Analysis of Graphic Narratives: 
War in Lebanese Comics

By

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a Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment 
of the requirements for the degree of 
Doctor of Philosophy in Visual Studies

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Statutory Declaration

I, Lena Irmgard Merhej, hereby declare that I have written this PhD thesis independently, unless where clearly stated otherwise. I have used only the sources, the data and the support that I have clearly mentioned. This PhD thesis has not been submitted for conferral of degree elsewhere.

I confirm that no rights of third parties will be infringed by the publication of this thesis.

Bremen, August 15, 2016

Signature ____________________________________________________________
Dedicated to my father, Béchara Jamil Merhej, for the stories he shared with me and for his enduring patience, support, and encouragement.
Acknowledgements

I am exceedingly grateful and appreciative to Dr. Marion G. Müller for assisting me in the dissertation process. Her eternally optimistic attitude was an inspiration and motivation to me. Her encouragement, support for visual studies, and her endless quest for building an understanding of the role of the image in contemporary society and politics have very much influenced my approach and helped me achieve my research goal. I would like also to extend my gratitude to Dr. Birgit Mersmann for her valuable advice and for her support of my work throughout the difficulties of narrating narration.

I want to thank Dr. John Bateman for his time, and for his dedication and prolific output which inspired me and made me believe that research can make anything possible. I want to thank also the VisComX members who helped me realize this project: Dr. Margrit Schreier and Dr. Martin Stommel, and my cohort colleagues Dr. Ronak Etematpour, Sabine Neumann, Mastewal Adane, Florian Wiencek, Dr. Elena Tsankova, and Dr. Alexandra Swiderska. My educational experience at VisComX Research Center at Jacobs University has been an outstanding journey. I have appreciated the lectures of Dr. Timothy J. Senior, Michael Renner, Dr. Monica Juneja, Dr. Frieder Nake, and Lev Manovich. In addition, I want to extend my gratitude to the members of the Department of Art, Art History and Visual Studies at Duke University, Durham, NC, Dr. Victoria Szabo, Bill Seaman, Robert C. Duvall, Marion Monson, and Dr. Eric Monson, as well as fellow-graduate students, Dr. Marie Pier Boucher and Sarah Goetz.

In addition, I would like to thank all the artists for making comics and for making them accessible for my research, particularly The FDZ, Hatem Imam, Ghadi Ghosn,
Mazen Kerbaj, Omar Khouri, Joumana Medlej, and Barrack Rima, as well as Barbara Carlson for helping so wholeheartedly throughout the entanglement of my text.

Moreover, I want to thank my friends Dr. Raja Abillama, Dahna Abou Rahme, Maya Chami, Dr. Irina Chiaburu, Zena El Khalil, Dr. Julia Fleischhack, Anna Gabai, Mahmoud Hanafi, Dr. Maysaa Housseini, Maya Karanouh, Imad Khachan, Leila Kobeissi, Dr. Micaela Kulesz, Sahar Mandour, Walid Taher, and Ranwa Yehia for their support, encouragement, and generosity.

Last but not least, I thank my mother, Dr. Waltraud Grote Nachabe Merhej, and my siblings Dr. Yasmine Nashabe Taan, Dr. Omar Nashabe, Dr. Reem Nashabe Mouawad, and Dr. Mona Merhej Moussa and their families for their support and for their unconditional love, my Aunt Ushi Scharnhorst and my beloved family in Hannover who stood by me in the ‘limbo days’ of the research. Thank you for all the stories we created together!
Comics
Comics, in the large sense of the term, are narratives that are essentially visual and that articulate spatially to create a story. They are a “narrative species of visual dominance” (Groensteen, 2011, p. 89; Miller, 2007; Pratt, 2009). There are numerous different attributions for the term ‘comics’ as a consequence of geo-cultural, professional, and theoretical usage. As example, the word ‘comics’ as describing early humorous works is a term that often is mistaken for the humorist attribution of comedians; while ‘dailies’, and later ‘comic strips’, refer to comics adaptations for the design grid of a newspaper page. The word ‘cartoon’ originally referred to the cardboard on which editorial images were drawn and ‘comic books’ to the first printed publications of comics. ‘Comics’, ‘funnies’, ‘comic strips’, ‘cartoons’, ‘komics’, ‘comic books’, ‘graphic novels’, and ‘tragicomics’ are terms often confused as being either the medium itself, or the genre to which they belong. In the Arabic language alone, expressions meaning ‘comics’ include ‘charae´t moussawara’ , ‘kissas moussawara’, ‘comix’, ‘carton’, ‘cartoon’, and the more recent term ‘fan tassalsouli’. In Lebanon, the French expression ‘bande dessinée, or ‘BéDé’, or “BD”, is also used in colloquial speech.

Comics Albums
These comics follow the 1945 Franco-Belgian tradition of 36-62-page-long format of roughly A4 international paper size.

Comics Style (graphiation)
The style is the persistent and visible act of graphiation. It can be a ligne claire, a realistic, a cartoonish style, or a bombastic style of muscular figures. The style of comics is often associated with “the pencil lines with which a picture is drawn and the brush strokes” (Duncan & Smith, 2009, p. 161). Graphiation is the “persistence and visibility of features of the enunciative act in the graphic result of that act” (Baetens, 2001, p. 147).

Corpus-based analysis
Corpus-based analysis is a research approach to analyze and validate patterns of variation and use for features derived from theory.

Focalization
“Focalization denotes the perspectival restriction and orientation of narrative information relative to somebody’s perception, imagination, knowledge, or point of view” (Herman, Jahn, & Ryan, 2005, p. 173).

Graphic novels
Graphic novels are comics that are more or less similar to literary novels in terms of length and book format.

Marginal comics
Marginal comics are from outside the traditions that are comics, bande dessinée, and manga.

Footnotes:
1 Coming from peripheral comics, the traditions of comics (including comics, bande dessinée, and manga) are not considered so much as defining, but rather the visual deployment from which narrative emerges.
2 Concept used for the title of the newsletter MoCCa (2012, New York).
3 The translation into English is ‘pictures strips’.
4 The translation into English is ‘imaged stories’.
5 The translation into English is ‘sequential art’.
Modality
Modality is a quality of the mode.

