American justice system in wider, systematic inequality and the moral failings of George W. Bush. This text vividly illustrates the multiplicity bound up with the notion of self (Renov 2004: xiii) as well as the entwined notions of individual singularity and social collectivity that the notion of the subject engages, with considerable political implications (Lebow 2012: 4).

By the time Pekar died in 2010 he was relatively well-known, and his passing was marked by obituaries in New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and the Guardian and The Telegraph in the UK. But his initial self-published comics were largely noticed mainly thanks to being collaborations with Robert Crumb, who in 1976 already had gained notoriety as a provocative artist/producer of American underground comics (Pekar, in interview with Malice 2009). That Pekar wrote comics about his own daily life and its very ordinariness was exactly what garnered him a following. It eventually brought him to a wider audience as this perceived idiosyncrasy led to him being invited to appear on David Letterman's talk show in 1986, followed by further

guest appearances over a two year period. More recently the film *American Splendor* (2003) based on his comics has cemented him as a peculiar, yet legendary figure. Pekar's work and his persona are thus elaborately entwined and predicated on the understanding that his comics chronicle his life.

It is clear that the impulse to record lies at the heart of Pekar's comic book project (Sperb 2006: 126). In his job as a hospital filing clerk, Pekar's work environment was filled with shelves and filing cabinets holding the medical records of patients. It was while reading the file belonging to his predecessor that he decided to begin a different kind of record of his own existence (Sperb 2006: 126–27), in line with James Polchin's (2007: 218) assertion that'[d]ocumentation anticipates a future looking back'. Pekar confessed to an obsession with accuracy and faithfulness to facts (Witek 1989: 123). Moreover, his attention to detail is evident in the sensitivity to nuances and patterns of speech of those around him as well as his observation of the features of everyday life; its ordinariness rarely matching the accompanying emotional tidal flows he charted with equal acuity.

American Splendor portrays the ways in which triviality and profundity intertwine, as found in the attention to seemingly mundane and generally overlooked aspects of everyday life. While honouring the commonplace no longer holds the revolutionary charge the novels by Balzac, Hugo and Flaubert or the paintings by Courbet, Manet and Degas once had, this nevertheless constituted an influential departure in comics. Although the tribulations, trivialities and absurdities of everyday realities had long provided material for, in particular, newspaper comic strips, in Pekar's treatment they are no longer the matter for humorous gags. For Joseph Witek (1989: 132–33) there is a distinct kinship between Pekar's work and literary realism, and he has described 'Pekar's aesthetic of aggressively hum-drum realism' (Witek 1989: 128) as a dissenting force 'against the tide of decades of comic-book fantasy and escapism' (ibid). Charles Hatfield (2005: 109) has similarly stressed the departure Pekar's contribution offers in the context of comics sensibilities, describing it as 'a new mode in comics: the quotidian autobiographical series, focused on the events and textures of everyday existence'[iii]. In *American Splendor* the quotidian is the overlooked and seemingly inconsequential, which by being brought into focus

becomes recognizable as the fabric containing and embodying a multitude of experience, from the pathetic to the profound.

If the documentary intentions of *American Splendor* are easily recognizable, some of the visual strategies also, as Craig Hight (2007: 184) has noted, comply with documentary discourses. 'The aesthetic style favored by Pekar's comics is consistent with this overall stance, as they eschew the complex, overlapping and visually dynamic layouts of superhero comics in favor of a conventional panel layout and commitment to eye-level perspective' (ibid). While agreeing with Hight that the stylistic choices in *American Splendor* set it apart from the superhero genre, I am struck by way this particular comparison reproduces a particular conception of comics, as defined by one of its historically dominant genres. In addition, and as I will go on to demonstrate, he overstates the aesthetic coherence of this text. However, one particularly prominent way that Pekar's *American Splendor* differs aesthetically from most superhero, and action and adventure comics, is in its absence of sound-effects.

Representing sound

When it comes to a discussion of sound, it is useful to start by considering animated documentary as a mode that shares with comics a substantial and defining process of translation between referent and representation. As I briefly indicated in chapter one, it has been suggested that the indexical link provided by audio-recordings offers authentication to the interpretative and creative visual content in animated documentary (Ward 2006: 113-129; Rosenkrantz 2011). While Paul Ward's account privileges the de-familiarising effect of such juxtaposition as it draws attention to the often overlooked, but highly evocative effects of sound in live-action documentary, it nonetheless places an onus on the sound here as a referential link. Even more insistent on such an indexical relationship, Jonathan Rosenkrantz emphasises the role of audio-recording as a crucial retainer of evidentiality in animated documentary. However, approaching this issue from a practitioner's perspective, Samantha Moore (2013) challenges the latter view and the reductive reading of the indexical it draws

on. Having chosen to replace original audio material of inferior quality with actors' voices in her animated documentary *The Beloved Ones* (British Film Council 2007) she concludes that what is at stake is not a concept of genuine versus adulterated, but rather how to facilitate the most effective connection between audience and material. These arguments to some extent replicate the debate regarding the authenticity value of images outlined in the previous sections, the main difference being that in the case of animated documentary they have come to centre on the issue of sound.

But comics call for a different discussion in relation to sound. Comics habitually translate sound into visual signs[iv]; in the words of Barker (1989: 11), in comics 'we hear with our eyes'. Speech balloons, thought balloons and of the expressive lettering to communicate sound effects have drawn substantial analytical attention (Schmitt 1992; Carrier 2000: 27-46; Khordoc 2001: 156 – 173; Groensteen 2007: 67-85). The latter exemplify the convention of turning words or onomatopoeias into iconic representations; the iconic being a relation between the sign and its object; 'a sign capable of evoking nonexistent objects because it proposes to imagine an object similar to the object itself' (Bal and Bryson 1991: 189). Mostly analyses of these aspects of comics have tended to focus on the fluidity between verbal and visual signification, as expressly evident in the communication through the symbolic and arbitrary letter forms and words and their simultaneous constitution as visual elements on the picture plane. The 'almost infinite variability in shape, size, thickness, color, style, and relationship' surrounding elements that pertains to comics panels (Berlatsky 2009: 184) is echoed in the diverse signifying possibilities that the visual rendering of verbal components and the different conventions that comics use to frame them (or not). For example, indicating the origin of their utterance with a tail, balloons vary in terms of size and shape; jagged outlines line to indicate the electronic buzzing that accompanies sound from a radio or television set, or elaborated with icicle shapes to emphasise extreme sensation felt by the source. The letter shapes themselves likewise offer potential for expansion. Bold print or proportionally enlarged lettering might indicate increased volume, small and delicate print suggest a whisper. This is not to say that balloons necessarily contain words, as such. Both speech and thought balloons can also incorporate ideograms; graphic characters such as question or exclamation marks, and iconic signs.

Balloons and other representations of sound very much interact with other compositional elements, and meanings may arise from the way they overlap with each other, seemingly emerge from behind something or someone, or visually block or interrupt part of the image. Sometimes these interactions may be understood literally (a balloon emerging through a letter-box, carrying the speech of someone on the other side of the door), at other times metaphorically (a loud noise that cuts through a situation). In both instances the sound which in comics is represented visually would not be visually present in the diegetic world. Yet such visual representations within the composition and picture plane interact with other elements, including those that belong to the diegetic world (Pratt 2009: 108). The role of words and dialogue in the temporal organisation of comics, and thus an important part of comics narratology, has also been subject of scholarly interest (McCloud 1993: Pratt 2009; Lefèvre 2011: 24). For example, a single panel might include an extended dialogue in the form of multiple speech balloons and thus indicate the prolonged duration of the depicted situation while simultaneously slowing the reader's progression across the page.

When considered in relation to mediation using audio-visual means, however, new sets of questions arise. For Groensteen (2007: 128) 'speech in comics is closer to speech in cinema than in the literary text (even dialogue)', and when enclosed in an inset or caption, it can be considered a counterpart to the audio-equivalent of a voice-over, 'the principal narrator or the delegated narrator, intra- or extra-diegetic, etc' (ibid). Yet such speech constitutes only one part of documentary sound. To this and dialogue we must add a whole host of other diverse, significant and evocative sounds of the sensory world. If the comparison is with audio aspects of documentary, rather than with the actual world, extra-diegetic music should perhaps also be given consideration, as a considerable and widely used affective tool.

In '*American Splendor* Assaults the Media' (Pekar 2004: 137-140), drawn by Robert Crumb, Harvey performs a prolonged monologue, the copious and tightly crammed text equating to an indignant rant and continuing unabated through speech bubbles

and insets over four pages, seemingly without discrimination as to a separation of function between them [see FIG 5]. This chapter of the comic provides a useful opportunity to consider the complex and sometimes uncertain relationships between sound and its representation in comics. Already in the opening panel his eyes bulge and drops of sweat trickle and project from his brow, as staring out from the page in direct address to the reader he begins a litany of complaints. The complaints concern unfulfilled promises of a review of his latest comic in the *Village Voice*, and the lack of recognition of his work more generally. Contradicting Hight's (2007: 184) claim as to the regularity of the panel arrangements in *American Splendor*, diagonal rather than just vertical and horizontal panel borders here work to underline the sense of heightened emotion. The alternation between differing viewpoints and proximity to Harvey increases the sense of urgency in the scene, and in between looking immersed in his personal pain and being shown talking on the phone he returns to direct address and breaking the fourth wall on two more occasions, the second time to conclude the episode.

Harvey's monologue seems to arbitrarily move between insets and speech balloons, and thus undermines a categorical understanding of the former as signalling narration, as in a voice-over, and the latter as representing a voiced utterance. The uncertainty is underlined by the fact that he is depicted alone in a space throughout the chapter, except for in the penultimate panel in which he is shown listening to the advice of a colleague. There are small indications that his location shifts throughout the sequence; in one panel he is sat on a sofa, the next on a chair surrounded by boxes of his comics. This works to stretch the time frame of this lengthy harangue, and insinuates not only the intensity of his inner turmoil, but also that this state of mind is more than momentary and does not abate for an un-defined yet sustained period of time. The way that the text, despite its production in relatively small letter forms and in densely packed lines, dominates the space in the majority of the panels intimates that these concerns pre-occupy him to the exclusion of all else; a good example of how these elements fulfil a diegetic function despite ostensibly having a physical presence in the depicted world.

But how should the words be understood in this sequence? Are they the ravings of an irate man talking aloud to himself, an internal monologue, or some combination of the two? There is no real way of knowing. Despite being highly verbal, this episode of *American Splendor* offers little certainty with regard to the correspondence between the conventions of visually signifying sound and purported actual sound. Instead this highlights how in comics the indeterminacy and fluidity between internal and external becomes extended to, and in this case accentuated in, considerations of sound. In audio-visual forms, whether animated or live-action, sound can also play a particular role in suggesting such indeterminacy. Especially extra-diegetic sound is often used to evoke mood, and to direct the meaning-making processes of viewers. In comics, on the other hand, the visual arrangement of the page and the execution of the elements it encompasses are all-important in creating a particular sense of emotion.

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE
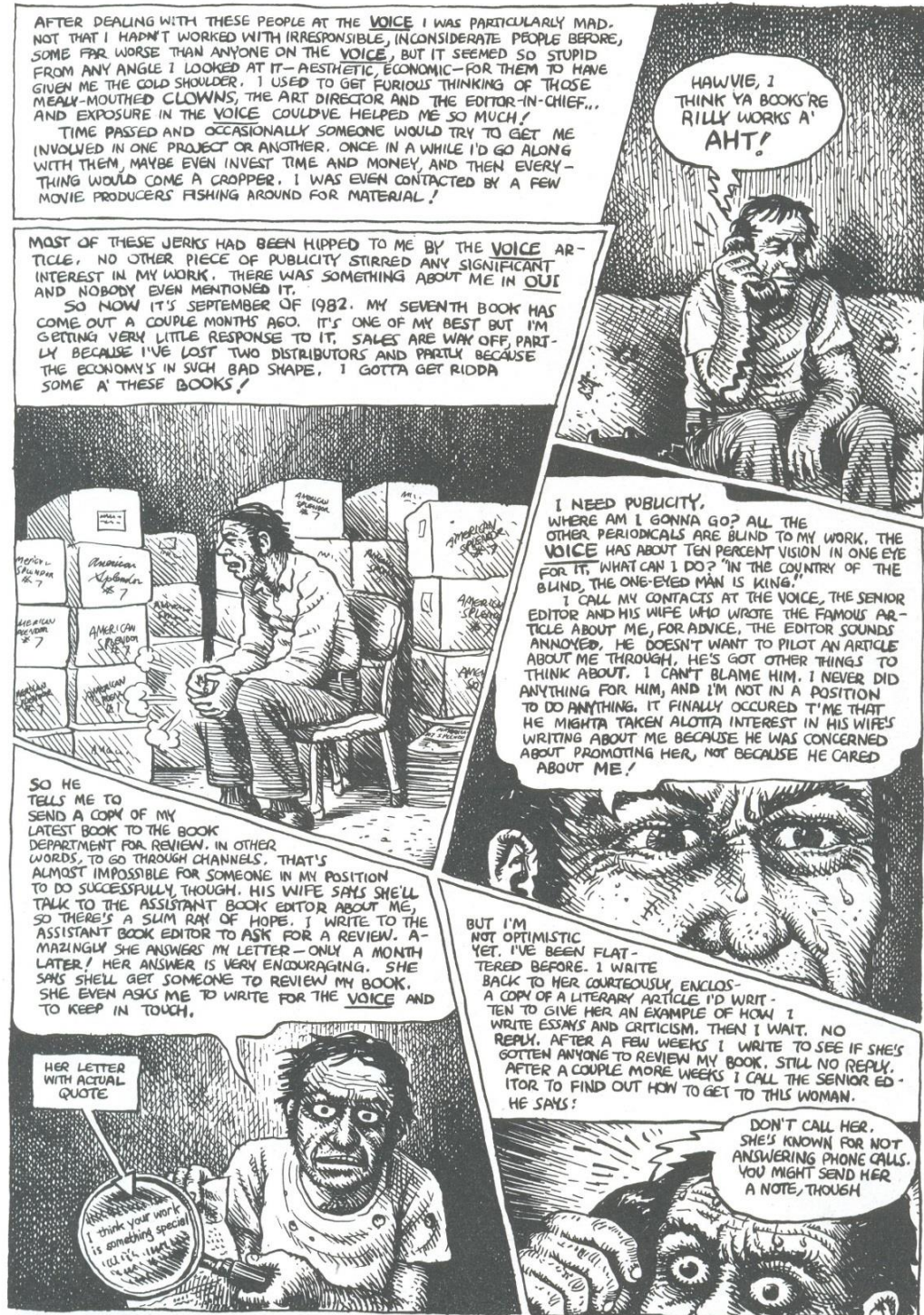
FIG 5 – Harvey Pekar/ Robert Crumb (2004) [1983], 'American Splendor assaults the Media' in *American Splendor: ordinary life is pretty complex stuff,* Titan Books, p. 139.

The episode I have been discussing includes a view of Harvey punching a wall in frustration. The quick movement of his arm is indicated by speed lines extending behind his bent elbow ending in a puff shape, and the impact of his clenched fist on the wall expressed by radiating black lines. That these indicators of direction, force and sensation simultaneously work to evoke sound appears to be a matter of common sense conjecture, but no explicit sound effect has been added.

Often omitted in Anglophone comics, the representation of sound has by comparison been far more utilised in Japanese manga (Petersen 2009: 165; Brenner 2011: 259). Robert S. Petersen (2009: 167-168) claims that the explanation for this can be sought in the Japanese tradition of performance *kami-shibai*; story-telling accompanied by sequentially revealed illustrations within a frame, the popularity of which continued in the post-WW2 period and the subsequent migration of kami-shibai artists into the emerging manga industry. Moreover, Petersen raises the idea of what he terms 'subvocalizalion, which is a natural habit of readers to imagine the sound through the inaudible speech movements of the lips and throat' (ibid: 164, see also Khordoc 2001: 160). The embodied and sensory dimension of such 'auto-oral' (ibid) resonance, he argues, is a powerful mechanism for reader engagement. In view of such considerations it does seem that the relative lack of attention to sound in many contemporary comics might be a missed opportunity. Apart from the different genealogy western comics have in relation to manga, another contributory factor can speculatively be traced in the way comics sound-effects such as 'ka-pow', 'blam', 'wham' and 'whoosh' have become emblematic of the perception of comics as crude,

trite and unsophisticated. The ingrained associations of certain conventions for the representation of sound in comics, beyond narration and dialogue, might thus seem counter-intuitive to some creators. A reticence in using sound effects is noticeable especially in what might be thought of as aspirational authorial comics; those seeking to overcome the cultural stigma attached to comics and their readerships (Lopes 2006) and/ or resisting preconceptions about particular historical genres as defining paradigms of the form. Certainly overt sound effects are conspicuously absent in *American Splendor*.

A multiplicity of signs

As a result of Pekar's extensive list of collaborators, issues of *American Splendor* habitually offer a patchwork of short stories drawn in a variety of visual styles and signatures. These visualisations encompass a broad spectrum, ranging from differing degrees of figural realism (Val Meyerik, Ty Templeton, David Lapham, Greg Budgett and Gary Dumm) and the bouncy lines and caricatures by the likes of Robert Crumb, Josh Neufeld and John Lucas to more impressionistic renderings by Sue Cavey and Gerry Shamray.

In Crumb's visceral cartooning style every character, including Harvey himself, takes on an exaggerated and expressive physicality. In 'Jivin' with Jack the Bell Boy as He Goes About …Hustling Sides' (Pekar 2004: 59-63) and 'Jack the Bellboy and Mr. Boats' (ibid: 64-69) also with Crumb, Harvey is distinguished by heavily sloped shoulders and notably large hands, while the depiction of some of his work colleagues exemplify the racial stereotyping Crumb has drawn criticism for; recalling dominant visual tropes of racist depictions of African-Americans. The consistency in panel size and placing of characters, speech bubbles and other elements within the panels sets a certain tone and pace; like a voice that, although not necessarily monotonous, is characterized by a certain regularity (see FIG 6). Moreover, the viewpoint remains equally positioned and distanced, producing a sense of detached observation that is strengthened further by including dialogue in speech balloons but no internal speech.

Yet, in 'Hypothetical Quandary' (ibid: 153-154) the caricature element is toned down, Crumb's drawing builds an aesthetic around light and shade, and uses a significantly different page lay-out. In this episode the relatively uniform ordering of panels (four lines of two), retaining a similar viewpoint and distance for prolonger sequences, that is more typical of Crumb's signature style, is exchanged for greater variation in size, viewpoint and placing. The combined effect is that of a *film noir* pastiche, incongruously framing the story of Harvey's walk to buy a loaf of bread. Following

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE

FIG 6 – Harvey Pekar/ Robert Crumb (2004), 'Jivin' with Jack the Bell Boy as He Goes About …Hustling Sides' in *American Splendor: ordinary life is pretty complex stuff,* Titan Books, p. 62.

my configuration of documentary as a mode of address in chapter one, the stylistic sense of irony; infusing a trivial situation with a melodramatic mood. While artists make choices in terms of visual style (Baetens 2001), these examples demonstrate the fundamental implications of not just the content and style of the images, but the multiple variables that constitute comics' visuality; relationships of scale, placement, variation and reiteration.

However, analysis of *American Splendor* calls for attention to the work of more than one artist. In 'Alice Quinn' (Pekar 2004: 226-231) Sue Cavey's graphic ink work offers a distinct contrast to the sensibilities extended by Crumb (see FIG 7). Where Crumb's work is compact and dense, accentuated by heavy lines and figures seemingly compressed into the panel space, Cavey's is sparse in detail, both where figures and backgrounds are concerned, lines are more delicate and trace their shapes seemingly by longer movements. Attention is given with a certain unpredictability; the rendering of the creases on a shirt here, the shading of a face there, a shadow against a wall, the surprisingly precisely observed physical gesture of an otherwise economically drawn figure, creating a semi-distracted mood and a sense of partial presence. Harvey's chance encounter with the eponymous Alice Quinn, someone he used to carry unrequited feelings for in his youth, visually signals a melancholic sense of loss and lack of connection, and the mood created by Cavey is languid, fragmented and uncertain. Here the visual rendering and the words work in unison.

Conversely, in 'Hypothetical Quandary' (ibid: 153-154) the melodramatic aesthetic is inconsistent with the banal actions and measured tone of the narration; the friction between the two contributes to the pleasure of the text. *American Splendor* incessantly shifts in terms of aesthetic, register and voice; the resultant paradox being that its most consistent trait is continuous adjustment and deferral.

In 'I'll be Forty-Three on Friday: How I'm Living Now' (ibid: 232-239), Gerry Shamray's drawing portrays a solitary walk in a reflective mood. Doing away with panel borders altogether it shows Harvey in a range of poses as he wanders through

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE

FIG 7 – Harvey Pekar/ Sue Cavey (2004) [1982], 'Alice Quinn' in in *American Splendor: ordinary life is pretty complex stuff,* Titan Books, p. 226.

trees in a park, occasionally sits down on some steps and a low wall, and passes by a set of swings. Although more interested in the play between light and shade than detailed information, close attention to the drawing suggests that it is based on photographic reference. Shown in a series of poses, Harvey's body language looks somehow self-conscious. He seems to be aware of being seen rather than, as it might first appear, walking alone whilst reflecting on his life to date. The text in the insets by all appearances comes across as an interior monologue, and the presence of another is never acknowledged. Yet the tactile qualities of Shamray's line work describe and inscribe the views of Harvey and his body language with intimacy, reinforcing the sense of inferred presence.

The remediation of this sequence into comics also holds compositional implications. On page 238 there are five images of Harvey, arranged across four horizontal strips [see FIG 8]. The topmost of these strips contains two of these; to the far left a medium close-up view of Harvey glancing to the right and to the far right a slightly more distanced view as he glances down at his feet. The background shows a small group of trees, and a shape made from tightly scratched vertical marks indicating softly undulating grassy ground. The head and shoulder view of Harvey framing and establishing this sequence shows him looking unusually content, as though a slight smile flickers across his face that is turned towards the sunlight. Two text segments take up the center between the two figures, the first slightly above and to the left of the other. The following three, equally sized, page wide strips show Harvey slowly (it seems, in part due to his posture, partly the amount of text that imposes a certain slowing down of the reading and partly as an effect of the empty white space left and the evenness of the gaps between the various elements) wandering past a large tree stump. That this movement contravenes the conventional narrative direction, left to right, works to emphasise the sense of meandering. In the first of these three strips as Harvey approaches the tree stump, the text, as in the previous two instances assuming a vaguely rectangular shape but without any delineating outline, sits to the far right. In relation with the two text segments in the strip above, this creates a descending diagonal from left to right across the upper part of the page.

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IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE

FIG 8 – Harvey Pekar/ Gerry Shamray (2004), 'I'll be Forty-Three on Friday (how I'm living now)' in *American Splendor: Ordinary Life is Pretty Complex Stuff,* Titan Books, p. 238.

In the following strip the text sits to the left as Harvey pauses in front of the tree stump, and in the last strip on this page as he walks on past it, the text is placed on the right, thus faintly echoing the diagonal direction of the text segments above with an elongated interval. It is thus not only the visual content, or even the visual content combined with the text, that creates the sense of leisureliness pervading this chapter. On this particular page, as this analysis has demonstrated, the rhythmic interplay of the page as a whole creates a sense of slowness and calm. It significantly plays a part in complementing the mood of the story that, apart from a walk in parkland, includes contemplative ruminations on philosophical impulses, the pros and cons of working to earn a living, different types of boredom, and ultimately the contentment found in acceptance.

These multiple versions of Pekar and his surroundings thus intensify the apparent incongruity staged by the drawn imagery of comics in relation to documentary. A scene in 'A Marriage Album' (ibid: 277-290), drawn by Val Mayerik, crystallizes the significance of multiple representations of Harvey, a trait of *American Splendor* as prominent as its grounding in the everyday. This scene depicts Joyce Brabner, who was later to become his third wife, on her way to meet Pekar for the first time. Joyce, at this time a working part-time as an education officer in a prison and also in a shop selling comics and fancy dress costumes in Delaware, has after a period of exchanging letters and phone conversations with Harvey decided to visit him in Cleveland for the first time. The comic shows her sitting on the airplane and pondering over which of the many cartoon Harveys might bear the closest resemblance to the man she is about to meet (see FIG 9). The idea of a drawn Harvey as a 'reliable', or accurate in a documentary sense, or as a stable signifier, seems beyond grasp as we are faced with a seemingly ever increasing parade of different-looking Harveys. It becomes progressively more apparent that these are all and equally partial and suggestive representations.

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE

FIG 9 - Harvey Pekar/ Val Mayerik (2004), 'A Marriage Album', in *American Splendor: Ordinary Life is Pretty Complex Stuff,* Titan Books, p. 285: 1.

However, rather than an obstacle to thinking about *American Splendor* as a documentary, the refusal of a definite representation of its main protagonist cuts to the core of documentary dilemmas and presents itself as a radical response. 'Given the truth claim which persists within documentary discourse as a defining condition ("what you see and hear is of the world"), the collapse of sign and historical referent is a matter of particular concern' (1993: 26). Such a collapse is held decisively at bay in *American Splendor* by the very heterogeneity of its visualisation. Harvey's presence can nevertheless be felt, if not fully grasped, as the combined and cumulative effect of his words and the visual interpretations delivered by his collaborators. As Joseph Witek (1989: 137) has put it: 'in *American Splendor* the sequential art medium embodies in its material form the collaboration of other people in the construction of identity'. The way in which Harvey is represented through a kaleidoscopic combination of his own voice and the multiplicity of visual approximations, suggests that neither self-perception, nor the perceptions we might engender in others comprehensively account for who we are, even as they all contribute to it.

In *American Splendor* the claim to authenticity and integrity is articulated in part by Pekar's willingness to portray himself in a less than flattering light (Puszt 1997: 73); he candidly displays aspects of his character such as his tendency towards hypochondria, neurotic anxiety and solipsistic self loathing, as well as a certain social awkwardness. Other textual strategies, such as the attention to different patterns of speech, accents and colloquial phrases that are part of Pekar's observed everyday life adds to the apparent authenticity of its telling. But aesthetic and structural considerations also play an important part in its believability. American Splendor is an unfolding autobiographical work, and the cumulative way in which readers get to know Harvey through a patchwork of seemingly unconnected stories and incessantly shifting tones and registers, his observations in the present, remembered anecdotes, reflections and emotional outbursts corresponds to subjectivity as a continuous process and self-narration. This is underlined visually through the variation in visual style.

Gaps and irregularity, paradoxically, become the consistent features that reinforce the credibility of *American Splendor*'s documentation of subjectivity as a fragmentary and perpetual constructive process. 'The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another' (Haraway 1988: 586). Chapter five of this thesis will engage more fully with autobiography and first person narrative under the rubric 'Visibility and Voice', but at this point it suffices to say that the two categories, documentary and autobiography, do not necessarily have to be mutually exclusive. That the film adaptation of *American Splendor* (Berman and Pulcini 2003) has brought comment on its relation to documentary, while the comics remain most consistently referred to as autobiographical, is indicative of the very assumptions this thesis sets out to query. Put simply, the tendency is to identify documentary with particular mediating technologies and to align comics with literary frame-works.

Beyond the comics page

In the film the refracted image of Harvey is extended, as animated sections, and static comic book panels mixed with scenes in which Pekar provides a voice-over but is played by the actor Paul Giamatti. When Pekar and his friend, Toby Radloff appear on set in a scene depicting them in conversation with Giamatti and Judah Friedlander (the actor who plays Toby), any notion of the acted sequences as more real or authentic than the cartoons is disrupted. In the end, none of the multiple versions of Harvey in the film hold a privileged position, any more in the film than in the comic. This forces the recognition that the rupture between signified and signifier unites both the recorded and the drawn signs.

Jason Sperb (2006) has suggested that the film represents a move into narrative film for its directors, previously known for their documentary film-making. Although the 'radical difference' (Sperb 2006: 123) between documentary and narrative modes of film-making is somewhat overstated, the grounds on which he makes this distinction are more problematic. It seems that the film's overt construction, reconstructions and

120

performativity have led to Sperb designating it a narrative film, while the term simultaneously indicates a reluctance to call it fiction. However, this ignores that re-enactment has been a historical and recurrent feature of documentary (Corner 1996: 30–31; Nichols 2008b), while reconstruction (Rancière 2006: 157–70) and performance (Bruzzi 2006) can be seen as innate aspects of documentary's interaction with the real. Nor are 'mostly linear narrative[s] with a defined emotional arc, and straightforward audience identification/sympathy' (Sperb 2006: 123) exclusively the domain of fiction films. 'It was indeed as a narrative form that the documentary distinguished itself from the actuality film and the travelogue which preceded it, and the documentary's relation to narrative was acknowledged by its makers from the beginning' (Cowie 2009: 61).

It would appear that, for Sperb, a film that disrupts realist conventions and presents 'a series of simulacra' (2006: 125) is incompatible with the notion of documentary. While here, '[Harvey Pekar's] life and the cinematic mapping of that life can never quite be aligned' (Sperb 2006: 130), in a documentary we presumably should be able to expect a far simpler and more direct relationship between sign and referent. Craig Hight (2007: 180-198), offering a more nuanced understanding of documentary has discussed the same film in terms of a drama-documentary and recognised that it makes available 'a space for a commentary on both comic and drama-documentary forms' (ibid: 196). He has conceded that: 'Paul Giamatti playing Pekar within the film is a mirror of Robert Crumb drawing Pekar in the comic; simply another means of representing the "reality" of Pekar, and just as implicated with issues of "authenticity" and "distortion" that are central to any such representation, within any medium' (ibid: 198). In agreement with this assertion I would also extend it to the segments in the film in which Harvey Pekar appears 'as himself'. As my argument concerns whether the comic must be categorised differently based on medium-specific grounds, rather than issues of documentary's sub-categories, it seems unnecessary to enter into discussion of how the distinction between documentary and drama-documentary can be configured.

Predicated instead on the more inclusive stance of documentary as a mode of address I propose that both the comic and the film qualify as documentary; seeking to

represent the real Harvey Pekar and declaring the limitations of such an undertaking. Following Rancière (2009: 93), representation will in every instance amount to a translation, that inherently constructs only a partial correspondence, regardless of whether it takes the form of spoken or written words, a photograph, film or comic. Both as film and in the form of comics *American Splendor* functions as an exemplary illustration of the contentious relationship that hallmarks documentary endeavour; its always partial grasp on the historical events that constitute its material (Nichols 1991: 142). Whether considering events, or persons, the complexities of the real will always exceed and elude attempts to comprehensively or definitely represent them. Rancière's reminder that we are better served viewing representations as a counterpart or version, not a copy, is a particularly poignant when dealing with representations constructing the world as actual rather than imagined. That *American Splendor* refuses to let us forget this at any point, whether as comic or film, does not make it fiction but rather a formally rich, self-reflexive documentary text.

Conclusion

This chapter has mapped historical iterations of realism and examined how drawn images can be configured in relation to the photographic realism of 'technologies of truth-telling' (Juhasz and Lerner 2006: 10), arguing that documentary comics offer a critical disruption to the notion of recorded images as constitutive of documentary. Comparing and contrasting recorded and drawn images, and their respective cultural meanings and associations, has enabled an elaboration of El Refaie's (2010) producer-oriented notion of authenticity. As a rendition of the artist/author's response to an event, or an account, rather than a mediation which claims a direct ontological relationship with said event, drawing stresses the subjective as a constitutive factor in the production of the real.

The cultural associations of drawing; narrative, embodied response, becoming, incompletion, all contribute to an accord between the visual mode of representation in comics and a conception of knowledge as situated. Rather than authenticity generated by the contingent information of a recorded view and moment, this is a

sense of authenticity more readily understood as a particular and partial perspective; reality filtered through individual consciousness. As my example shows, this is not necessarily dependent on the artist and the narrator being one and the same. I thus argue that documentary provides an alternative description of *American Splendor* that encompasses the kinds of collaborative telling it exemplifies. Its drawn and hand-crafted images in documentary contexts pose poignant questions about the meanings and assumptions attached to photographic realism and the visual representation of the real.

I have argued that the authenticity of camera-derived images can be identified in terms of the images' capacity to record that which exceeds intention; the excess and the contingent. Their objectivity, on the other hand, has less to do with accuracy or correspondence with physiological and optical vision. Rather, it connects to the idea of mechanical operations free from human interpretation. It is the conception of the ideal passive spectator, devoid of the vagaries of human subjectivity (Daston and Galison 1992: 117; Peters 2001: 716), which constitutes the authority routinely, and mistakenly, assigned to the index as trace. By drawing on a more nuanced understanding of indexicality than that of a trace function, these two types of image and their respective authenticities (the capacity of both for expressive as well as descriptive functions notwithstanding) can be understood as pointing towards, or indexing, differing conceptions of knowledge. Offering up retained surface details and nuances from one particular point of view and moment, photographic realism has nevertheless come to symbolise a more universal assertion and been socially constructed as emblematic of empirical knowledge. The subjectivity of drawing, by contrast, elicits situated, particular and partial perspectives as the terms of knowledge. It is important to recognise that such connections are culturally and historically contingent, as are the implied understandings of knowledge. It is equally important to remember that documentary assertion cannot be reduced to, or assigned to, the ontology of its images.

While some documentaries rhetorically extend recorded images as evidence for both unspoken and explicit claims, others consciously complicate and subvert the status of such images and their relationship to the real world events and persons they convey. Nevertheless, the particular challenges that the drawn image poses to documentary

evidentiality, and to the tightly tied knot of realism and perceived objectivity at the level of the documentary image, is made particularly explicit in Pekar's comics. Connections between Pekar's work and the documentary impulse in nineteenth century naturalist literature and realist painting have also been noted, while the fragmented aesthetic and refusal of comprehensive visualisation ostensibly highlights the idea that 'any objective conception of reality must include acknowledgement of its own incompleteness' (Nagel 1986: 26). The visual inconsistencies of *American Splendor* radically disrupt the perceived realism of the documentary image. Yet I argue that the comic performs, and insistently so, in a documentary mode.

However, in spite of engaging with notions of knowledge, factuality and proof-functions, this discussion has stopped short of addressing documentary's archival function and conveying access to the past. Chapter four will go on to examine how comics might figure in terms of documentary's relation to historiography.

ⁱ Animation 'immediately extricates itself from these kinds of [realist] debates by already being a medium which is informed by self-evident principles of construction' (Wells 1998: 24-25). Ward (2005: 88-89) notes that 'there is something inherently reflexive about animation, especially in relation to documentary'; that 'despite any truth-claims made, or real-world situations and relationships shown, the 'animatedness' will still be an overriding feature of the film for the viewer as they watch the film' (ibid: 89).

ⁱⁱ This is not always the case, as illustrated by the example of a bullet hole (Peirce 1991: 239-240), nor would it apply in the case of a medical symptom.

ⁱⁱⁱ Pekar himself, when recollecting the initial insight that 'comics can be about anything', suggests that this meant a realization that comics anecdotally commenting on life experiences did not necessarily have to be about the underground scene (Wiater and Bissette 1993: 131).

^{iv} There are exceptions to this in web-comics and comics published in association with audio material (see Hague 2012: 105-106).

Chapter 4 -

History in the Making: Comics, History and Collective Memory

'For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.' (Benjamin 1999: 247)

'Documentation anticipates a future looking back.' (Polchin 2007: 218)

While often seemingly preoccupied with contemporaneity, recorded documentary is widely accepted to function in an archival capacity and can therefore be viewed as offering the opportunity to 'participate in historical remembering' (Rabinowitz 1993: 119). Or, as Laura Mulvey (2006: 25) has said: 'personal and collective memories are prolonged and preserved, extending and expanding the "twilight zone", merging individual memory with recorded history.' Furthermore, archival material and testimony function as rich sources for documentary which has past events as its subject. It is thus possible to identify a two-way relationship between documentary and historiography; documentary as an inscription of history and history as a subject of documentary.

The aim of this chapter is to investigate how comics can be seen to figure in this particular context. The chapter will examine comics using testimony in conjunction with subsidiary research in order to represent and contribute to understandings of past events. I begin by situating documentary in relation to historiography and the archive, before considering particular ways in which images enable acts of witnessing. Following this, analyses of Joe Sacco's *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009) and Emmanuel Guibert's *Alan's War* (2008) will yield opportunities to critically reflect on issues of subjectivity, narrative, memory and the archival function of documentary.

The past, as Hayden White has explained,[i] is important for the processes of conceiving identity; the horizons along which such processes play out being simultaneously social and genealogical, latitudinal and longitudinal. Identity here is thus necessarily conceived as a 'configuration of subject positions' (LaCapra 2004: 5) whereby individual and collective identities are mutually constitutive. Likewise indicating the interdependence between collective and individual, past and present, Jan Assman (1995) has distinguished between communicative memory and cultural memory[ii]. According to this model, communicative memory exists within the indistinct and everyday realm, and does not extend beyond the span of three or four generations, or eighty to a hundred years. Meanwhile:

> [t]he concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose "cultivation" serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image. Upon such collective knowledge, for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity.
>
> (Assman 1995: 132)[iii]

Cultural memory, then, becomes a source through which, importantly, 'imagined communities' (Anderson [1983] 2006) are constructed through material practices. Through them, groups and individuals are able to configure 'patterns of understanding' (Morris-Suzuki 2005: 2), which formulate cause and effect and context, and as a consequence 'define and re-define the place that we occupy in [the] world' (ibid). Assman characterises cultural memory by its 'fixed points' and 'figures of memory' (1995: 129), for example rites, festivals and memorials. He describes the way the past is re-constructed and given value and meaning through them, and other cultural texts, as 'binding' (formative and normative) and 'reflexive' (ibid: 132-133) in varying degrees.