Mode
A mode “is a socially and culturally shaped resource for making meaning. Image, writing, layout, speech, moving images are examples of different modes” (Kress, 2010, p. 79).

Multimodality
Multimodality is an inter-disciplinary approach that provides concepts, methods, and a framework for the collection and analysis of visual, aural, embodied, and spatial aspects of interaction and environments, and the relationships between these (cited in Glossary of Multimodal Terms, 2012).

Narrative delegation
Narrative delegation is the assignment of narration to another narrator that is embedded in the narrative of the original narrator, to tell or show the story. It can also be considered a narrative manipulation or what is “traditionally known as perspective” (Bal, 1985, p. 76).

Narrative text
It “is a text in which an agent or subject conveys to an addressee (‘tells’ the reader) a story in a particular medium, such as language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof” (Bal, 1985, p. 5). A visual narrative text, in the wider sense of the term ‘text’, is a story told with visuals.

Narration
Narration is the production of narratives. It competes with the story for the attention of reader (Herman, Jahn, & Ryan, 2005, pp. 339-340).

Narrativity
The various degrees of narrativity are presented by texts that are more or less narrative and conditioned by a spatial, temporal, mental, and formal dimension (Ryan, 2010, p. 315).

Narratology
It “is the ensemble of theories of narratives, narrative texts, images, spectacles, events, cultural artifacts that ‘tell a story’” (Bal, 1985, p. 3).

Non-narrative elements
Non-narrative elements are the argument that “refer[s] to an external topic” or to inter-textual material (Bal, 2009, p. 32). Or they can be the description which features are attributed to objects and that is “the privileged site of focalization” (ibid., p. 35).

Oubapo
Oubapo, Ouvroir de la bande dessinée Potentielle, or Workshop for Potential Comics that are constrained by arbitrary rules and structures. It was founded and announced in the publishing house, L’Association, in France in 1992. It stems from the literary movement Oulipo founded by Raymond Queneau.

Peripheral comics
Peripheral comics are comics originating from countries that did not produce comics in the traditions of American comics, the Franco-belge comics and Japanese Manga.

Roman-photos
Translated into English as ‘photo romances’, from original Italian and French. These are comics with photography as their graphiation.

Sequential Art
Will Eisner (1985) and Scott McCloud (1994) use this term to refer to comics, reinforced by the claim of Thierry Groensteen (2011) that art is “that [what] a self-proclaimed artist declares to be art” (Groensteen, 2011, p. 175).

Story
The story, also called ‘fabula’, is the “series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or that are experienced by actors” (Bal, 1985, p. 5).
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1. Introduction

Ongoing wars and unrest have been occurring on the geographical territory of Lebanon, from the confrontations of Phoenicians, Assyrians, and Babylonians to Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, Arab, Ottoman, French, and, finally, Lebanese rule. War-related artifacts, including gods of war, armies, and warriors, populate the National Museum in Beirut. A marble statue (fig. 1.1) found in Beirut but dating from the Roman period (64BC - 646AD\(^1\)), in armor, has a relief of a smaller warrior dressed in similar cuirass on the side of his torso. A winged figure in a long dress hands a shield to the smaller warrior. This act of armament is repeated from the angel to the soldier-relief and from the soldier-relief to the soldier-statue, distancing the later from the angel. Thus, this “embeddeness” pushes the away the act from its responsibility (Groensteen, 2011:112). Narratology reveals embedded levels and the ideological tenor of delegation; the angel confers war to the warrior who, in return, delegates his acquired responsibility. This is depicted on the emblem affixed onto the

\(^1\) As explained in the Museum caption.
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chest of the larger warrior – the marble statue. A narratological reading reveals that the delegation of war to the warrior is a celestial one, passed on by an angel.

This research study looks at similar relations in Lebanese war comics – a genre that has been growing in output and popularity since 2000.

1.1. Motivations, Relevance, Objectives, and Contributions

War is a violent conflict. Ho-Won Jeong (2008) defines a conflict situation as being “represented by perceived goal incompatibilities and attempts to control each other’s choices” (p. 6). Therefore, war is represented by such violent subjugations as the killing, abuse, and oppression of state and non-state individuals and civilians, and the destruction of habitations, resources, and infrastructure. Exemplified by the warrior statue at the National Museum, violent conflicts can be embedded and thus delegated in a way that distances the narrator from the act to the extend of release his/her responsibility of the act. War is a significant trope in contemporary Lebanese literature, film, and theater and research reveals that war has been delegated to and fought in the name of God, the country, or the family (Hourani, 2008; Fadda-Conrey, 2010; Yaqoub, 2011; El-Aris, 2013). War is becoming a genre in comics though research in this field is scarce, and more so when it comes to Lebanese and Arab comics, not to mention war comics. Nonetheless, an emerging interest in comics studies and a rising popularity of narrative analysis and narratology are bringing more light into this field of study and the analysis of comics as narratives (Groensteen, 1988, 2011; Miller, 2007; Dittmar, 2008; Mikkonen, 2008; Chute 2010; Kukkonen, 2011a; Kindt & Müller, 2003; Herman & Vervaeck, 2007; Peeters, 1991; Lefèvre, 2000; Cohn, 2013). The interest is spreading and is gradually including also what can be regarded as ‘peripheral’ comics from Central American and South East Asian countries, as well as Arab comics and – as in this research study – specifically Lebanese war comics.
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Lebanese comics are new, marginal, and diverse. At the turn of the twenty-first century, Lebanon witnessed a cultural and philological awakening which, however, has been conspicuously absent from research on editorial trends, as the Civil War destroyed archives and discarded memories (Bizri, 2013). Research tells us that, since 2007, the Lebanese so-called ‘war debate’ has challenged the period of collective amnesia following the Taif Agreement in 1989 and the ‘end’ of the Civil War into a living archive with contributions from different artistic productions (Haugebolle, 2008; Fadda-Conrey, 2010; Georgis, 2013). The first decade after the war witnessed an ever-more vigorous market of children’s books and activities that involved the development of publications and such related agents as artists, writers, illustrators, and librarians – the culmination of which was in 2009, when Beirut was the UNESCO World Book Capital. Among many projects related to books that took place around this time was a lecture on independent comics publishing, called Le Background de l’Employé du Moi and a workshop, Storytelling for Comics, with Stéphane Noël and Sacha Goerg of L’Employé du Moi, organized by Samandal and held on July 3, 2009.

In Lebanon, the practice of visual narration in picture books, animation, and comic books has accelerated since 2000, engaging designers, visual artists, writers, musicians, and programmers. Taught in several Lebanese universities and Institutions, Graphic design has become a recognized profession, visual artists and storytellers have multiplied, and new technologies are becoming more accessible. Lebanese visual narration enjoys growing attention due to it being regarded as ‘new’ and as having a ‘peripheral’ position as compared to more established American/Canadian, European, and East-Asian traditions. Furthermore, it contains a multilingual proliferation, which provides it with inter-medial and intercultural complex precedents.

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1 The Taif Agreement, also known as the National Reconciliation Accord, was signed in Saudi Arabia in 1989 and formed the principle of “mutual coexistence” between Lebanon’s various religious parties with regard to their respective political representation - an issue which still is debated.
2 L’Employé du Moi is a Brussels-based publishing house founded in 2000 by a group of illustrators specializing in comics. It publishes what they term “independent comics”.
3 Samandal is a comics collective based in Lebanon with an aim to providing a platform for alternative expression of cultural and social issues to youth and adults through the diverse and varied medium of comics. In addition to collecting and publishing comic books from the region and abroad, a comics magazine is issued once every two months. Established in 2007, the main members are FDZ, Hatem Imam, Omar Khouri, and the researcher, Lena Irmgard Merhej.
4 The major ones are the American University of Beirut (since 1991), the Lebanese American University (1994).
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1.1.1. Motivation and Relevance

The study is motivated by the analysis of narratives in comics, particularly of war in the Lebanese context. Also, it is motivated by the contribution to the increasingly frequent crossovers between computational technologies, literature and the arts. It is also driven by the application of a narrative analysis to a large corpus of comics and of the visualization of that analysis which adds to the originality of the study. Last, there are personal motivations that would add to the growth of the researcher in the course of her career as both researcher and visual storyteller, which also creates the novelty of the study: The design background fused with a scholarly approach has motivated the creation of a tool (Chapter 4) that enabled the study of comics and the analysis of narratives. Thus, the intention of the study is to analyze war in Lebanese comics from a combined view of visual studies and design.

A relatively large portion of Lebanese comics printed between 2003 and 2011 – the period covered this research study – targets a general audience and deals with the common narrative of war, which totals 29 comics various format such as book series, comics shorts or novels, comics pages, comic strips (Fig. 3.3) and includes 2,365 comics pages.

FIGURE 1.2: The discrepancy in the point of view © Lena Merhej, 2014.
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In addition to the narrative delegation, discussed earlier, a major principle in narratology is that “a concept is best judged by letting each party give its own version of the events, its own story” (Bal, 1985; ibid., 2009, p. 77). The relevance of studying different narratives of a similar story lies in considering also the perspective of what others tell, thus getting a better understanding of the idea of narrative as a multiplicity of versions of events. Figure 1.2 illustrates the need for stories and, in this case, for the object to be seen from different viewpoints. Four heads of certain ‘characters’ look at the same depiction placed in their center, but each sees a different part. There is a dependency on the individual’s perspective whether the depicted ‘object’ at the center actually is – clockwise from the top – a square, origami, a floor plan, or shelves. Although the object is not identified, each interpretation adds to the understanding of it and also of the character. In the same manner it is important to look at the different events of war and how they are narrated in order to be able to contribute to the ‘war debate’ which includes different perceived goal incompatibilities, and diverging views of who controls choice, and how. Thus, for this research study, the first motivation is the study of narratives in comics, particularly of war in the Lebanese context. The second is related to the increasingly frequent crossovers between computational technologies, literature, and the arts.

New technologies compute large data files and permit access to discreet characteristics of image and film sequences (Benton, 1999; van Leeuwen, 2008a); furthermore, much research has been conducted on visualization image and text computation (Ware, 2004, Manovich, 2012; Kehrer & Hauser, 2013). Visualization is an expanding field from which Comics Studies are yet to benefit. Being one of the main topics of this research study, visualization is motivated by the need to understand the complexity of narrativity and to facilitate the mapping, fragmentation, and reconstruction of the raw material of comics into an analysis. Andrew Salway, have conducted narrative structure analysis of large textual sequences with David Herman (Salway & Herman, 2011) and on the taxonomy of image-text relation (Martinec & Salway, 2005). Lev Manovich
created visualization from one million comics pages. However, a narrative analysis has not yet been practiced and debated over a large comics corpus that includes both visual and textual sequences and their interweaving.

The third motivation for this research study is to enable theories related to semantics to be applied on a large corpus of comics by the use of visualization, while the fourth and final motive is personal; namely, as a Lebanese designer who – among such other visual narratives as animation and children’s books – also makes comics and whose work to the most part is about or related to war with a strong background in interactive design. Being involved in the teaching profession and closely connected to the Arab comics community motivates the objectives to understand, revise, and evaluate the production of comics in Lebanon, but also – as an artist – to research and expand the work through new technologies. Moreover, there is a motivation to communicate this research by multimodal means that reflect the essence of this study, while remaining true to the visual and verbal texts. As an artist and educator doing research, this researcher believes that there is a need to reconcile comics artists with narratives and narrative constructions and, ultimately, to reconcile comic practice with theory. Furthermore, the research motivation is a response to the “narrative turn” and increased interest in multimodal narration in comics studies in general (Czarniawska, 2004; de Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011).

1.1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The first aim of this research study is to bring closer the ‘making and writing’ of comics to their analysis as a multimodal and narrative medium in order to allow expansion and new configurations and permit discreet analysis of the material. The main objectives of the study are, first, to create a tool for icono-textual narrative analysis; and second, to analyze the narration and focalization of war in Lebanese comics. The analysis of Lebanese comics narratives of war reveals the narrated events and their focalization, and exposes the parties, narrators, and characters involved – in this
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case, relating to war in the Lebanese context. By using a multimodal narrative analysis, a distinction can be made between what is told, which narrator tells, and what is focalized by whom; hence, it provides a better understanding of the story – in this case, the story of war in Lebanon (Genette, 1980; Bal, 1985).