In other words, while the past can be a source of affirmation in the present, it might equally serve as a cautionary reminder: an example of that which must be guarded against (Waterson 2007: 70). According to the political thinker and historiographer

Michael Oakeshott, 'the practical past' can be used as a base for ethical judgement and thus 'moral or political instruction' (O'Sullivan 2003: 18). The past is thus not only important for orientating subject positions and informing understanding in the present, but potentially has bearing on decisions, agreements and resolutions which in turn will hold implications for the future. Operating under different sets of constraints, documentary shares historiography's position of being 'always attached to an ambition to speak the "real"' (de Certeau 2000: 39), that incorporates an understanding of 'the ability to act as historical agents' (Rancière 2004: 38-39).

The past and its mediation: multiple histories

The past, by ontological necessity, is afforded presence and meaning through codified processes of construction and mediation. Thus, although often used interchangeably, the past and history are not one and the same thing (Jenkins [1991] 2003: 7). History can more precisely be described as a discourse *about* the past, and as a scholarly discipline with its own particular genealogy. In the West, history as a study of the classics was embedded in the tradition of *belles lettres*, which drew no clear boundary between literature, poetry and history. However, the drive towards a scientific model and approach as the legitimising means by which a profession and academic discipline could become established brought about a deliberate distinction (Howsam 2004; Gwynn 2006: 16). History scholarship, and the writing of history as it embodies the drive of a culture or social group to order 'events with respect to their significance' (White 1987: 10), became characterised by the systematic and original study which had as its object *facts*, and empiricism which thus paid attention to a broader variety of sources. The persistence of narrative despite the rise of aspirations and discourses aligned to scientific methodology thus points towards interpretation, and narrative, as an essential form of meaning making (Bruner 1992: 4).

One of the ways the perceived excesses of narrative have been managed in history, and other disciplines within the academy, has been through the neutrality of language. This not only signals that subjective and emotional bias is kept in check by rigorous self-discipline and restraint, but works rhetorically to bolster the credibility

of the text as factual discourse and set in opposition to fiction (White 1987: 65). 'Because history, unlike fiction, is supposed to represent real events and therefore contribute to knowledge of the real world, imagination (or "fancy") is a faculty particularly in need of disciplinization in historical study' (ibid: 67).

A broader view of history, beyond the confines of academic scholarship, would need to recognise that '[h]istory has always been a hybrid form of knowledge, syncretising past and present, memory and myth, the written record and the spoken word' (Samuel 1994: 443, cited by Davies 2006: 58-59). To this we might now add a multiplicity of visual modes of representation disseminating discourses about the past and occupying spheres of experience beyond the classroom or library (Rosenstone 1988: 1174; Morris-Suzuki 2005; de Groot 2009; Bell and Gray 2010; Dillon 2010). De Groot (2009: 2) argues that, particularly since the 1990s, an interest in history across a range of cultural pursuits and products has been noticeable in the sphere of leisure. Historical knowledge is 'constructed, transmitted and perpetuated' (ibid) as 'a social form of knowledge' (Samuel 1994), not only in museums, on television and in literature, but through activities such as local history, family genealogy, collecting and games (be this computer games or historical re-enactments and role-play) (de Groot 2009). The engagement with pasts beyond personal experience, also described by the terms 'postmemory' (Hirsch 1997) and 'prosthetic memory' (Landsberg 2004) potentially offers both cognitive and empathetic benefits. For Morris-Suzuki (2005: 30-31) multi-platform and mass media production of historical awareness that, additionally and importantly 'transcend[s] the narrow frontiers of national history' (ibid: 31) is a significant supplement to the versions and selections of educational curricula in a world of increasingly global politics and economics. Sounding a note of caution, Marita Sturken (2008: 76), however, suggests that forms of consumption through which engagement with the past takes place might equally encourage 'particular kinds of political acquiescence'. Certainly commodified representations of the past and the participatory positioning that in public and popular culture contexts constitutes 'recognition of history and its representation as *process*' (Sobchack 1996: 7) [original emphasis] intermingle in complex and heterogenous ways.

'Popular history, formed around ritualised ceremony together with television's own rituals, creates a shared understanding of the past' (Dillon 2010: 108). In a continuation of the imagined communities constituted by capitalist print culture in the form of newspapers (Anderson [1983] 2006), television similarly connects the individual to a wider community in the form of audiences. Marnie Hughes-Warrington (2007: 82) argues that on a purely theoretical basis and without the support of reception studies, the notion of a specific relationship between cultural products and collective imagination is speculative and one-dimensional. She criticises Benjamin Anderson's concept of imagined communities and its aptness, in her case for historical film studies, on account of the 'limiting emphasis on the interior dimensions of a single kind of community, the nation state' (ibid). Such a notion, Hughes-Warrington argues, fails to account for identity as constructed through a range of different discourses and in multiple configurations.

Such a critique is a pertinent reminder of the complex negotiations and on-going, fluid processes through which identity is constructed and the complexities which mark out the relations between individual and collective identity. However, discourses of nation (Balibar 1991: 86-106) and national identity permeate both academic (Iggers 2005: 471) and non-academic (de Leeuw 2010: 141-142) history. Popular history might be able to facilitate transnational subject positions (Morris-Suzuki 2005; Hughes-Warrington 2007). But it nonetheless retains a particular prominence in mediating intertwined notions of history and national identity, playing out in multiple and diverse forms across a fact-fiction continuum. The popularity of some of the leisure pastimes mentioned by Jeroen de Groot (2009) is reflected and solidified in documentary formats characterised by the interweaving of personal and familial pasts and the discourse of national identity (Holdsworth 2010: 244); a 'collective and shared history through the publicizing and the historical contextualization of the personal' (Kleinecke-Bates 2010: 228).

As I go on to demonstrate, the problematic and contested notion of national identity is a salient subject in the comics examined in the chapter. These comics also belong to a particular type of documentary that engages with past events by 'embedding [...] the texture of an oral history' (Chanan 2007: 264)[iv]. Such documentaries not only

rely on archives as a source, but by recording or inscribing their material effectively produce new archival sources.

Visual archives: images, testimony and witnessing

The theorisation of the archive as a 'discursive formation' (Hall 2001: 89) and contested space has built on key contributions by Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida (Ketelaar 2001; Manoff 2004). For Foucault (1972 [1961]: 120-130), the structuring principles of knowledge production and the material organisation of knowledge combine to define what it is possible to know, and say. One example of this might be the way the archive constitutes a normative and legitimising indicator of disciplinary validity in professional history, in the way field work does in anthropology (La Capra 2004: 33). Derrida (1995), on the other hand, describes the archive in terms of consignment and forgetting, as much as it involves retention and the possibility of retrieving the past. As both Foucault's archive as a system of discursivity (1972) and Derrida's (1995: 17) insistence that history and memory are shaped by the structures and technical methods of archives (Manoff 2004: 12) indicate, archives are socially constructed. Their underlying principles inevitably indicate forces of power; 'the choice of what to record and the decision of what to preserve, and thereby privilege, occur within socially constructed, but now naturalized frameworks that determine the significance of what becomes archives' (Schwartz and Cook 2002: 3). Absences and omissions may thus be as significant as the material which archives contain (Bell and Gray 2010: 253-254). Importantly, 'records and archives as dynamic technologies of rule [...] *create* the histories and social realities they ostensibly only *describe*' (ibid: 7, original emphasis).

Photography and film, in view of their recording function and evidential authority, have come to constitute:

> a strange new form of historical evidence which gives us the immediate sight of the recent historical past embedded in what is always already a partial perspective on it; a veridical social and historical world as interpreted by the film-maker just a moment before it becomes historical […].

Although the technology of film has been historically thought of as having an innate affinity with the archival impulse (Doane 2002: 62; Baron 2011: 335), it becomes necessary to account for 'the complex relation between film and historiography and the social and political role of moving images as archive memory' (Wahlberg 2008: 41). '[A]ll too often, the archive serves as visual evidence of history, with the role of found footage reduced to the textual authority of the documentary fact' (Russell, cited by Wahlberg 2008: 42). Chapter one indicated the multiple processes that complicate any notion of documentary as a transparent replication of the pro-filmic real, and in chapter three I outlined problems that arise when subjecting the evidential aspects of recorded images to closer scrutiny. Even 'raw' images, devoid of premeditation, as exemplified by the keenly examined and repeatedly analysed Zapruder footage of the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963 and the Holliday video tape of LAPD officers beating Rodney King in 1991, remain inconclusive and mutable despite their authenticity as visual records (Bruzzi 2005: 419-431). Here too, the recorded fragment performs as a site of multiple, contingent and contested meanings[v]. Despite the 'claims to the historically real' (Nichols 1991: 153), narratives into which such fragments are inserted become instrumental in guiding the manner in which meaning becomes constructed.

As archived material, such representations present clues and traces (Ricoeur 2004: 146-147, 172-181) that call for reconstruction and contextualisation. As a signature in a register of births and marriages testifies to the one-time bodily presence of a particular individual, so photographic evidence, alongside DNA samples and fingerprints as all '"testify"- through their muteness' (ibid: 174). Processes of reconstruction in order to gain access to the past in turn require acknowledgment that it is impossible to transcend the particular lenses and perspectives of such culturally and historically situated practices (Hall 1991: 152-153). Nevertheless, documentary can be seen as archival production, a record of that which at a particular time and in a particular moment is an aspect of the social world, considered of sufficient significance for re-presentation and, potentially, storage. This also raises the question of the constitution of new archives as 'an interruption in a settled field' (Hall 2005:

92) and a critical intervention, creating access to histories which have previously been omitted (Hall 2005: 25-35; Bastian and Alexander 2009). The intersection between documentary that records and inscribes oral testimony and the archive can thus be understood as a point of transference, between communicative memory and cultural memory.

However, the role of the visual in relation to documentary witnessing and testimony calls for particular attention. I propose that the clues provided by archival documents, speaking of and testifying to a presence turned to absence take on a particular double operation in relation to images. Images, too, perform as replacements for that which is absent, and in particular documentary images simultaneously allow acts of secondary witnessing.

To see with one's own eyes: the dual role of documentary witnessing

Attempts to, on a cultural and collective scale, come to terms with historical trauma since the end of the Second World War, have brought the concept of witness-testimony renewed significance. It has constituted a central concept in the field of trauma studies, emerging through the 1980 and 1990s (Peters 2001: 707-711; La Capra 2004: 106; Guerin and Hallas 2007: 7-8). Stressing the role of mass information channels, John Ellis (2000: 9) has dubbed the twentieth century 'the century of witness'.

'A witness is the paradigm case of a *medium*: the means by which experience is supplied to others who lack the original' (Peters 2001: 709, original emphasis). But there are layers, or certain folds, inherent to witnessing. To witness means to see, or to experience something. However, to witness also means to bear witness, to communicate one's experience to another or others through testimony. Without an audience which in turn performs as witness, this second type of witnessing as a performative act, or testifying, is not a possibility (La Capra 2004: 77; Guerin and Hallas 2007: 10; Waterson 2007: 53). The notion of testimony in turn highlights a

fundamental problem inherent to all communication; 'No transfusion of consciousness possible. Words can be exchanged, experiences cannot' (Peters 2001: 710). Thus testimony has perennially been subject to protocols of substantiation and attempts to underwrite and police its credibility, and from judicial torture and religious martyrdom to lie detector tests they point to the corporeal as the site of assurance (ibid: 710-715). The implications of testimony for those who perform the equally vital role of observing, receiving or, in fact in turn 'witnessing' the act of bearing witness also extends beyond mere watching or listening. A heightened moral and ethical responsibility, predicated on empathy (La Capra 2004: 76-77) is solicited (Peters 2001: 721) in keeping with the address to 'historical agents' (Rancière 2004*a*: 38-39) and particular 'regimes of response' (Ellis 2005: 351) characterising documentary, as discussed in chapter one.

Images, like testimony, offer a representation of that which is absent, and potentially extend the possibility of a similar kind of secondary witnessing. The iconic presence of images has been explained by Hans Belting (2005: 312-313) in the following terms: 'images depend on their media for their presence, yet they stage an absence of which they are an image'. Like testimony, images too have been treated with an ambiguous mixture of reverence and denouncement, belief and suspicion. Further demonstrating this connection, Janet Walker's (2007: 87) assertion that: 'There is this appetite for testimony, and yet our understanding deepens of memory's constructive aspect', is prefaced with a reference to the observation that the distrust of the capacity of images to represent truthfully paradoxically accompanies an unabated appetite for images of the real (Williams 1993: 10).

Images, however, cannot be thought of simply as material processes and artefacts. From description to tropes and metaphors, language invokes imagery, suggesting that images are both material and virtual (Mitchell 2005; Belting 2005). 'Images are neither on the wall (or on the screen) nor in the head alone' (Belting 2005: 302). Emotional and mental processes, imagination, memory and cognition – all are necessarily mediated in material and embodied forms and for Mitchell (2005: 215-216) images are the main currency of media. There is no simple or unidirectional relation between tangible images and mental constructs, in varying degrees of

subjectivity and cultural collectivity. When Roland Barthes (1973) performed close readings of artefacts and phenomena from wrestling to advertising for pasta sauce, in order to illustrate the relay between connotation and cultural myth, he was making a similar point.

Culturally and collectively held imagery generates, informs and reproduces material images and vice versa in a relationship whereby neither can securely be assigned positions in terms of causality. Images in themselves are incapable of speech, they 'show' rather than 'say' and as such depend on the verbalisation of the viewer, who by putting into words 'projects a voice into the image' (Mitchell 2005: 140). And even then they appear to somehow exceed the possibilities of capture by verbal means (ibid). Images in this sense, alive and animated only through acts of looking, interpretation and meaning-making, are in such moments no more innocent or empty of cultural meaning/s than their beholders. For Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas (2007: 1-17) the poignant capacity of images in relation to documentary, and specifically trauma, is constituted by making available acts of secondary, or passive witnessing. This uncoupling of the documentary image from functions of evidence, and the emphasis on emotional engagement and empathic response that it accentuates, finds a particular resonance in relation to the fluidity between internal and external, subjective and observational, of comics.

History in Comics

Factual histories in comics form, or as Witek (1989: 13) has described them, '[a] marginal genre of the already culturally marginal comic-book medium', can be traced to informational and edifying biographies or 'industrial and corporate give-aways' (ibid: 14). Comics rendering historical narratives more often than not continued to be tied to promotional and propagandistic objectives, but failed as commercial undertakings in their own right. *Picture Stories from American History* (launched in 1945) and *Picture Stories from World History* (launched in 1947) by EC (Educational Comics) were both publishing disasters (Morris-Suzuki, 2005: 170). Other instances of history in comics signalled their educational worth and distinction

from the entertaining diversions of humour and adventure by refusing established formal conventions, such as hand-lettering and sound effects, and adopting a more costly format. As Witek explains, such strategies evident in *Classics Comics* and *Classics Illustrated* by the Gilberton Company, were intended to appeal to parents of young readers, at a time of widespread concern over the effects of comics on their young readers.

However, the comics I examine here derive from publishing contexts which differ substantially from these earlier comics publications. Joe Sacco's *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009) was published by the Macmillan imprint Metropolitan Books and Emmanuel Guibert's *La Guerre d'Alan/ Alan's War* (2008) was originally published under the titles *La Guerre d'Alan* (2000), *La Guerre d'Alan 2* (2002) and *La Guerre d'Alan 3* (2008) by L'Association. While the former is a large book publisher, the latter originated in 1990 as a non-profit comics publisher, 'a platform to publish work that did not fit into the strictly circumscribed formats and genres represented by the mainstream publishers' (Wivel 2011). In both cases, as chapter two explained, the legacy of underground comics underscores their author driven cachet and appeal to an adult readership. Joe Sacco's particular brand of comics reporting from conflict-torn areas in The Balkans; *Safe Area Gorazde* (2003) and *The Fixer* (2006), and the Middle East; *Palestine* (published in serialised form in 1993, and as a single volume by Fantagraphics in 2001), had already amassed critical and media recognition by the time *Footnotes in Gaza* was published in 2009 (Barker 2012). While the 388 page length of this book gives some indication of the publishers' faith in his market value, in combination with the politically charged and complex subject matter, it also suggests the projection of a mature readership. Emmanuel Guibert's oeuvre as an author and artist on the other hand does include stories for children. But while *Alan's War* (FirstSecond 2008) invites less age-specific speculation as to its demographic than Sacco's work, its monochromatic aesthetic and subdued tone suggests that this is not one of them.

Both *Footnotes in Gaza* and *Alan's War* can, as Witek (1989: 10) remarks in his analysis of Harvey Pekar's *American Splendor*, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Jack Jackson's *Comanche Moon* and *Los Tejanos*, be considered as additions to 'a minor

but long-established tradition of historical and fact-based comic-book narratives'. It is, however, through the pivotal use of witness testimony that Sacco's and Guibert's texts become connected with particular types of documentary, as they incorporate aspects of oral history. Like Jack Jackson's historical comics, Sacco's *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009) is concerned with historical events that have been suppressed and overlooked. In both cases addressing and bringing to light such past events links to contemporary concerns of their time of production and publication. Jackson's alternative accounts, or revisionist history, of the defeat of indigenous peoples by white culture in North America asserts a critique of American imperialist discourse at the time of the Vietnam War; it 'gives lie to America's deceit that its ideals as a culture preclude atrocities by its members, that any killings of innocents in its wars are isolated and unusual incidents' (Witek 1989: 71). In *Los Tejanos*, he resuscitates historical characters involved in the Texan-American war of 1836 and its aftermath, whose complex cultural situation echoes that of present-day Hispanic Texans (Witek 1989: 58-95). Dealing with events beyond living memory, Jackson necessarily relies on secondary sources. Sacco's immersive and situated research process on the other hand makes use of multiple eye-witness testimony. Witness testimony is also central to Guibert's comic, but built on a premise and with results distinctly different to that of Sacco's work. *Alan's War* is the visualisation by one man of another man's recollections of his experiences during the Second World War, the result of a collaboration spanning eight years.

In relation to documentary with history as its subject, these two comics would, if we adopted the distinction between 'compilation documentaries that rely on historical documents and documentaries that center on the testimony of still-living historical participants or witnesses to historical events' (Gwynn 2006: 144), fall in the latter category. Thus, through their engagement with history they point toward a conception of documentary which relates to 'bearing witness' rather than providing evidence (Guerin and Hallas 2007: 11-12), and they correspond to the tendency to complement fact-based historical narrative with witness testimony as a recording (in the case of comics more accurately described as an inscription) of witness testimony. Drawing on encounter and testimony, they simultaneously perform the two functions of narration and documentation. Such documentaries, regardless of the inherent fragility and inconsistencies of individual memory, and especially traumatic

memory (Walker 1997: 822), thus fulfil a function of preserving and archiving communicative memory, transforming it into documentary culture (Williams 2006 [1961]: 37) and potentially incorporating it into cultural memory.

Footnotes in Gaza: a documentary project in comics form

Footnotes in Gaza (2009) recounts field research undertaken in order to uncover specific events that took place some fifty years earlier, on the 3rd and the 12th of November 1956, in the Palestinian refugee camps of Khan Younis and Rafa on the Gaza strip. It does so through multiple interviews with eye witnesses, supported by archival research. The Israeli invasion of Gaza in early November 1956 was followed by a swift surrender by the Egyptian army that had controlled the area following the 1947 partition plan and the 1948 war (Masalha 1996: 55-56). According to a 1957 UN report 275 civilians were killed by the Israeli army in Khan Younis, and while omitting to give figures for Rafa the same report states that 'a serious incident occurred' in which 'a number of refugees were killed and wounded' (see appendix I). Nur Masalha (1996: 59) offers a civilian death toll of 111 for Rafa. That mentions in both archives and secondary sources are scant and fragmentary suggests that, despite their severity, these events had been largely neglected in extant historical accounts. Sacco's inscription, verbal and visual, seeks to investigate and to re-instate what had effectively been deselected by official and collective historical memory. Yet, despite its concern with events which took place in the 1950s, the project inextricably links to geo-political situations playing out in the early twenty-first century.

At the time of *Footnotes in Gaza*'s publication Sacco had already gained considerable critical recognition for previous work, often referred to as comics reportage or journalism[vi]. The issue of how to name, and consequently understand, his work had formed a significant part of mainstream media attention (Barker 2012: 63-66), and Sacco's profile as a comics creator had grown significantly entangled with the widening awareness that the form is not reducible to particular genres. In other words, for many his name would already be associated with non-fiction comics.

In addition, this particular text is prefaced by a lengthy foreword in which Sacco outlines the premise of the project and gives specific details of the time he spent in Gaza conducting research. This unequivocally directs the reader towards a particular position: to understand and accept what follows as a factual witness account. He also elaborates on the factors motivating the project. By re-tracing these events, still within living memory, Sacco's stated intention was to address a particular absence of historical context in portrayals of the current conflict between the Israeli state and the Palestinians, particularly in the American media landscape (Sacco 2009: xi). While the relationship between public opinion and policy-making on a government level is a complex one, democratic ideals and principles nevertheless rely on the assumption that public support is an important and desirable factor for the implementation of foreign, as well as homeland, policy. From September 2002 US government officials were conducting a concerted media effort to secure popular support and the backing of Congress for war against Iraq, mobilising fears over terrorism and repeatedly suggesting links between Saddam and Al Qaeda (Chomsky 2003; Kellner 2003). *Footnotes in Gaza* seeks to make visible a Palestinian perspective which ill fitted the demand for news journalism at the time to support one-dimensional and partisan accounts of escalating conflict in the Middle East.

The premise of this work, then, points unequivocally towards the importance of the past and its representation for judgements and decisions made in the present. Its historical revision, vitally understood as an intervention, seeks to make available to a Western audience or readership a perspective which as a result of under-represention is denied due consideration. Documentary representation in this sense is understood as 'contributing to the flow of information necessary for individuals and institutions to make sense of, and function within society at large" (Dovey 2000: 14-15). It operates as a mechanism of social inclusion, by means of visibility and being spoken for and behalf of and, in some instances, making one's own voice heard, thus affording documentary its particular and traditional associations with 'political and social responsibility' (Kilborn and Izod 1997: 6).

Process and participation

The comic resulting from Sacco's immersion in the field on two trips, and subsequent years spent at the drawing-board could be described as long-form reportage, and thus comparable with the form assumed by a substantial proportion of TV documentary as it developed within public broadcast television (Corner 1996: 2). But we are also offered the position of secondary witness to scenarios which bring to life some of the challenges and experiences of Sacco's undertaking. The task of tracking down elderly witnesses to the massacres in 1956 and to collect their testimonies presents Sacco with its own challenges, and when he finds people, their memories have sometimes become garbled and distorted over time (Sacco 2009: 200–201, 276- 277). Eventually however, a picture emerges. The fact that this story draws on multiple accounts, fragmented and continually marked by constraints of memory and time is indicated in several ways. By including himself as a character in the narrative, Sacco is able to reflect, by way of verbal commentary, and by visual and compositional cues on his position as an outsider. In chapter three it seemed appropriate to differentiate between Pekar the author and Pekar as representation by referring to the latter by first name: Harvey. Here on the other hand, as Sacco presents himself in a professional capacity, a similar differentiation will refer to Sacco the creator, and use 'Sacco' to indicate his diegetic representation. In subsequent chapters I will continue to follow this model, unless the text itself offers a more suitable solution. This should not be seen as a suggestion that other character representations are less distinct from the actual people they portray, but merely to call attention to the distinct functions operating within the texts in relation to narrators/ narrating subjects. In the following sequence Sacco (as author) stresses the disparity between his own perspective and responses, and that of the Palestinians, whose experiences his comic attempts to represent and communicate [see FIG 10].

'Sacco' (within the diegesis) sits in a room with his guide, Ashraf, and two other friends, when his story-telling is interrupted as the buildings around come under Israeli fire. This incident is shown over four horizontal panels. In the uppermost and

largest panel we see the four men sitting around, smoking and talking. In a strip below, 'Sacco''s animatedly talking head and gesticulating hands are repeated three times
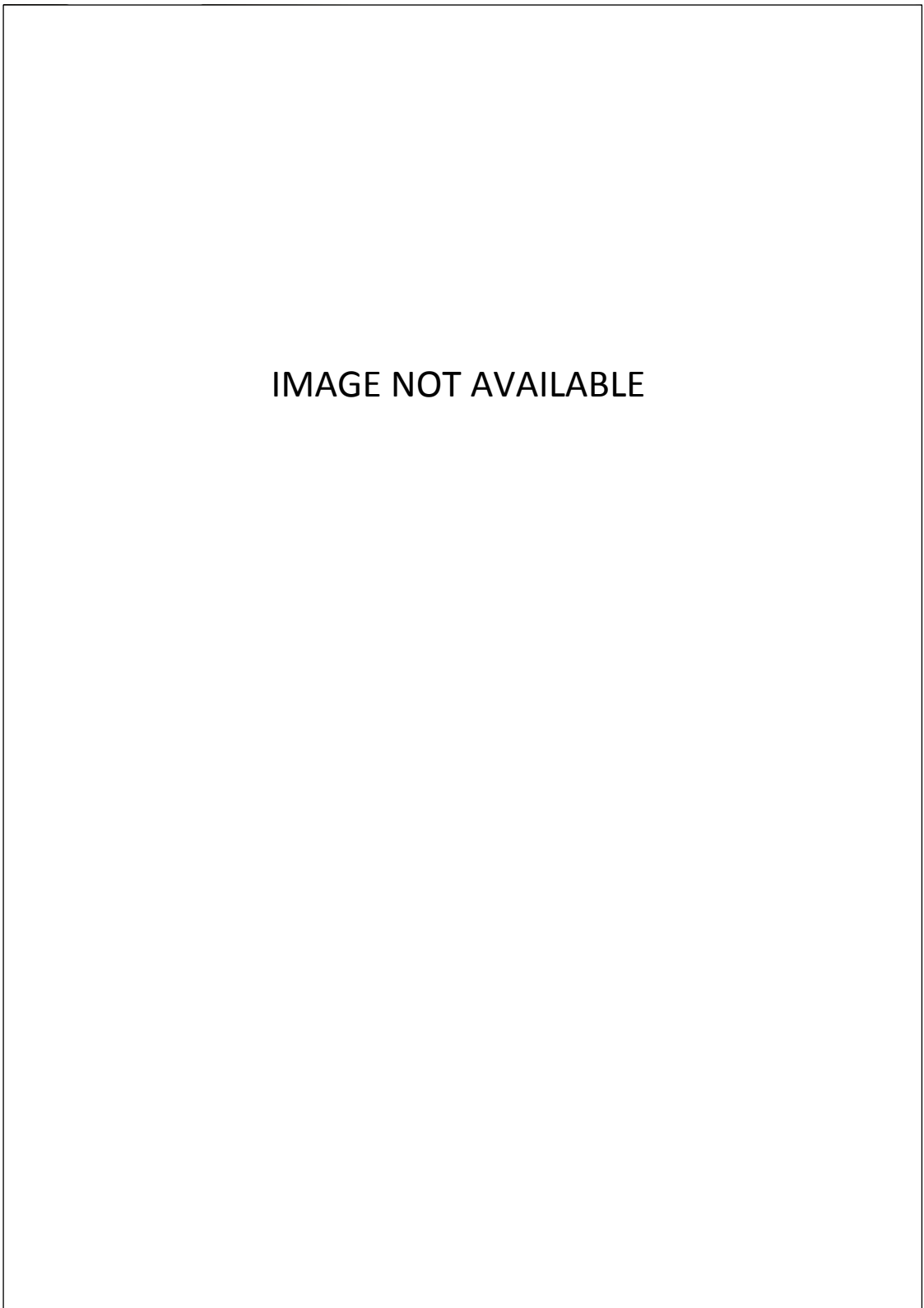
FIG 10 - Joe Sacco (2009), *Footnotes in Gaza*, Jonathan Cape, p. 297.

with minor variation, suggesting he is engrossed in telling a lively and extended anecdote. Then a thinner strip underneath the four men's black silhouettes is compressed as they seemingly flinch at the sudden bursts of gunfire. A row of diagonal insets appear as scattered across this panel with the words 'My exposition - dissolves - in a barrage - of bullets and ricochets! - Israeli gunfire - is hitting - the buildings around us - and then cracks - against the upper floors'. In line with the suggestion made in the previous chapter, sound is here represented without recourse to onomatopoeic equivalents, yet through unmistakably visual means. The 'barrage of bullets' is given visceral impact as the text insets disrupt the picture plane in short successive bursts.In the last panel 'Sacco', brow tensely knitted, looks disconcertedly out towards the left of the page, while the others have continued their conversation. He comments that while for him being under fire is not an everyday occurrence for the others it is more commonplace: 'Not as if nothing has happened - but as if - it happens often enough that it hardly merits a word' (ibid). These aspects of the text resonate with participatory documentary, in which the encounter between documentary maker and his/her subject, rather than suppressed, becomes an integral aspect of the story (Nichols 1991: 182).

Contextualising interviews as social encounters likewise links Sacco to the participatory mode of documentary. We are intermittently shown scenes in which 'Sacco' can be seen sat in crowded small rooms, sometimes cross-legged on the floor and often partaking in tea drinking rituals (Sacco 2009: 201) as he gathers information in order to piece together past events. These inclusions allow us to witness the process in a way which sustains a sense of authenticity. For Nichols (1991: 181), when viewers offered a position of secondary witness to what the filmmaker has experienced first-hand constitutes what he calls the realist style of documentary. This strategy enforces the sense of sharing the experience of his information gathering process, and ostensibly adds transparency to the constitution of factual narrative and discourse. Continuously signalling that he is the filter through which we witness these scenes and events, draws attention to the mechanisms of mediation and articulation which constitute this factual narrative. At the same time, the image of Sacco enables the kind of witnessing on the part of readers proposed by Guerin and Hallas (2007). It allows an engagement not only with the stories of Palestinians, but with Sacco's experience of being immersed in this research project

in particular situations and locations. His function as narrator and character, simultaneously, facilitates a kind of splitting whereby the internal dialogue is contrasted with the way he is seen as one character among many.

Early on in the narrative we are shown 'Sacco', having arrived jet-lagged and sleep deprived in Khan Younis. Standing on the rooftop terrace of his lodgings, in the company of a small group of Palestinian men he listens to the sounds of tanks, machine-gun fire and Apache helicopters in the dark of night (Sacco 2009: 11). A subsequent panel shows him having breakfast with his guide the following morning as they watch the story of the latest suicide bombing reported on the portable television set next to his bed; on it a backpack, toiletries bag, camera case, notepad and pen (ibid: 12). The inclusion of the tools of his work; note-pad and pen, voice recorder and camera, corresponds to ways in which documentary might self-consciously signal its process of construction. Such recurring acknowledgement of processes of production, alongside the subjectivity and experiential aspects of Sacco's account, replicates gestures through which documentary has attempted to counter the conceit of transparent mediation (Chanan 2007: 176). Critics have argued that the 'invisible' style through a variety of means and strategies reinforces documentary's 'factual pretensions' (Lebow 2006: 224) and seeks to make invisible 'its own status as discourse' (Nichols 1991: 127; Hartley 1996: 204). Such a consciously disinterested stance, invoking institutional rhetoric and authority, functions as a device for making particular arguments or perspectives more credible (Kilborn and Izod 1997: 12-13). However, as indicated in chapter one (see p. 38) it would be reductive to suggest that self-reflexivity can be equated to methodological techniques. Routinely incorporated indication of the context of production works as assurances of professional rigour. They enhance validity in line with scientific protocols, and therefore underline rather than question the authoritative stance of such documentaries (Trinh 1997: 103-104).

Sacco's work indeed conveys a persistent tension between his insistence on objective truth and desire for 'the facts, the definitive version' (Sacco 2009: 119) and the implicit questions posed to documentary by comics. For example, the incorporation of maps (ibid: 18: 160, 161, 217) and parts of official documentation (ibid: 117, 376)

partly works to strengthen the account's factual authority. But at the same time, the fact that these elements are reproduced by Sacco's pen works to diminish the status differential between such modes of representation and the surrounding narrative. So doing not only suggests that his representation of people and events aspire to factuality, but also raises questions about how, and on what grounds, some conventions of visual representation are accepted as valid and accurate representations of actuality while others must work hard to achieve confidence. This particular critique perhaps becomes most tangible at points where television screens bearing news reports form part of the mis-en-scene (ibid: 126, 136), highlighting the equally selective version of events extended by ostensibly neutral factual broadcasting and effectively placing it on a par with Sacco's own account.

Yet Sacco's self-confessed ambition to represent truthfully and accurately draws on tenets of journalism, and is confluent with its rationalist discourse of factuality. As a result he finds himself frustrated by the inconsistencies, schisms and vagaries of memory that inevitably accompany an oral history undertaking. This tension surfaces in a sequence showing 'Sacco' and Ashraf working through and comparing witness accounts, expressing mounting frustration with the inconsistencies they are faced with (ibid). By including into the final account an example demonstrating one particular discrepancy between the various testimonies surrounding one particular incident (ibid: 114-115) Sacco again confirms his commitment to a trustworthy representation. The recurrent assurances of validity appear congruent with the shift from fewer and ostensibly longer term relationships with subjects in his earlier work, to an emphasis on multiple corroborating accounts.

Throughout *Footnotes in Gaza* small insets with the faces and names of witnesses, whose testimonies are the sources for this account, occur across the pages depicting events of 1956. This might again be seen as a remediation of televisual convention, in view of Ann Gray and Erin Bell's (2013: 13) insistence that 'the strong relationship between the dominant mode of television, the talking head, and the oral history method cannot be overemphasized'. When a section narrating a particular sequence of events pieced together through multiple statements is overlaid by several corroborating sources, the effect is also one of heightened credibility. Yet, providing

an oppositional account through multiple testimonies can amount to more than a sign of the insufficient archival material available (Sacco cited by Vågnes 2010: 200). For example, a full page vividly interrupts a longer account of the mass round up of Palestinian civilians in a school building in Rafa on November the 12th 1956. It depicts an elevated view of scores of closely crammed men, sitting cross-legged on the ground with their hands on their heads [see FIG 11]. Three smaller images are placed diagonally across the page, and each of these insets shows an elderly man, two identified by name and one referred to as 'anonymous'. These three men all offer explanatory comments which link together to form a truncated narration, and in each depiction the figure imitates the position the detainees had been ordered to assume.

On numerous preceding and successive pages with talking head insets, from which speech bubbles protrude and overlap narrative and multi-panel sequences, the pace of the narrative is slowed by the complexity of the layout and sheer amount of information given. The suspension of the narrative drive here derives from the scale and unity of this image, the rhythmic repetion of shapes and the considerable contrast this presents to the scattered effect of the preceding pages. The repeating pattern of diagonal lines produced by arms extending towards hands that are clasped over bowed heads invites the eye to scan the surface in multiple directions and suggests the anonymity and subjugation of an enforced collective of victims. Meanwhile, the superimposition of speaking witnesses not only prompts a forceful sense of embodied memory, but restores the possibility to relate to the experience they testify to on the terms of human individuality. This page, by its graphic linkage between previously faceless and silenced victims and survivor testimony, thus encapsulates the power of recovering 'subjugated knowledges' (Foucault 1980: 81-82) through witness testimonies, and their aesthetic mediation as an act of criticism in the public realm.

As I have already demonstrated, Sacco uses conventions familiar from factual television formats; news, current affairs formats and documentaries. He draws himself and his translator flanking an interviewee (Sacco 2009: 344), to set the scene from which the narrative based on this witness testimony proceeds. Or his own

profile, turned to face another interviewee seen in a head-and-shoulder framing, appears tightly cropped by the left edge of the panel (ibid: 51). That these gestures that acknowledge processes of mediation and production remain limited to the fieldwork aspect of text production in *Footnotes in Gaza* is no exception; the tendency of film and television

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE
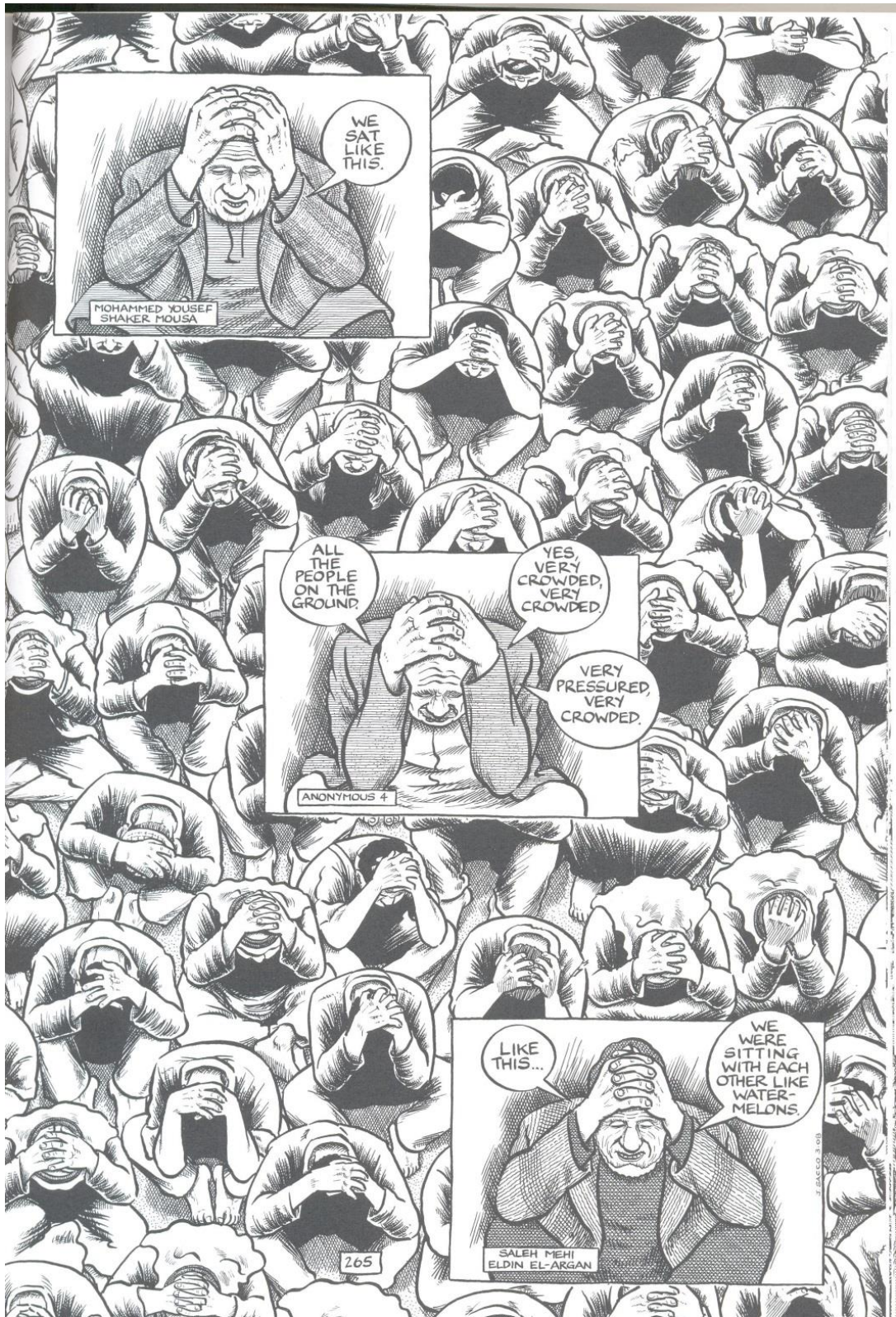
FIG 11 - Joe Sacco (2009), *Footnotes in Gaza*, Jonathan Cape, p. 265.

documentary to incorporate aspects of the recording contexts far exceeds explicit attention to pivotal post-production processes. However, while connections between audio-visual documentary conventions and *Footnotes in Gaza* are readily identifiable, the text also demonstrates aspects of visual communication peculiar to comics.

Temporal seepages and spatial configurations

The structural and compositional aspects of comics offer particular sets of signifying strategies, and Sacco's use of them provides the next point of analysis. The present day context of Sacco's research and those temporally distant events in Khan Younis and Rafa, as they emerge through recollections and witness statements, continually interrupt each other to assert visual co-presence and connections throughout the narrative. The effect of insets with faces and names of witnesses whose testimonies are the sources for this account across the pages cannot be reduced to a function of validation. As a section narrating a particular sequence of events incorporates images of multiple corroborating witnesses, this works to 'introduce splintered or constantly refracted versions of a traumatic past by using any number of different vantage points' (Friedlander 1992: 53, cited by Walker 1997: 813). Moreover, they function as part of a consistent and strategic narrative and visual disorder that refuses to neatly distinguish between past and present in its spatial arrangements. In amongst pages depicting the past, the images of a much more recent present, including a tense taxi-journey through a check-point (Sacco 2009: 128-133) and Israeli bulldozers turning Palestinian homes to piles of rubble (ibid: 179-199), allegedly to destroy smuggling tunnels providing routes into Egypt, insist on the vital connection between the two. Likewise scenes from the past intermittently disrupt the narrative strand of the present, on the same page and even within the parameters of a single panel. The combined effect is of realities overlapping and jostling with each other, never quite content to accept delineated places.

There are instances when the boundary between past and present becomes particularly leaky. For example, an overview of the refugee camp built after 1948,

showing rows of brick houses with walled backyards in a uniform grid formation, among which children play, women carry water and a man leading a donkey wanders past (Sacco 2009: 27). Turning the page, the view of Gaza from what appears to be the same vantage point sprawls across the entire double page spread, a densely built-up townscape of corrugated iron roofs held down by bricks, flat roofs housing water storage cylinders and washing-lines, and narrow alleyways bustling with people between the houses. The transformation is amplified both by the contrast generated in the shift from a one page panel size to a double spread and the move between them constituted by the actual turning of a (material) page. A similarly temporal juxtaposition (ibid: 98-99) instead invites a side-by-side comparison. Here we are shown the castle wall in Khan Younis, from the same viewpoint but fifty years apart. On the left hand side of this double page spread the wall is lined by dead bodies and a small boy walks along this silent post-massacre scene, a few houses and trees in the distance. On the opposite page, the same wall, now plastered with posters and graffiti, is lined with parked cars. The witness, now a middle-aged man, retraces his steps, flanked by 'Sacco' and his translator, among people going about their business. Beyond the wall multi-storey houses now obscure the horizon. The relationships between past and present are significantly uninterrupted by the kind of additional complication that an archive photograph/ film representation juxtaposed with a contemporary counterpart would present. Qualitative differences between such images would be likely to assert a far more distinct disruption between past and present; the connotations of nostalgia tied to an old object as a 'reference [to] an obliterated world' (Aufderheide 1995: 122). Instead Sacco's drawn townscapes and the characters in them remain unified at the level of signification; equally proximate representations of two historical moments in a specific location.

Furthermore, the ability to dwell on these images, and to turn back and forth in order to compare, reflect and to re-consider, means that details which might enrich processes of meaning-making remain accessible. The density produced by the visually busy pages, often incorporating substantial amounts of verbal information particularly invites a slower pace of reading. Often the insets and segments of text are placed in ways that disturb and destabilise any sense of easy linear progression, and intensify the inclination to scan the pages in multiple directions. Sacco's text insets oscillate between being embedded within specific images and appearing to

float across visual sequences as though inhabiting a separate stratum , and they often overlap panel borders in such a way that they do not seem to clearly belong to one or the other. The temporality of the comics page here assumes particular uses and efficacies in the way it differs from film's unilateral forward movement, by which irrespective of diegetic cuts, jumps and flashbacks, one frame always replaces and subsumes the preceding one (Doane 2002: 112-113; Bredehoft 2006: 87). It is true that digital developments and the ability to freeze, pause and repeat moving image narratives have brought changes to the ways in which audiences are able to engage with such texts, and presumably also how producers consider how they communicate. Yet the amount of detail and layering that Sacco has incorporated in *Footnotes* appears to be predicated on the ability of readers to manage the pace of their engagement freely, and to move back and forth within the text as a matter of course. This then, to some extent wards off the criticisms levelled at television documentaries by professional historians, while at the same time bringing that which is absent (the past) into presence by visual means.

Not only does the past assert its presence in direct juxtaposition and relation to the present, and vice versa, but they inextricably interweave throughout the text. As observed and eloquently described by Chute (2011: 109), relationships and meanings arise through the spatial configurations of temporally distinct and at times distant events[vii]. As the narrative is broken into segments that are displayed spatially, comics enable 'suggestive, but subliminal connections which need not correspond to the linear logic of the narrative sequence' (Witek 1989: 28). The following analysis will demonstrate how this might facilitate meanings to emerge beyond the linearity of narrative.

The first half of this double page spread (Sacco 2009: 50-51) consists of two large close-up portraits; first the face of the old fighter who has been the topic of the previous chapter. Beneath him we see the face of Khaled, who is on the run from the Israeli army at the time of telling, framed equally tightly. The chapter title 'The Wanted', in conjunction with the two men's faces, recalls posters of outlaws or mug shots in law-enforcement image banks. However the visual qualities of the image counteract this association, making clear the ability of the comics page to mobilise

relations of scale for rhetorical impact. By their proportionally striking size the closely framed faces, the photographic equivalents of which would be mug-shots, become more akin to portraits. They encourage the eye to dwell on and follow the intricate marks of their making, and thus ostensibly invite identification rather than objectification. There are clear similarities in the depiction of these two individuals: the lined foreheads, determined expressions on chiselled (to the point of gauntness) features and an unflinching gaze, the younger man looking perhaps more acutely tired. The dark shadow running down the middle of the page creates a vertical line connecting the two men's faces even closer, visually and metaphorically. In combination with the interwoven panels opposite, this page further seems to underscore visually (as the text narrative reinforces) that this conflict spans generations.

Page 51 provides an example of how 'codes weave themselves inside a comics image in a specific fashion, which places the image in a narrative chain where the links are spread across the space, in a situation of co-presence' (Groensteen 2007: 7). The page consists of four equally sized horizontal panels, dividing the page into four strips [see FIG 12]. As is the case throughout, the insets placed at angles and seemingly scattered across the picture plane create the impression of a more integrated and involved, but also less authoritative and stable, narration than the conventional placing; securely attached along the panel edge. In the top left corner of the page, the closely cropped profile of 'Sacco' works to lead into the situation. This side view of his face is turned towards his centrally positioned interviewee, enabling the reader to 'see over his shoulder' in the way often used in TV interviews. A fraction left of centre are the head and shoulders of the man he is talking to, Khaled.

The right hand side of the panel shows the incident of their discussion; a hooded man (Khaled) pointing a gun at the back of the head of a sweating, slightly forward leaning and grimacing man (a Palestinian collaborator). The information that this is indeed the case is indicated in an inset which breaches the panel's top border, and combined with the dialogue between 'Sacco' and Khaled in three speech bubbles suggests that the incident took place some years earlier. There is no gutter in this case between the two temporally separate scenes, but the background gradually

changes from left/ light to right/dark by means of increasingly dense crosshatching. 'By compressing multiple […] moments into a single panel, the impression of a "window" onto a consistent

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE

FIG 12 - Joe Sacco (2009), *Footnotes in Gaza*, Jonathan Cape, p. 51

world is destabilized, and any assertion that time and space are related according to hard and fast rules undermined' (Miodrag 2013: 149).

In the second panel we see Khaled, his head overlapping the panel in a way corresponding to the inset in the first panel. He is pointing a machine gun aimed in a right-left direction at two soldiers in the back of a military truck. They appear just to have noticed him. This time, two insets tell us that Khaled had been working as an assassin in the First Intifada, and had been high on the Israeli 'wanted' list. The action in the third panel creates a left-right vectoral line, as two armed soldiers (the helmet of one of them again exceeding the top border of the panel) push a man towards a door. Three insets floating over the image tell us that the man is Khaled's father during a raid on his home, which leads him to decide to go on the run. The fourth and final panel on this page is separated into two parts, but as is the case in the top panel, not by an actual gutter. Instead a doorframe acts as a divider to the left of which Khaled stands surrounded by a group of children and neighbours. Khaled's arm is held vertical as he fires his gun (again exceeding the panel's edge) in a gesture of defiance. The cross-panel constellation of this *fedayee*, or freedom fighter, and the two soldiers in the panel above assumes a certain metonymic value, as his rifle blast overlaps and comes to appear as aimed directly at these representatives of the Israeli army. Khaled's father is positioned by the doorframe, while foregrounded to the far right in this final panel on the page his mother faces straight ahead, her eyes closed and mouth wide open in an expression of pain and grief. Both the top of her head and the pistol overlap the preceding panel. These recurring panel overlaps, and the visually implemented alternating directional dynamic which tie the panels together in a zig-zag fashion, are suggestive of a causal chain of events. And while all the armed figures are turned away from the reader's gaze, the faces seen most clearly, those of the about to be executed collaborator and Khaled's parents, are linked by their expressions of fear and distress. The chain of violence on this page thus becomes punctuated by the suffering of victims, and acute moments of pain and profound helplessness that do not discriminate according to the political allegiances that occasion them.

This analysis brings to the fore the way, in comics, narrative is not only expressed through the forward movement of narration, but that opportunities for meanings to arise also results from the spatial mapping of the narrative that brings into play relationships between elements across the page. Retaining simultaneity even when not directly connected or adjacent in terms of the narrative chain, such relations are available and at times deliberately emphasised by compositional choices. Sacco makes use of these strategies to present the idea of the past and the present as inseparable, as he visually renders and materialises their continued interlacing.

The displaced soldier: remembering *Alan's War*

The testimony of soldiers' experiences of war can be understood as part of a broader 'experiential turn' in history as a professional discipline in the lead up to the twenty-first century, which emerged as a response to the ways in which histories are obscured and excluded at the level of archive and official documentation, especially in the case of non-dominant groups (LaCapra 2004: 3). *Alan's War* (Guibert 2008) follows a young American G.I. who was drafted following the bombing of Pearl Harbour, underwent training as a radio operator and arrived in Europe in February 1945, on the day of his twentieth birthday. Replacing the manifold facets of combined memories which on Sacco's pages interject sequences set in the present, the visual narrative here is placed resolutely in the past, but accompanied by excerpts from the retrospective first-person narration that gave rise to the visual representation. It is composed to represent one man's gradual re-tracing of his time as a soldier, some fifty years after the event. This time lapse, however, corresponds to the one Sacco negotiates, and resonates with the impetus to record and inscribe communicative memory (Assman 1995) as an act of preservation.

The preface explains the context of the comic's production, and as with *Footnotes in Gaza*, this fulfils an important function in terms of setting up the particular position extended to readers. Written by Guibert, it relates how in 1994 he met and befriended Alan Cope, who had returned to live in France after the war, and the collaboration between the two men which lasted over five years. Cope recounted his war time

experiences; Guibert recorded their sessions and produced the graphic narrative[viii]. Considering the performative aspects of witness testimony (La Capra 2004: 77; Guerin and Hallas 2007: 10; Waterson 2007: 53) the context of a long term relationship, gradually building rapport and trust, becomes inseparable from the shaping of this narrative and the intimate tone that pervades it. Lucy Noakes (2001: 663-664) has observed that:

> Recent historical work on war and memory has examined issues such as the legitimacy of disparate memories, the processes by which personal memories become a part of popular memory, the role of memory in formations of nationhood, and the variety of ways in which wartime memories have impacted upon postwar societies.

Diaries, letters and autobiographical writing have caused historians to critically reflect on the challenges involved in assessing and making use of the personal accounts of modern warfare (Hynes 1998; Hewitson 2010; Fulbrook and Rublack 2010: 265). Publication of soldiers' first person accounts of war have also addressed a wider reading public. Framing these enunciations within a discourse of national remembrance, Mark Hewitson (2010: 310) has stated that: 'Increasingly, they have confronted that public—and contemporary and later historians—with the claim that only they know what war is truly like' (ibid: 310). Nevertheless, the personal memories of soldiers are inevitably embedded within and derive their meaning from collective cultural memory (Lomsky-Feder 2004). 'The personal narrative of war veterans should be read as a "cultural text" that interweaves private experiences with collective representations that constitute the memory field of war' (ibid: 4). Particularly key in this analysis is the reminder of the ways in which extant discourses and cultural frame-works of meaning structure the self-narration through which soldiers produce and perform their testimonies. Remembrance is a process through and within which the interpretation of the past takes place in the context of present and projected needs and as an act of on-going and revisionary identity construction (Lomsky-Feder 2004: 4-5).

Over the remainder of this chapter I will in turn examine the aesthetic representation of memory in the comic, and two particular aspects in which *Alan's War* confounds

particular models associated with war narratives; the figure of the heroic soldier alluded to by Lomsky-Feder (2004) and national remembrance as mentioned by Hewitson (2010). It proffers no stories of heroism and sacrifice, nor indeed spectacles of dramatic intensity and visceral impact. Instead it quietly confronts official accounts of history through testimony and the voice of an ordinary individual (de Leeuw 2007: 76). The fact that the story includes significant periods both before (as Alan undergoes military training in the U. S.) and after (as he returns home and eventually finds his way back to Europe after a short-lived marriage) the supposed main event, suggests that the personal significance of the war far exceeded the parameters of his deployment.

Visual strategies

In considerable contrast to the vigorous line-work, polyphony of voices and busy pages of *Footnotes in Gaza*, Emmanuel Guibert's *Alan's War* (FirstSecond, 2008) is by comparison muted and rather tentatively paced. While in *Footnotes in Gaza* effort has been made to give each face distinct character and individuality, here the characters are drawn in a more schematic way, faces and gestures often outlined by a few brush strokes. This too creates a certain sense of distance and reticence, possibly suggesting reluctance by Guibert to let his interpretation dominate the account. Simultaneously this aesthetic also speaks of the character of memory, as visceral yet elusive, fragmentary and, quite literally, sketchy. The panels, although varying in size, shape and organisation are placed next to each other as discrete entities and without overlaps. A variation of the 'conventional design conceit, often called "the nine-panel grid"' (Hatfield 2009: 140), which uses six equally sized squares to a page is used intermittently. Even when larger panels occur on a page, the smaller ones tend to conform to the size used on the six-panel pages. The angular shapes of the speech bubbles, which are like rectangles with a 'tail', further implement a sense of regularity. The drawing style is restrained and decisively 'un-cartoony', often making use of black silhouettes and a reduced amount of detail. This might indicate the sincerity and earnestness of the telling, but more emphatically it matches the tone of Cope's narration as represented by Guibert; prone neither to embellishment nor intensity of expression.

The narration, in Alan's first person voice, is not placed in insets, but instead occupies space within the picture plane, creating an intimate relationship which belies the distance between the words told by Cope and the drawings by Guibert, who had no firsthand experience of the events depicted. The drawing, a mixture of inked outlines, delicate washes and stipple effects, combines subtle tonal variation with constant play between positive and negative space. Its fluid, yet almost blunt line-work depicting figures contrasts with the lack of outline in many of the backgrounds. Here the tonal range, with its subtle gradations adds a certain nostalgic quality, or at least a connotative link to a period reproduced to a great extent in black and white print photography. At times it is evident that actual photographic references have been used to inform the images, but clearly much is also drawn directly in response to and in an attempt to visualise the story told by Alan Cope.

The disparity between decisive and affirmative line-work, and the vagueness implied by the ink-wash effect, emphasising textures, thus comes to allude to the inconsistencies and uneven character of memory. The acknowledgement of inconsistencies, both in representation of individual memory, and possibly the even more precarious undertaking of representing events remembered by someone else is explicitly expressed in the preface, and tacit in the work itself through the recurring depictions of figures against an empty ground. However, it is not only individual memory that is selective; cultural memory too, as the analysis of Sacco's work made clear, can likewise be understood as perpetual transaction between remembrance and the loss of it, re-telling, revisions and versions that correspond to needs in the present.

Drifting Un-Heroically

The cultural understanding of war as traumatic event, prominent since the aftermath of the First World War, remains accompanied by the narrative of personal self-sacrifice for the greater good, and of masculinity realised 'to the highest possible degree'(Lomsky-Feder 2004: 4). At the time when Alan Cope was drafted such ideas

circulated not only through literature or folklore but were, as he remembers, a staple of the movie industry. Shown sitting in a cinema hall with his friend Lou, Alan turns to ask why they must watch another war movie again. Lou replies: 'Because I wonder how I'll react in those situations' (Guibert 2008: 44). In the next panel Alan is turned looking at his friend's profile, and the 'after-the-event' comment reads: 'He was very brave and very tough, but I guess he was afraid of reacting badly during combat' (ibid). While Alan remembers his own preference for films that distracted him and provided diversions from military training and the looming realities of a war zone, his friend used them as a means of preparation. This brief scenario indicates the weight of this cultural image of the heroic soldier, highlighting its transmission through diverse cultural texts.

Alan's stories and anecdotes are not ones of fierce battles, dramatic advances, surrenders or encounters with the enemy, nor graphic accounts of injury, suffering and death. Instead what we get is a meandering episodic account in which personal and chance encounters become the focal points through which the narrative takes its shape. It would seem that Alan considers himself one of millions of people who more or less unwittingly have been caught up in the wheels of history, and among whom he experiences a series of formative encounters, some brief, some which develop into long lasting friendships. Alan's story thus presents more of a coming of age narrative Samuel Hynes (1998: 4-5) describes the kind of war narrative based on soldiers' testimony as 'something like travel writing, something like autobiography, something like history'. But it is a travel narrative which does not render the landscapes described familiar, a life-story account more like a conversion story in which irregular and atypical experiences have formative effect, and a history not concerned with exact dates or locations (ibid: 5-16). Hynes also describes the Second World War as defined by 'space and movement' (ibid: 116). Both these terms are key features in Alan's story of the war, which is one of roaming from deployment to deployment through an unknown continent which is further estranged by the after-effects and ravages of war. Among Alan's very first experiences of being a soldier is spending two months in a small village in Normandy because the unit's tanks, jeeps and artillery have been misplaced. 'It was a completely crazy situation' (Guibert 2008: 3). The absurdity is underlined by the image; we see the back of a soldier, arms akimbo, exchanging stares with an expressionless sheep.

Whilst stranded in Normandy the men sleep under the rafters of a barn, having to make their way up and down on a ladder. When one day someone has moved the ladder, Alan tumbles to the ground and hurts his leg. Panels 5-6 on page 105 and the full length vertical first panel on page 106 stand out by the way they visually dramatise this event and the effect is further emphasised by the turning of the page which takes place between them [see FIG 13]. In the first two Guibert uses the panel borders and the gutter between them to separate Alan's foot stepping onto what he believes to be the top rung of the ladder from the rest of the figure. He is looking sideways in the upper panel, clearly assuming that he can rely on his familiarity with the descent. In the panel beneath, his foot in the top right-hand corner steps off into an expanse of empty space. On the next page a black silhouette of a falling figure, followed by the array of things he had been carrying in his arms contrasts starkly against the white of the page. The positioning of the figure in the lower part of an otherwise empty vertical panel dramatically accentuates the velocity of his fall. Using strategies unique to the comics form this scene evokes a more profound loss of equilibrium than the mere physical plummet off a roof. The emphatically literal visualisation of stepping into a void resonates with the disorientation and lack of familiar reference points of these young soldiers, whose most keenly shared attribute is their lack of experience.

This minor incident gives rise to one of several tacit comments on the discrepancies between actual events and the official protocols through which symbolic conventions serve to produce narratives of valour and sacrifice. Regardless of Alan's candour as to the trivial circumstances of his injury this later becomes the reason his name is perfunctorily added to the list for Purple Heart commendations. As a result he receives an award for bravery for an accidental and minor injury, probably caused by a prank. The arbitrary relation between procedural representation and experience is further accentuated by his reflection that the bravest thing he did during the war was to calm down a drunk, disorientated and aggressive sergeant from his own unit (ibid: 169).

The sense of dislocation experienced by the soldiers on the ground, mobilised and repositioned without orientating markers, but aware that their situation involves the possibility of sudden and irrevocable destruction is visually intimated by two rectangular panels on page 135 [see FIG 14]. The first panel shows what suggests the

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE
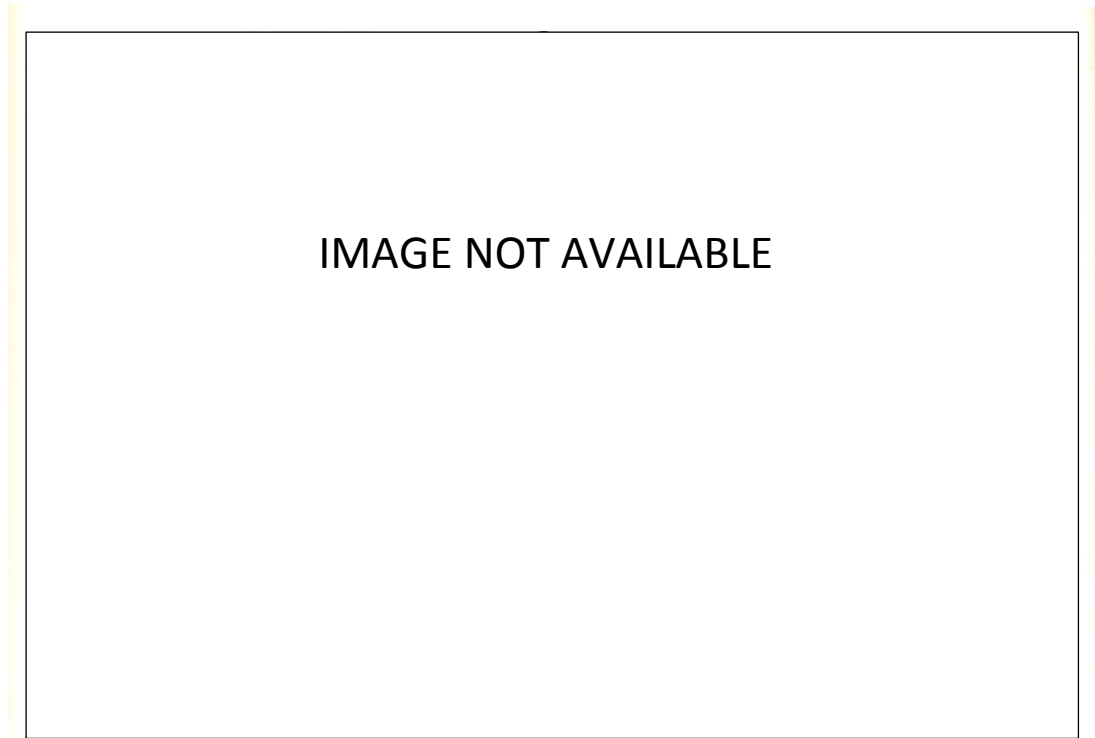
FIG 13 – Emmanuel Guibert (2008), *Alan's War*, FirstSecond, pp. 105-106

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE
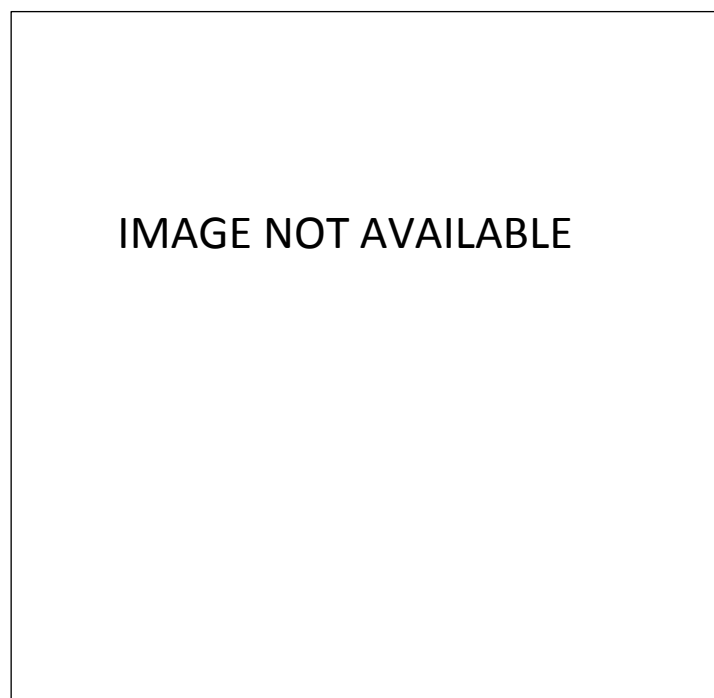
FIG 14 – Emmanuel Guibert (2008), *Alan's War*, FirstSecond, p. 135: 3-4.

view from the turret of the tank, as it moves along an empty stretch of road lined by surrounded by bushes, young trees and undulating countryside. The innocuous sense of adventure is rapidly countered in the next panel and retroactively adds a feeling of unease to the way the road disappears from view as it dips down a hill. The equal proportions, and the contrasting relation of light and dark that the two images produce, underline that the two aspects they describe are inextricably connected: two sides of the same coin. The second panel shows a night-time view reduced to solid darkness. Protruding from the left edge, the only visible detail is the concrete post and mangled, drooping metal frame-work of a blown-up bridge outlined against the void.

Alan's narration in white lettering against the dark background explains that the need not to draw attention by using headlights sometimes led to tanks accidentally crashing from a height. In the previous panel, a corresponding commentary, this time in black letters against the light expanse of sky, describes how Alan and his brigade are, quite literally, without maps (ibid). They are disconnected in an unknown landscape – and disconnected as to the reasons and purposes of their eastward movement, neither privy to where nor why. But as Samuel Hynes (1998: 11) has made clear: '*Why* is not a soldier's question'.

> The individual body becomes an element that may be placed, moved, articulated on others. Its bravery or its strength are no longer the principal variables that define it; but the place it occupies, the interval it covers, the regularity, the good order according to which it operates its movements. The soldier is above all a fragment of mobile space, before he is courage or honour.
>
> (Foucault 1977: 164)

Certainly in Guibert and Cope's representation, the young G.I.'s experience of war is one dominated not by fierce battle but auxiliary deployments, the strategic importance and aims of which often remain hazy to the men in the platoon. Instead interpersonal relationships, chance encounters and incidents form the thread of the

narrative. Small scale and mundane turns and events are recollected with clarity and given a central role, thus undermining the mythology of heroic warfare as a dramatic event. The over-riding impression is that neither dominant military narratives of coherently executed strategic moves, nor their dramatisation in the form of heroic battles and sacrifice in literature and the movies, bear much resemblance to Alan's experience.

Outside the national memory field

The heroic soldier is a figure transnationally invoked by commemorative monuments, awards and rituals, yet prominently and paradoxically tied to discourses of nation state and national identification. This figure of remembrance is also evoked through the testimonies of veterans in broadcast media as 'a particular type of public history', defined by Ann Gray and Erin Bell (2013: 6) as 'a representation of the past provided for and/or by people who are not university-based historians'. This, then, illustrates that as Edna Lomsky-Feder (2004: 5) has pointed out, 'life stories are not only a mechanism with which to elicit silenced voices and construct "popular memory" (Popular Memory Group 1982) but are also a common practice with which to constitute the hegemonic remembrance'.

Such commemorative means and the imagined communities (Anderson [1983]2006) they evoke are often delineated along national boundaries. 'National identity is centrally at stake in the public collective remembering of war' (Finney 2011: 14). In addition, different narratives have evolved in relation to specific wars. While the First World War has come to be understood in terms of the impact of mass scale fatalities and destruction beyond previous imagination, and the Vietnam War perceived as the trauma of unrealised victory for the United States, the Second World War still holds the status in the cultural memory of the Allies as 'a good war', morally justified and successfully saving Europe from tyranny and destruction (Terkel 1984; Hynes 1998: 112). What becomes gradually apparent in this account, however, is a more ambivalent relation to such narratives and the subject formations they invite. The way Alan remembers and tells his story, what he re-presents, is

consistent with an identity-construction falling outside any particular patriotic allegiances. From the time serving as a soldier and during his continued deployment after the end of the war, Alan recalls bonds he forged with several local civilians and also individuals displaced by the war. One such friendship that was to last over subsequent decades was with the pianist Gerhard Muench, who had served in the German army throughout the war, and his American born wife Vera. Another relationship that takes on added significance, signalled by the larger than average frame that portrays her, is that with a German woman called Gisela. Even after the war has ended, and she has been employed by the American forces as a telephone exchange operator, she admits to harbouring Nazi sympathies (Guibert 2008: 213). But the representation of Alan's friendship with Gisela, and her family, speaks of a connection stripped of ideological conflict and instead foregrounds the resources inherent in everyday cooperation and exchange. That the fundamental and essentialising distinction between ally and enemy that marks the rhetoric of war is being undermined is also reinforced by the fact that the only violent deaths described in any detail are those of German soldiers. One particularly poignant anecdote, told in the same low key tone characterising the story overall, offers a tacit condemnation of war. It is a pointless and banal death, witnessed by Alan Cope but a tragic incident that otherwise passes largely unnoticed. A soldier walking along the road as the surrendered German troops return from the frontline is dragged under and killed by his own tank, quite literally crushed by the machinery of war (Guibert 2008: 156).

Both Alan's narration and Guibert's visualisation seem to deliberately avoid the dramatic, the graphically violent and spectacular. On the other hand, Alan's story includes several accounts of dishonourable behaviour, all of which involve his own compatriots. At one point Alan is party to, and indeed by his own admission incites a looting incident (ibid: 145). Another anecdote tells how, after surrendering to an American corporal, a group of German officers is unlawfully handed over to Russian troops who summarily line them up for a roadside execution (ibid: 161-162). Without further comment the story continues with a depiction of an impromptu photo opportunity with a general (ibid). That an act of gross misconduct immediately precedes this military ritual, to mark the honourable service of the company, constructs a reservation that, although never expressly articulated in so many words, becomes elaborated more fully in the sequence depicted across these two pages.

The event appears to be an informal occasion by military standards, and only the stripes on jacket sleeves which mark rank distinguish the otherwise identical-looking men from one another in the line-up. Due to a mix-up Alan ends up receiving somebody else's photograph as a keepsake. Even without an accompanying text or caption performing what according to Barthes can be described as *anchorage*, or 'an effect of certainty, even of dogmatic assertion' (Berger and Mohr 1995: 91), photographs are accepted, expected and assumed to possess evidential power. In the case of Alan's photograph this evidential status turns out to be unstable. It might seem a minor error, but here serves to undermine the certainties attached to archival documentation. Furthermore, and perhaps more poignantly, this short sequence laconically comments on the gaps between official versions of war and actual events as experienced by soldiers. On the double spread in question (Guibert 2008: 162-163) the image sequence on the verso page is as follows: panel one shows the bodies of four German officers sprawling lifeless on a grass verge, while the image next to it shows American soldiers saluting waving crowds as they triumphantly enter Prague accompanied by their Russian allies. In the rectangular panel stretching horizontally across the page beneath them a slightly grubby looking American flag billows in the wind. Then, the story seemingly shifts location without any further explanation. In the first of two panels, of equal dimensions to the two at the top of the page, we are shown three men sat outside a tent as they are being called to attend the ceremony. The subsequent panel shows a row of identical-looking soldiers standing to attention as the general is about to begin his round of handshakes. As reproduced by Guibert's hand, the photograph[ix] 'of a corporal who isn't Cope, shaking the hand of a general who isn't Patton' takes up the whole of the recto page. The conduct implicitly linked to insignia of honour is far from courageous, individuality is erased and the relationship between events as they unfold in Alan's recall and what will come to count in official narratives is marked by tension and disparity. The visual juxtaposition of the summarily executed German officers, after their surrender, the celebratory pose of the victors, the aforementioned flag and the honorary keepsake meanwhile imbue this passage with a silent critique. And the contractions and elisions in the narrative, as it seemingly jumps from one situation to another, do not in the context of recollection appear as incongruous as they otherwise might.

However, not only retrospective narratives present disjuncture; the visceral realities of war are encountered, suffered and inflicted under the authority of distant strategists and policy-makers. For soldiers material keepsakes can be potent symbolic carriers of remembrance; they are tangible, physical evidence of experiences which are inexplicable, unspeakable and often untranslatable, on returning home (Hynes 1998: 26-27). Alan tells of having been given a German revolver, originally taken from a dead officer by one of his fellow soldiers, and is pleased to have it as a souvenir (Guibert 2008: 147). But on his return to the US after the war, customs officials are intent on confiscating such items carried by the disembarking passengers. Alan and several others in the same situation throw their German handguns into the sea in a small, but symbolic, gesture of defiance. As he explains, they 'threw [their] weapons into the sea rather than give them to customs' (Guibert, 2008: 147: 6). Seemingly these returning soldiers, despite having served in the interests of the nation, consider such symbols of personal experience something that the state machinery is not entitled to. Taking the form of a chronological jump and narrative detour, this interlude thus encapsulates how Alan's personal experience in relation to the institutional contexts and discourses of military service is characterised by both acquiescence and resistance. Soldiers' testimony stands apart both from anti-war polemics and 'the simplified narrative that evolves from a war, through which it is given meaning' (Hynes 1998: xiii), a narrative formed both through popular and official discourse and commemoration.

Conclusion

Footnotes in Gaza and *Alan's War* call forth mental images and bring into presence that which is absent, through the words, material images and spatial arrangements of their pages, as an integral part of their documentation of testimony. As Roxana Waterson (2007: 66) notes in her work on documentary films that centre on the transmission of testimony and the inscription of social memory, '[m]emories cannot become social, until they are articulated, in whatever medium, and become available to be shared'. These comics simultaneously work to make personal memories 'endure over time, multiplying available perspectives on the past' (ibid: 51). They

are invested in 'the struggle against the forgetting of past injustices, and ultimately have the potential to contribute to shifts in our interpretations of history' (ibid).