New narrative strategies of comics broaden the term ‘narration’ as a traditional form and instead feed into the concept of ‘narrativity’ (Abbott, 2011). While Thierry Groensteen (2011) discusses “new narrative rhetoric” and Benoît Peeters (2007) highlights a type of “productive narrative/composition interdependence”, the notion of narrative in these cases takes on a complexity that is not characteristic of conventions of oral or written narratives, or even certain early comics (Groensteen, 2011, p. 198; Peeters, 2007, p. 41). Groensteen (2007a) contrasts ‘new’ comics with ‘traditional’ and ‘conventional’ ones, and defines them as comics that push the limitations of the medium towards its own specificity. The so-called OuBaPo comics are concerned particularly with such potential of the medium. For L’Association artist Jean-Christophe Menu (2011), they also take part in the formation of new narrative design and new ways to tell stories.

Though considered as traditional, narrative is also regarded as a tool to reflect on and expand stories (Bal, 2009). Many artists reject the traditional definition of narrative as a “structured activity, with a beginning, a middle and an end” (de Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011, p. 2). Xavier Löwenthal (2006), in Articulation / La Narration vs L’Histoire, underlines the frustration of the “monoform” in narrative and of forcing narrative logic as the fundamental goal of narrative deployment. He argues for different articulations whose functions are “poetic, plastic, synergic, and/or metaphorical [in contrast to didactic] elucidation and explanation” (ibid.). Likewise, the prominent comics artist Chris Ware states in an interview that “the one thing I don´t want to be is a storyteller, which to me is more or less the skill of relating events and plots” (Bellerman, 2009, p. 8).

1 Abbreviation of the French ouvroir de bande dessinée potentielle.
2 L’Association is a French publishing house founded by Jean-Christophe Menu, Lewis Trondheim, David B., Matt Konture, Patrice Killoffer, Stanislas, and Mokeït.
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This rejection stems from an avant-garde aspiration of comics artists wanting to place their work out of traditional forms where “writing […] places events in a fabric that knits them all together with the feelings, the sensations and textures of real experience, and follows, directly or poetically, the development of life at which it seems or seemed to unfold” (Bellerman, 2009, p. 8). Barrack Rima, for instance, called a workshop that he gave with Lebanese comics magazine Samandal sequential art\(^1\) rather than using the title ‘pictured stories’\(^2\) as on the cover of the magazine. This distinguishes the ‘new’ comics in Samandal from those in, for example, children’s magazines that are a tradition already well established in the Arab world since the 1960’s. Samandal members and other Lebanese comics artists include performance artists, musicians, painters, filmmakers, and journalists and their work is far from being just ‘pictured stories’ with a beginning, middle, and end. These artists have the potential to move closer to performance art, music, and journalism when they present highly sophisticated drawing skills; however, based on the experience of the editorial team at Samandal, they often reveal their poor narrative skills. Peripheral comics have the advantage of being innovative and, thus, experimental by nature; however, reconciliation is needed between comics artist and narrative, and a comics artist needs to have an understanding of narrative construction and play in order to enrich his/her work.

In 1997, Groensteen presented his recommendation for artists under the title A First Bunch of Constraints during a comics laboratory-type workshop (Menu, 2011). New-York artist Matt Madden (2005), based on Raymond Queneau’s 1947 Exercices de Style, experimented and created comics in 99 Ways of Telling Stories. In 2004, Scott McCloud (2014) urged artists to create comics within constraints and to do it within twenty-four hours. This practice has been preserved in the 24-Hour Comics event around the world and, since 2007, is an established Samandal event on the

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1 Literal translation from the Arabic ‘fann tassalissouli’.
2 The translation into English comes from the Arabic ‘kissass moussawwara’, which includes the meanings of pictured, visualized, photographed, and drawn stories. It is the term used by Samandal under the cover title and as the translation into Arabic of ‘visual narratives’.
online comics platform Grandpapier.org in collaboration with the Belgium-based L’Employé du Moi.

As a researcher, experience\(^1\) in design and in working with digital media and visual storytelling contributes to this study in terms of knowledge of interactive design, as well as insight and accumulated observations of a practicing comics artist and publisher. The graphic design skills, in addition to the design and technology formation acquired at the American University of Beirut and the Parsons School of Design, New York, enables the researcher to conceptualize the development of the interface that exists between the theory of comics narrative analysis and the practice of mapping and analyzing comics.

Focusing on the literature and the conceptual material needed for the development of an analytical system, the objectives are to develop the visualization based on these theories, and to demonstrate its use by analyzing the large corpora of Lebanese war comics.

The second aim is to analyze narratives of war in Lebanese comics and focus on marginal comics that have attracted little research until now. Instead of looking at the three major established traditions of comics – the American/Canadian tradition, *bande dessinée* of Franco-Belgian comics, and the Japanese manga – the significance of this research is the analysis of comics that are peripheral to those traditions. On the one hand, Lebanese comics are on the rise, which is an additional motivator for this research to predict the development and direction of such comics in the future. Another focus is on comics aimed at an adult readership – as opposed to those in children’s magazines – and how their war narratives contribute to the Lebanese war debate. When “Narratives are vital both to the creation and sustenance of value, and to the achievement of individual identity” (Gergen, 2005, p. 15). The goal is to focus on the narratives of war to understand the value that was given to war and to particular individuals in Lebanese comics. The subjective focalization created

\(^1\) Including educational foundation at the schools of graphic design at the American University of Beirut (1995-2006) and the Lebanese American University (2003-2009), Beirut, Lebanon; and at the departments of design and technology at Parsons School of Design, New York (2000-2002).
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by comics narrative has contributed new words, characters, and events related to war, and revealing them adds to the debate on war. On the other hand, there is a growing network of comics artists and publishers within the Arab world, including Lebanon, however related comics research remains very limited indeed. The publication Arab Comic Strips: Politics of an Emerging Mass Culture by Allen Douglas and Fedwa Malti-Douglas (1994) – with its broad spread of comics of Arab countries – represents the only extensive research resource.