Oblivion has been described by Marc Augé (2004:16-17) as a loss of remembrance, while he describes the latter in terms of 'an impression that remains in the memory' and draws attention to the crucial role of exterior objects to produce such impressions. The consignment of the massacres in Rafa and Khan Younis to oblivion does not eradicate the events themselves, or as Sacco's work bears witness to, their consequences. However, their remembrance has been hindered by the lack of exterior objects (texts, rituals, monuments) relating to the events in question, and part of his project is to address this issue. *Footnotes in Gaza* thus performs as documentary and archival undertaking, collecting witness testimonies of significant events which, as the title alludes to, have left minimal traces in historical sources. As Edward Said (1992: 115-181) has observed, Palestinian consciousness has emerged from a history of two types of exile, both internal and external. Considering that 'the proper subject of historical narrative has been, following Hegel, the state' (White 1987: 11-12), Palestinian history has as a consequence not been documented through concerted projects. Even when such projects have included collaboration, they have been undertaken by dispersed individuals within institutional frameworks that are either distant, hostile or both (Pappé 2010 and 2011: 276-278).

However, despite its archival ambitions Sacco's work is ostensibly primarily addressed to a Western readership/audience. Situating the text within a particular historical and geo-political context, *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009) and the earlier *Palestine* (2003) provide a counterpoint to the hostile media representations of Palestinians. While far from exclusive to a US context, this has been a particularly dominant tendency in American mainstream media (Artz and Pollock 1995: 119-135; Daniel 1995: 66; Kellner 2003; Chomsky 2003). Sacco's work unravels largely ignored historical dimensions, 'the depth of the past's reverberations with the present' (Williams 1993: 20), in the current and on-going situation in Gaza. In this instance the spatial and formal ability of comics to present different temporal realities, intertwined and simultaneously present, becomes particularly apt.

169

In *Alan's War*, on the other hand, the selective, truncated and elliptical aspects of memory are given particular aesthetic expression by the style of drawing. The fragmentary and episodic, and at times unreliable, qualities of memory are accentuated visually in Guibert's translations of the narration and testimony of Alan Cope. In terms of factual visual discourse then, the drawn images of documentary comics appear to highlight the conditionality of witnessing, as described by Peters (2001). While all images may make present that which is absent, here the connection to witnessing is underlined more decisively. What we are offered is both an embodied interpretation and a performative response (Gardner 2011) to an event or situation of witnessing, producing images frequently characterised by contractions, omissions and emotive emphasis. Both of the comics use witnessing as a way to interrogate particular understandings and narratives surrounding historical events. Adopting a documentary mode of address they utilise visual and narrative means to offer their readers a position of secondary witnessing, and constitute instances of prosthetic memory.

This chapter has continued to examine comics in relation to the category of documentary, here foregrounding its archival function and relation to history as collective memory. It has argued that the visual narratives of comics, using strategies and capacities specific to the form, potentially offer an equally effective mode of documentary representation to conventionally accepted forms such as film and television. In other words, in addition to a shift from what constitutes a documentary image towards the social functions of documentary the chapter has involved a more assured proposition of comics *as* documentary has gradually emerged. Without leaving behind matters of visual and aesthetic means ('the *how*' of comics as documentary), chapter five now turns to the issue of documentary representation as social visibility and engagement.

[i] A Masterclass with Hayden White, Birkbeck College, University of London, 23/02/2012.

[ii] Assman's point of departure consists of two unrelated attempts to formulate a concept of cultural or social memory as a counterpoint to theories of cultural memory as a biological attribute. This discursive shift towards social and cultural theories was constituted by sociologist Maurice Halbwachs' focus on memory in relation to the group and art historian Aby Warburg's work on memory as inscribed in cultural forms (Assman, 1995: 129).

[iii] The idea that rites and traditions are cultivated in order to promote and naturalise values and identifications that preserve particular societal structures and interests, that Assman hints at here, has also been argued by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1992).

[iv] According to Michael Chanan's (2007: 264) account the Thames Television series *The World at War* (1973-74), was an influential early exemplar of this approach, its contribution significantly helping establish television as a purveyor of popular history. Steve Humphries (2008, cited by Bell and Gray, 2013: 12) traces the incorporation of televised oral history to the earlier *The Great War* series (BBC, 1964).

[v] Regardless of its ambivalence the Zapruder footage has nonetheless, as Øyvind Vågnes (2011: 9) asserts, been hugely significant in the formation of the Kennedy assassination as cultural memory.

[vi] Sacco's comic *Palestine* (the first issue released in 1993) was awarded the American Book Prize in 2009, his *Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992-1995* (2000) received substantial press attention on its release and he became the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2001. *Footnotes in Gaza* went on to receive a Ridenhour Book Prize in 2010 (https://www.fantagraphics.com/artist-bios/artist-bio-joe-sacco.html).

[vii] This use of spatial relations to express past events as insistently asserting their presence has also been noted in *Maus* (Vice, 2001; Chute, 2006: 210-213) and Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* (Chute 2011: 109).

[viii] After Cope's death in 1999 Guibert visited California and Germany; seeking out places and meeting some of the people he had been told about, thus being able to add to his depictions through first hand observation.

[ix] The photograph itself, or rather a reproduction of it, can be found among the 'photographic memories' in the very last section of the book.

Chapter 5 -

Visibility and Voice

Examples of comics that represent marginalised voices have already figured in the previous chapters. The aim of this chapter however, is to specifically bring case studies into dialogue with longstanding documentary traditions of social critique and intervention. As noted in the very first chapter, documentary incorporates a broad and varied range of approaches and has been found resistant to attempts to define or conclusively categorise its component groupings (Beattie 2004: 2; Chanan 2007: 33). However, 'ordinary people' and the 'prioritising of the mundane occurrence' (Bruzzi 2006: 79), have been persistent themes in various forms and styles of documentary (Biressi and Nunn 2005: 35-36). Linked to this, although not synonymous with it, is the agenda of addressing social injustice, exposing institutional failings and extending visibility and voice to those 'denied access to the means of producing their own image' (Ruby 1991: 51). What is at stake here is representation, the relations of power constituted by visibility and practices of looking; 'who is authorized to look at whom with what effects' (Pollock 1994, cited by Taylor 1998: 4), and the related questions of who speaks, who they speak for, and to whom such speech is addressed (Ruby 1991).

The chapter is divided into two main parts. The first deals with the tradition of what I opt to call 'the documentary of social concern'. This description, while owing a clear debt to the more widely used expression 'cinema of social concern', aims for greater precision. While the latter term specifically evokes cinematic forms and thus could be seen to include some documentaries, it remains inclusive of a whole host of films more resolutely engaging imagined characters and storylines in order to highlight social issues. The category of documentary on the other hand, is itself too broad to necessarily work as a description of texts that specifically bring such concerns into focus. A more precise designation is required in order to express the uses of documentary as tool for social and political engagement within a more diffuse, if 'lengthy and various history of concern with the historical and social world (Corner 2002: 256). In her critique of such a tradition and its roots in nineteenth century

reform movements, Martha Rosler (2004: 151-206) uses the term 'liberal documentary' to mark what she perceives to be its lack of radical intention. However, 'the documentary of social concern' offers a way of identifying the idea of politically motivated engagement with social issues, without necessarily ascribing to the expectation that such texts would, or could, affect systemic change in clearly defined or measurable ways.

The first text analysis concerns Josh Neufeld's *AD New Orleans: After the Deluge* (2009). This comic tells the stories of a collection of individuals during the onslaught and aftermath of hurricane Katrina in 2005. The ways in which the comic navigates the contested waters of the 'documentary of social concern' offers an opportunity to examine how documentary comics might contribute new possibilities of seeing and knowing.

The second part of the chapter considers the role of comics autobiography as a means of representational agency. It is true that most, if not quite all, of the comics I discuss in this thesis make use of first person narration, and that many of them have been written about as autobiographical texts. The prevalence of the autobiographical mode in contemporary comics is indeed undeniable, and has been subject of considerable scholarly interest (Witek 1989: 96-156; Davis 2005; Whitlock 2006; Beaty 2009; Gardner 2008; Hatfield 2005: 108-151; Basu 2007; Watson 2008; Rifkind 2008; Bredehoft 2011; Chute, 2010 and 2011; Chaney 2011; Shannon 2012; El Refaie 2013). But again, while Elisabeth El Refaie (2013) takes a more interdisciplinary approach, much analysis of autobiographical comics locates itself in the context of literary studies. In line with the context of this thesis, however, my interest will be focused on the connections between the ascendance of comics autobiography and its counterpart in audio-visual documentary form. In so doing, I am acknowledging that autobiographical work can be considered as part of, rather than oppositional to, my framing of these texts as documentary. Thinking about autobiographical comics in relation to first person and autobiographical modes in film, and particularly television, works to locate them as part of a significant cultural current in which the authority of individual experience underwrites debates and understandings in the public sphere (Dovey 2000: 25) . In this context first-person telling and bearing

witness underline the interlacing of the personal and the public. Moreover, as the representation of others through the self, it connects to the questions around representational agency raised by 'the documentary of social concern'.

This chapter's second textual analysis takes as its main focus the potential of comics to contribute particularly explicit and tangible visual representations of subjective experience. *Epileptic* (2005) by David B. depicts the impact of the author's brother's epilepsy, as it comes to overshadow his childhood and dominate the whole family. It moves beyond the, however diverse, approximate and relative, realist conventions of all the comics previously discussed in this thesis. *Epileptic* gives visual shape to fears, anxieties and anger, expressing them in the form of mythical animals, warriors and skeletal figures. This assertively subjective representation works to dismantle the separation of external and interior worlds into distinct spheres. But as I will go on to argue, neither this, nor the comic's preoccupation with the realm of familial space and relations, diminishes its social dimension. Here too, as in documentary more generally, inferences about broader issues and concerns arise from narration and visual representation grounded in particularity (Nichols 1983:17). However, in order to prepare the ground for all the ensuing discussions it is useful first to extend on the debates around the social role of documentary initially set out in chapter one.

In the eye of the beholder: vision, visibility and power

The problem, or conflict, that has given rise to competing interpretations, positions and theorisations of 'the visual turn' in culture is brought into particular focus when thinking about the ways in which documentary makes the social subject visible and as importantly, the subject positions its viewers are offered.

The notion of a visual turn was introduced briefly as part of the discussion of the documentary image in chapter three. This idea, that modernity is characterised by the production, circulation and consumption of images on a previously unimaginable scale, and to complex effects, has occasioned extensive scholarly desire to

understand the social and institutional practices through which seeing connects and interacts with knowledge, power and pleasure in complex ways. It should be noted that the diverse cultural practices that tend to be brought into alignment under the rubric of 'visual culture' are never purely visual (Rampley 2005: 3), and critiques of the prevalent focus on ocularcentric interpretation draw attention to issues of materiality (Julier 2006: 66: Moxey 2008) and, as chapter six will elaborate, other sense experiences. Following Stuart Hall and Jessica Evans (1999: 2) the study, or 'social theory of visuality' (Jenks 1995: 1) needs to be situated within the broader framework of cultural studies. Thus located, it draws on the organising principle of discourse (Foucault 1971) and the understanding of 'the relations between seeing and knowing as mutually constitutive' (Hall and Evans 1999: 3). Questions concerning such relations were of central importance as mid to late twentieth century social movements brought to the fore dissenting discourses through which theoretical positions developed and raised further questions with regard to ethnicity, gender and sexuality. The Panopticist model of modernity developed by Michel Foucault (1977: 195-228 and 1999), building on Jeremy Bentham's architectural plans for a prison, developed a theoretical metaphor to describe how codes of normativity, regulation and monitoring of behaviour underwrite social structures and uneven, if not unilateral, articulations of power. According to this model, surveillance, social control and the self-monitoring subject provide points of reference for understanding the reproduction of particular culturally held values and discourses, and the ways in which meanings circulate across cultural practices and processes. Vision and visibility are prominent elements in the Panoptic model, and it has merited recurring mention in debates around the functions and social roles of images in terms of implications of spectatorship and visual subjects (Tagg 1988: 87- 92; Jenks 1995: 15-16; Walker and Chaplin 1997: 106-107; Mirzoeff 1998: 10; Sturken and Cartwright 2001: 96-100). For documentary such considerations are acutely implicated in the relations between representation and knowledge, and seemingly never more so than in the context of documentary texts explicitly addressing social issues.

The documentary of social concern: a treacherous terrain

My reading of the first case-study will analyse it dialectically in relation to the broadcast mediation of the unfolding of humanitarian catastrophe and to critiques levelled at certain traditions of the documentary of social concern. Anxiety over two distinct but connected aspects haunts writing about both the documentary of social concern and the visual representation of humanitarian disaster. These aspects involve the physically distant position from which a looking subject is able to survey images of suffering whilst protected from immediate engagement (Taylor 1998: 14), and the question over what results might ultimately be achieved by such images (Sontag 2004; Rosler 2004: 151-206). The dilemma of the documentary of social concern lies in the idea that visibility is a prerequisite for social inclusion and empowerment, while the agenda of extending visibility as process always appears prone to exploitation, spectacularisation and objectifying disempowerment. In spite of ostensibly compassionate intentions, a lingering suspicion that the production, circulation and spectatorship of such images involve a predatory aspect (Aubert 2009: 7) persists. As in the case of news footage of humanitarian disasters and human suffering, subject positions have been conceived as particularly problematic (Ruby 2005: 41).

As discourses surrounding civic responsibility and social progress developed throughout the nineteenth century, they became evident in literature, the visual arts and the burgeoning interest in social science (Rancière 2004: 57-58). Partly aided by the rapid growth of print culture these developments constructed poverty and deprivation as 'social', in other words *shared*, problems (ibid; Keating 1989: 303). However, the seemingly emancipatory agenda of social reform, situated within 'the political construction of bourgeois democracy' (Stallybrass and White 1986: 202), was despite its progressive ambitions encoded with 'a subliminal elitism' (ibid) and concerned with preserving extant hierarchies (Rosler 2004: 177). Consequently the representations it engendered were beset by contradictions.

Critics such as Rosler (2004) and Jill Godmilow (1999) argue that whether soliciting charitable intervention or invoking civic responsibility, or both, the documentary of socal concern rarely addresses the structural or systemic causes at the root of problems. Instead, its images construct certain people and social groups 'as social

problems' (Hall 2002: 258). Moreover, essentially produced for those 'addressed as socially powerful' (Rosler 2004: 179) such images offer viewers a position as 'cultural tourist' (Creeber, 2009: 424) and, thinly veiled by a rhetoric of intervention they instead work to satisfy viewers' self-construction as morally responsive. '[W]hat is being marketed and consumed is an attitude of concern' (Paget, 1990: 49). However, while posing necessary questions regarding the ethics and conditions upon which the effectuality of images of suffering depend (Sontag 1979: 167-168, 2003; Rosler 2004: 151-206) such critiques do not necessarily account for the commitment to social change on the part of image-makers, from Gustave Doré's depictions of poverty and hardships in Victorian London (Jenks 1995: 152) to Jakob Riis documenting housing conditions in nineteenth century New York (Aubert 2009: 16), and onwards. But even if, in relation to a purported or implied social agenda, the relationship between intentions and effects of images cannot be understood as simplistically causal, the antagonism that marks judgements on the documentary of social concern betrays a disappointment that this should not be so (Rancière 2009: 103). This type of documentary appears to be saying precisely that it advocates social and political change, by making visible 'problems' and bringing them into view in the public sphere. However, it is precisely at this point that the question of voice, as a term to describe agency on the part of subjects, takes on significance. Voice suggests the possibility of overcoming the compromised status of vision; implicated in practices of surveillance, exploitation and domination. In this context voice does not simply mean vocal expression, but should be understood as an extension of visibility, through which the position and subjectivity of participants is given validity within a system of communication.

In addition to the critiques of social documentary outlined earlier, scepticism about its critical capacity has also been attributed to the close relationship between documentary makers and corporate and governmental agencies, particularly prominent with regard to the Grierson school and the Farm Security Administration's documentary project in the US (Gaines 1999: 86; Winston 2008: 64-67, 78-79). Nevertheless, it should be remembered that the political landscape, specifically of large Western democracies such as the US and Britain, has shifted substantially since the first half of the twentieth century. Since the 1970s the social contract on which such regimes of representation, irrespective of their contradictions and limitations

were founded, has largely become defunct (Giroux 2006: 22). Instead, we have reached a 'permanent state of class and racial exception' (ibid) in which marginalized groups are neither provided 'social protection, security, nor hope' (ibid). Such parts of the population are 'largely invisible in global media, or, when disruptively present, defined as redundant, pathological, and dangerous' (ibid). Henry A. Giroux draws on Giorgiou Agamben's (2000) theory of 'the camp' as a key manifestation of modernity. Agamben suggests that states of exception, in which legal and constitutional rights of citizens are revoked, are a pre-condition for, rather than an irregularity of contemporary government. Agamben's metaphor, which might be seen as competing with Foucault's earlier articulation, is in fact an extension of another of Foucault's concepts: biopolitics. Agamben's work has been subject to repeated criticism, on the grounds that his focus on the formulation of repressive statehood in the end reproduces the juridicial perspective it sets out to critique (Rancière 2010: 64-67; Lemke 2005; Colatrella 2011). Although such theoretical arguments go beyond the scope of this chapter, the idea of invisibility as a systemically induced position is useful for thinking about Neufeld's endeavour to extend visibility while negotiating the problems of subject position inscribed in a liberal documentary tradition.

After the deluge: navigating mediated disaster

'If horror is banalized, it is not because we see too many images of it. We do not see too many suffering bodies on the screen. But we do see too many nameless bodies, too many bodies incapable of returning the gaze that we direct at them, too many bodies that are an object of speech without themselves having a chance to speak.'

(Rancière 2009: 96)

News media representation of the disastrous effects of hurricane Katrina in 2005 was characterised by dramatic spectacle, in particular in its focus on the flooding of New Orleans. The extent to which this disaster was 'natural' is open to question in light of 'the federal administration [having] cut the budget appropriation for maintaining flood defences by 50 per cent, so that for the first time in 37 years Louisiana was

unable to supply the protection it knew it would need in the event of a catastrophe' (Bauman 2006: 80). Kevin Gotham (2007: 89) has suggested that the media's reporting of these events exemplified spectacle, as 'a dual process of commodification and rationalization that obscures relations of domination and conceals power relations', but also argues that the self-same reporting (in part inadvertently) brought renewed attention to racial and social divisions in the US (ibid: 82). Likewise for Giroux (2006: 23), in the wake of the storm the 'cleansed social landscape in which the poor, the elderly, the infirm, and criminalized populations share a common fate of disappearing from public view' was dramatically disrupted, and race as a factor in social marginality and economic disposability was made blatantly clear (ibid: 29).

Josh Neufeld's comic *After the Deluge: AD New Orleans* (2009) offers a rendering of this humanitarian crisis which, in many ways, is oppositional to the media spectacle surrounding Katrina. *After the Deluge* initially appeared in serialised form in the on-line SMITH magazine, featuring a blog and links to podcasts, YouTube videos, video and audio interviews with the characters. Its multiple narration follows seven main protagonists as they either stay in the city or are evacuated, each of whom experienced upheaval and displacement. While their names have been changed, it is made clear in the foreword that the people depicted correspond to actual individuals and that the narrative has been constructed based on their actual experiences. *After the Deluge* therefore differs not only stylistically, but in terms of its premise, from Mat Johnson and Simon Gane's graphic novel *Dark Rain: A New Orleans Story* (2010) which sets a fictional heist storyline against the backdrop of the wreckage of hurricane Katrina. Although situated in a specific and attentively depicted historical time (the hurricane and its aftermath) and space (New Orleans), the latter presents a moral universe in which fictional characters are divided into (flawed, yet ultimately honourable) protagonists and their (irredeemably corrupt) adversaries as part of a conventional narrative structure and resolution.

By contrast, Neufeld's text interlaces several distinct stories, in order to narrate the impact of the disaster itself and elicit reader responses to its characters as representations of actual and real individuals. The fact that his comic is rendered in a

restricted palette of candy-like colours, blues paired with greens, oranges with yellows, and pink with purple, significantly sets it apart from the gritty monochrome associated with the aesthetic conventions of social realism and the documentary of social concern. In addition, Neufeld's drawing is stylised and cartoony and bears no resemblance to photo-realism. It stands in marked contrast to the specificity, detail and likeness of such images, which in actual photographs are made even more emphatic by the close link between image and referent. Photographic spectatorship permits scrutiny from a remote (and thus sheltered) position, enabling an intimacy of access which in an actual encounter would be perceived as improper (Taylor 1998: 14-17) and that further compounds the inequality constructed in the visual tradition of social reform movements. Here, on the other hand, the anonymity of the persons portrayed is preserved, while the narrative ensures and maintains individual particularity. Thus the fact that Neufeld maintains control over the representation of his subjects, as much as, or arguably even to a higher degree than if he had used more conventional means of documentary representation, is to some extent off-set by the way his drawn representations function as protective screens. The deferral and distancing of the comic produces a different order of correspondence between seeing and seen subject, allowing secondary witnessing by means of visual narrative while the contracted and stylised images disallow what might be thought of as voyeuristic impropriety.

The analysis will concentrate on two of the five narrative threads centred on particular individuals, that of the two friends Abbas and Darnell, and that of Denise. In both cases the characters are established as individuals making deliberate choices and considered decisions from the moment news of the impending storm breaks. Denise, a social worker in her forties, initially brings her niece, Cydney, and her toddler to seek shelter at a large hospital. Denise's mother who works as a surgical technician has been offered a room there, but it soon turns out that space is in short supply. When it transpires that their only option is to stay in the already overcrowded corridors (Neufeld 2009: 58-59), Denise decides to see the storm out in her apartment instead (ibid: 44). As the storm clouds thicken she makes her way home (ibid: 60-61) and proceeds to wedge her bed between the walls in her hallway, away from widows and the danger of breaking glass (ibid: 66).

Abbas is the owner of a small neighbourhood store. While his family joins the exodus on the highways leading out of New Orleans, Abbas and his friend Darnell stay on the premises. Their intention is to protect store and stock against potential looting in the aftermath of the hurricane (ibid: 44). Abbas' decision to stay in New Orleans to protect his shop indicates the widespread influence of what Kathleen Tierney, Christine Bevc and Erica Kuligowski (2006) call 'disaster myths'. They suggest that one of the most prevalent media frames based on such myths is the "looting-frame" (ibid: 61), and that popular culture (they make specific mention of the disaster genre in film and made-for-TV drama) both 'reflects and perpetuates erroneous beliefs about disaster-related behaviour' (ibid: 58). According to Tierney et al., disaster myths both amplify and distort assumptions about risk. Frames associated with disaster myths also inform media coverage of disasters as they unfold. In the case of Katrina, the initial coverage of the storm and its impact rapidly gave way to accounts in which the victims trapped in the city were spoken of as frenzied and violent looters and criminals; portrayed through 'a lens of civil unrest' (ibid) which eventually escalated further, framing the situation as 'urban warfare' (ibid). The framing of the New Orleans survivors in terms of a threat to the social order was partly due to a communications breakdown across the disaster zone, which led to an over-reliance on unverified witness accounts and rumours, and was exacerbated by the demands of rolling news coverage (Tierney et al. 2006; Sommers et al. 2006; Thevenot 2005). However, race and social demographic have also been attributed as factors in the inaccurate reporting and propagation of fantastical allegations (Sommers et al. 2006: 46; Giroux 2006: 55).

The comic gives vicarious insight into the conditions in which rumours and stories might have flourished and spread (Neufeld 2009: 149-151). A densely packed scene shows over-heated, dehydrated and hungry bodies among which desperate speculation and ill-founded rumours spread rapidly and fear escalates into panic with ease, abetted by lack of information. In Neufeld's account Giroux's assessment of a politics of disposability is corroborated as not only an intellectual proposal, but a widely felt condition, as suspicion about the authorities' intentions ripples through the crowds outside the Convention Centre in September 2005 (Neufeld 2009: 49-51).

The 'symbolic annihilation' (Ruby 1991: 61) that manifests in a general lack of visibility is thus a continued and fundamental issue with considerable stakes, the paradoxes and problematic subject-positions of social documentary discourse notwithstanding.

The rumour shown to be rippling through the crowd here, is that the authorities have not merely abandoned those stranded in the city but are intent on killing them. While this instance of speculation was not reiterated in the mainstream media, other rumours (most of which were later found to be false) concerning dead bodies, murder and rape did, despite lack of verification, make their way into news reports (Sommers et al. 2006: 46; Thevenot 2005: 32). Within a very short space of time, news stories concentrated on narratives of violent crime and looting rather than the conditions faced by the victims of this disaster. Such media framing worked to shape public opinion and justify not only individual, but organisational and governmental responses during the crisis. In the words of Slavoj Žižek (cited by Giroux 2006: 53): 'These reports were not merely words, they were words that had material effects'. Consequently questions have been raised about the extent to which the deployment of the army in New Orleans was primarily a response to the media's urban warfare rhetoric (Sommers et al. 2006: 40), with resultant "misallocations of public safety resources that could be put to better use in providing direct assistance to victims" (Tierney et al. 2006). What this highlights, despite the impossibility of determining levels of intentionality, is the inter-connected relationship between the media, the local authorities, the federal agencies involved, government and the army. In other words, what following Michel de Certeau (1984: 36-39) we might call the strategic entities at work in the situation.

In the comic, the effects of the dynamic between media, public opinion and official strategic decision-making are only shown as experienced by those on the ground [see FIG 15]. When tanks roll in the already oppressive and desperate atmosphere is effectively heightened, and in the crowd Denise comments: "I can't fucking believe it – we got people dyin' here, and they roll by with their goddam guns pointed in our faces" (Neufeld 2009: 142-143). Neufeld's representation of the situation at the Convention Centre makes clear that any organisation of the facility has been

completely eroded. Police cars drive past repeatedly, and issue instructions by loudspeakers for people to line up for buses arriving to evacuate survivors, but no further assistance is offered (ibid: 135). As the fraught situation causes a desperate fight over a bottle of water to break out, some young men pull out hand guns in order to restore calm and avoid a potential frenzy. According to Denise's testimony, as mediated by Neufeld, these men respond in a way which distinctly counters dominant media accounts of violent young thugs taking advantage of the chaotic conditions. These individuals are shown to assume authority in order to contain conflict rather than to instigate it, and to act in the interests of the larger community of evacuees.

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE
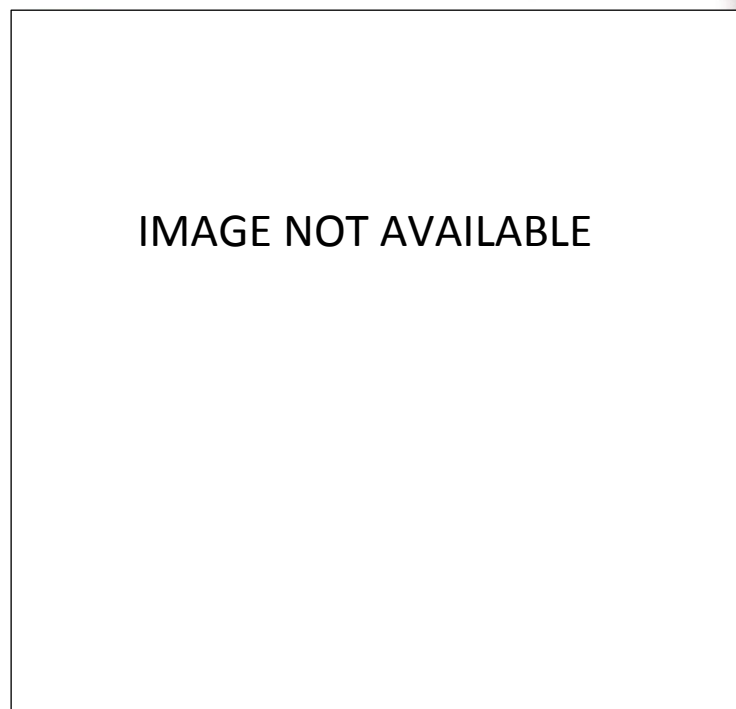
FIG 15 – Josh Neufeld (2009), *AD New Orleans*, Pantheon Books, p. 142.
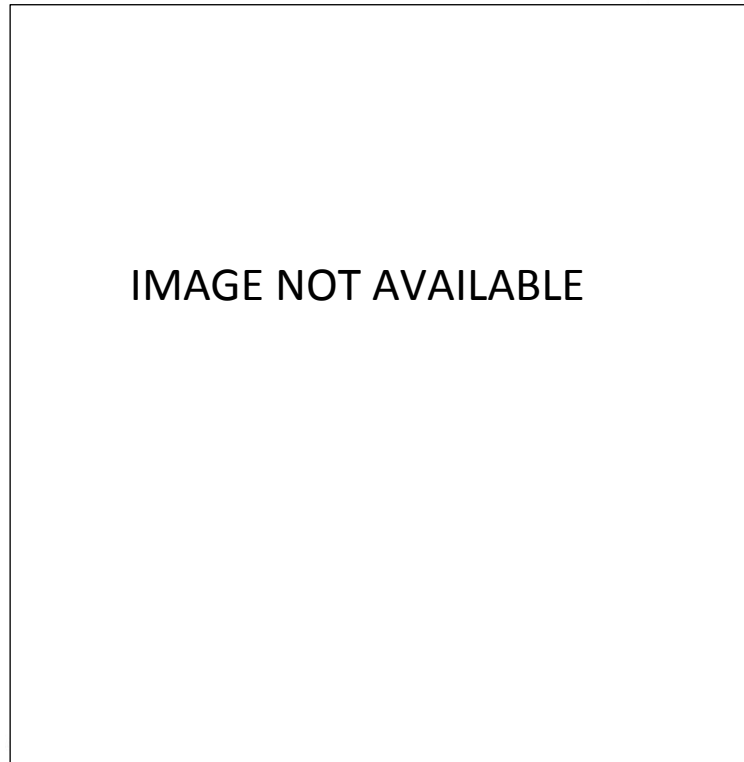
FIG 16 - Josh Neufeld (2009), *AD New Orleans*, Pantheon Books, p. 176.

The looting, which played such a prominent role in the media's representation of New Orleans after the hurricane, is eventually corroborated by Neufeld's text (ibid: 143-144). However, it takes the shape of the group of vigilantes arriving back with a shopping trolley loaded with supplies to share out among the people; juice, beer, soft drinks and medication such as pain relief and items of clothing. These actions might be understood in terms of tactics (de Certeau 1984: 36-39); an improvised response to a situation and an act of *bricolage*, of making do, in an urgently practical sense. At this point Neufeld's narrative is congruent with research in the disaster field which has found evidence of social cohesiveness and the emergence of mutual support and pro-social behaviour in disaster stricken populations (Tierney et al. 2006; Rodriguez, Trainor and Quarantelli 2006). It is a representation that contradicts the version assumed by the press and officials about riot-type behaviour and the profile of certain categories, specifically young black males, which circulated as a result. The comic thus offers a counterpoint to the dominant narrative that accompanied and anchored the substantial visual representation of Katrina's aftermath, a counterpoint reinforced by its aesthetic choices. Yet, it allows a visual and narrative engagement that in offering the perspective of victims of the disaster aligns with the ambition to extend a 'voice'. As part of this, and at odds with news media's demand for iconic and

arresting statements, the attention to idiosyncratic and mundane detail that runs through *After the Deluge*, works instead to make it personalised and specific, and to offer points of recognition.

For example, in a scene showing two of the main characters as they prepare to take refuge on a shed roof to escape the rising floodwater (Neufeld 2009: 103), the unfolding events are accompanied by semi-inconsequential dialogue. This banter positions the protagonists as individuals whom readers might identify with, rather than voice-less victims or members of a crowd viewed from a distance. Visually, attention is continually drawn towards specific details that not only imbue a sense of authenticity, but force recognition of the importance of practical items and actions: flash-lights and first-aid kits (ibid: 51), packets of beef jerky and pretzels (ibid: 88), rolled-up carpets and rugs piled onto stacks of furniture on a front-porch (ibid: 120), and the recurring interjections of voices emanating from transistor radios and television sets. While both documentary and fiction use individual stories in order to make large scale events comprehensible, this 'centrality of a visual engagement with the physical world' (Corner 2007: 11) and 'the holding of physical particularity' (ibid) is especially characteristic of documentary intention across multiple media forms. In this instance it also invites projective identification by linking ordinary and recognisable everyday considerations to the traumatic upheaval to which readers are offered vicarious access.

In line with certain strands of documentary, *After the Deluge* takes a long-term approach. Its scope exceeds the immediate events of the storm and flooding, and goes beyond its immediate aftermath, to include the lasting impact on the lives of those affected. It is only in this part of the comic that Neufeld's own presence, and his process of production, is given overt acknowledgement. The chapter named 'The Diaspora' opens with a black panel only containing a small inset with the words 'one and a half years later'. This deferral of narrative action presents an acknowledgement of the temporal lapse, and the unyielding blank space works to underline how after a crisis the people who might have momentarily been the focus of intense interest fade away from view. Beneath this, is an over the shoulder view of 'Neufeld', facing a computer screen and tapping his keyboard. Into the microphone attached to his

headphones, he asks: 'So then what happened?' (Neufeld 2009: 157). From this point on, images of Neufeld's subjects as they are talking to him by phone intersperse the depictions of their various experiences; Abbas slowly cleaning up flood damage and eventually rebuilding his shop, Darnell seeking refuge with relatives elsewhere while others return to New Orleans to face damaged homes, the doctor treating patients in local bars and dealing with the build-up of bodies waiting for disposal.

In this penultimate chapter we find that Denise, who through the days following the storm seemed fuelled by determination and anger, a year and a half later is struggling both emotionally and financially. She is living in Baton Rouge with her mother and niece in a house built by a relief organisation, and feels torn about whether to return to New Orleans or not. Her mother is equally affected, and reluctant to buy new furniture when the opportunity arises. In the image depicting this situation, Denise's mother, arms folded in stubborn refusal and her brow knitted in an expression of exhaustion, turns her back on the daughter who frustratedly gesticulates towards a two-seater in a discount show room: 'She kept saying she didn't want to have anything more to lose' (ibid: 175). Denise herself feels in limbo, she has no wish to stay in Baton Rouge yet fears facing the extent of what she has lost if returning to New Orleans. Being crippled by fear fills her with self-loathing: 'This isn't my life. This is the life of someone I wouldn't even want to shake hands with' (ibid: 177). Here, the eloquence with which Denise expresses her emotional displacement is offset by the pithy visual narrative of an instantly recognisable everyday situation, as she paces around the plain and barely furnished prefab during a phone conversation (ibid: 176).

The page [see FIG 16] consists of three panels. In the first, stretching horizontally across the page, Denise is standing in her hallway. The wide angle perspective taking in multiple doorframes to adjoining rooms emphasises its impersonal emptiness. The high sheen of new linoleum (?) flooring, which is indicated by a few vertical lines beneath her foot, and the incongruously smiling stuffed toy leaning against the skirting board, add to the sense of desolation. In the following left hand panel Denise, framed in a head and shoulder composition, is still on the phone, distractedly staring out through the window, a cigarette hanging from her bottom lip. The last

panel shows her still sat at the window, but this time from the outside of the building. Her dark silhouette against the yellow of indoor light is tightly framed by the narrow window and half-drawn blind, and the vertical lines of the blind and wooden slats cladding the outside wall add to an impression of confinement. Another window close by, from which no light emanates, suggests that the interior is divided into rather small rooms. This last panel, in combination with the rhythm created by the movement across the entire page (right-left-right), position (low view-point to slightly elevated angle to straight ahead) and scale (full figure at some distance, close-up and partial view from a distance), accentuates the sense of restless entrapment. Narrative and visual emphasis on what might initially be perceived as trivial and unimportant brings specificity to the representation and offers points of connection by way of recognition. In paying care and attention to the particularities of the testimonies on which it is based Neufeld's text connects to the effort of the documentary of social concern, to not only make visible, but to offer subjects a voice.

Although, as I have already asserted, voice should not simply be equated with vocal expression, the speech of subjects has become an important part of the codes and conventions documentary uses to extenuate some of the problematic aspects of visibility. Direct address and multiple, often intercut, interviews have emerged as a prevalent mode of documentary, as 'a response to the recognition that neither can events speak for themselves nor can a single voice speak with ultimate authority' (Nichols 2005: 24). However, unless a documentary is an autobiographical undertaking in which the subject/s retain full editorial control, such voices will always be partial and their meaning conditional; circumscribed by the documentary maker's mediation and narrative. Clearly this is also the case with *After the Deluge*, irrespective of the notable absence of extra-diegetic information as the equivalent of voice-over narration. Neufeld refrains from including any of the contextual information which would have been available to him in this process. On one hand the sense of following the experiences of the people involved is strengthened, we are not distanced from them by any distraction from the immediacy of each moment encountered. On the other, by foregrounding human interest, at the cost of context and analysis of underlying structural factors, he to some extent reproduces the patterns of superficial and sensationalist news reporting (Gotham 2007: 88) and his

realist form does little to acknowledge uncertainties which ultimately are 'inescapable in all communication and signification' (Nichols 2005: 25).

However, although concerned with the stories of individuals *After the Deluge* does not privilege attention to dramatic or visually spectacular scenes over mundane considerations, and following the protagonists beyond the immediate events of Katrina mitigates charges of superficiality. The decision to exclude any extra-diegetic narration or information is poignant in view of the extent to which media propagated assumptions and expectations played their role in the run-up to the hurricane and the way victims were subject to media discourse (with significant consequences) during the disaster and its aftermath. The strict adherence to the perspectives of the participants signals an intention to construct a space through which the voices of Katrina victims can be heard, their subjectivities and particular experiences given validity. Stories thus emerge which include aspects largely absent in the 'familiar textual and visual narratives' (Smith Dahmen and Miller 2012: 6) which have structured remote and collective comprehension of this humanitarian disaster. It is therefore in relation to the contextual matrix of media representation, which is mentioned and alluded to but never explicitly analysed, that Neufeld's critical position can be sought. The interactive, organic and multi-vocal nature of its original online context indicates the intention to address people directly affected by Katrina and its aftermath. Described as a process of collaboration in which subjects simultaneously performed in the role of researchers (Neufeld, cited by Smith 2011: 69-70), this initiative provided a forum for making experiences visible and voices heard, and for communication between dispersed subjects to take place. It signals the intention of Neufeld's project to 'speak alongside' rather than to speak for or about its subjects (Ruby 1991: 50). Yet, published in book-form and reverting to a more traditional authorial model, the comic becomes stripped of some of its original and collaborative context and thus offers less by way of 'thick description' (Geertz 1993: 7-10).

Autobiographical representation: from stable subjects to speaking selves and the performance of subjectivity

In its time, Edward Anstey's decision to allow his subjects in *Housing Problems* (1935) to speak directly to camera, expressing their views and experiences rather than simply being 'talked about' by a narrator, was considered a radical departure. So, too, was the initiative taken by The Mass Observation project[i] instigated in 1937 to incorporate a National Panel of Diarists as a way of allowing participant-subjects of this anthropological study 'a voice'. The vital difference between commonplace interview to camera conventions that have followed Anstey and the autobiographical account, as it is considered here, is that the latter does not become subservient to another narrative, nor is it relegated to a fragment of testimony. It extends the position of witnessing, which has been a recurring notion in this thesis so far, and makes it the central and structuring principle of a text. Autobiography, then, seems to offer a solution to the problem of agency that has troubled the documentary of social concern; a mode and platform for greater autonomy in relation to representation.

Although more or less 'ordinary' individuals writing and depicting their own life-stories should not be assumed to originate at a particular historical moment, the value apportioned to such self-inscription, in the western cultural paradigm at least, has gained heightened significance during the latter part of the twentieth century. Social movements in the west that built up over the post-war period, becoming ever more vociferous throughout the following decades, questioned conventions, hierarchies and institutional discourses configured around gender, sexuality and ethnicity. The ways in which dominant discourses that configure knowledge about the world excluded and marginalised certain parts of the population, rendering them effectively both invisible and silent, were challenged and from these larger collective endeavours followed an increasing articulation of difference, and 'identity politics'. The upshot for autobiography was to simultaneously undercut its previous privileges and confer on it a new relevance. As post-structuralist scepticism of dichotomies, historical linearity and stable subject positions undermined the memoir tradition of elder statesmen and elite figures; the production of 'a unified self (the subject of traditional autobiography- a linear, progressive development of an enlightened subject)' (Kosta 1994: 2, see also Gilmore 2001: 2), autobiographical modes were recast as a means for making available hitherto repressed perspectives, experiences

and knowledges. Crucially, it emerged as 'a mode in which to represent oneself as a speaking subject' (Gilmore 2001: 13). This also marked the point when autobiographical subjectivity challenged documentary conventions in film-making (Lane 2002: 4-6; Beattie 2004:105; Renov 1999 and 2004). Contemporary first person filmmaking currently exceeds its earlier, predominantly avant-garde incarnations and can be mapped across multiple platforms that include new media exhibition spaces and social networking sites (Renov 2005: 345-355) in a cultural landscape distinguished by a notable porousness between previously relational definitions of private and public (Dovey 2000: 25).

However, far from simply conceived as a radical departure from previous authoritarian and patriarchal social models, the shift towards subjectivity as a signature of authenticity has been, and continues to be highly contested ground. As early as 1978 Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism* mounted an extensive critique of the growing cultural tendency to focus on individual needs, neuroses and gratifications through confessional modes and 'a "therapeutic sensibility" that centers everything on the self' (Hatfield 2005: 129; see also Dovey 2000: 53). Developed through psychoanalytical formulations of narcissism Lasch's argument goes on to situate the rise of first person narrative as myopic self indulgence, symptomatic of the social and political surrender to late capitalism (Hatfield 2005: 129). Jon Dovey's (2000) account of the proliferation of subjective forms in documentary and factual television genres likewise connects these developments to the marketplaces and ideology of neoliberal economics.

Moreover, within the formations that place individual experience at the forefront, and as the underwriting function of knowledge about the world, discourses of expertise, surveillance and the imperative to self-monitor behaviour remain cogent factors. The performance of difference constituted in 'the proliferation of confessional TV genres and subjective documentary forms' (ibid: 25) also functions 'precisely [as] part of a mechanism for the production of normative identities in the public communicative space of broadcasting' (ibid: 26, see also Rimke 2000, White 2002; Ouellette and Hay 2009; Sender and Sullivan 2009). The prominence given to the 'ordinary' person, who is not speaking from a place of professional authority, in various media

landscapes and the porosity between private and public that marks the cultural moment cannot, then, be simplistically understood as a mechanism of increased agency. The extent to which 'voice' accompanies visibility remains considerably uneven.

The autobiographical mode, it would seem, holds the promise that visibility is accompanied by voice; ensuring that the subject's position and subjectivity is constructed as valid within a text. Yet its emphasis on individual experience and its relation to the social and collective body, and the issue of who the individual can be said to 'speak for' beyond herself, is one fraught with potential tension (Spivak 1988; Anderson 2011: 97). The turn towards subjective and self-telling modes in documentary and in comics should be located as part of a broader cultural recognition of the 'artificiality of any firm division between private and public selves' (Walker 2005: 23), and 'emphasis on the individual subject as the guarantor of ontological knowledge' (Biressi and Nunn 2005: 34; see also Dovey 2000: 21). However, what the epithet 'autobiographical' specifically marks in this broader context, as a particular mode among multiple iterations of performed subjectivities, is a more substantive control over the framing, and consequently 'voice' within the text, foregrounding agency as constitutive of the speaking subject. This, however, still leaves un-answered how visual self-representation might produce its own particular considerations.

The dual subject

Claiming that audio-visual means such as film and video declare the end of the autobiographical genre, Elisabeth Bruss (1980) has argued that such means of communication are unable to perform the core condition of the autobiographical text, that subject and author are one and the same. This conclusion, based on the premise that a film-maker cannot possibly be both in front of and behind the camera simultaneously, has since been overturned (Renov 2002: 280-282). It is in fact, the very possibility of such splitting, and the significance of it as a productive opportunity, that has been raised both in relation to first person film (Lebow 2012: 4-

5) and autobiographical comics (Gardner 2008: no pagination). Writing on first-person filmmaking Alisa Lebow draws on the etymological meanings of the term *subject*, to elicit the duality of 'subjecthood and subjectivisation' and articulate the connection between the individual and 'entire systems of relation, interdependency and power' (Lebow 2012: 4). She embraces the challenge to the notion of 'the unified subject', that she perceives as inherent to first person mediation, (ibid: 5).

Jared Gardner (2008: no pagination) likewise welcomes such reminders of the separation between narrator and subject in autobiographical texts. However, he proposes that in prose this distance can become less evident, or even 'effaced' (ibid), and that the truth-status of 'recorded visual autobiographical acts' (ibid) also works to undercut the inherent ambivalence that autobiographical telling entails. Gardner's argument highlights the commonalities between autobiography and documentary in terms of questions around truth-claims and veracity, debates also familiar from earlier discussions concerning testimony and witnessing. Much as I have proposed that the inscription of subjectivity extended by comics functions to destabilise conventions of documentary, but not necessarily to undo its project, Gardner views the distantiation that comics perform in relation to truth-claims as productive. Thus that '[t]he split between autographer and subject is etched on every page' (ibid: no pagination), brings into question 'the fantasies of authentic and unmediated truth facilitated by traditional autobiographical texts'. For El Refaie (2013: 52- 60) this is also an important point; she describes 'the authorial self […] as tacitly- or sometimes quite blatantly – plural' (ibid: 52).

The self-images offered are always composed of views that are, in Vivian Sobchack's terminology, both *intrasubjective* and *intersubjective* (Sobchack 1992: 103-143, cited by Lane, 2002: 23). In other words, they constitute acts of performative self-making (Geiger 2011: 195). In autobiographical comics written and drawn by the same person, the protagonist who is also the author/ narrator's self-representation or alter ego, is recurrently viewed from a third person perspective. This is sometimes interrupted by a first person perspective, so that the view offered to the reader ostensibly coincides with that of the protagonist, and such a perception can be strengthened by internal monologue or retrospective commentary. The

autobiographical subject is both perceiving subject and seen subject, a duality that visual forms of self-representation appear to render especially conspicuous. The fluidity of such weaving through multiple codes, and the co-presence of subject-as-seen and subject-as-agent calls forth the notion of being simultaneously perceiving subjects and the objects of the perception of others. Yet my concerted effort to maintain a distinction between extra-diegetic author and diegetic protagonist/ narrator throughout the thesis suggest that the temptation to conflate subject/ author with his or her image nevertheless continues to play a part. The same principle is at work in first person filmmaking, although as chapter three has argued, discourses of subjectivity associated with drawing (see chapter three) lend a particular emphasis to the autobiographical project 'that works in tandem with the sometimes visceral effects of presenting "private" images' (Chute 2011: 10). In the case of comics 'the subjective positionality of the author' (ibid: 11) as the organising and constructing narrator, is further extended through mark-making and stylistic signature, and the ability to instil outward appearances with internal and emotional dimensions.

Chute's stress on handcrafted qualities (ibid) finds a counterpart in the ways in which the unsteady and grainy qualities of camcorder and, increasingly, mobile phone footage, carry a heightened authenticity value. Aesthetically they all, in their own ways, foreground a 'raw' sensibility that signifies directness, unpolished and unhampered by professional manipulation. Yet, as the previous discussion of drawing in chapter three has made clear, such ostensible artlessness is rarely as uncalculated as it might at first seem and is often deliberately applied, in audiovisual forms (Ruby 2005: 42-43; Landesmann 2009) and in comics (El Refaie 2013: 155). Nevertheless, in their evocation of the voice of the amateur and the ordinary individual such markers of authenticity are rooted in a broader cultural focus on personal experience as a validating source of knowledge.

Writing from the perspective of documentary studies Lebow configures the split subject through a far more explicit connection between 'the seen subject' and the social subject than writers on autobiographical comics such as Gardner, El Refaie and Chute do. However, the form's multiple articulations of subjectivity does not diminish the way autobiographical comics, often incorporating social issues, open up

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and operate within the self-same fissures between subjectivity and historical subject that first person film does. If anything, this demonstrates that approaching these comics in relation to documentary opens up considerations not as visible or available when analysis remains located within literary frameworks.

Autobiography and Comics

Contemporary autobiographical comics trace their lineage to the American underground publishing scene, and critics (Sabin 2008: 101; Hatfield 2005:131; Beaty 2009: 230 and 2011: 248-249; Gardner 2008 (no pagination); Chute 2011: 13-20; Williams 2012; El Refaie 2013: 3) appear to be in agreement about the seminal and lasting influence of Justin Green's confessional *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary* (published by Last Gasp Eco-Funnies, 1972). Green's comic is ostensibly an attempt to deal with the neurotic compulsions he is in thrall to and simultaneously motivated by the desire to reach out to others he is certain are suffering in similar ways (Hatfield 2005: 134). Its portrayals of Binky Brown's obsessive efforts to control and suppress a heady concoction of Catholic guilt and sexual compulsion combine self-reflexive parody, surrealism and makes potent use of visual metaphor. Charles Hatfield's (2005: 138-139) comment, that 'Green's blending of scarifying psychological content and profuse visual metaphor has been an important reference point for several generations of cartoonists', is followed by specific reference to the re-emergence of autobiographical comics in the early twenty first century.

A common theme that makes itself apparent across an extensive body of autobiographical comics is that of family (Beaty 2011: 253). Family is the site that still, in part at least, proves resistant to the inversion of private and public, and remains enclosed and capable of harbouring hidden worlds of experience. Any delving into familial pasts is made precarious by the way family crystallises intersubjective relationality and subjective relativity; any shared event or memory within a family will be experienced and remembered in different, sometimes sharply discordant and conflicting ways. This is what Marianne Hirsch has described as 'the

unspoken, unacknowledged interrelations and intersubjective bonds that shape familial subjects and relationships' (1997: 119). Yet family, as a structuring social unit and context for profoundly formative and relational subject positions, is a paradigmatic instance of intimate particularity interlinked with broader commonality and reference point. Autobiography that centres on contexts of family has been identified as a particularly fertile site for tracing the fluctuations between 'outer and inner, social and personal, historical and psychical' (Kuhn [1995] 2002: 4; see also Hirsch 1997) that exemplifies a therapeutic and confessional impetus. Yet the latent charge of a first person family narrative, as it resonates with the feminist adage 'the personal is political', extends the possibility to 'argue a position on society and culture at large' (Lane 2002: 22) and thus converges with the notion of representing others through the self (Gilmore 2001: 19).

Family contributes a significant presence and consideration in comics charting the experiences of illness. Here too, a connection to autobiographical modes in audio-visual documentary can be discerned, especially such responses to the AIDS epidemic of the late 1980s (Horrigan 1993:164-173; Lane 2002: 86-91; Geiger 2011: 205), when social, political and media predispositions to attach stigma were particularly pronounced. At issue in such documentary work is precisely giving a voice, denied those affected by illness by medical discourse, and combating the added effects brought about by discursive policing of normative values. As Thomas Couser (2007: 337) has observed: 'Personal narrative is an increasingly popular way of resisting or reverting the process of depersonalisation that often accompanies illness – the expropriation of experience by an alien and alienating discourse'. The extensive list[ii] of comics that ostensibly do just that, includes among others *Mom's Cancer* (2006) by Brian Fies, *Our Cancer Year* (2009) by Harvey Pekar, Joyce Brabner and Frank Stack, *Stitches* (2009) by David Small, *The Spiral Cage* (1990) by Al Davison, and *Blue Pills* (2008) by Frederic Peeters. Ian Williams (2012: 21) has argued that 'comics and graphic novels can effectively relate the patient experience and, indeed, the experience of the carer or healthcare provider, and that comics might have a particular role to play in the discussion of difficult, complex or ambiguous subject matter'. This certainly points towards this sub-genre's role in breaking down the isolation often experienced by patients facing both the trauma of illness and the sometimes de-humanising machinations of medical and healthcare institutions. More

specifically, Williams (ibid) indicates the potential use of these texts to support a drive towards more holistic healthcare approaches.

Medical discourse and social realities in David B.'s *Epileptic*

Written by David Beauchard, under his pen name David B., *Epileptic* was originally published in six instalments as *L'Ascension du Haut-Mal* (L'Association, 1996-2004), the first three of which were translated into English and published by the same publisher in 2002 as a single volume; *Epileptic 1*. In the complete collected English translation from Jonathan Cape which followed in 2005, *Epileptic* is cued as an autobiographical narrative in the foreword, and by the publisher's description on the back cover. But beyond the story of the author's childhood, dominated as it is by his brother's epilepsy, an illness 'as mysterious in its origins and course as it is chronic' (Tabachnik 2011: 102), the comic speaks of experiences often consigned to the isolated realm of family life. This comic thus combines the theme of family with that of the social realities and meanings of illness. It also offers the opportunity to consider the capacity of comics to communicate experience that exceeds the readily visible, in this case through the persistent use of visual metaphors.

The opening scene of the comic shows the author, as an adult, cleaning his teeth in front of a bathroom mirror during a visit to his parents' house [see FIG 17]. When the door opens, and an unkempt figure of a man wanders in, it takes him a few moments to recognise his older brother, Jean-Christophe. The latter is bloated from medication and a sedentary existence, has a bald patch from scarring on his head, scarring from countless falls during fits that also covers much of his face and body and his front teeth have been knocked out. A brief exchange between these seemingly estranged brothers continues over this initial page, but then the story jumps back thirty years, to when Jean-Christophe was seven, the author (then going by the name Pierre-Francois) five, and their younger sister, Florence, four. This introduction sets up a striking contrast between the adult Jean-Christophe, ravaged and dominated by his condition, and his younger self, showing no discernable difference to his siblings.

After setting the narrative up with an introduction of a young family living in an average (neither grand nor visibly deprived) neighbourhood in a small French town, Beauchard portrays his brother's first epileptic fit and the subsequent visit to the doctor's surgery. 'And thus begins the endless round of doctors, for my brother and my parents' (Beauchard 2005: 10). Neither the family doctor nor various specialists are able to provide answers, but for a while the prescribed medication causes the seizures to desist. A Parisian neurosurgeon takes on his case when they gradually return, and after performing investigative procedures recommends radical surgery.

Medical discourse is concerned with measurable clinical facts, causes, effects and interventions that aim to cure, or facilitate a return to a state 'quantified by reference to "normal" physiological measurements' (Helman 1994: 104). Thus, the model and perspective of the medical professionalism, and in particular specialism, does not incorporate 'the meaning of the disease for the individual patients, and for those around them' (ibid). The tendency of the medical gaze to objectify and quantify, 'reducing the whole patient to one crucially afflicted part' that becomes treated as 'all that matters' (Couser 2007: 334), and the disjuncture between medical expert and patients and their relatives, is made palpable in three consecutive panels (Beauchard 2005: 42). In the first, the white-coated neuro-surgeon points to an enlarged image of a brain behind him as he explains the potential risks of surgery, in the manner of a meteorologist in front of a weather map [see FIG 18]. In the next, Jean Christophe's naked and dismembered body is hovering in space, illustrating how a slip of the surgeon's knife might irretrievably cause the loss of various physical functions and
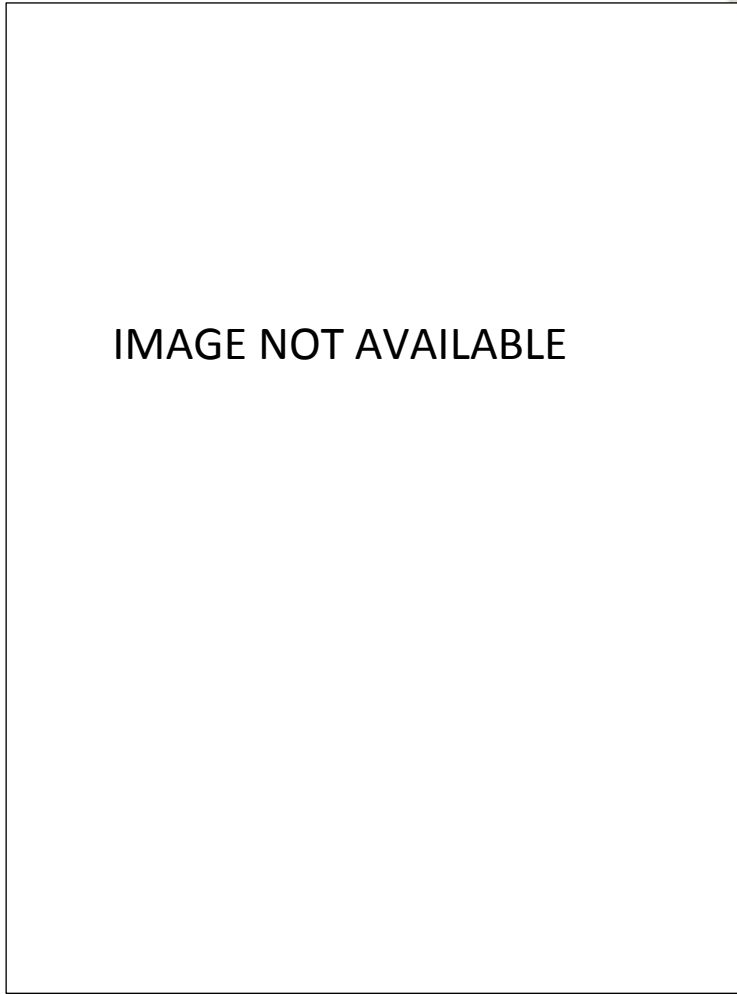
IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE

FIG 17 - David B. (2005), *Epileptic*, Jonathan Cape, p. 1.
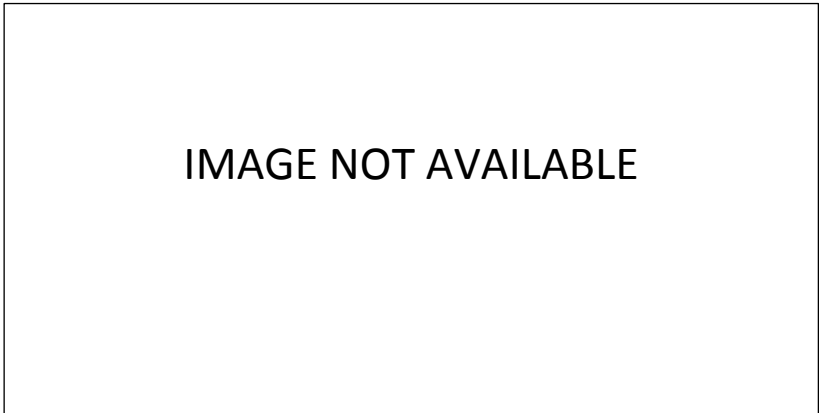
IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE

FIG 18 – David B. (2005), *Epileptic*, Jonathan Cape, p. 42: 3-5.

senses. This three part horizontal sequence concludes with the image of the children's mother slumped across their father as he sits on a bench, presumably in a hospital corridor. She has fainted from the emotional overload caused by the surgeon's exposition. More than just a narrative sequence, these three images form a kind of triptych of heightened significance. Its central image is that of the patient, at once a clinically sliced object and the mutilated body of a child, as it simultaneously connects and irreconcilably separates the panels at each side of it.

That Jean-Christophe has been sharing a room with a patient who after operations is showing few signs of successful recovery does little to allay his parents' anxiety, and they instead opt to seek a cure to the condition through alternative therapies. This cues the beginning of a relentless journey that takes the family from macrobiotic communes, to mediums, faith healers and seemingly no end of quacks, charlatans and self-proclaimed gurus. For the most part these characters are portrayed as no less invested in their own hierarchies and discourses of expertise than their counterparts in conventional medicine. The parents, in particular the mother, appear driven less by conviction that each new treatment will offer a solution, than the need to exhaust every avenue whatever the cost; not trying is not an option. The whole family's immersion in spiritualist and esoteric contexts and communities is thus one outcome of Jean-Christophe's illness, the consequences of would have been impossible to calculate but become gradually evident through Beauchard's narrative. The added social pressures the family faces are more immediately recognisable, however.

David B. (2005: 130) vividly brings to life the gratuitous and judging stares and unhelpful comments of onlookers when Jean-Christophe suffers a fit in a public place, a regular occurrence [see FIG 19]. The top left panel shows Pierre-Francois and the boys' parents hurry towards him as he first falls to the ground on a pavement. In the following image a larger than life Jean-Christophe is convulsing as his kneeling father holds on to his head, with arms that barely reach to hold it still. Surrounding them is an amorphous dark shape from which disembodied staring eye-balls, chattering rows of teeth and beaklike noses protrude, and speech balloons

expounding unsolicited advice: 'Asylum!'/ 'Crazy!'/ 'Shouldn't be outside'/ 'Fire-men'/ 'Doctor', and so on.
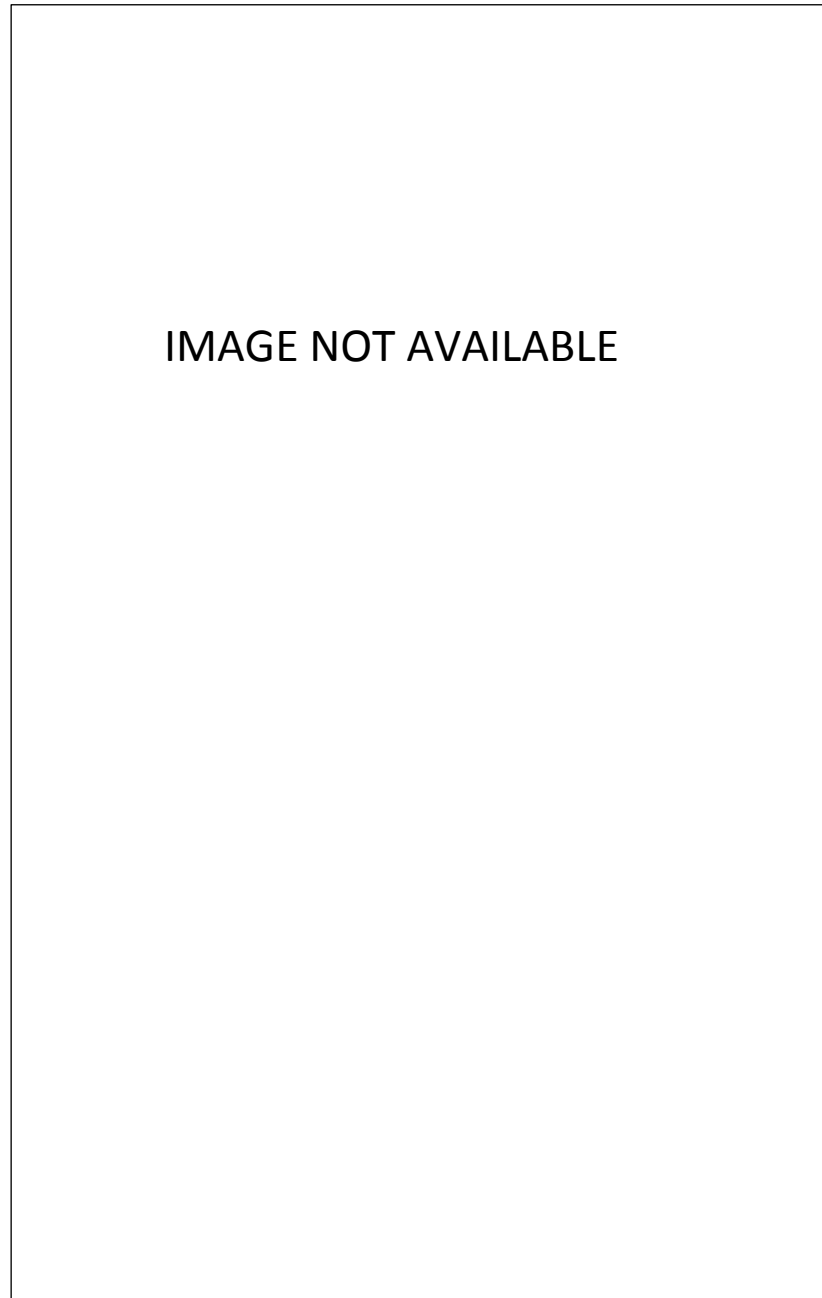

FIG 19 - David B. (2005), *Epileptic*, Jonathan Cape, p. 130.

In the next panel three gendarmes have appeared, but the background is still teeming with eyes, mouths and comments. It is only in the subsequent image that a space emerges around Jean-Christophe as he comes around, while his father negotiates with the officials, convincing them that he does not need to be taken to hospital. The younger brother's worry, that one day it might happen when just the two of them are out, and he will be unable to keep his brother from being carted off somewhere is played out in the last panel of the page. It depicts Pierre-Francois tugging ineffectually at a uniform to stop three gendarmes carrying a long stick on their shoulders to which Jean-Christophe's wrists and ankles are tied, as they determinedly march off against a backdrop of malevolent eyes, mouths and jeers.

As a similar situation, some years later, is depicted later in the book (ibid: 234-236), the reaction of strangers to Jean-Christophe's seizure is already a familiar experience. But the tensions and strains arising from such episodes is made clear by the resentment Pierre-Francois feels towards their mother when he realises that she has sought refuge in a quiet corner and left the other family members to deal with the unfolding situation. Not that he is exempt from the desire for escape; there are moments when the young Pierre-Francois toys with the idea of neglecting his responsibility to keep his brother safe (ibid: 131-132). Later, despite harbouring feelings of guilt, he is determined to build a life not dominated by the shadow of his brother's situation and they both live separate lives in Paris (ibid: 294). Through its acts of therapeutic self-telling, the comic describes a vast range of emotional responses, and charts the impact of illness as it reaches far beyond the scope of medical discourse. Beauchard's frank self-telling gives voice to effects and experiences that, lacking systemic support or official outlets, are expected to be absorbed within the confines and privacy of family. While fulfilling a personal and therapeutic function this public narration and visualisation also provides a conduit through which isolated experiences can become recognised as common.

Giving form to fears and fantasies

There are several contributing factors to why the transportation between real and imaginary, and the symbolism incorporated in Beauchard's narration, seamlessly suturing realism and metaphor does not present any discernable contradiction to its purported truth claims. Although the visual language strays far from anything remotely resembling realism, and images of the fantastical encroach on real life scenarios, even dominating the mis-en-scene, these are explicable as approximations of emotional states and experiences, no less part of reality for being intangible and invisible. Moreover, the narrative remains rooted in real events, even as the expressive imagery threads through and infiltrates them. Thus, even the iconography used, and the sources for Beauchard's vivid imaginings are themselves given context and a rationale.

As the home life of the family is introduced the images of his father telling bible stories round the table at lunch, and the dramatic scenes of fights involving spears and swords that these stories conjure in the young Pierre-Francois' mind, are placed next to one another and separated by a gutter. Below, the depiction of the boy listening intently to his mother is likewise followed by a separate image, this time showing the battle between conquistadors and native armies during the invasion of Mexico. And last on this page, the scene of the three children being read a bedtime story by their mother, next to which is placed a panel across which an army of Tartars gallop across on horses. From an early age Pierre-Francois and his siblings are introduced to stories of semi-mythical pasts and story-telling traditions that become sources of reference and inspiration that remain evident in the author's work. As their parents seek solutions and answers to the opaque and intractable illness that afflicts their eldest son, the various mystics, faith healers and esoteric groups they encounter these mythical image-worlds become elaborated further in various ways. Buddha figures (B., 2005: 108), Rosicrucian symbolism (ibid: 202-204), animalistic totems conjured by a medium from the Swedenborgian church (ibid: 158), anthroposophy and even a brief encounter with a Haitian voodoo church feed into his imagination. Occasional stays in Paris that involve visits to galleries, theatre and the cinema also have an impact, despite the often initial reaction of bemusement registered by David B.: 'Unbeknownst to me, this flood of absurdities takes root in my brain. Images are born' (ibid: 116). That the influences that inform the narrator's imagination and the visual language he uses in order to translate his memories and

remembered emotional experiences are included and explained as part of one narrative works to make the inclusion of fantastical beings and appearances seem reasonable and logical.

The notion of ghosts and the imagery of fierce battle and warfare appear to carry particular resonance for Pierre-Francois/Beauchard. The death of his grandpa produces a birdlike ghost (ibid: 75) who from then on appears intermittently and often without any further mention or explanation. Later, this bird creature is joined by a small group of other benevolent 'ghosts' that inhabit the wooded part of the garden in which Pierre-Francois seeks refuge and comfort from the ongoing strain his family is living under. The idea of such negotiability between the worlds of the dead and that of the living is probably in no small part made feasible by his mother's example. Having trouble coming to terms with her father's death, she involves the whole family in her attempts to contact the spirits, both around the Ouija board and in repeated consultations with mediums. But there is a more intricately bound connection between the void of death and Jean-Christophe's condition that seemingly is ameliorated to some extent by its population with various presences. Not only does the question of what happens to Jean-Christophe during seizures arise; where does he go? Does every seizure mark a small death? But the fact that the illness gradually transforms him, irretrievably and beyond recognition, also means that the other family members are living through a prolonged and continuous process of loss and mourning, that gives no opportunity for closure. The theme of warfare, of course also connects to death and loss. But its relevance for Pierre-Francois/ Beauchard is in the evocation of struggle and combat; the compulsion to overcome obstacles and to deny the possibility of defeat while staring it in the face (ibid: 95). While this is only explicitly stated once, a suggestion of displaced anger accompanies the recurring imagery of weaponry and soldiers charging into battle, creating an undercurrent of tension.

In the early stages of Jean-Christophe's illness the comic depicts his helplessly curled-over body being carried away by a galloping horse, and his younger brother in hot pursuit with what appears to be the heads of warriors dangling from his saddle: 'I'm not any one person, I'm a group, an army. I have enough rage in me for one

hundred thousand warriors. I relate my brother's seizures to this rage. What horse is carrying him away?' (ibid: 19). But later the epilepsy becomes compared to a mountain that demands climbing (ibid: 77, 118), and most consistently personified as a large serpent that holds him in its grip, violently twisting and contorting his body during seizures (ibid: 76). Its recurrent presence sometimes dominates individual images, snarling around Jean-Christophe's body and clamping his head between long jaws and their rows of jagged teeth. But it also materialises in smaller form, sliding across Jean-Christophe's brow, as his brother explains that: 'Now I can recognise an oncoming seizure just by the expression on his face' (ibid: 79). When a macrobiotic dietary regime and acupuncture treatment brings on a remission we see Jean-Christophe stand straight and confident on the stomach of the serpent that lies on its back with its legs lifted in the air, tamed (if temporarily) into submission like a large but harmless canine. Following this success the family join a macrobiotic commune, the first of many. The other members, who for various reasons are all there to find a cure or treatment, are drawn floating against a black background with rice bowls and chopsticks in hands; each with their own monster attached.

On page 112 the serpent representing Jean-Christophe's epilepsy forms the panel itself [see FIG 20]. Jean-Christophe is represented in a central position and larger than the other family members, his head and legs are gripped by the creature's paws and its long tail runs right through his stomach. The image relates to the period when at the age of fourteen, Jean-Christophe begins to rebel against his situation. He is pointing an accusatory finger and asking: 'How come I'm sick and they aren't? / HUH? HOW COME?' But the rest of the family is also entangled in and surrounded by the serpent, their smaller figures dominated by the uneven battle between the child and his illness. His mother clasps her hands across her chest as she recoils from one of the monster's many limbs, his father's hands are tightly folded fists, yet he looks helpless and ineffectual, and Florence seems to be doing her best just to hold her balance. Pierre-Francois is the only one matching his older brother's fury, stealthily advancing from the top right corner with a raised sword in his hand, and covered from head to toe in armour. However, in no proximity to the serpent's head, his battle-ready stance is instead positioned directly facing his brother's confrontation. Here, despite clearly owing the depth of context to the surrounding narrative, a whole familial psycho-drama is powerfully summoned in one image.

The serpent that represents Jean-Christophe's epilepsy is a conspicuously recurrent motif. As the siblings grow apart, we are shown them in the large family garden (ibid:

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE

FIG 20 - David B. (2005), *Epileptic*, Jonathan Cape, p. 112.

123). Florence is left standing by herself, in the middle, while Pierre-Francois heads into the bushes in one direction and Jean-Christophe is carried off on the serpent's tail in another. Not long later, Jean-Christophe disappears from the house, to explore the large supermarket some distance away. Realising that he is gone, his mother and grandmother anxiously exchange information before his mother gets in her car to go look for him (ibid: 126). The underlying tension, generated by the constant threat of seizures and the knowledge of his vulnerability, is stressed by the way the road leading from the house is recognisable as the tip of the serpent's tail. Through its insistent appearance, the visual motif of the serpent drives home the inexorable presence and pressure of Jean-Christpohe's illness. Yet the way it is represented in multiple ways and incarnations subtly signals that this presence is mutable, perpetually taking on different characteristics and levels of threat.

The Aristotlean conception of metaphor, as 'a kind of decoration or ornament' (Punter 2007: 12), has given way to understanding that it is a foundational mechanism for conceptualising experience, constructing subjectivity and communicating meaning (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, cited by Kövecses 2002: viii). Both early and later definitions agree, however, that metaphor enables additional understanding by the recognition of a connection and a simultaneous disjuncture; 'incongruity on one level produces an influx of significance on another' (Geertz 1973: 210). Metaphor is thus a tool for conveying elusive and difficult to describe experience (Knowles and Moon 2006: 5), such as pain, and other invisible and intangible sensations, both bodily and emotional. It plays a particularly prominent role in medical contexts, often relied upon to express intangible sensations and experiences (Lupton 1994: 55), and as a rhetorical and ideological device (ibid: 55-58; Sontag 1989).

Addressing the issue of metaphor in autobiographical comics, El Refaie (2013: 208-210) privileges the unexpected; the ability of an artist to conjure up an idiosyncratic image that can be interpreted in multiple ways by readers, depending on their own subjective experiences and imaginations. Certainly depicting epilepsy as a horse, a mountain, and a serpent appears to fall into this category. However, the significance of visual metaphors in documentary comics can be specified further in relation to

other types of rhetorical device. Let us imagine, for example, how a recorded documentary might make use of a shot of a long and empty neon-lit corridor to emphasise the isolation felt by someone awaiting test results in a hospital. This remains at the level of allusion and connotation. As does, for that matter, previous chapter's reading of Alan Cope's falling off a ladder, and the blank panel following it, to tease out an insinuation of a more profound sense of disequilibrium. Certainly absences, reticence and merely hinted at can be powerfully evocative.