The second objective includes enabling the analysis of large data sets of comics and their narrative construction in order to explore new narrative articulations and experiments – in the case of this research study, focused on war in the context of Lebanon. Narratology, as the study of narratives, is limited when applied on large comics corpora, and narratological quantitative research, although applied on text to build on theory, particularly with the accessibility to digitized text and text mining tools, has not been used on large comics material. Large-corpus narrative research is exemplified by the work of Vladimir Propp, Ariadna Y. Martin, and Richard P. Martin (1984) analyzing story structure in Russian fairytales (Propp, Martin, & Richard P. Martin, 1984) (Propp, Martin, & Richard P. Martin, 1984) (Propp, Martin, & Richard P. Martin, 1984) (Propp, Martin, & Richard P. Martin, 1984). A further example is that of Salway and Herman (2011) who, in their analysis, explain the extraction of “212,000 words” from a varied corpus including such different genres as psychological novels, supernatural tales, and Holocaust testimonies, and also used large corpora of Slavic literature to build new models of narrative structure (p. 124),

Inderjeet Mani (2012) integrates narratology, artificial intelligence, and computational linguistics and calls it “computational narratology” to advocate text mining and processing of narrative structure from large corpora (p. 23). In addition, Wouter de Nooy (2005) uses visualization to propose a similar approach to social structures. Comics narratologists – including Groensteen, Karin Kukkonen, and Marc Singer – problematize theories and concepts by presenting new
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terminologies and new approaches, rather than engaging in large-corpus research (Groensteen, 2011; Kukkonen, 2011a; Singer, 2012). Comics scholars who use the ‘narratological toolkit’ and discuss the narrator, narrative time, narration, and focalization have focused on small corpora, often limited to twelve pages. In Reading Bande Dessinée: Critical Approaches to French-Language Comic Strip, Ann Miller’s (2007) application of the narrative concepts of Gérard Genette on Le Cahier Bleu is limited to eight pages. ‘New’ comics, however, may pose a definition challenge not only to contemporary comics artists and creators, but also to researchers (Baetens, 2010).

Moreover, visualization is aimed at addressing the procedure of handling the analysis of large corpora of comics through facilitating the access and retrieval of large corpus material and contributing to archiving methods and annotation systems. In particular, so-called “direct visualization” will handle large corpus material and create new visual representations from that material (Manovich, 2011, p. 36). The arguments for using visualization are, first, to generate references for the theories presented in order to clarify and contextualize them with respect to visual narratives; and, second, to enable close access to the material by the means of mining, annotation, mapping, and editing.

1.1.3. CONTRIBUTIONS

The contributions of this study are an analytical system and a visualization tool for comics, and a narratological analysis of war in Lebanese comics. The study also points out the expansion of the tool into a comics remixing machine.

The analytical system designed and visualized incorporates annotation and discusses the possibility of comics mining operations combining the possibility of the tool to facilitate qualitative and quantitative on the multimodal structure of comics. Text-mining and image-mining methods – incorporated in the visualization and enabled by it – are presented in addition to the analytical structure that is based on the units of comics and on which a narratological study was also enabled.
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Lebanese comics were chosen to conduct the narratological study and they also demonstrate the analytical system. The focus on comics that are peripheral to the established traditions is a new domain that needs further research and deserves attention as an emerging research area. Moreover, the analysis of war provides valuable information concerning the contribution of comics to the Lebanese war debate. This also may benefit artists and comics studies through the presentation of these new narrative strategies, which were applied in this research study.

The tool designed for this analysis may also benefit artists by providing the conceptualization of tools for comics editing and for further experimentation with comics narrative by re-mixing narrative sequences. Artists often reuse, reshuffle, copy, and duplicate their comics on the page and in the sequence; and this is also what direct visualization enables this research to do in order to identify and distinguish the comics constituents.

1.2. Interdisciplinary Scope
Though comics studies is a rapidly-expanding field of research – with comics appearing in mainstream literature and given serious consideration in academia with grants and scholarships being awarded in this area of study – it remains interdisciplinary. Jan Baetens (2010) claims that interdisciplinarity opens up the research on comics to “diversity and exceptional dynamics”, referring to some scholars and researchers in the field of visual studies at universities in the United States who have adopted practices from cultural studies, and also to a modified approach to semiotics more rooted in the materiality of the analyzed object (Baetens, 2010:6). Not abiding by strict parameters, this study is characterized by interdisciplinary work, however, is aimed at the visual study of multimodal comics text.
This research study considered multiple disciplines, including visual studies, literary studies, and visual communication, as well as interface design in computer science; however, the main focus remained on narratological, multimodal, and visualization approaches supported by storytelling, imaging, and digital design (fig. 1.3). Both the academic circle at the VisComX research center at Jacobs University, Bremen, Germany, and the visual studies program at Duke University, Durham, NC, United States, frame the studies of ‘the visual’ at the intersection of the fields of humanities, social sciences, and sciences. In addition, the background of this researcher as a Lebanese visual storyteller and digital designer supports this research study with her knowledge of making comics and working with digital media.
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When William J. Thomas Mitchell (1994) coined the expression “pictorial turn” describing the considerable interest in pictorial media in Western humanities, he advocated visual studies as a “de-disciplined” area of research (as cited in Elkins, 2003, p. 3). Visual studies, as the “study of visual practices across all boundaries”, branches out from different disciplines (ibid.). James Elkins (2003) illustrates this idea with the research work of scholar Mieke Bal and her approach to visual culture, which, for her, includes literary theory, art history, postcolonial theory, psychoanalysis, and also translation studies. Indeed, the established disciplines of art history, cultural studies, and literary theory present “a set of overlapping concerns” in visual studies (ibid., p. 17). Semiotics, iconology, visual narratology, and multimodality have contributed to the knowledge of how meaning is mediated in images (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Müller, 2003; Bal, 2008; Bateman, 2008a).

Comics studies, as part of visual studies that look at static visual narratives, also borrow theories from different fields, particularly as narratives spill over into literature, sociology, history, art history, media studies, mass media, politics, and communication, among others.

Comics studies is an expanding field of inquiry and somewhat ‘à la mode’ as, since 2000, it has been included in university curricula as a research field (Baetens, 2009; Groensteen 2007b; Smith, 2012). Nonetheless, it “must work toward a model of true interdisciplinary collaboration if the field is to thrive” (Hatfield, 2010, p. 1). Much comics research includes also historical, philosophical, psychological, cultural, social, and political exploration, as well as semantic, narrative, and multimodal research. In the 1990’s, formalist and semiotic approaches dominated comics studies, while recent research has historicized or contextualized comics to critically examine the implications of the cultural politics of comics (Suzuki, 2010).

In Lebanon, despite the fact that cultural studies focusing on visuals remains limited, let alone the scarcity of research on comics, some scholars have carried out cultural analyses on Lebanese representation of war in literature, film, and graphics (Cooke, 1996: Seigneurie, 2008; Khalaf, 2009; Hout, 2012; Khatib, 2007; Hourani, 2008; Maasri, 2009; Elias, 2009). In the study of comics,
Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994) cover dominant political themes in the Arab countries, including Western influence, patriarchy, justice, and anti-Zionism. Thus, the insight into the cultural aspects of Lebanese comic strips presented in this thesis has been gained from interviews and lectures by artists in the field, articles in relevant publications, and the experience of this researcher as a Lebanese comics artist and publisher who, also, is making comics about war.

Visual studies overlap with literary studies to cover semantic research on verbal and visual aspects of comics. Scholars have compared the grammatical units in verbal language to structural units of comics, attributing, for instance, the functions of the paragraph to the panel and elaborating on comics units (Saraceni, 2001; Menu, 2011; Groensteen, 2007b). Others have applied terms from literature and linguistics – like metaphors, metonymy, and synecdoche – on graphic form (Miller, 2007; Kukkonen, 2011b). Intersecting with comics studies, the semantic study undertaken by Neil Cohn (2003) proposes a different grammar for particular concerns related to the semantic functions of comics. His research exemplifies interdisciplinary research in literary and visual studies and presents proposals for the formulating of comics ‘grammar’ and visualization (ibid., 2003, 2010, 2013). Literary studies, on the other hand, look at the literary aspects of comics, which are distinguished from visual aspects “in light of the norms and styles and concerns that attach to literature” (Meskin, 2009, p. 219).

The research conducted in literary studies covers elaboration of a semiotic system towards the text (Turner & Greene, 1977). The literary aspect of comics is limited here to the adoption of a formal presentation of the meaning of the text; while the so-called ‘global text’ is a text based and composed of units that are a sequence of propositions (ibid.). Thus, studying the words, sentences, and paragraphs in comics – in addition to the visual aspects – encompasses a critical approach taken towards comics defined as “narratives of visual dominance” (Groensteen, 2011, p. 5). The interdisciplinary approach of visual narratology spans narratology and visual communication.
In 1969, three years after the issuing of a special edition in the French journal Communications, Tzevatan Todorov (1969) coined the term ‘narratology’ to describe a theory that is grounded in the structural analysis of narratives. The issue, introduced by Roland Barthes (1966), calls for a new theory to “describe and classify the infinite number of narratives” and contains contributions by Algirdas Julien Greimas, Todorov, and Genette, that set forth the basic principles of narratology (as cited in Barthes, 1966, p. 238). In 1971, linguist and semiotician Greimas introduced a ‘narrative grammar’ which looked at the units and levels of narrative texts, abstracting the semiotic meaning into visualization in logical statements and enriched by narrative elements and further transposition in abstract formulas (as cited in Genette, 1980; and Bal, 1985). Nevertheless, narratology outside the domain of literary studies is still widely debated as to whether it can be regarded as a discipline (Herman & Vervaecj, 2007). The ‘narratological toolkit’ and the fundamental concepts of narrative analysis, however, are “accessible to related disciplines and provided – and still provides – us with interfaces to complex ‘philosophical questions’” (Meister, 2003, p. 69).

Visual and cross-medial narratologies branch out from narratology in applying such concepts to visuals. The methodological bridge between visual studies and narratology is visual narratology. Bal (1990) questions the nature of visual narratives, and demonstrates how the gaze and hand gesture in a narratological study can reveal narratives that push the critical dimension of the painting: “the sign of the gaze-fist […]raises] questions about the complicity of the pictorial tradition and the misuse of the female body” (p. 749). In addition, trans-medial narratology conflates media studies and narratology, focusing on the study of trans-medial adaptations. Kukkonen (2011a) investigates how a particular medium “constrains as well as enables storytelling practices” and how comics appropriates medium-specific narrative strategies from other media (p. 37). In analyzing comics, Kukkonen (2011a) states that the fundamental modes that operate in comics are words, images, and sequences and she draws a distinction between the function of images and words, while also indicating the idea that between the arts of time and the arts of space lies a cultural construction.
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and a historical constraint that also are realized by appropriating modes from different media. Literary and visual studies in communication regard comics as a popular medium and develop sociological, political, and historical views of comics.

According to Marion G. Müller and Esra Özcan (2007), visual studies have a strong influence on visual communication but “the limitations of treating visuals with a textual approach are well established, and in the field of linguistics and semiotics, the ‘cure’ is multi-modality” (p. 102). Indeed, multimodal analysis enables quantitative research from the taxonomies and distinctions presented, for example, the taxonomy of image-text combination (Martinec & Salway, 2005). John Bateman (2008a, 2013a) mentions the considerable use and adoption of materiality in semiotic research, including the work of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2006), and presents the so-called ‘GeM system’ (Genre and Multimodality) for the analysis of the layers and the structures of multimodal documents. Moreover, visual studies include quantitative studies of the image facilitated not only by multimodal analysis, but also by visualization.