Sharply contrasting with such reserve *Epileptic* defies conventions of realism to visceral effect; rendering metaphorical analogy material in order to make elusive and invisible concepts and conditions tangible. David B.'s use of visual metaphor undoes the separation between felt and seen, interior and external. This is not so much a question of a collapse between real and imagined as it is one between experience and expression. The text visually conjures as a means of communication, in order to mediate aspects of the real that have no actual visible form. Seeing Pierre-Francois standing covered from head to toe in armour against the outline of a dense, dark forest, while in surrounding panels his parents stand dwarfed by the swirling serpent, and his sister is faltering and sloped over while surrounded by skeletons pulling and tugging at her from all sides, communicates emotional and conceptual statements about the family (ibid: 163). But it does more than communicate, it also evokes aesthetic responses through its very specificity (El Refaie 2013: 208). The three accompanying text segments add yet another layer of description, and pathos. 'My brother is far away. I no longer believe in anything. I lock myself ever more tightly in my armor'/ 'My mother has buried her father, but my parents are just as lost as they were before'/ 'Florence's anxiety never lets up. She is tormented by the same ghosts that I've succeeded in taming'.

The panel shapes interlock like square cornered jigsaw pieces. Yet the straight lines of the gutters that hold them apart appear significantly rigid, in contrast with the swirling and organic shapes that present three quite separate settings within these panels. Although the parents to his left are facing vaguely upwards in the direction of Florence in the upper right part of the page, their line of sight appears blocked by the protruding tab shape of the bottom panel containing Pierre-Francois' head. Placed in

a central position on the page, he faces the reader in a head on stare. This composition strongly evokes the simultaneous interdependence and isolation of the family members. That Pierre-Francois should be standing in the forest wearing a suit of armour is not credible, nor is it a credible interpretation of Beauchard's intention. Nor is the metaphor particularly unusual, armour being a standard substitution for self-protection. Yet being able to see him stand there, encased in a suit made of overlapping protective scales emphatically brings a materiality and conviction to the depiction of his emotional state.

Nichols (1991: 233-237) instigates the concept of 'vivification', that he describes as 'rendering felt what representations only allude to' (ibid: 234), in order to think about representation and affect. He concedes that vivification can play a contributory part in spectacle, but nevertheless makes an important distinction between the two by aligning vivification with a more complex response; 'a felt sense of contradiction, dilemma, or existential paradox' (ibid). For Nichols vivification can be explained as the idea that the symbolic work of representation can make the historical world real, 'as for the first time, because [it is] rendered with a specificity [it] never had before' (ibid: 236). What he finds particularly powerful in relation to documentary, is that as opposed to fictional constructs such as drama and novels where the sense of historical reality becomes secondary to the text's own project, in documentary this is averted. For Nichols this is due to the indexical/ realist promise; '[t]he represented instance clearly existed before the camera' (ibid). This thesis has already argued, and called on multiple examples to demonstrate, that rendering reality without usurping or overpowering the sense of historical actuality is not necessarily dependent on such a connection. Beauchard's's use of visual metaphor, however, pushes further than others in terms of documentary conventions of realism. Nevertheless, I contend that despite its radical deviation from realist conventions it never becomes detached from an acute sense of historical actuality. As an internally coherent and logical system of communication *Epileptic*, by visual and metaphoric means, evokes and narrates a composite reality involving internal, interpersonal, social and material aspects.

Here the connection between animation and comics becomes particularly pronounced, as both forms of representation offer particular freedoms by which to

strategically express subjectivity and dismantle boundaries between external and interior worlds. While stressing the tension produced between abstract or imaginary images and a recorded audio track that affirms a real world relation in animated documentary, Ward (2005: 93) has equally drawn attention to animation's capacity to make accessible aspects of experiential reality that are not necessarily available in tangible visual form. Truth claims here have little to do with correspondence between referent and image. Indeed the ability to externalise inner realities and give them visible form relies on acts of translation; the images are necessarily constituted by the alchemy that transforms subjective experience into equally subjective expression. The acknowledgement of subjectivity, not as an obstacle to be policed, but as the very condition of communication and sharing, thus becomes overtly clear. In the foreword to *Epileptic*, written by David B.'s sister Florence, she describes some of the differences in the way they remember:

> You've laid down, in the panels of this book, the shadows of our childhood. My recollections are neither as detailed nor as precise as yours. My memory is like a tiny little seed, dense and dark, which encircle one irreducible fact. That one thing of which I am certain is Jean-Christophe's illness: epilepsy - that mountain you envision him climbing. It's funny: for my part, I always pictured it as a powerful little kernel, lodged in the contours of his brain.

That Florence's mental image of the illness that loomed over the family differs in character from that elaborated by her brother's comic is of no consequence to the truthfulness that his account claims; this is to be expected. Yet the question of subjective versions and the responsibility at stake in representation is raised elsewhere, in the depiction of a conversation between 'David B.' (at the time related in this 'flash forward' he has already changed his name) and his mother (ibid: 94-95). Here the narration of family history has reached a point where his maternal grandmother is a little girl, when the story is interrupted. Suddenly back in the present 'David B.' is challenged to stop telling this story by his mother who holds what appears to be a draft of comics pages in her hand. She wants to know why his drawings have to be so frightening and why he wants to include ancestral history in a story ostensibly about his brother's illness. Her concern that the inclusion of stories

about past generations will invite readers to make false assumptions about epilepsy as a hereditary condition has seemingly prompted her objection to the depiction of her great grandmother's alcoholism. In view of the small likelihood of such a connection, this reaction might be indicative of two slightly different things, namely the social stigma that the family has had to contend with as a result of Jean-Christophe's illness, and the feelings of maternal guilt that she has failed to rationalise away. 'David B.' responds by comparing the hardships encountered by previous generations with their more recent and ongoing struggles with his brother's condition, to him they are both about adversity and survival. This directly corresponds to the observation that the experience of ill health 'often shares the psychological, moral and social dimensions associated with other forms of adversity, within a culture' (Helman 1994: 108).

A rare inclusion of retrospective comment, this reference to the process of production also functions to reinforce the narrative's commitment to being genuine and truthful, and as a reminder that Beauchard's subjective narrative is not exempt from moderation. It also enables him to include both a story that reinforces the suggestion that this late relative was on occasion falling-down drunk, and to follow it with his mother's insistence that she does not remember her maternal great grandmother in this way, but rather as 'cheerful, brimming with energy' (Beauchard 2005: 95). This sequence thus provides a reminder that contradictory facets and complicated realities that are irreducible to simple truths, make up the material of experience and memory. Consequently the partial and selective processes that constitute their representation also carry particular responsibilities.

Conclusion

This chapter has configured debates pertaining to visibility and voice in relation to examples of comics, thus reading them through the lens of documentary. *AD New Orleans* (2009) documents the Katrina disaster and its longer term consequences through the testimonies of survivors and evacuees. It counters some of the media frames that dominated coverage at the time of the events, and attempts to stay with

the key subjects beyond the point when media attention waned and turned somewhere else for headlines. This comic thus performs as an act of intervention, moving from its original web presence that offers an interactive platform and forum, to presenting and documenting a dissenting collective testimony. Through its images readers are able to witness the experiences of others on conditions that place subjects and their testimonies in a central position, as Neufeld's images are most often created from what he has been told, not from what he himself has seen, surmised or mechanically recorded in situ. While this could be seen as a deficiency, a lack of non-partisan observation and verification, it significantly alters the power dynamic of the conventional model for the documentary of social concern. The images he produces also impact on the relation between seeing and seen subject. They deny readers the privilege of scrutinising the excess and contingent that recorded images would incorporate, and offer their subjects visibility in conjunction with a certain degree of anonymity.

AD New Orleans attempts to navigate the difficulties associated with the documentary of social concern, yet shares its ambition to extend both visibility and voice to its subjects, and to speak alongside them (Ruby 1991: 50) as much as for and about them. *Epileptic* on the other hand bears witness in a way that more assertively claims its own voice and control over representation. Yet it, too, bears witness in a way that insists on voicing personal experience as a matter of broader public relevance.

Using autobiography as his framework leads Stephen Tabachnik to conclude that *Epileptic* is the story of David B.'s *becoming*, through finally achieving 'a belief in unselfish love and acceptance of his situation' (Tabachnik 2011: 115). Aligning this text with documentary on the other hand, the first-person mode does not necessarily equate the speaking subject with the central theme of the telling. Instead, what has emerged in the above reading, is David B. bearing witness and by way of self-representation also representing and extending a voice on behalf of others; his brother, sister and parents, but importantly also others who in various ways might recognise their own experiences through his pages. In *Epileptic* (2005), as read through the lens of documentary, the autobiographical mode and focus on family

resonates with the notion of pluralistic subjective knowledges and transactions between public and private. This comic gives voice to the experience of illness as a social reality that affects not only the patient but has resounding consequences for an entire family. The narrative offers a counterpoint, or at least a reminder of the disparity that exists between the perspectives of the medical profession and that of those who come into contact with them as patients and family members affected by illness. In terms of documentary, its most radical contribution is the uncompromising utilisation of visual metaphors. As with animated documentary, subjective and invisible 'states of mind' (Ward 2005: 93, see also Wells 1998: 122) are given a visual materiality in order to communicate affect, thus finding new strategies for the narrative and visual representation of aspects of the real world.

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[i] The Mass Observation project was initiated by Charles Madge, Humphrey Jennings and Tom Harrisson in an effort to document the British people during a time of extensive and profound social change (Highmore 2002: 75-112).

[ii] Ian Williams' web-site, www.graphicmedicine.com lists over sixty titles of illness-related comics.

The Journey Narrative: Alterity, authenticity and cross-cultural encounters

This thesis began by setting out an understanding of documentary as a particular mode of address in combination with narrative, performativity (Bruzzi 2000) and the capacity of pictorial depiction to 'make us vividly imagine seeing' (Maynard 1997:104). Subsequent chapters have paid attention to how comics offer distinct possibilities and qualities to documentary undertakings. These discussions have incorporated the performance of subjectivity in drawn images (chapter three), the way this adds force to first person narration when the artist and diegetic narrator are one and the same (chapter five), and flagged up the vital function of narrative in order for documents of any description to acquire meaning (chapter four). Right the way through, however, the departure from conventional documentary depiction/ means of production has remained a consistent point of interest. As it seems probable that objection to the idea of documentary comics will be based on such grounds, these matters have indeed merited extensive attention. Still, having by now argued in some detail for the malleability of the documentary image, this remaining chapter will turn to questions of cultural narrative and its relation to telling, showing and encounter. An exclusive focus on visual qualities risks obscuring the importance of narrative models and culturally circulated tropes in documentary's interaction with the world it represents and produces. And although comics may offer new and different possibilities in terms of documentary representation, to what extent does this bring about new ways of understanding the world?

The journey narrative presents a promising prospect for the considerations at hand. Travel and journeys have played a notable part in documentary history from its very earliest days (Griffiths 2002: Ruoff 2006: 1; Altman 2006; Amad 2006), and have consistently been prominent features of factual broadcasting schedules. The promise of knowing about the world, beyond the immediate reach and everyday experience of viewers, is given particular resonance and specificity in documentary texts that offer the vicarious experience of geographically distant places and encounters. Thus, the

juncture of travel and documentary offers a useful area for exploring how documentary's production of knowledge intersects with both narrative and performativity. In addition, the journey has also emerged as a recurring topic and structuring device in contemporary non-fiction comics (Bader 2006); the kinds of comics I argue can be described as documentary. This confluence prompts the question of whether such comics can be conceived as a continuation of certain traditions of documentary journey narrative, or whether and to what extent they might offer something different.

The chapter opens with a consideration of the journey narrative; as theoretical concept, structuring device and a cultural category with specific historical roots. Moving on to questions of performance and authenticity, as they figure in theoretical debates in travel and tourism studies, allows for comparisons with corresponding ideas in documentary studies. These introductory sections set up the analysis of Craig Thompson's *Carnet de voyage* (2004) and Guy Delisle's *Shenzen*: *a travelogue in China* (2006), and *Pyongyang*: *a journey in North Korea* (2005). Thompson's *Carnet de Voyage* is described as a travel diary by its publisher Top Shelf, while Guy Delisle's work has been assigned the term 'graphic travelogue' (Maclean 2009), although several reviews posted on publisher Drawn and Quarterly's web-pages also use the less specific description 'graphic novel'. Michael Faber's (2006) review in The Guardian designates *Pyongyang* and *Shenzen* 'graphic memoirs'. He goes on to call *Pyongyang* 'a fascinating, even important document', despite the restrictions curtailing Delisle's movements presenting an obstacle to it being 'being a travelogue in the usual sense'. David Thompson's (2009) review of *Pyongyang* in the same paper links it to Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* and Joe Sacco's *Palestine*, likewise using the overarching term 'graphic memoir'. Despite the apparent difficulty in agreeing on terminology, these extra-textual materials all cue readers to understanding the non-fictional address of the comics in question. Moreover, and as demonstrated by Thompson's review, the connection that this offers between otherwise distinctly differing comics has been given recognition.

Delisle's works complicate a simplistic conflation of travel and tourism, as his sojourns in various locations are framed in the context of work. In the two comics

attended to here[i], he travels as a contracted supervisor of outsourced French animation production in China and North Korea respectively. Nevertheless, both Delisle's texts and Thompson's *Carnet de Voyage* can be situated as journey narratives that originate in *and* conclude with a return to a particular place conceived of as 'home', making frameworks associated with tourism studies equally viable in both of these instances.

However, historical and culturally specific models for thinking about and representing travel do not necessarily encompass the plurality of experience constituting travel in the current global context: 'there are countless mobilities, physical, imaginative and virtual, voluntary and coerced' (Urry 2002: 161). While tourism discourses continue to be prevalent in travel documentary, the fact that '[t]he experience of migrant or diasporic people is central to contemporary societies' (Gillespie 2007: 2), suggests the need to reconfigure travel itself according to a broader model. This chapter thus assumes a deliberately inclusive view of what constitutes a travel narrative. In it, the chosen texts represent the category of documentary travel narrative according to the premise that travel practices and modes encompass divergent spheres of experience, yet commonality can be extrapolated in the movement of bodies across geographical locations (Kaur and Hutnyk 1999: 1-4). Hence the third, and concluding analysis of the chapter turns to Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis: The story of a childhood and the story of a return* (2008). Exploring migrant experience and the borderlands of diasporic identity, the travel narrative in this comic inverts the idea of the west as the assumed point of origin and return; the centre around which destinations are plotted.

The journey: from narrative form to cultural narrative

In narrative theory (de Certeau 1984: 115 and Bal 1997: 137, cited by Mikkonen 2007: 287) the concept of travel works 'as a description of and even a code for how narratives work in general' (ibid). The journey functions as a metaphor for narrative, in that both as experience and in mediated form it 'presuppose[s] a consecution of places, and events happening in particular places' (ibid). Yet seemingly

paradoxically, the travelogue, by drawing its narrative structure from the journey it depicts, 'offers an alternative to hegemonic narrative forms in both the documentary and the feature fiction film' (Ruoff 2006: 2). It is this un-predetermined approach, likely to produce a more episodic structure by allowing chance encounters to assume critical significance, that forms the basis for Stella Bruzzi's (2006: 81- 119) configuration of the 'journey film' and its direct cinema and cinema vérité influences.

In Bruzzi's theorisation the journey thus becomes narrative method rather than necessarily 'a physical journey across terrain' (ibid: 82), at its core a privileging of the encounter, and 'events as they unfold in the present and in front of the camera' (ibid: 85). The journey film as conceptualised by Bruzzi, and ostensibly used to undercut the documentary genealogy constructed by Nichols (1991), clearly presents difficulties in terms of the retrospective translation processes involved, from encounter to inscription, in the drawing of comics. Exactly the 'rapidity of registration' (Roth 2012: 179), allowing the capture of unforeseen and inadvertent features, that cameras offer and that the production of comics inevitably excludes seems to be a key point. However, in order to function as a documentary rather than a series of fragments, even the most open and undetermined approach to recording, is also narratively constructed in retrospect. It will employ certain strategies in order to create suture, rhythm and meaning. Nevertheless, Bruzzi's category of the journey narrative highlights documentaries that purposely mobilise a sense of uncertainty and openness, accompanied by an enhanced subjectivity. No longer found to be at odds with documentary (Nichols 1994: 1; Bruzzi 2006: 85) these are also qualities that, as previous chapters have demonstrated, tend to characterise documentary comics.

However, the documentary journey offers a range of possible approaches; as narrative structure, as theme and in terms of its historical persistence (from nineteenth century film and other forms to twenty first century comics). Moreover, it has been noted that the journey as metaphor and theoretical tool, in its mobilisation of language, draws on specific cultural and historical traditions of travel (Wolff 1993; Reynolds 2000). Hence my examination of the documentary journey narrative, engages with it in terms of an embedded cultural narrative. What I am

suggesting, is that while a journey may comprise openness and uncertainty, the journey narrative as cultural category belies such apparent transparency. A German proverb borrowed from Walter Benjamin (1999: 84) illustrates the point: 'When someone goes on a trip, he has something to tell about'. This ostensibly profound and concise explanation of the perennial appeal of the journey narrative nevertheless calls for further unpacking. What might the 'something' be, and to what degree do specific contexts, circumstances and the imagined or actual audience of such an account inform the telling? Moreover, does said trip necessarily conclude by a return to the point of departure where the telling then takes place?

The 'something' might be described otherwise as difference. In part such difference is constituted in the break between the routines and the familiarity of the everyday. But cultural difference and ethnographic discourses also play a significant part in such narratives. This would suggest a telling, or *witnessing* (see chapter four) in which both 'seeing' difference, the exotic and the strange, and 'being' other, by embodying the position of a stranger, are important ingredients. Rather than simply universal truisms, both of these aspects are contextually contingent and deeply imbricated in culturally and historically specific discourses of travel.

'The idea of travel as a means of gathering and recording information is commonly found in societies that exercise a high degree of political power' (Kabbani 1988: 1), and the ethnographic discourses generated by travellers as part of Occidental expansionism were preceded by earlier Arab counterparts (ibid: 1-3). Nevertheless, the particular cultural context and legacy of the concerns of this chapter fall within the former. The cross-cultural encounters brought about by the voyages of discovery from the sixteenth century onwards enabled 'comparisons [that] helped to change Europeans' self-image of Europe from being a periphery to ancient centres, to being a centre in its own right which was at the edge of the "modern"' (Leed 1991: 21, see also Featherstone 1995: 152; Said 2003: 117 and 206; Cinquegrani 2011: 325). This self-mythologising process embedded and relied on a hegemonic discourse of ethnocentricity and racial superiority (Said 2003: 7). More specifically, as Colin McCabe (2011: 14) has asserted, the concept of 'race' was vital to the colonial endeavour as the ideological licensing of economic expansionism, from slave trade

to colonial exploitation in India and elsewhere. Travel literature proliferated as print culture accompanied European expansion, and travellers became the 'seeing eye, and the recounting voice' of the new colonial powers (Kabbani 1988: 6). Moreover, visual practices of appropriation and display; the drive 'to collect and order the planet in visual form' (Amad 2006: 101, see also Gunning 2006: 27) helped shape discourses of cultural difference, geographic and ethnographic knowledge.

In narratives shaped by this cultural heritage ideas of exploration and mastery, self-discovery and cultural capital have come to be closely related. Thus, in the language and discourse of travel from the British Grand Tourists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to contemporary forms of mass tourism and independent travel (Chambers 1994: 31) 'travel continues to be figuratively treated as a form of personal appropriation' (Adler 1989: 1383). Raminder Kaur and John Hutnyk (1999: 6) have claimed that due to its heritage in 'a colonial past [contemporary travel] is acquisitive, exoticising, and, to a large extent, dependent on the racial associations of the traveller'.

From gaze to performative encounter

Travel incorporates the diverse practices and experiences that form the associated category of tourism. Although tourism might be broadly defined as travel as leisure, this is in no way a simple distinction; tourist experiences and practices may be included in travel undertaken for other purposes, and some travel undertaken within the context of leisure resists, for a variety of reasons, association with tourism. Contradicting such lack of clearly defined distinctions, cultural associations set the traveller apart from the tourist and vice versa. The former's engagement ostensibly seeks participation and a depth of understanding while the latter is typically concerned with the accumulation of superficial and discrete experiences (Damarin 1996:81). However, rather than descriptive of different modes of travel, this is a distinction is indicative of and invested in cultural taste hierarchies. For example, in chapter five the subject positions of viewers of social documentary were critiqued by comparing them to those of tourists (Creeber 2009), inferring the latter's dubious

ethical credentials and self-serving motivations. In correspondence with critical approaches to the visual that foreground loss of meaning (Baudrillard 1994), industrialised production and passive consumption (Adorno [1979] 1991) and the seductive, yet hollow, spectacle (Debord 1994), 'the mere sightseer has come to be universally denigrated, as someone who is necessarily superficial in their appreciation of peoples and places' (Rojek and Urry 1997: 7). However, despite the discourses of consumption and leisure particularly associated with tourism, the claims to cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) it offers participants are also informed by the notions of accruing knowledge about and experience of the world associated with travel in a broader sense. As outlined earlier, travel has been historically and culturally invested in as 'a conduit – for training, knowing, thinking, belonging' (Amad 2006: 101) and cultural capital in the form of competencies and connoisseurship. It would seem that despite at times being defined in opposition to each other travel and tourism nevertheless inform each other and intersect in significant ways.

Hence, even when approaching travel in a way that goes beyond the sphere of leisure, it is appropriate to address debates concerning 'the tourist gaze' (Urry 2002). Identifying the gaze as a 'performance that orders, shapes and classifies, rather than reflects the world' (Urry and Larsen 2011: 2) resolutely summons an understanding that goes beyond mere seeing and configures it as sets of discursive and 'socially constructed' visual practices (ibid: 1- 2). Much attention has indeed been given to the intersections between travel and visual culture (Rojek and Urry 1997: 9; Crouch and Lübbren 2003: 2-12; Crouch, Jackson and Thompson 2005: 12); the role played by visual practices as a mode of engagement with geographical locations (Crang 1997: 360) and the extension of travel in mediated forms that facilitate vicarious travel (Fürsich 2002: 207), inform expectations (Dunn 2006; Law, Bunnell and Ong 2007; Bolan and Williams 2008; Sugandi 2011: 4) and reproduce 'romanticized notions of travel' (Reynolds 2000: 542).

Bronwyn Morkham and Russell Staiff (2002: 297- 316) have argued that Urry's concept of the tourist gaze inverts, as it evokes, a Foucauldian notion of disciplinary surveillance that seeks to address the position of 'those *who are gazed upon*' (ibid:

311, *n*1, original emphasis). They also suggest that the concept of the gaze, as applied in the theorising of cinema as in tourism, overstates the aspect of ocularism in ways that obscure other considerations and sense experiences. Moving away from the visual as the privileged focalising point allows consideration of two equally salient aspects of travel (and of documentary); encounter and performance as they interact with cultural narrative. Consequently, this chapter considers the journey narrative in terms of performative encounter with cultural difference.

Travel, tourism and authenticity

As noted, rather than a unified category, tourism/s might be better conceived in terms of multiple positions and experiences (Cohen 1988; Rojek and Urry 1997: 1-3). However, authenticity as tackled by tourism studies holds particular relevance for the analysis of my first two case studies. Moreover, the focus on authenticity in discourses surrounding tourism resonates suggestively with similar concerns in debates around documentary. While the former might centre on locations, experiences and commodification and the latter on representation, their shared problems include a desire for authenticity and the imperative to signal it in appropriate ways. The notion of systems of signification, as constituted by signs, codes and conventions, is thus vital to authenticity debates in both of these areas.

John Frow's (1997: 64-101) outline of three distinct discourses in relation to tourism provides a useful starting point. The first is highly critical of tourism, and dismissive of tourist practices and pleasures as shallow and inauthentic. An early and often referred to example of this perspective is Daniel Boorstin's 1961 *The Image: A guide to pseudo-events in America.* Boorstin (1961: 77-117) argues that, in modernity, travel has become transformed from a precarious and transformative venture to an increasingly 'bland and riskless commodity' (ibid: 116). Here the comparison to a romanticised construction of earlier travel identifies tourism as a turn from the authentic, but is according to Frow the least interesting tourism discourse. A different alternative is the framing of tourism as a quest for authenticity. A prominent advocate here is Dean MacCannell (1976: 100-102), who draws on the sociological

model of different stages of social performance by Erving Goffman (1958) to conceptualise sets of front and back regions of tourism, in which authenticity is both satisfied and deferred. MacCannell outlines a model of six stages of tourist settings, according to a gradually ascending order of authenticity. This scheme indicates that MacCannell remains committed to the category of the authentic, although he ultimately fails to clarify or define it.

The third discourse of tourism, according to Frow, acknowledges that authenticity only exists through its own classification, and is therefore dependent on being marked and mediated. This, as Jonathan Culler pointed out as early as 1981, stands in clear opposition to the common understanding of it as synonymous with 'untouched' in travel and tourist contexts). The paradox recognised by Culler, that authenticity is understood as 'untouched' while dependent on being marked and mediated, finds a correspondence in documentary. What ostensibly signals a 'direct' access to the real world in documentary, as we have seen, consists of elaborate conventions of documentary realism. As chapter three examined in detail, such realism can be generated both in line with discourses of objectivity and associated means of production, or, as in the case of documentary comics, call forth the authenticity of subjective experience and expression.

But returning to discourses of tourism, Edward Bruner (1994) takes to task the 'essentialist vocabulary of copies and originals' of postmodern theorists of simulation. His analysis of the Lincoln memorial in New Salem outlines multiple and negotiated authenticities at work; authenticity as reproduction, credibility, social construction of cultural myths and identities as well as performance and ludic pleasures. In line with Appadurai (1986: 44-45), Bruner concludes that 'authenticity today is becoming a matter of the politics of connoisseurship, of the political economy of taste, and of status discrimination; beyond that, I would claim, it is a matter of power, of who has the right to authenticate' (1994: 408). In relation to Bruner's scheme of negotiated authenticities travel documentaries can be seen as fulfilling a significant function both in terms of reproduction and the social construction of cultural identifications and differences. These particular forms of mediated tourism also contain aspects of both performance (by presenters and

subjects alike) and pleasures of seeing and knowing (for documentarians and audiences/ readers). Bruner rejects the narrow view of tourism as a quest for authenticity, but deferred along a scale, and its construction of hierarchical order. His understanding accounts for multiplicity of experience and difference, less hampered by predetermined implications of value.

I agree with Bruner that authenticity provides an overly simplistic framework through which to understand tourisms (and I am deliberately using plural form). Yet it would seem that as pre-conceptions, desires and projections figure in encounters with cultural difference, the notion of authenticity remains a salient consideration. The line between what might be perceived as an 'authentic' experience, and what constitutes the perceived 'authenticity' of a host culture during such an encounter is easily blurred. If the latter is dependent on cues and conventions, and thus draws on prior understandings and culturally configured narratives, it significantly contributes to how certain experiences become imbued with a notion of authenticity. So to reiterate, tourist experiences accommodate a broad array of social practices, not all of which can be presumed to relate to either authenticity or otherness. Yet, when such an experience is framed in terms of cultural difference, however laden with doubt and slippery this concept might be, 'authenticity' often re-surfaces as a marker of evaluation. For this reason MacCannell's scheme of six stages still finds a use in two of the analyses here, if in a limited capacity and with particular reference to the romantic traditions of travel discourse.

Particular discourses of travel and tourism designate travel as self-improvement and the accumulation of cultural standing and capital through practices not reducible to, but nevertheless incorporating what Urry (2002: 44) defines as 'the spectatorial gaze'. This, too, might function to describe documentary more broadly. Both the cultural configuration of travel outlined in the previous section, and documentary, hold the promise of aesthetic and visual pleasures combined with the satisfactions of mastery and increased knowledge for the individual. In travel documentary, more specifically, the ostensibly lone traveller/ presenter persona performatively reproduces and reinforces this particular narrative. Meanwhile, the double bind of this connection ensures that the representations through which audiences are able to

participate in the visual and ephistephilic (Nichols 1991: 40-41) pleasures of such travel simultaneously function as authentications of romantic, and often implicitly Euro-centric, understandings of travel.

A ticket to ride

Canadian Craig Thompson's *Carnet de Voyage* (2004) is introduced by the author/artist as a travel diary. His indication that this interim book project was initiated by his publisher (Thompson, 2004: 224) suggests that this autobiographical account is expected to cement his status as an acclaimed comics author[ii]. *Carnet de Voyage* traces a couple of months spent in Europe to promote his graphic novel *Blankets* (2003), interjected by a three week trip to Morocco. Roughly ninety of the book's two- hundred and twenty-four pages describe this period, which is also markedly different in character than the rest of his travelling experiences. While in France, Switzerland and Spain, Thompson is travelling in a professional capacity. He conducts book signings and does interviews, and when not engaged in promotional activities stays with friends he has previously made a connection with, and their families. Both the personal, professional and cultural contexts underscore a sense of familiarity and belonging. In these sections of the book Thompson's experience of being somewhere 'other' is principally marked through the consumption of food; multiple pages are taken up by the display of various food items and dishes (Thompson 2004: 172 and 137); highlighting the point that tourist encounter and consumption are not exclusively related to scopic pleasure (Morkham and Staiff 2002). Partaking in taste experiences which differ from those which are familiar and everyday is here foregrounded as a marker of cultural difference (Curtis and Pajaczkowska 1994: 207-208), underscoring the role of food in imagined communities based on national identity (Holtzman 2006: 366-370; de Soucey 2010) and the increased cultural capital offered by travel.

In addition, this part of *Carnet de Voyage* depicts encounters with famous names in the comics world; playing lazer quest (Thompson 2004: 168-169) and enjoying sophisticated French cuisine (ibid: 170-171) with Lewis Trondheim[iii] or spending

hours sketching side by side with the cartoonist Blutch (ibid: 153). This depiction of domestic and everyday scenarios involving well-known figures in the comics world, positions Thompson's work in an intertextual matrix. It works to reinforce the idea of the comics artist as embedded within a field of cultural production that involves its own networks and hierarchies, and simultaneously bolsters his own status. The publication of *Carnet de Voyage* on the whole capitalises on Thompson's previous success with *Blankets*, and the interest in graphic novels and their creators among a readership by this point broader than a mere niche market. Yet, whether such readers were longstanding fans or drawn towards the comic by more recent media and critical attention, access to Thompson's personal experiences and social encounters with other famous names, as re-staged here, is seemingly offered as a particular point of interest. This differs from how Sacco (see chapter four), Neufeld and Beauchard (see chapter 5) incorporate scenes in which they are explicitly shown in their capacity as producers of their texts, and in effect draw attention to textual construction as a way of undermining, yet simultaneously reinstating textual authority and authenticity. Matthew Pustz (2007*b*) has argued that autobiographical telling in comics has played an important part in asserting comics production as an authorial practice, thus underscoring the form's claims to cultural legitimacy. This mechanism is vividly exemplified in the way Thompson extends vicarious access to personal interactions between producer personas, and engagements to promote his work internationally, in *Carnet de Voyage*.

The quest for authentic alterity

As Thompson embarks on his trip to Morocco there is a tangible shift in tone. He is travelling alone, and finds himself struggling with the cultural disjuncture he experiences. Although the back cover suggests that Thompson was involved in research for his later book *Habibi* (2011) during this journey, this is the only mention to position him in a professional capacity while in Morocco. The text constructs this interlude as distinct from the world of work and therefore one explicitly understood in terms of tourism (Urry and Larsen 2011: 6). Compared to the European parts in which the drawings occasionally incorporate architectural details (Thompson 2004: 16-17; 185; 188-189; 192; 195; 200) and landscapes (ibid: 125; 142; 166), but

predominantly the people Thompson spends his time with, this section shows great attention to sights of people at work and going about their daily business. Partly this might be explained by Thompson's effort to collect visual records as part of his research, partly the relative isolation he experiences as a lone traveller. The upshot is a series of observational drawings of the street life, markets (ibid: 42; 44; 95), men at work in the tanneries (ibid: 32; 112), women spinning and carrying bundles of straw (ibid: 62-63), fishing

boats (ibid: 68), carcasses hanging outside a butchers' (ibid: 82), market stall holders (ibid: 90- 92, 99) and birds-eye views of narrow alleys and backstreets (ibid: 31; 32; 47; 72; 111). Remembering that this repertoire of images is not just seen, but chosen, raises the question of the North Africa it constructs. It might be interpreted in terms of a pan-humanist ideal of shared origins; 'the fantasy that dramatizes the impossible desire for a pure, undifferentiated origin' (Bhabha 1994: 81; see also Adler 1989: 1374) and a sign of ambivalence towards urban and industrial modernity (Griffiths 1999: 296). Yet, it reproduces the contrast between 'the threshold-advancing presentness' (Featherstone 1995: 153, see also Griffiths 1999: 296) of Western modernity and the perceived timelessness of other cultures; a contrast integral to the narrative of rationality and progress that underwrote the colonial project.

If the attention to picturesque vistas and scenes of manual labour [see FIG 21] comprises fetishist overtones, it could indeed be argued that fetishism plays a significant part in the tourist experience on the whole, from the markers that verify the experience of any given location; snapshots, postcards and souvenirs, to the tourist's search for evidence of the authentic. For Thompson, while the palaces he dutifully visits correlate to MacCannell's (1976: 100) touristic front region, the central medina and its abundance of stalls selling products aimed at tourists fits McCannell's simulated back region of the tourist experience. 'I tried on a jallab and a Tuareg head wrap like a true tourist' (Thompson 2004: 33). So, too, does the trip to the mountains for a camel trek (ibid: 48-60). This trip takes a group of Western tourists by mini-bus to a desert location, where they partake in a simulation, or staged caravan, riding on camels and spending a night in tents, before being driven back to the city. A splash, or single panel, page (ibid: 59) shows the caravan winding its way along dunes, the tourists on camel back, led by their tour guide on foot.

Thompson's comments reveal his contradicting emotions. On the one hand he concedes that: 'I'm a doofy tourist acting out *ORIENTALIST* fantasies in a poverty-stricken land…' while simultaneously exclaiming: '…but even with our cameras and water bottles, it feels *AUTHENTIC*!' The duality is visually underlined by the two statements positions to the right and left of the page respectively. His self-consciousness of participating in a staged tourist experience is underscored by the addition of a thought-balloon emanating from the robed guide. The thought bubble, sarcastically and speculatively, conveys the guide's

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE

FIG 21 – Craig Thompson *Carnet de Voyage*, Top Shelf, Productions, p. 95.

private thought: 'Can't wait to get out of this uniform, take the ATV back to Ahmed's, and catch "Sex and the City".

To presume to represent the thoughts of a subject in this way initially seems like a blatant transgression of documentary realism, and certainly jars with the idea of subjects assuming some level of control and agency in terms of their representation. However, this 'comics specific' aside might be compared to a similarly speculative rumination on the mood, thoughts or motivations of a subject in a presenter's voice-over, or diary-cam segment. Although the thought-balloon is linked to the guide, the understanding is clear; this is a representation of Thompson's own speculation, signalling that he is conscious of the staged and illusory aspects of this tourist experience.

Later on Thompson depicts being invited to share meals in the homes of some of the market workers he has got acquainted with by drawing their portraits. In one instance he goes back with a small boy, Mahmoud, and joins his extended family around a table. In exchange for some portraits and a small amount of money, he is made welcome for an evening in the family home and 'a back-stage tourist experience' (MacCannell 1976: 101). The visit to Mahmoud's home might qualify as a stage five social setting according to MacCannell's scheme; a transactional and restricted access to a non-touristic back region. An informal guided tour, in which Thompson and some fellow travellers are promised access to less touristic parts of Fez, likewise falls within this category. Thompson is disappointed, however, '…his tour is unimpressive… dragging us down one-person alleys heaped with garbage…to chintzy tourist shops…encircling the same routes just outside the periphery of the old medina…' (ibid: 109-110). The realisation that the guide's lack of licence means the tour has been shaped by his overriding need to avoid patrolling police signals the uneven and often invisible conditions which constitute the economic flow of tourist localities. However, such considerations remain secondary to the performance of Thompson's conflicted tourist persona; ironic self-awareness competing with a frustrated desire for the authentic.

The pinnacle of MacCannell's scheme of authenticity describes an authentic experience of the non-touristic social space as that which motivates 'touristic consciousness' (1976: 102). Paradoxically, if Thompson's account is any indication, this may turn out to be so discrepant with expectation that it goes without recognition. Thompson depicts being invited to the home of Driss, one of the market sellers he has drawn and thus got acquainted with, to share some couscous and wine and watch a Bollywood movie. We see him lying down on the seating next to the low table in a small room, his host casting a sideways glance towards his incommunicative guest. The inset states; 'then I collapsed with illness_ _ It'd rained all day, I'd barely slept the night before and I was just generally worn raw with homesickness' (Thompson 2004: 102). The thought bubble emanating from Thompson: 'I'm not here to watch TV…' comes across whiney and defensive. This is not the Morocco which befits his desire for the authentic. However problematic Thompson finds being confronted with cultural difference, when it imperceptibly mutates into commonality (two single guys hanging out in a modest domestic space, eating, drinking and watching a movie) he rejects it outright. Both the television set and the cross-cultural flow represented by the Bollywood film are incongruous with the search for some idea of Morocco which is pure and essential, and which Thompson looks for and reproduces in the surfaces of tiles and fabrics and the very teeming throng of physical proximity which he struggles to contend with. Any sight or location is likely to have a given and prior 'culture of tales, symbols and fantasies' (Rojek 1997: 53), and Thompson seems to be searching for the confirmation of his own and prior cultural construction of Morocco. As '[t]he act of seeing becomes a verification of 'the congruence of the sight with the idea of the sight' (Frow 1991: 125) he shows little interest in engaging beyond specific and predetermined markers by which he recognises Moroccan authenticity.