The investigation of visualization and visual-design communication is supported by visual communication and art history, starting with the fascinating visual boards of Aby Warburg (1979) which present material combinations of series of images for the purpose of iconology, or research in the memory, the meaning, and the functions of images across cultures and social classes. Archives and digital archives of comics are essential for the survival of comics in the absence of annotation software for comics’ multimodal nature (Friedman, 2012; Groensteen, 2011). Also, semantic approaches are emerging in design studies that are increasingly related to digital media and have given “a new energy” to digital humanities (Barnhurst, Vari & Rodriguez, 2004, p. 630). The factors that facilitated the recent growth and importance of information visualization include the availability of software and data sets, and the Internet speed and distribution. “Design students, from digital media to architecture, are increasingly exposed to cross-disciplinary knowledge such as programming and interface techniques, supplementing creative design experience with state-of-the-
art computer science skills. An emerging group of visualization designers wish to cross boundaries between fields, by inventing, designing and prototyping novel techniques” (Lau & Vande Moere, 2007, p. 2).

Visualization of multimodal data uses graphics, simulations, and computational techniques, while the design of the “visualization pipeline” manages the different modality fusion (Kehrer & Hauser, 2013, p. 504). On the one hand, image and text mining as computational operations may create different kinds of visualizations, commonly employed for the study of formal characteristics of large corpus images such as the work of Manovich (2012). The syntactical model and statistical training methods for recognizing particular formal features, including face recognition in comics, also employ visualization and prove that formal analysis can be made more complex by distinguishing different feature combinations (Stommel & Kuhnert, 2009). On the other hand, studies on the semantic annotation for narrative media have enabled the annotation of preconditions and effects of narrative units (Lombardo & Damiano, 2011). A multimodal narratological approach taken towards comics can benefit from both image and text mining. Coding multimodal text has been applied in narrative visualization of film, and research in annotation systems for narratological analysis of film from a multimodal perspective is being developed (Manovich, 2013; Bateman, 2013a).

Nevertheless, narratological coding of comics still needs investigation. Bateman (2013a) advocates open-source systems of annotation for research. The study of large corpora would greatly benefit the multimodal study of large-corpus material in comics by the means of sharing comics and their annotations across different research. In fact, innovative archiving procedures have broken down the traditional distinction between archiving projects and distribution (Knight, 2011), raising the relevance of designing software for comics that combine archiving, editing and sharing functions. Moreover, Groensteen (2010b) proposes a kind of confluence of approaches in comics, where scholars are adopting new approaches that are more “inventive (approach) towards the media” and
that are “less confined within the existing theoretical frameworks and their ideological presuppositions” (p. 22).

1.3. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

In this research study, the challenges were many. The author has lived and made comics about the war, thus a self reflective and self-critical approach had to be adopted. The diversity of comics’ formats in the corpus and the different languages and reading directions they are written in, required a constant process of translation and reordering. The limitations are in the corpus, which did not include children formats nor comics published before 2003 or after 2011.

Keeping an emotional distance with the subject – being war– was difficult when this has been experienced personally several times and when it remains as a close, ominous presence. A constant effort had to be made as to try to keep a distance from the emotional aspect of the topic, especially when it was needed to recall and re-immerse oneself in war memories in order to understand a situation or a certain point of view.

The other significant challenge was the diversity of formats of comics and of the multilingualism that exists especially in Lebanese comics. The corpus consists of as many as twenty-six comics formats ranging from books or graphic novels, comics albums, serial comics, shorts, and strips. This number includes 2,365 pages of comics aimed only at an adult readership, disregarding children’s comics. Moreover, such non-standardization of formats created another challenge to the direct visualization, which needed to be flexible enough to adjust to the multitude of different variations, as well as to the analysis due to the varying length of the graphic narratives.

The use of Arabic, English, and French in Lebanese comics is particular, due to the fact that Lebanon is a multilingual country. Kassim Shaaban and Ghazi Ghaith (2002) point out that the nature and use of native and foreign languages in social, educational, and media contexts raises
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Controversial issues in Lebanon, including the assertion of “the personal and the national identity; the conflict between modernity and heritage and between westernization and holding to Arab traditions” (p. 558). These are, of course, aspects that are included in the analysis; however, such use of spoken languages complicated the task. A constant process of translation needed to be made but, more importantly, the reading direction required the visualization to accommodate both comics that are read from left to right and from right to left. Also, this thesis is in English, but the sources are texts in Arabic, English, and French, while the major theoretical reference points are taken from the French-language author Thierry Groensteen.

The limitation of the research is the corpus, which adhered strictly to the period chosen and did not include earlier or later comics dealing with war, particularly because of the lack of archived resources of such works as Ahmad Higazi’s (1981) Tambulal-Awwal in Dar El Fata El Arabi (1981), the Jad workshop’s From Beirut (1989), and Zerooo magazines (2000-2002). Nor did it include such recent comics as This Story Happens (2011) by Mazen Kerbaj at Dar el Adab, or the magazine Zamakan, edited by Omar Khouri (2013). Children’s and crossover comics, being highly ideological, also were eliminated at the expense of alternative comics, including one magazine of particular interest, Al Hadi, published Resistance (2007-2012), an elaborate series about Hezbollah fighters, most of which was written by Fadia Mroue. When considering these works for further analysis, the corpus had to be delineated and, thus, they were excluded.

1.4. Outline of the Research

This research study analyzes war narratives in Lebanese comics in order to explore the contribution of comics to the current debate on war in Lebanon. It looks at the events to see what has been told, what has been focalized, and what has been omitted from the wars that Lebanon already experienced. Also, it looks at characters of intense conflict in order to identify them and their involvement in war. The research questions are presented in Chapter 2, as well as the methodology
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used and a summary of the queries concerning the nature of comics narratology, visualization, and application, and of the content of the Lebanese war narratives in comics as the focus and the applied narratological study.

The principal findings of this research study are the developed comics narratology and its visualization, which further deepened the analysis by examining the units and modes of comics. The visualization was designed as an analytical interface to transcribe, annotate, and map narrative fragments on the units using visual, linguistic, and spatial modes. The interface is called “Amphibian” to transcribe, annotate, and map narrative fragments on the units using visual, linguistic and spatial modes. Amphibian was demonstrated by the mapping of the narratological elements of events and characters extracted from the corpus. ‘Events’ of bombing and shooting and ‘armed characters’ were mapped on the corpus and their narration and focalization analyzed, determining the nature of war narratives in the comics and, by extension, their contribution to the Lebanese war debate. The results are of random and cruel violence to instill suffering and fear, and of repetitive invasions by and conflicts with foreign armies – however strong, evil, or banal these armies may be. Also, the narratives show the ‘Lebanese unity’ as absurd and violent, rather than being that of a civic peace.