Performing as the (not so) intrepid traveller

On the other hand, Thompson exhibits an acute awareness about his shortcomings as a 'good traveller'. '[T]ravel experience involves mobility through an internal landscape which is sculptured by personal experience and cultural influences as well as a journey through space' (Rojek 1997: 53) and the notion of a journey is itself

weighted with cultural meaning. In numerous folk tales a hero sets out on a journey eventually leading him towards maturity and fortune. The 18th century Grand Tour travellers subscribed to the notion of self-edification, its 'cognitive and perceptual education of the male English upper class' (Urry and Larsen, 2011: 6) also comprising self-improvement through overcoming challenges and adapting to unpredictable circumstances. This romantic notion of the journey, as a goal in its own right, retains its currency in contemporary valorisation of independent travel. Unmoored from the routines, limitations and security of everyday life, travel is seen to demand and foster certain competencies, although to vastly different degrees (Adler 1989: 1367-1368). Arguing that contemporary invocation of anti-tourist travel is a way of invigorating, sustaining, and reproducing the values of the global travel and tourist industry (Munt 1994: 104), Ian Munt has collated adjectives from travel brochures in order to indicate how a 'traveller' might be distinguished from a 'tourist'. From brochures that specifically address those who seek experiences away from locations offering a collective tourist experience, he lists: 'adventurous, broad-minded, discerning, energetic, experienced, keen, imaginative, independent, intrepid' (ibid: 116).

These words might also be used to describe the presenter personas of broadcast programmes which have largely come to replace the more straightforward consumer guide formats of previously popular shows on terrestrial channels in the UK, such as *Holiday* (BBC1, 1969-2007) and *Wish You Were Here?* (ITV, 1974 - 2003, 2008). The substantial catalogue of travel programmes featuring Michael Palin's criss-crossing of the globe is one example of this, as are Ewan McGregor and Charlie Boorman's *Long Way Round* (BBC 2, 2004) and *Long Way Down* (BBC 2, 2007), Bruce Parry's *Tribe* (BBC2, 2005) and *Equator* (BBC2, 2006), *Tropic of Capricorn* (BBC2, 2008) and *Tropic of Cancer* (BBC2, 2010), presented by Simon Reeve. What unites the newer travel programmes, despite their varying reliance on the prior fame factor of presenters such as Michael Palin and Ewan McGregor, or emphasis on popular anthropology, human geography and ecology or address to motorcycle or other motoring fans[iv], is the performance of the presenter. In the main these, usually male, presenters are depicted as determined, resilient, confident and extrovert. The qualities of these personas thus perpetuate the myth of the intrepid adventurer, for whom inner strength is showcased by self-reliance and an ability to adapt to

unfamiliar circumstances. In Georg Simmel's (1911) essay *The Adventurer*[v] the idea of adventure is explained in terms of accentuated interplay between 'chance and necessity' (Simmel 1971: 191) and the synthesis of activity and passivity. 'The adventurer relies to some extent on his own strength, but above all on his own luck; more properly, on a peculiarly undifferentiated unity of the two' (ibid: 194). It seems reasonable to suggest that contemporary romanticised notions of a traveller valorise the same qualities which Simmel [1911] (1971) assigns the adventurer; the very, hard-earned rewards of the lost art of travel mourned by Boorstin (1961).

The traveller, in other words, is not merely a consumer and purveyor of the sights and experiences of unfamiliar surroundings and chance encounters, he/she is also engaged in a social performance with certain expectations and demands. This is perhaps the clearest way in which Thompson's narrative deviates from some of the conventions discernible in contemporary television travel documentaries. The performances of celebrity presenters, such as Palin, McGregor and Boorman, and those presenters whose authority is underwritten by specialist knowledge, do intermittently include moments of contemplation, frustration and fragility. Such moments in part serve to balance celebrity, or specialist, status with ordinariness, as an important point of audience identification (Sugandi 2011: 15). They are key indicators of the discourse of self-transformation central to travel, but ultimately strengthen the presenters' display of resilience and competence.

However, at odds with masculine demonstrations of steadfast and unruffled capability common in travel documentaries, Thompson's self-presentation draws on a particular characterisation which, although not specific to comics, is familiar and well-established as a comics trope[vi]. He is far from an indomitable traveller. In fact, he complains often and gives recurring accounts of feeling ill, disenchanted and being homesick (Thompson 2004: 43; 46; 64; 72-73; 86-87). In keeping with the melancholic and self-deprecating masculinity of comics cultures (Worden 2006), where narratives of romantic failure and unfulfilled desire, feelings of inadequacy, despondency and shame[vii] are recurring motifs, Thompson presents himself as lacking. Comics' denigrated position and the stigma attached to them (Lopes 2006) has extended to their perceived (adult) readers and fan communities, often

conceptualised as puerile and obsessive, reluctant to let go of what has been perceived as childish pleasures. Self-referential and nostalgic tendencies in late twentieth- to early twenty-first century comics, often by writer/artists with a strong identification with the maligned historical contexts of comics, have developed distinct themes of 'masculine melancholy' and 'a romanticization of the straight, white male subject as the object of society's scorn' (Worden 2006: 894). This also applies to Thompson. At times he makes use of an anthropomorphic and blob-like character to elucidate on contradictory emotions and internal dialogues [see FIG 22]. This strategy bears a resemblance to Beauchard's use of visual metaphor, discussed in the previous chapter, in that it offers a way of giving actual visual shape to internal states. Here, this self-parodying character performs Thompson's knowingness; it voices his shortcomings as a traveller and, more generally, insinuates the potential self-indulgence and solipsism of comics autobiography (Thompson 2004: 87).

However, while Thompson's comics-specific devices and ability to draw on conceptualisations of self-portrayal enable him to undermine certain heroic myths and narratives of travel, his representation nevertheless reproduces a problematic and ingrained Western-centric perspective. The description of exoticism as 'a mode of aesthetic *perception* – one which renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them, and which effectively manufactures otherness' (Huggan 2001: 13, original emphasis) transfers with ease to *Carnet de Voyage*, despite Thompson's gestures towards a knowingness. Cultural others remain exotic objects for appropriation, and having collected sights and experiences which match a sense of the authentically 'other' as decorative and pre-industrial, the return to more familiar surroundings is portrayed as a moment of relief (Thompson 2004: 118).

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE

FIG 22 – Craig Thompson *Carnet de Voyage*, Top Shelf Productions, p. 87.

Tourist back regions in the company of Guy Delisle

French-Canadian comics creator Guy Delisle has produced a series of books which follow periods he has spent in various parts of the world, not as a tourist, but either on a work placement or accompanying his wife who works with the NGO Médecin sans Frontières. The titles of his books: *Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea* (2005), *Shenzen*: *a travelogue in China* (2006), *Burma Chronicles* (2009) and *Jerusalem: Chronicles from the Holy City* (2012) correlate uncannily to the convention of early travelogue films to offer location names as markers of 'the touristic frame'(Amad 2006: 100).

In this section I will draw my examples from the first two books. In each of them, Delisle spends a period of roughly three months working as a production supervisor for French animation companies in huge urban centres in 'economic special zones', in China and North Korea. This context might suggest that instead of a tourism studies frame, a consideration of the complexities of global economics and migrant populations would be more appropriate. However, as the analysis will show, this is not necessarily the case despite the account's reach beyond conventional tourist locations. Delisle does make clear the disparity between tourism's imagined geographies and the places where migrant workforces are likely to find themselves in. By way of recalling an earlier working trip to Réunion, a small French island east of Madagascar, he presents a juxtaposition of two small panels (Delisle 2006: 46). The first image shows a small house with a sloped roof nestled between two palm trees, outlined in a crisp black line with the expanse of ocean and bright sky in the background giving a sense of open space. By contrast, the next image is covered in smudgy grey tones, its lines forming a cluster of tall and irregular buildings in front of which a motorcyclist followed by a trail of exhaust fumes can be made out travelling along a dark road surface. 'You'd think tropical paradise / Wrong!' (ibid).

The 'radically asymmetrical relations of power' (Pratt 1997: 7) which marked the 'contact zones' (ibid) of travel writing at the height of European expansionism remain a constitutive ingredient in the global markets, and fields of production and

consumption which frame Delisle's travelogues. The outsourcing of specifically the more mechanistic parts of 2D animation production to countries with comparatively low labour costs has been a prevalent practice as the industry has grown to meet demand from an increasing number of cable and satellite channels (Tschang and Goldstein 2004). Corroborating Ted Tschang and Andrea Goldstein's account, Delisle (2005: 15) describes how key frames are produced in Paris, and the connecting 'tweens' or secondary frames which create smooth transitions between key frames are drawn in North Korea, for speedy and cost-effective conversion of comic book classics into television animation series (ibid: 16). European animators, like Delisle, are contracted to oversee production and quality control. As these are stories of working away, and of being dislocated away from family, friends and familiar surroundings, one might expect boredom, alienation and loneliness to feature. They do. Delisle observes the uniform anonymity of hotel rooms, finds himself disorientated in cityscapes where his capacity for decoding linguistic and other cultural signs is minimal, and his ability to communicate frustrated by a lack of language skills.

The lack of connection, both personal and cultural, that runs through these texts, is made more patent by Delisle's stylistic signature. His terse cartooning style that seemingly refuses to elaborate on facial expressions or characterise individuals beyond bare indications, and the prevalent use of a mid-range perspective adds to a sense of surveying from a distanced position. Characters, including his inter-alias, have faces constituted by a minimum of characterising lines. Using a subtly nuanced range of grey tones and soft pencil marks, his drawing on one hand offers relatively detailed observation of urban views, and architectural features (both exterior and interior) with particular attention to spatial relationships [see FIG 23]. On the other, this creation of perspective and spatial depth is continually intercut by figures set against blank background in panels devoid of excess detail to considerably flattening effect. Although the minimal detail in the depiction of people does not preclude acutely observed gestures and body language, the curt characterisations that constitute individuals, especially by comparison to a seemingly far more involved engagement with spaces and surfaces, here contributes to a feeling of interpersonal dissociation and isolation.

The persistence of the unfathomable 'Other'

I will begin by examining Delisle's portrayal of his time in Pyongyang in North Korea, a country which the dust jacket describes as 'one of the most secretive and mysterious nations in the world today'. On arrival he is installed at the Yangakkdo hotel, one of three which cater to foreigners in the city. It is a 50 storey colossus on a small island in the Taedong River in which all foreign visitors are housed on the same floor (Delisle 2005: 18). Delisle is allocated a guide and a translator, Mr. Sin. The circumstances prescribe that these officially appointed hosts are the only North Koreans foreign visitors are able to associate with, and Mr. Sin is his only conduit for communication and information. This heavily prescribed and circumscribed contact means that a certain distancing is evident in the observations of local life and culture. The cultural gulf between Delisle and his Korean companions comes across as insurmountable.

Page 74 shows 'Delisle' in the back of a mini-van, on the way back from a sightseeing tour to the Juche tower, a monument designed by Kim Yong-Il to celebrate his father's seventieth birthday [see FIG 24]. After the first frame which shows the small van travelling past a uniformed female figure directing traffic (although no other cars are visible), follows the twice-repeated image of Delisle seen in profile, as through the side window, arms folded across his chest . The accompanying text states: 'There's a question that has to be burning on the lips of all foreigners here…/ A question you refrain from speaking aloud…/ But one can't help asking yourself:' Below this initial row are two images. In the first Delisle is sat expressionless on the backseat, his arms still firmly crossed, looking ahead towards the silhouetted heads of his companions.

This panel is silent. The following frame inverts the view-point, so that we see his guide and his translator against the shaded outline of 'Delisle''s head, above which the inset asks: 'Do they really believe the bullshit that's being forced down their throats?' The two men are both equally impassive and expressionless, sat turned

slightly away from each other. Sin's hands are resting on his knees, the guide's on the seat beside him. In the bottom row of the page 'Delisle' is seen sideways from inside the car, he

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE

FIG 23 – Guy Delisle (2005), *Pyongyang: a journey in North Korea*, Drawn and Quarterly, pp. 32-33.

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE

FIG 24 - Guy Delisle (2005), *Pyongyang: a journey in North Korea*, Drawn and Quarterly, p. 74.

has turned away and staring out the window again and has sunk deeper on the seat. His arms are still crossed. The last panel is a long shot of the van as it turns onto a road with some other vehicles. On the following page, after a couple of panels showing a short exchange between 'Delisle' in his studio chair and the off panel voice of Sin which leaves 'Delisle' visibly frustrated, we are momentarily returned to Sin staring out the van window, followed by a drawing of a wind-up toy figure. It would seem that the positions are fixed and immutable, leaving no hope of a meaningful exchange.

During his last week in Pyongyang 'Delisle' manages to give his entourage the slip, and sneak out in the city by himself (ibid: 171-172). On his return to the hotel he is met by his visibly shaken translator, who appears somewhat comforted when he finds out there had been no camera involved in this illicit outing. But no further comment is offered by Delisle on this matter. It is difficult to tell exactly what this means. Is the fact that any signs of empathy are absent a self-knowing and wry jibe at his own, ultimately carefree and removed, position? In the central panel on this page the translator is wiping an arm across his forehead, two large sweat-drops splashing from his head and shaky lines around his legs to indicate their trembling. Meanwhile, Delisle depicts himself sunken in a relaxed position on a sofa with one leg crossed nonchalantly across his other knee, looking up at the Korean in the manner of a nonplussed, intransigent teenager. This visualisation reticently implies a level of self-awareness which never is fully expressed, yet disturbs a sense of clear-cut meaning. However, having from the outset decided that George Orwell's *1984* is the 'book that comes to mind for a stay in North Korea" (Delisle 2005: 40) it is hardly surprising that 'North Korea is represented by Delisle as the physical embodiment of Orwell's totalitarian state' (Bader 2006: 95).

Shenzen: A Travelogue from China (2006) is similarly ambiguous in its narration of cross-cultural encounters. The frustrations of the language barrier is repeatedly made clear as when 'Delisle' instructs a studio animator through a translator, resulting in a lively and prolonged exchange between the two which he (nor a reader without ability to read Chinese script) remains excluded from (Delisle 2006: 25), and has to rely on pictures on a menu (ibid: 11) or sign language (ibid: 31-32) to order food in

restaurants. His sense of isolation, 'there are days when I don't say a single word' (ibid: 82) and captivity is illustrated by a comparison to the Russian space dog Laïka (ibid: 35); a horizontal panel showing a small face peering out from a tiny space shuttle against the expanse of a starry sky followed by an identical one in which we see 'Delisle' stretched out on his back with his head on a pillow, seemingly floating, against a dark ground. While the feeling of un-anchored freefall connects the two images, the second panel also intimates confinement by its narrow proportions and the absence of a sense of depth which is evident in the first. This might be construed as a visual metaphor of displacement and estrangement, but the text on the page is far more specific. 'Delisle' muses about hostages, and the page ends on a rhetorical question: 'is it being in China that's got me thinking about freedom?'

This conflation between political rhetoric and the articulation of cultural difference recurs at various points in Delisle's comic. A trip to Shenzen's 'only tourist attraction' (ibid: 61), offers another example. 'Windows of the World' is a theme park consisting of a collection of miniature versions of monuments and sights as representations of various countries around the globe: the Eiffel tower, the leaning tower of Pisa, the Egyptian pyramids, the Grand Canyon and Manhattan. This visit, which could easily be compared to a trip to a number of equivalent sites such as Legoland or the Disney World Showcase, is instead presented as a sorry placebo for the real travel which is unattainable for the local residents and depicted in terms of its inaccuracy (the Eiffel tower is disproportionally tall compared to every other exhibit) and shabby (he spots a rat peering out from the Lincoln Memorial building). The visit prompts 'Delisle' to reflect on his relative freedom of movement compared to that of his Chinese translator: 'When I think that all I've got to do is buy a ticket… I can go where I like…/ We hardly ever stop to notice how amazingly free we really are' (ibid: 63).

There is another, similarly sketchy, and politically inflected commentary on page thirty-eight, where Delisle draw a visual comparison between the seven stages between paradise and inferno according to Dante, and a similar hierarchy which compares paradise and the USA and hell with the Chinese countryside. The stages in between, in descending order are described as Hong Kong, the special economic

zone (Shenzen) and the big cities (Canton, Beijing and Shanghai). This, however, is contextualised somewhat by the following two panels which address the barriers which police traffic between these different zones, a bureaucracy of permits and visas as well as electric fences and watchtowers. What Delisle fails to acknowledge at any point in his musings on mobility is not only that 'ninety-five per cent of Shenzen' population was born elsewhere' (Bach 2011: 414), but that:

> For the inhabitants of the first world – the increasingly cosmopolitan, extraterritorial world of global businessmen, global culture managers or global academics, state borders are levelled down, as they are dismantled for the world's commodities, capital and finances. For the inhabitant of the second world, the walls built of immigration controls, of residence laws and of "clean streets" and "zero tolerance" policies, grow taller; the moats separating them from the sites of their desire and of dreamed-of-redemption grow deeper, while all bridges, at the first attempt to cross them, prove to be drawbridges.
>
> (Bauman 1998: 89)

The comic's construction of a 'free West' as opposed to an oppressed and restrictive China fails to acknowledge the economic factors which curtail movement regardless of state ideology. Underscored by his outsider position, sense of isolation and limited interactions, the political critique it ostensibly offers instead works to invite a construction of irreconcilable cultural difference.

Relative comparisons and shifting frames

Delisle's personal experience, as depicted in the comic, does not quite match the hierarchical ordering of China's different zones he offers. In Shenzen he finds few redeeming features, whereas he reports with more enthusiasm from the occasional weekend trips he takes to Canton and Hong Kong. Canton is obliquely described as 'the kind of city you see in documentaries' over a panel which depicts a compressed

urban scene; traffic flowing beneath and across two flyovers supported by sturdy concrete structures against multi-storey buildings and only the tiniest glimpse of sky (ibid: 40) This city seems to offer a wider variety of cultural highlights such as markets, pagodas and museums, and above all the joys of familiar tasting coffee (ibid: 41). Hong Kong on the other hand 'is something like a tropical New York. The pace here reminds me of Western cities: there are cafés, bookshops, movie theatres, all kinds of boutiques, a botanical garden…' (ibid: 103). Here the accompanying image is a low viewpoint of a line of tall imposing buildings receding diagonally across the panel and creating a geometrical, yet varied skyline. Claustrophobic chaos is seemingly exchanged for a reassuring sense of order.

The part of the comic which tells of Delisle's trip to Hong Kong is opened by a full page homage to Hergé's *Tintin and the blue lotus* (1936) in which a re-drawn panel depicts the eponymous hero and his dog Milou striding down a street under a large flowing banner with Chinese script (Delisle 2006: 101) [see FIG 25]. The other characters in the image are faithful renditions of Hergé's original creations; a barefooted man pulling a rickshaw in which a seated man wearing the traditional wide-sleeved long shirt can be glimpsed, a white-bearded man with a skull-cap and walking stick, a figure carrying large barrels hanging from a rod over his shoulder. But in Delisle's version of this page, replacing Tintin's face is his own. Considering well-versed critiques of the colonial values and problematic representations of cultural others in Hergé's Tintin[viii] (Langford, 2008: 82; Scorer, 2008: 140) this image is typical of the potential for multiple meanings which makes it difficult to judge the extent of Delisle's self-awareness and use of irony. Is this an acknowledgement that his text bears implications of a cultural heritage of colonial discourse and essentialist exoticism? Or is it a nostalgic reference and identification with a youthful spirit of adventure which disavows such implications?

It seems that it is specifically in Hong Kong that Delisle experiences travelling in a foreign country as pleasurable; this interlude resonates with a wholly different register than the isolation and routine of his working life in Shenzen. Partly this can of course be attributed to the fact that he is both temporally and spatially removed

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE

FIG 25 - Guy Delisle, *Shenzen: a travelogue in China* (2006), Jonathan Cape, p. 101.

from the context of work. But not only that; here it seems, there is enough familiarity to render that which is different stimulating and interesting, rather than alienating and overwhelming. 'The kids are hip (they wear their jeans like Lucky Luke), I can read all the ads on the walls…' (ibid: 102) which makes the fact that 'in the boutiques, even the XL shirts are too tight' (ibid: 103) a source of amusement. The sense of comfort at this transnational culture is underlined when 'in a bookshop ['Delisle' finds] a Sherlock Holmes adventure set in a kind of Sino-London' (ibid).

By contrast, in Shenzen Delisle represents even that which might be construed in terms of commonality as a sign of division. At the sight of a Chevignon store (a French high street fashion company with branches worldwide) in central Shenzen, he comments: 'Shopping is the main pastime here. In fact, it is the only pastime' (ibid: 17). The following image shows three sales ladies standing behind glass vitrines filled with durable goods, in an otherwise un-peopled showroom bedecked with global brand names on a multitude of stickers and placards suspended from the ceiling. While in Hong Kong transnational popular culture references serve as positive markers, but when invited to Chinese homes in Shenzen 'Delisle' seems dispirited by his hosts' television sets, whether they show Tai Chi Chuan videos (ibid: 92) or highlights from Magic Johnson's career (ibid: 123), and finds the profusion of Western products in the supermarkets disappointing (ibid: 115). As in Thompson's representation of Morocco discussed earlier, when markers of authenticity and cultural difference fail to appear in accordance with expectation, communication and engagement become foreclosed.

Delisle's droll observations of boredom and alienation in highly industrialised contexts, which exceed the imagined and touristic geographies, are tales which might find counterparts in the experiences of countless people who travel to unfamiliar places for purposes of work. Yet the promise of his comics is exactly about access to hidden and unchartered domains; the global back regions normally denied to the tourist gaze, and throughout they reproduce a discourse of exoticism and cultural difference. Ultimately Delisle's travelogues appear to say: see these crazy places and strange people, no wonder I am always relieved to go back home where life is normal. By extension this offers his readers similar reassurance about their cultural

privileges and, by implication, superiority. For Delisle, as for Thompson, there is a certainty attached to the notion of the journey; it has a finite duration and set endpoint. Furthermore, their performance of encounters with novelty and strangeness sets up 'home' as the unspecified and unquestioned norm, to which the journey stages an inevitable return. While neither presents a particularly heroic travelling persona, their cultural identities are seemingly reinforced and consolidated, rather than destabilised, by their experiences in foreign lands. Ultimately, these travelogues reproduce the problematic cultural narrative which informed early moving image travelogues, despite a century setting them apart.

'Other' border crossings

Travel in many instances is not about privileged choices or voluntary departures but rather constitutes 'survival through movement' (Hutnyk and Kaur 1999: 1) and travel in the form of migration includes dislocations and relocations which extend far beyond moments and acts of physical movement. If the conventional understanding of travel documentary presumes a return home in order to tell a story, notions of home and cultural identity are subject to more subtle and insistent scrutiny in Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis: the story of a childhood and the story of a return*. Initially published in two parts, of two volumes each, by L'Association (2000, 2001 and 2002, 2003 respectively), the collected edition translated into English was first published by Jonathan Cape (2006) and later by Vintage (2008). In this chapter Satrapi's text will be used to demonstrate that documentary travel narratives can contribute to, and voice, perspectives of travel beyond binary discourses of here/ there, home/ away, and centre/ margins. The analysis will thus focus on how Satrapi's work interrupts the twin assumptions, or culturally embedded narratives, of a stable cultural identity, and the binary opposition of home and away.

Distinctly different in style from Delisle's soft tonal renderings and Thompson's fluent line-work, Satrapi demonstrates a pared down and highly stylised aesthetic which frequently uses black and white shapes by way of figuration, accentuating contrast and negative space[ix]. In part, this might be seen as an indication that rather

than being concerned with observation and its translation Satrapi is drawing on memory for her reconstruction and in order to visually communicate. At the same time, as her (iconic) visual signs move further away from realist detail and verisimilitude, their potency to take on symbolic meaning appears to become stronger. McCloud has explained this characteristic of cartooning as 'amplification through simplification'(1993: 30) and argues that a stripped down aesthetic can perform an intensifying function, but also aids slippage between the representation of appearances and more conceptual meanings (ibid: 41). The departure from observational depiction of exterior and surface attributes in this case also contributes to a distinct remove from tourist frameworks of representation.

Cultural constructions and reconstructions

Persepolis (The story of a childhood and the story of a return) (2008) describes Satrapi's childhood in Tehran against the backdrop of the revolution which overthrew the Shah in 1979 and led to the founding of the world's first Islamic state, as well as the ravages of the subsequent war between Iran and Iraq. In line with the comic's own device I here use the name Marji for Satrapi's depicted self, while referring to the author/ artist as Satrapi throughout. Marji is the only daughter of a politically engaged middle class couple. She is an ambitious, curious and outspoken child with a highly developed social conscience and who through voracious reading and parental guidance is familiar with topics ranging from the Palestinian struggle to Che Guevara and Karl Marx (Satrapi 2008: 12).

Satrapi depicts an engagement and affinity with Anglo-American youth culture that runs through Marji's upbringing, from visiting a burger bar with some older school friends to the poster of Kim Wilde and Iron Maiden her parents smuggle back for her from a trip to Turkey (ibid: 126-131), and buying bootleg tapes on the black market (ibid: 132). Satrapi's text thus draws attention to the transnational flow of culture and commodities and the hybrid nature of global/local youth cultures (Massey 1998: 123, cited by Miller 2011: 45), while also highlighting ways in which the meanings and uses of the signs and codes embodied in cultural artefacts alter according to context.

Nima Naghibi and Andrew O'Malley (2005: 238) have acknowledged that Marji's use of Western popular culture lends itself to be interpreted as 'a profound statement of resistance and individualism in the menacing face of a totalitarian, fundamentalist Islamic theocracy'. Yet, as they observe, such a reading is undercut by the compositional juxtaposition in which (poor) young soldiers meet their deaths as martyrs at the frontline while Marji and her middle-class school friends dance to punk music at a house party (Satrapi 2008: 102). Thus 'Persepolis brings East and West together, often in ways that underscore the tensions and contradictions such unions inevitably entail' (Naghibi and O'Malley 2005: 240). These are important considerations in relation to the chapter's earlier analyses, as critics (Naghibi and O'Malley 2005; Basu 2007; Gilmore 2011: 162) appear to agree that Satrapi's work disturbs the habitually oppositional positioning of cultural paradigms in significant ways.

However, I would suggest that *Persepolis'* narrative disrupts the very idea of a unified or indeed stable or given, cultural identity. This is forcefully and graphically indicated early on in the book. The panel (Satrapi 2008: 6) shows Marji looking at the reader head-on, with a serious and intense stare [see FIG 26]. The background is divided behind her; on the left we see a white ruler, hammer and various cogs and sprockets against a black background. This half of Marji herself is wearing a long-sleeved white dress or t-shirt, and her hair is outlined against the background. The right half of the image shows a hijab-wearing Marji against a white background decoratively covered by ornate swirls and patterns. But this is not a Western and Eastern half of Marji, but rather her secular Iranian identification contrasted against her religious identification (Davis 2005: 272) Although the image visually renders a starkly black-and-white opposition and division between two halves, it illustrates that cultural heritage, rather than a unified entity, may contain complex internal elements which require negotiation on the part of the individual.

The particular histories which inform national identity are also depicted [see FIG 27], as Marji's father explains to her about '2500 years of tyranny and submission' (Satrapi 2008: 44). Here a large square panel contains four horizontal layers which chronologically orders the rule of the Persian emperors (kneeling subjects lying prostrate before the horse-borne ruler brandishing a large sword), below which a

horde of Arab invaders on horse-back stretch from left to right, followed by an army
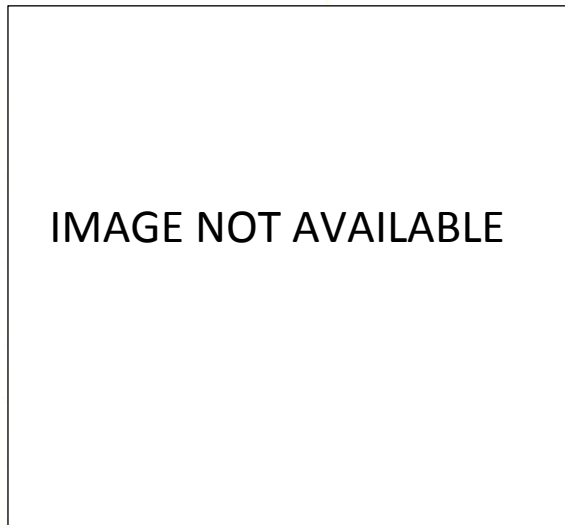of

FIG 26 – Marjane Satrapi (2008), *Persepolis*: *the story of a childhood and the story of a return*, Vintage, p. 6: 1.
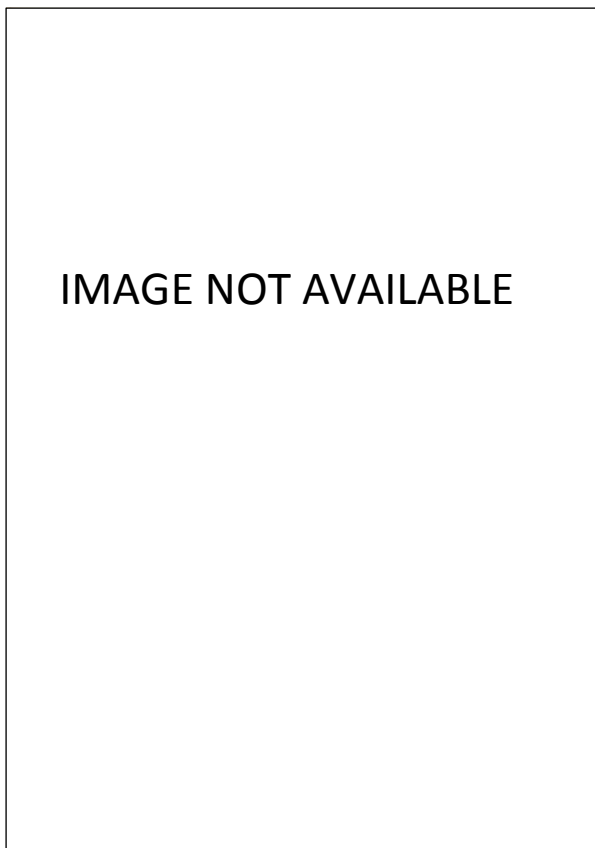
FIG 27 – Marjane Satrapi (2008), *Persepolis*: *the story of a childhood and the story of a return*, Vintage, p. 44.

Mongolian invaders advancing in the opposite direction. Lastly, we are shown three separate groups of modern imperialist aggressors, spearheaded by what looks like a bearded bureaucrat carrying a Union Jack flag and a rolled-up document which could either be a map or treaty, and a representation of Uncle Sam. Both of these images serve as a reminder that the notion of national and cultural identity as cohesive, singular and continuous is an overstatement and ideological misrepresentation and that it belies centuries, and indeed millennia, of formative cross-cultural encounters and large-scale movements of populations. So from the beginning, *Persepolis*, in its attempt to describe the political upheaval in 1980s Iran, complicates the idea of a stable or pure cultural identity.

However, the impact of the revolution and its deliberate reconstruction of Iran from a secular to an Islamic nation state, as depicted in Satrapi's comic, also demonstrates the contingencies and constructed nature of cultural identity. In the very last chapter of the story Marji and her husband are working on their combined graduation project at the school of art and design in Tehran. Their brief is to design a theme park based on Iranian legends and mythological heroes. After positive reception at the end of year exhibition, and being awarded top marks for their joint dissertation, Marji meets with the mayor's deputy to pitch their ideas (ibid: 333). But it transpires that their painstakingly researched and designed efforts are impossible to realise, as a large portion of the characters they have included are female and depicted without a veil. As the official makes clear to Marji, to display these female figures unveiled is not acceptable – and were they re-drawn in attire meeting the standards of the government they would be unrecognisable as the characters they are meant to portray. Consequently the project is dead in the water. As Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) have made clear, traditions are not only weighted with ideological implications. As opposed to customs, which are pragmatic arrangements which are malleable according to circumstance, traditions are inventions which deny their particular historical origins in order to appear as essential and mythical cultural markers. In this instance, one set of traditions and references for cultural identity is rendered invisible; 'un-invented' so to speak, by its incompatibility with the dominant regime's preferred codes of representation.

Adapt to fit

In addition to the complex contingencies, multiplicity and internal contradictions of cultural identity brought into acute focus by the Iranian revolution, *Persepolis* addresses the impact of dislocation and attendant emergence of a hybrid, or 'borderlands' (Anzaldúa [1987] 2007) subjectivity. Marji's story traces the increasingly repressive circumstances as the long hoped for revolution gives way to executions, political persecution and heavy bombing of Tehran by the Iraqi army. At fourteen years old, her parents fear that her rebellious and anti-authoritarian attitude will make her life in Tehran too dangerous and send her to live in Austria. However, long before the narrative reaches the point of Marji's departure from home, the potential implications of emigration are raised, when Marji and her parents accompany members of their extended family to the airport as they leave to start anew in Los Angeles. During the drive back the mother tentatively suggests: 'maybe we should emigrate too…' to which the father's reply is: 'So that I can become a taxi driver and you a cleaning lady?' (Satrapi 2008: 64). The loss of social status is a commonplace experience for a large portion of migrants with qualifications and licenses that instantly become void when entering a different country's job market, and as newly arrived immigrants they occupy the bottom layers of the social hierarchy. This is the reality faced by the family friends Marji is eventually sent to stay with, in Austria. In Iran the husband had been a CEO, but in Austria he loses the family's savings on bad investments, and as a result is 'nothing' (ibid: 159). The wife, previously a secretary, retrains as a hairdresser and becomes the family's sole provider. The strains of a marriage adversely affected by this reconfiguration of roles, combined with financial pressures and a lack of living space, lead to Marji rapidly being dispatched to central Vienna, and a boarding house run by Catholic nuns.

For Marji, the arrival in Europe and the attendant feelings of displacement, isolation and lack of support, are compounded by her sudden realisation that she is now subject to xenophobia and prejudice, even from those who seemingly accept her. An acquaintance at school finds her experience of living through war compelling, but it does not diminish his posture of cultural superiority. Satrapi shows this boy

patronisingly laying his hands on Marji's shoulders when explaining about the numerous holidays in the academic calendar: 'You'll get used to it. Thanks to the left, there are holidays in Europe. We are not forced to work all the time' while her thought-bubble asks: 'And your point…?' (ibid: 175). His naïve explication continues in the next panel: 'If, at the beginning of the century, the anarchists had triumphed, we wouldn't work at all. Man isn't made for work.' As he carries on in the following panel: 'Come on, relax, take advantage! Cultivate yourself! You don't even know Bakunin!' Marji faces him with a broad smile on her upturned face, whilst silently thinking 'Asshole…' Although she recognises his equation of cultural difference with lack of knowledge and sees through the supercilious politics, the next panel portrays her realisation of the position she finds herself in and its implications. Standing among the group of friends discussing their plans for the upcoming holiday, her wide-eyed forward stare breaks the fourth wall to directly address the reader and the text in the inset below concedes that: 'This cretin Momo wasn't altogether wrong. I needed to fit in, and for that I needed to educate myself' (ibid: 175). Satrapi's anecdote illustrates how the onus on exiled people is to 'be accepted, rather than to accept' (Trinh 2011: 30). Hence, the imperative to assimilate overrides her usual directness and ability to see through Momo's assumption of cultural superiority, ill masked by his naïve posture of radical politics.

Satrapi depicts a series of encounters; confrontations, misunderstandings and embarrassments, through which Marji gradually absorbs cultural codes and gains in confidence. However, this transformation carries a price. Marji feels that she is becoming more and more distanced from her past, 'by 'playing a game by somebody else's rules' (ibid: 195). This is illustrated by the figure of Marji taking an extended and stretched step away from the black silhouette of her parents across a plain background [see FIG 2]. The two panels below show Marji with a telephone against her ear to the left, and her parents on the other end of the line to the right, a thick black line dividing them and the cursory conversation outlined above them similarly separated and disjointed. She finds the television news about Iran unbearable (ibid: 196) and even describes herself as French when meeting a boy at a party (ibid: 197) due to the grim connotations her nationality has accrued in the European media. But when the school gossip uncovers her dis-ingenuity, she overhears other students accuse her of lying in order to make herself seem more interesting.

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE

FIG 28 - Marjane Satrapi(2008), *Persepolis*: *the story of a childhood and the story of a return*, Vintage, p. 195.

This causes Marji to lose her temper and she is shown to angrily exclaim: 'I am Iranian and proud of it!' (ibid: 199). In Satrapi's retrospective telling, this interlude, despite her initial sense of mortification, marks a momentarily restored and renewed sense of self.

Ultimately, however, Satrapi's depiction shows Marji becoming gradually more lost as she lives through a couple of failed romances and dabbles with recreational drug use. As a result of being falsely accused of stealing by her landlady, she is evicted and finds herself sleeping rough in a wintry Vienna. 'Her inability to be integrated into Austrian society is figured by the trajectory of the bus she rides to keep warm: she has become nothing but an abject body in permanent motion' (Miller 2011: 46).

The travel narrative in *Persepolis: The story of a childhood and the story of a return* thus stands in stark contrast to the accumulation of cultural capital and reassurances of a stable identity outlined earlier in this chapter. Rather than describing an encounter with cultural difference that is circumscribed in ways that might be limiting, yet works to reinstate and affirm cultural identity and belonging, Satrapi's depiction of mobility is marked by the express demands to adapt and integrate in order to manage. The qualities necessary for survival might be the same as those associated with romantic notions of the traveller; resilience, confidence, determination and interpersonal skills. But the model of the heroic traveller does not provide provide a supporting framework or reference points to allow Marji to recognise her strengths as she faces adversity. Moreover, the imperative to assimilate constitutes a decisive difference. This is travel that gives rise to the very opposite of reassurances of stability and fixed or coherent identification points. In addition, although this particular narrative does include a return home, this far from presents narrative resolution.

Beyond returning

On arriving back in Tehran Marji finds that not only has she herself changed, but so has the city she left some years earlier. But Satrapi also describes the feelings of shame she experiences, at having failed to reward the sacrifices of her parents by making a success of her time in Austria. After hearing about the war and the failed challenges to the regime, Marji is shown lying on her narrow bed glumly staring ahead; 'Next to my father's distressing report, my Viennese ventures seemed like little anecdotes of no importance./ So I decided that I would never tell them anything about my Austrian life. They had suffered enough as it was' (Satrapi 2008: 259). She recognises the elaborate hairstyles her Iranian girlfriends obsessively maintain beneath their veils, and the Western make-up they model in private spaces, as small acts of resistance. But she struggles to find common ground with them, and withdraws into a state of depression. The second part of *Persepolis* thus details the, often unexpected, challenges involved in the return home after an extended absence involving concerted efforts to adapt to a different cultural context. Rather than reassuring normality, for Marji, the return entails a continued sense of dislocation.

On her grandmother's suggestion that she look up those people she once had a meaningful relationship with, Marji seeks out Kia, a boy she used to play with in the street outside her childhood home. As with Marji herself, his experiences have forced him to adapt to unforeseen circumstances. After an unsuccessful attempt to avoid military service by fleeing the country illegally, he was sent to the front and sustained serious injuries. When Marji and Kia are reunited she learns that he now is wheelchair-bound, his left arm is amputated above the elbow, and he is hoping to leave for America where he might be fitted with a suitable prosthesis. In Satrapi's representation of this encounter, a significant amount of space is allowed for a joke shared between the re-united childhood friends. This joke, as told by Kia in Satrapi's re-narration, forms the centrepiece of this chapter and works to link his physical disability with her emotional state. It also foreshadows later events which describe both Marji's falling apart and eventual self-acceptance.

The joke is about a soldier, who after being blown up by a grenade and severely dismembered is stitched back in a long series of operations. After he has recovered his family arranges for him to be married to a suitable young girl. On the wedding

night she discovers, to her horror, that his genitalia have been attached to his thigh instead of between his legs. Despite his protestations that everything is still fully functional, if slightly displaced, she runs disgusted from the room. Annoyed at this, the man responds by pointing to his armpit, exclaiming: 'Kiss my ass!!' (Satrapi 2008: 268). Kia and Marji's shared mirth at this darkly humorous joke speaks to the pain that can accompany irreversible change and the imperative to adapt to and accept such change in order to survive. And it addresses the added burden, when difference is met by intolerance and judgement. While Kia's challenges are outwardly tangible and physical at first glance, Marji's own apprehension ahead of, and awkwardness during her visit show that they also carry a social and emotional dimension. In terms of Marji's own situation the joke functions on a metaphorical level. She has been altered by her displacement and experiences in Europe. Returning to Iran has not remedied her sense of alienation and loneliness, instead she finds herself just as unable to share her thoughts, feelings and perspective. This becomes explicit during a conversation, as her admission in that she has had sexual experiences invokes a swift and unmistakable denounciation of her morals by her outwardly modern friends (ibid: 272). After being prescribed medication Marji feels even further removed from everything around her. Her alienation and incapacitated state is visualised as a stark white shape against black ground that recalls the outline of a fallen body [see FIG 29]. 'I was a Westerner in Iran, an Iranian in the West. I had no identity. I didn't even know anymore why I was living' (ibid: 274).

However, after a failed suicide attempt Marji concentrates her efforts on overcoming her sense of estrangement and reinvents herself as a sophisticated Tehranian woman. With a determination that mirrors her resolve to fit in socially in Austria, she takes up aerobics and a new social life of shopping and clandestine parties with other young, middleclass urbanites. At one such party she meets Reza, an ex-soldier with whom she attends art school and, a couple of years later, she marries. But once their education comes to an end, the marriage unravels and the comic concludes with Marji deciding to leave Iran, for France this time. At the point of resolution this narrative suggests an acceptance that 'unlearning strangeness as a way of confinement becomes a way of assuming anew the predicament of deterritorialization; it is both I and It that travel; the home is here, there, wherever one is led to in one's movement' (Trinh 2011: 30). In so doing, and while still being

a comic that adopts a documentary mode of address, it offers an alternative model to the other examples in this chapter.
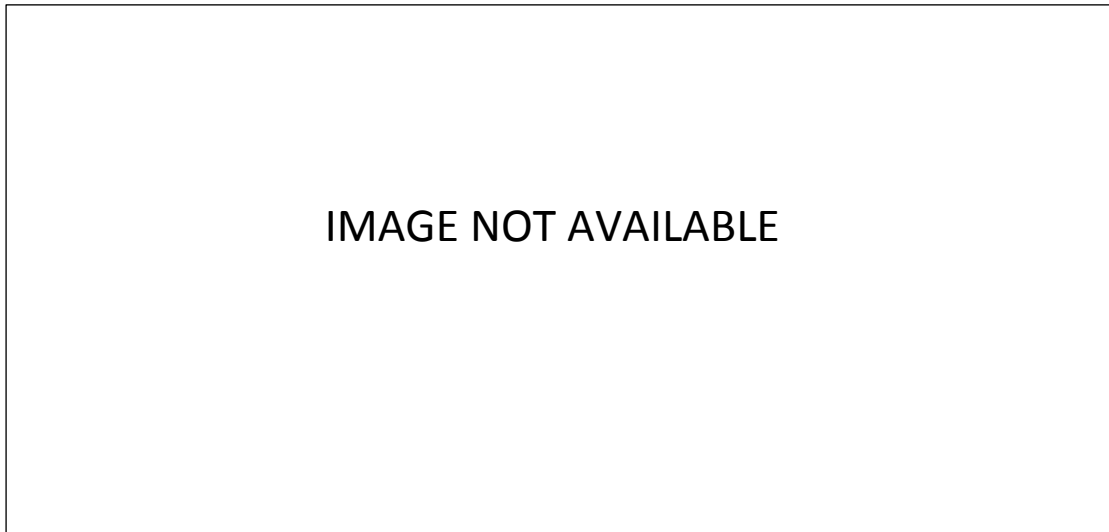

FIG 29 - Marjane Satrapi(2008), *Persepolis*: *the story of a journey and the story of a return*, Vintage, p. 274: 1-2.

Yet it, like them, is unquestionably a representation of travel and a journey narrative as much as it simultaneously might be read and framed as other things; autobiography, postcolonial and/or trauma narrative.

Conclusion

The assertion that '[t]he promise of instructional entertainment still holds sway in the domain of the travelogue' (Ruoff 2006: 4) is not limited to this particular sub-genre. It equally works to describe documentary more broadly.

Moreover, what documentary offers to its audiences by virtual and vicarious means, the ability and pleasure of seeing, experiencing and gaining knowledge about the world, speaks to a particular idea of travel. What attention to the travelogue particularly reveals, however, is how culturally embedded narratives shape and inform the production of the real world, in representations but ostensibly also in the actual and interpersonal and performative encounters subject to representation.

Thompson's *Carnet de Voyage* (2004) can be situated in the tradition of a particular trope within the Western imagination; an interior journey of self-discovery and self-improvement enabled by detachment from familiar surroundings. The privileged traveller whose encounters, acquisition and consumption of 'other' places and people, ultimately serves to affirm a dichotomy between home and away and through it the notion of a stable and coherent cultural identity. Delisle's travelogues, on the other hand, extend a 'spectatorial' (Urry 2002: 44) tourist gaze and vicarious experience of places and settings normally beyond reach. Both Thompson and Delisle's comics perform what Homi Bhabha has recognised as the paradox of fixity and stereotype, one which 'vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated' (1994: 66). This process is not without ambiguity, as both creators make ironic and self-reflexive acknowledgements of the exoticising perspective exemplified by certain elements within their representations. Nevertheless, they readily reproduce tropes of difference which serve to maintain the invisible normativity of their own particular cultural perspective and offer vicarious experiences of exotic sights and curiosities. In this

sense they both conform to familiar patterns and perspectives discernible in many broadcast travelogues.

However, Satrapi's work offers an alternative to such a model of the journey narrative. *Persepolis'* representation of trans-cultural movement and encounter, with reverberating consequences undermining fixed notions of identity and home, thus brings into sharp focus the particular and partial perspectives, narratives and understandings of travel associated with travel documentary. Marji's story presents both cultural identity and subjectivity in terms of constructive process. Although appealing to the 'liberal humanist model [that] encourages a recognition that can be formulated as: "they are like us" rather than "we are like them", as Gayatri Spivak has famously argued' (Naghibi and O'Malley 2005: 226) Satrapi's position is 'neither purely assimilationist nor oppositional' (Davis 2005: 265-266, see also Naghibi and O'Malley 2005: 224). But rather, her narrative voices what Gloria Anzaldúa (2007: 101) has described this in terms of a 'mestiza consciousness' which 'operates in a pluralistic mode'. In so doing it offers a position from which it is possible to transcend dualistic thinking (ibid: 102).

On the one hand, the analyses of texts in this chapter suggest that documentary comics do not necessarily, or at least in any inherent or intrinsic way, challenge extant cultural models or narratives. Despite the indexing of subjectivity that challenges certain conventions as regards pictorial representation of reality, they are as likely to reproduce, as to question or re-work embedded conventions, assumptions and subject positions, as representational systems in other forms of documentary. It would of course be wilfully naïve to expect anything else. And yet the strength of the link between these journey-based comics and documentary's origins in travelogue supports the overarching claim of this thesis, that documentary comics significantly share issues of representation: who speaks for and about whom and to what effects, with their counterparts in other forms. Their narration and visual representation of the world produce and circulate kinds of knowing and understandings of the world. Beyond formal considerations and the capacity to tell and show differently, what these examples open up anew, are questions regarding the representation of cultural difference as asserted through travel documentary.

It would seem, as the comics examples here have indicated, that the interstices of travel and documentary contain both ingrained legacies of Euro-centric discourses of discovery and appropriation, and instances that expressly contest such perspectives. Diasporic subjectivity and self-representation maintain a marginal position in broadcasting schedules, an underrepresentation in stark contrast to the pervasiveness and scale of contemporary mobility, displacement and migration. Nevertheless, 'diasporic subjectivity' is a steadily growing area in documentary filmmaking (Smaill 2006; Lebow 2012: 219-232).

The question arising from this is one of categorisation. It could be argued that journey narratives drawing on a particular historical legacy should be seen as distinct, and dealt with separately from those arising from another in order to maintain meaningful categories. However, I propose that a separation into on the one hand travel documentary, and on the other diasporic subjectivity, reproduces a hierarchy of dominant and marginal discourses, and that the disconnection between the two functions to obscure relations and potential comparisons. Instead, as demonstrated in this chapter, bringing together distinct, yet connected, discourses works to train critical focus on how we understand the concept of travel as a lived, performed and represented category and challenges the apparent transparency of the journey narrative as concept and classification.

The heterogeneity and tensions at the heart of this chapter, then, highlight the influence of categorisation as much as that of cultural narrative. That texts adopting a documentary mode of address are infused with larger societal and cultural narratives should not come as a surprise, yet is made particularly evident through the realignment of texts that, however different, all clearly work as examples of the journey narrative. This is an argument that correlates with the underlying theoretical viewpoint of the thesis as a whole. As discursive formations, genres and other historical categories involve elements and delineations, simultaneously arbitrary and motivated. Such demarcations work to impose certain orders on how we configure and connect, and ultimately make sense of the world (Rancière 2004: 39). The value in tracing and disturbing such orders is to make slightly different sets of relationships more readily visible.

[i]Delisle's publications include two further travelogue comics, *Burma Chronicles* (2009) and *Jerusalem*: *Chronicles from the Holy City* (2012) in which the overseas stays are occasioned by his partner's work for Médecin Sans Frontières.

[ii]Thompson's earlier *Blankets* (2003) had been well received by critics (www.**time**.com/**time**/arts/article/0,8599,464146,00.html*)* and went on to be awarded with seven industry awards in 2004 (http://www.hahnlibrary.net/comics/awards/eisner04.php; http://www.spxpo.com/2004-ignatz-award-recipients; http://www.harveyawards.org/previous-awards-nominees/2004-harvey-awards/) [accessed 10/06/2013]

[iii] Lewis Trondheim is one of the founding members of L'Association, the French comics publishing house.

[iv] *India on Four Wheels* (BBC2, 2011) and *China on Four Wheels* (BBC2, 2012) with presenters Justin Rowlatt and Anita Rani facilitate two contrasting perspectives on the growing and increasingly motorised economies of India and China. The programmes are constructed according to blatantly gendered identifications. Rani invariably drives a luxury car and tours the country on the most newly built highways, using palaces and top end hotels for her pit stops. Meanwhile, driving a low budget and commonplace vehicle, Rowlatt takes 'the road less travelled' to explore remote villages and get stuck on dirt tracks. Here, a dichotomy between authentic and modernised functions as a structuring principle and central theme.

[v] Simmel's essay does not conceive of adventure merely in terms of spatial movements, but points to the adventurer as a figure with links both to artistic processes and gambling, and the elements of adventure constitutive of romantic love.

[vi] 'A common feature of autobiographical underground commix is an emphasis on the inadequacy or ineffectualness of their subjects (Naghibi and O'Malley, 2005: 240).

[vii] Daniel Worden (2006) has identified 'masculine melancholy' (2006: 905) in comics characters from Charles M. Schultz's *Charlie Brown* to Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan*. Extending Judith Butler's concept of gender melancholy as repressed and disavowed identifications and desires which find expression only as projections onto a desired other, Worden suggests that 'the masculine melancholic renounces his own privilege within heteronormative, patriarchal culture – he will never find true love, he will never be appreciated – and therefore becomes susceptible to shame for renouncing those very privileges' (ibid: 902).

viii *Tintin au Congo/ Tintin in the Congo* (1931) was withdrawn from the children's section in Waterstones and Borders bookshops after a campaign in newspapers in 2007, protesting against its racist stereotyping and colonialist tropes (Vaclavik, 2009:229).

ix Chute (2010:146) draws a comparison between Satrapi's privileging of block shapes over line and flattened picture plane with examples from the western modernist tradition, such as Cézanne and German expressionism. However, the most immediately discernable influence is probably that of David B.'s *Epileptic* (2005), discussed in chapter five.

Thesis Conclusion

This thesis started by thinking about comics in relation to documentary. After configuring a core understanding of documentary in terms of a mode of address; a particular position according to which representation narrates and visually mediates the actual world, it has examined how comics have contributed to such undertakings. I have argued that comics adopting a documentary mode of address bring into play a challenge to the hegemony of recorded images and their particular type of realism as the privileged means for visually representing reality. Analyses have demonstrated how the idiosyncratic, selective and interpretive hand-rendered images in comics contest the completeness of vision associated with the documentary image. In addition, their spatial mapping and breakdown of narrative not only overtly acknowledges its construction, but allows particular strategies and possibilities for the production of meaning. While drawn representation can affect a screening function that counters the uneven relations between seeing and seen subjects, it is also capable of give visual form to aspects of experience that do not manifest in a tangible physical appearance yet are a constitutive part of the experienced real.

If expectations and attitudes as regards documentary are one part of figuring the trends and tendencies through which this convergence between comics and documentary has emerged, so too are changes affecting the horizons of expectation (Jauss, 1982: 23) and the social construction of comics. The position of comics has been one of inferiority in line with distinctions of value drawn between art and mass culture products and pursuits. Yet, as Beaty (2012: 24) maintains, it should be remembered that the lack of certain kinds of approval also signals that for a long time comics 'have not actively solicited that form of recognition'. It would, however, be difficult to claim this to still be the case. In the UK, 2013 will see the inaugural *Lakes International Comic Arts Festival* in late October, with invited writers and artists, exhibitions and panel discussions, interviews and workshops. This event is billed as setting itself apart from extant fan conventions and trade expos. Instead it models itself on European counterparts, such as the International Comics Festival of Angoulême, an established and prestigious festival that has been recurring annually since 1973. This development offers yet another indication of the increasing claims

to cultural recognition. And, while a long way from substantive or across the board recognition, the form has undeniably achieved more credibility of late.

As outlined in chapter two, this repositioning of comics involves multiple factors; improved production values, the consolidation of certain comics and comics characters as nostalgic cultural icons through the successes of blockbuster movies and television series drawing on comic book culture and the circulation of an increasing variety of comic books in mainstream book shops, engaging new readerships. Although the latter developments, reinforced by the cultural cachet and authority of authorial status, equally include texts adopting a resolutely fictional mode, they incorporate many that present a more complex positioning on a spectrum of interaction between factual and fictitious. When, as they often are, printed in book rather than trade paperback form, their materiality adds a weight and permanence that further underlines an implicit claim to status. Often a resistance to established genres and subject matter that confounds expectation has worked to pique critical interest. Certainly the emergence of comics addressing actual events seems to incorporate this combination of factors, and they can thus be seen as part of wider claims to legitimacy as a cultural expression capable of diverse approaches and topics staged by the form; its producers, industries, fans, critics and scholars. The examples encountered in the thesis have shown how a distinct space is being claimed by comics drawing on encounter and witnessing to extend documentary claims. I contend that this development is a significant aspect of the processes of cultural repositioning of comics.

Still, my purpose in talking about documentary comics has not been to extend an argument about the legitimacy of comics as a cultural form, drawing on the relatively established and respected position of documentary. Nor has my argument been about the capacity of comics to address a multiplicity of subjects, adopting a variety of different registers. I grant that academic interest in particular cultural phenomena and forms, especially those that have previously been dismissed and ignored, contributes to claims to validity. After all, however much there are academics reluctant to consider themselves as contributors to extant hierarchies, and those whose work actively engages in challenging such values and structures, the academe is

intrinsically and institutionally implicated in such hierarchies. Even so, as I hope the examples attended to throughout this thesis have demonstrated, I maintain that first and foremost it is comics' producers who assert the form's capacity for diverse subject matter and approaches. The project of establishing comics as a legitimate and coherent area of scholarship, however, is a different matter, and one currently being undertaken by a small but growing academic community across a broad range of disciplines and institutional contexts. It is within this context, and especially in view of the prominent role that literature and language studies within this burgeoning field, that I argue for the connection between comics representing actual persons, experiences and events and documentary as a valuable and alternative frame-work for analysis.

My contention, as far as comics scholarship is concerned, is that categorising these texts according to literary paradigms - journalism, autobiography, biography and so on - constitutes a problematic undercutting of the form's inherent visual character. Reading these texts in ways that primarily consider literary categories and frame-works, especially when, as Bart Beaty (2012: 18) has suggested, comics studies is more likely to be taught in literature departments than elsewhere, risks concealing other relevant connections. Consequently this research has brought comics into dialogue with writing on documentary. I have sought to demonstrate that these comics engage in documentary debates, with which they share an investment and engagement in negotiating an exploring the relationship between reality and representation as a social, visual and narrative practice.

Implications for documentary studies

To talk about documentary comics also raises questions in terms of documentary as a category and field of study. In this thesis I have outlined an understanding of documentary as visual (but not exclusively so), narrative and performative representation, and a mode of address through which audiences and readers are invited to accept that the persons, events and encounters signified are actual rather than imagined. By examining a number of comics in chapters constructed around

concerns that I consider to be centrally important, if not necessarily defining or constitutive, of the category of documentary, I have argued that these texts offer readers a position equivalent to that of documentary audiences. My analyses have demonstrated how the visual and narrative strategies of comics extend their own, somewhat different possibilities to those of more conventionally accepted documentary means of representation, while at the same time a continuation of documentary motivations and narrative tropes can be discerned. In effect, I propose that these comics re-mediate (Bolter and Grusin, 1999: 55-56) a documentary mode of address usually associated with certain forms of media. Mapping this inter-media connection consequently prompts a review as to the medium-specificity of documentary. Extant scholarship, despite a discernible reluctance to ascribe to essentialist conceptions of documentary 'truth' as attached to particular technologies, still largely works on the assumption that documentary is a category specific to certain media. Yet, in these comics as in texts utilising established documentary media, claims to truth (whether deliberate and emphatic, hesitant or purposely eschewing certainty) are ultimately predicated on trust that, however difficult to quantify or regulate, is constitutive of their particular mode of address.

In broadcast documentary, in particular, this issue of trust, and attempts to safe-guard such a producer-viewer relation is formalised in legal terms (Winston 2000: 88-112; Paget 2011: 62-93), as institutional codes of production attest. In comics on the other hand, the subjective qualities of drawing, and the overt display of their principle of construction, work as a rebuttal and caveat that to some degree pre-empt essentialist notions of both truth and transparency. Secondly, their historical distance from the institutional discourses of authority that imbricate recorded imagery, makes the idea of policing the truth-claims of comics seem incongruous. Both of these points suggest that documentary comics occupy a space perhaps especially well-suited for exploring and extending ways in which the experiential real and representation might be constructed and performed. Certainly from an academic point of view, once questions of veracity and transparency have been dispensed with 'it is more interesting to ask what aspects of reality are being represented, and how that is being done' (Honess Roe, 2013: 22). On the other hand, for a practitioner like Sacco who wants to assert the authenticity and credibility of their account, adopting rather than subverting conventions and codes from established documentary forms might be of

paramount importance. Certainly, the tension generated between a lack of restriction, in terms of set codes, and the impetus to assert credibility for and within particular texts is one that figures intriguingly for comics as documentary.

Nevertheless, controversy in relation to truth-claims has not been wholly absent despite the form's associations with the imagined and fantastic, or its limited authority as a source of factuality. For example, debates were ignited, as it transpired that the subject/author of an autobiographical comic turned out to be a fictional construct (El Refaie, 2012: 156-157). This suggests that although the differing cultural expectations with regards to recorded and hand-rendered images that may ostensibly make comics immune to the kind of accusations of fraudulence and thus gives a certain degree of flexibility in terms of the documentary image (as is also the case with animated documentary), this does not exempt comics from expectations in terms of the mode of a particular system of communication, indicated by para-textual markers (Genette, 1991). In the case of documentary and autobiography both, trust is a crucial part of what is generated by such expectations. In other words, if regulation of documentary is necessary in order to protect producer-viewer trust, because documentary is capable of lying (Eitzen, 1995: 89), then comics, too, can lie when they are understood as extending a truth-claim.

Beyond the question of truth-claims, documentary as performative interaction and interplay between the reality and representation (Bruzzi, 2006: 252) plays out in somewhat different ways in comics to what we might conventionally think of as documentary media. The difference is not that the narrative is constructed retrospectively, as this tends to also be the case with documentaries utilising recording technologies. But rather than performativity being that generated by the encounter between film-makers, technological equipment and subjects, and in turn, viewers, documentary comics are produced by the subjective, interpretive and performative inscription of their creators and by readers. Broader cultural shifts have undoubtedly impacted on the continued interaction between reality and its representation, and as assertions of universal truth, neutrality and objectivity have become replaced by terminology marked by qualifications; negotiation, partial perspectives, and subjectivity (no longer conceived as a merit particularly in the

context of artistic expression, but as validating the plurality of experience). It would seem that as subjectivity has become a more important consideration for documentary (Renov 2004), as has the acknowledgement of the constructed character of its texts, which in turn forces recognition of representation and reality as distinct, despite their close engagement and reciprocal exchanges. On such terms, the performative inscription and engagement with reality in comics form significantly intersects with documentary. However, accepting the notion of documentary comics would necessitate seeing technological specificities as variations within the category of documentary, rather than boundaries that circumscribe it.

Of course, re-drawing and extending the boundaries of a category risks the charge of broadening it to the point of rendering it unwieldy, or even meaningless. Nevertheless, I hold that documentary's assertion that it takes as its material the actual, rather than the imagined (Rancière 2006: 158; Trinh 1993: 78) is sufficient to distinguish a mode of address that gives it particularity and specificity, while encompassing a spectrum of iterations. It could also be argued that documentary has, in fact, become a more strictly circumscribed category since specific terms and names have been adapted for diverse forms of programming under the general description of factual programming; news, docu-soap, documentary drama, reality TV, and so on. The idea of 'post-documentary' (Corner 2002) seemed to indicate that the category was perceived to be eroding, as formats with a distinct emphasis on entertainment came to proliferate on broadcasting schedules (Dovey 2000; Corner 2002). Thus through the adoption of numerous sub-categorisations, of which documentary is but one, under a broader umbrella term of 'factual programming', attempts have been made to preserve its status as a serious discourse with a distinct social function; evoking a historical lineage of civic representation, edification, responsibility and participation. Yet, historically documentary has incorporated diverse styles and approaches at various given times, and connections and continuities between older and more recent strategies challenge habitually drawn distinctions between what has been historically understood as part of documentary and contemporary formats (Bruzzi, 2006: 74). Broadcasting schedules and the extra-textual cues such as promotional and critical commentaries frame and organise texts in particular ways, signalling different sets of codes and conventions at work as they

distinguish current affairs and journalistic programmes, nature, history and travel documentaries, and different types of 'info-tainment' and reality shows, by which audiences form their expectations. However, rather than just marking the separation between one kind of representation from another, this explicit acknowledgement of the multiple coding in operation across texts, that all take the real rather than the imagined as their material also functions to signal the construction inherently part of such representations. If anything, this is more apparent when considering terms derived from hybridised conventions, such as drama-documentary, documentary dramas, docu-soap and reality TV, than distinctions based on the subjects of programmes (despite the reliance on convention equally at play within these kinds of sub-genres). So again, I am more inclined to seek connections than police boundaries, and to see the documentary impulse as incorporated in a range of these formats that have given rise to new descriptions and terms.

Directions for further research

This research has brought to light issues and questions that it has not been possible to incorporate in the thesis, but would suggest potential research topics and directions for future undertakings. For example, citizen journalism on digital platforms utilise both recorded imagery and comics. Although Twitter, as a text-based social media has asserted prominence in contemporary information exchange and circulation, the internet as a platform for sharing the visual representation of events, crises and confrontations continues to thrive. Ever more affordable and mobile recording equipment and the ability to self-publish has offered means of visual representation and access to public visibility to an ever-growing slice of global populations. Equally, similar undertakings of visual reportage on digital platforms have been emerging in comics form. Examples include *Symbolia*, which can be downloaded as an app, or subscribed to via email, and the website Comics Reporter.com. It seems likely that the capacity to generate content quickly, and the immediacy of digital recording technologies fulfil needs in different ways than the longer time-frame of comics production that nevertheless holds the advantage of incomparably modest minimal requirements; pen and paper. In addition, situations in which any kind of recording equipment might present a risk do not necessarily present problems for a

comics reporter, whose gathering of material may be unnoticeable. This is a research topic that would benefit from empirical production research methods, in combination with textual analysis, and would provide a timely alternative to textual approaches.

On the other hand, looking at the anonymously produced comic *Zahra's Paradise* (initially serialised online by FirstSecond) in connection with Krystof Kieslowski's film *Camera Buff* (1971) sets in motion a different, yet also comparative attentions. *Zahra's Paradise* tells of life and resistance to the regime in contemporary Teheran; a mother's search for her son who disappeared during demonstrations following the contested 2009 elections, and thus necessitates a certain fictionalising of characters in order to protect and conceal the identities of both creators and protagonists. The website (http://www.zahrasparadise.com/lang/en/about) describes this as 'a composite of real people and events'. In *Camera Buff*, Kieslowski who had up until its making been a documentary filmmaker turned to fiction as a more effective tool of 'truth-telling' under a regime exerting considerable political censorship. *Zahra's Paradise*, according to its publisher and website, is likewise the work of someone who previously had worked as a documentary filmmaker, but instead turned to writing a comic as a way of communicating with international audiences. These two texts raise questions about the transactional relations between fact and fiction, as well as the political restrictions that may result in particular enforced silences and not least, how strategic moves to overcome such circumstances converge and differ in terms of affect.

Another potential avenue for further research likewise relates to the capacity of comics to maintain a certain distance between referent and representation, but also concerns their ability to fuse the depiction of physical reality with emotional expressiveness in particular ways. The frank treatment of issues around sexuality has a lineage and tradition in autobiographical comics, and how comics might be able to show depictions that their photographic, filmic and electronic equivalents would render pornographic, illegal, impossible, or all of the above, is one deserving of more sustained attention in its own right.
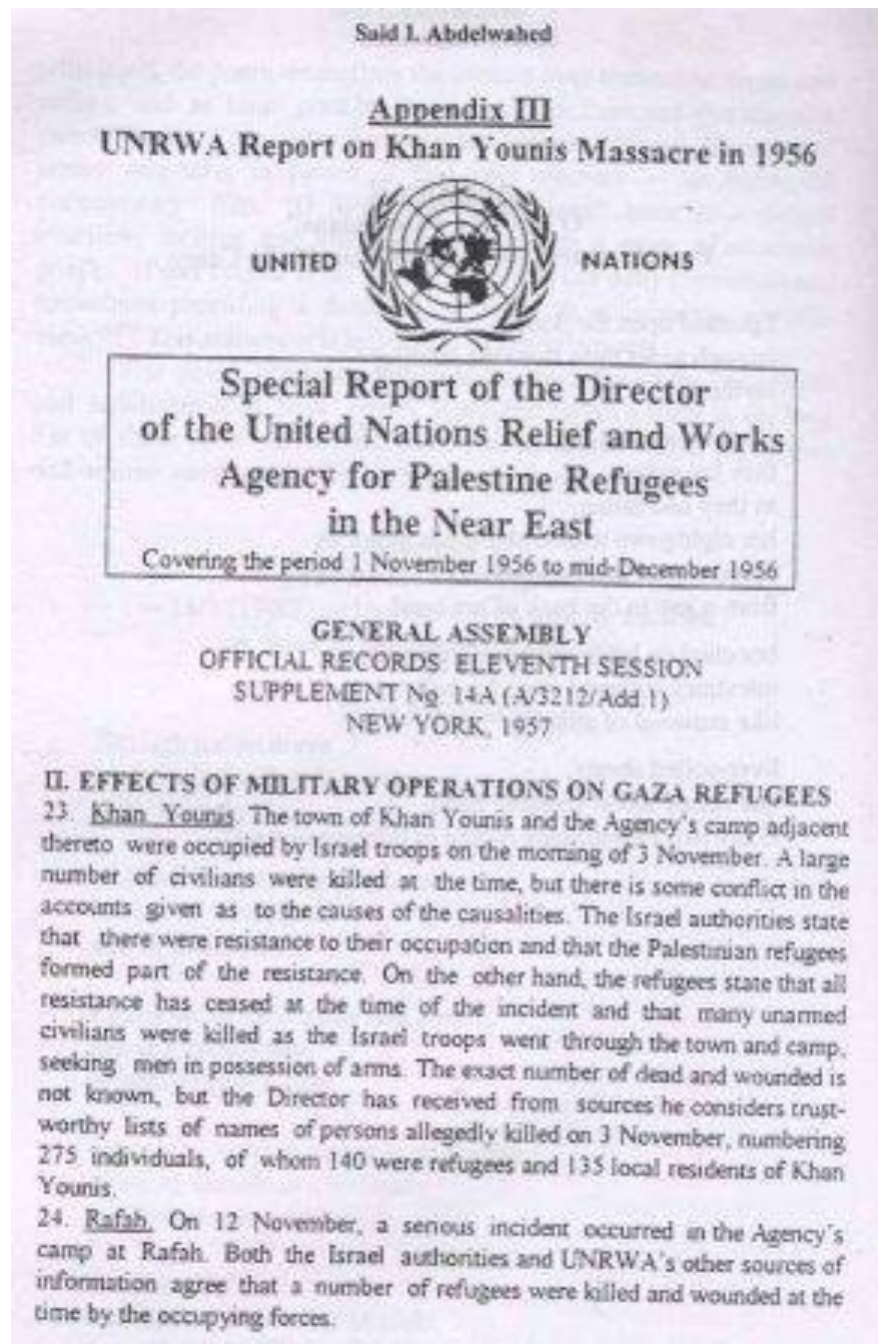
Moreover, research on this topic would offer the opportunity to include issues of gender, particularly in relation to the speaking subject. Critics who have addressed the representation of subjects such as intimacy, emotional bonds and sexual relationships, whether male (Worden 2006; Beaty 2011: 247-259) or female (Chute 2011), recognise and remark on an, at times profoundly uncomfortable, ambivalence. For Chute, creators such as Aline Kominsky-Crumb and Phoebe Gloeckner 'make especially clear […] that, in dominant social formations, female sexuality is composed of both pleasure and degradation' (Chute, 2011: 61). Understood as a deliberately provocative stance this resonates with the feminist contention that: 'political awareness emerges more productively out of intellectual and emotional discomfort and unease than out of presumption of an already assured position of certainty' (MacDonald, 1998: 108). While equally unflinching in their graphic depictions of sexuality, and emotionally complex, critics have on the other hand figured male counterparts in terms of 'masculine melancholy' (Worden 2006: 894, see also Beaty 2011: 252). Particularly interesting in terms of an interdisciplinary approach, is the uncanny correspondence with the observations arising from an analysis of documentary film. The performance of such masculine subjectivities seemingly finds a counterpart in the work of male first-person filmmakers, in which intimacy of private and subjective experience becomes 'a particular response […] that takes on board the newly perceived importance of private subjective experience' (Dovey 2000: 46). That this should be so prominently accompanied by 'an aesthetics of failure' (Arthur, 1993: 126) might perhaps be read as a response to speaking from a position that in many respects still remains dominant, yet subject to destabilisation and struggle as its traditionally privileged position continues to be contested. It would seem that the tensions in negotiating the performance of, particularly white and heterosexual, masculinity become foregrounded in the dual performance of self-assertion and 'introspective abasement' (Arthur, 1993: 129). However, whether the differences with respect to gender are textual or constructed at the level of criticism, this is an area that although extensively written about, has certainly not been exhausted in terms of documentary accounts, especially not in cross-media approaches.

More specifically relevant to the area of comics scholarship, is that considering the category of documentary comics offers an alternative to framing and delineating

research according to particular categorisations. For example, autobiography has come to assume a particularly dominant position in academic work on contemporary comics, perhaps even comparable to that commanded by superhero comics in academic attention to comics fiction. As I have demonstrated here, it is quite possible to include first-person accounts under the larger umbrella of documentary. Yet, and importantly, so doing opens up different connections and considerations to critical inquiry and raises other sets of potential questions than the heading of autobiography would necessarily encourage.

Ultimately at stake, is that reconfiguring the classifications and categories by which cultural expressions, artefacts and objects are understood, allows the opportunity to question and reconsider the particular historical and cultural legacies that implicitly guide how we make sense of them. In so doing, the extent to which categorisation and discourse construct knowledge and comprehension of the world, and thus the actual world, becomes critically highlighted (Rancière, 2004).

APPENDIX I

Said I. Abdelwahed

Appendix III
UNRWA Report on Khan Younis Massacre in 1956

UNITED NATIONS

Special Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Covering the period 1 November 1956 to mid-December 1956

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL RECORDS ELEVENTH SESSION
SUPPLEMENT No. 14A (A/3212/Add.1)
NEW YORK, 1957

II. EFFECTS OF MILITARY OPERATIONS ON GAZA REFUGEES

23. Khan Younis. The town of Khan Younis and the Agency's camp adjacent thereto were occupied by Israel troops on the morning of 3 November. A large number of civilians were killed at the time, but there is some conflict in the accounts given as to the causes of the casualties. The Israel authorities state that there were resistance to their occupation and that the Palestinian refugees formed part of the resistance. On the other hand, the refugees state that all resistance has ceased at the time of the incident and that many unarmed civilians were killed as the Israel troops went through the town and camp, seeking men in possession of arms. The exact number of dead and wounded is not known, but the Director has received from sources he considers trustworthy lists of names of persons allegedly killed on 3 November, numbering 275 individuals, of whom 140 were refugees and 135 local residents of Khan Younis.

24. Rafah. On 12 November, a serious incident occurred in the Agency's camp at Rafah. Both the Israel authorities and UNRWA's other sources of information agree that a number of refugees were killed and wounded at the time by the occupying forces.

Abdelwahed, Said I. "Humanism, Nationalism and History in Michael Davitt's Gaelic Poem "O My Two Palestinians"."

http://www.arabworldbooks.com/Literature/michaeldavitt.html

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