Chapter 2 explores the different theories related to visual narratology and multimodality and their applicability to this research study. It highlights some of the methodological elements involved, including the design and the methodological approach taken towards comics’ narrative. Chapter 3 examines the system and multimodal analysis of comics and how they can be applied to a narratological study of comics. It presents the articulation of units and modes and the fundamental principles of narratology, and proposes a comics narratology. Introduced in Chapter 4 is Amphibian, an analytical interface for comics, which is visualized and designed to operate manual and automated functions. This chapter also includes a flowchart that elucidates the process and the
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usability of the interface. Chapter 5 discusses the ongoing war debate in Lebanon and then presents in detail the corpus material and sampling of narratives of war in Lebanese comics.

Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 combine the data relating to war and comics analysis, and then discuss the mapping of events and characters on Amphibian – thus demonstrating the operation and function of this analytical interface for comics. Chapter 6 presents the analysis of events of intense war carried out using the analytical interface Amphibian and, thus, acting as a first demonstration of the system. The result is a chronology whereby events were studied in terms of their narration and their focalization. Chapter 7 also presents a demonstration of Amphibian, this time applied on ‘armed men’ involved in wars depicted in the comics. This category includes individuals, as well as state and non-state groups.

The final chapter, Chapter 8, draws together the narrative fragments examined and the results of this research study and places them in the context of the larger narrative and the debate on war – demonstrating the valuable and unique insight that this research study is aiming to provide. Moreover, it includes suggestions of ways in which this study may be extended and contribute to advancing future research on comics. Such research would build on and develop further the software of the analytical interface Amphibian and, using the strategies presented, challenge the limits of this discipline. Through insight into narratives, comic re-mixes, and new technology, a deepened understanding and development of comics studies among both researchers and comics artists would emerge.
2. Research Design and Methodological Approach

This chapter presents the overall methodology used in this research study, in addition to listing the research questions and explaining the approach and design applied to combine the various methods, including corpus-based analysis, visual narratology, and multimodal analysis. Furthermore, it illustrates the application of the designed methods and includes a discussion of the way the study findings answer the original research questions.

2.1. Research Questions

The investigation concerns the analyzing of narratives of war in Lebanese comics. Initially, this implied studying the literature on narrative analysis and exploring the published research on comics, as well as relevant cultural studies. Further research was made into ‘visualization’ and how this could facilitate the analysis of comics as a multimodal and narrative medium, which, ultimately, led to expanding into new comics configurations.

The objectives were, first, to create a tool and system for graphic narrative analysis of a large corpus; and, second, to use this tool to analyze the narration and focalization of war in Lebanese comics by looking at war events and at armed characters in this corpus. In other words, a mixed-methods approach that combines a review of large data sets and that presents a draft proposition for comics mining with a narratological qualitative study applied to comics was used.
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The research questions are the following:

- What is the narratology of comics and how can it be applied?
  
  This is related to the study of narratives by distinguishing the constituents of the narration.

  It is an attempt at drawing the foundation of a ‘comics narratology’ based on narratological, multimodal, and formal comics theories accommodated to a visualized system for the actual analysis of comics.

  The two sub-questions that it presupposes are the following:

- What are the formal, multimodal, and narrative constituents of comics and how can they be visualized?

- How can a multimodal and narratological analysis be applied on comics and can it be facilitated by direct visualization?

- What is the Lebanese war narrative in comics?
  
  This second question is the application of the analysis to the analytical system; in other words, a demonstration of the analytical system that, in turn, prompts the following three sub-questions:

  - What are the events, the characters, and the objects related to war in Lebanese comics?
  
  - How is war narrated and focalized?
  
  - Who are the armed men and how are they narrated and focalized?

2.2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The methodology is a corpus-based mixed-methods approach. Stemming from the materiality of the corpus, the methodology merges various methods, starting with narratological and multimodal methods, then combining these with visualization methods to illustrate the theory of narrative and
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multimodal comics, followed by a qualitative analysis and direct visualization method in order to facilitate access to the material.

Through answering the first research question, the result is a comics narratology and its application. This was reached by researching narratology, comics studies, and multimodal analysis and led by visualization. The outcome revealed the comics constituents of the corpus to be analyzed. The theories were visualized in order to illustrate how comics can embody such theories and cover the narrativity of the comics in their materiality. A narratological analysis was applied using direct visualization; in other words, comics images were stored, edited, cut, and reshuffled into a larger image, which, in turn, articulated the constituents of these comics according to the theoretical development of the comics narratology. Finally, the comics were analyzed using the direct visualization as the analytical system.

The second research question relates to the content of Lebanese war narrative in comics; namely, which events and who are involved in the stories told about these wars. Thus, a review of all comics formats related to war was conducted to reveal the areas that would be of valuable focus. Then, an analytical system was used to demonstrate their usability and facilitate an analysis both of events of war and of armed characters. The evaluation of this system relates to the effectiveness vis-à-vis the narratological and multimodal application on the analysis of the narration, and to the focalization of the events and the characters.

2.2.1. CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS

The corpus-based analysis focused on adult Lebanese comics related to war, particularly on the events of war and on armed characters. The analysis looked at narratives and their constituents within the limits of the medium – in other words, they were physically mapped on the site of the comics image. Gillian Rose (2011) calls this site “the visual technology” (p. 27); while Marion Müller (2003), John Bateman (2008a), and Hillary Chute (2010) use the term “materiality”. Müller
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(2003) distinguishes the “material” from the “mental image”, and explains that analyzing images should take into consideration their materiality and “undergo objectification” to include their tangible and intangible components in scientific visual communication research (p. 20). According to Chute (2010), narratives do not replace an “absence and aporia”, they realize a material text and a presence “however complex and contingent” (p. 2). She argues that form and content are mutually appropriate and comics are narratives that require research that includes formalist solutions (Chute, 2006).

The importance of the materiality of comics is to provide the research with images that include also typography, and to fragment, redistribute, and reconfigure the narrative components according to theoretical and analytical categories. In addition, for research to expand on comics as an object of study, it must investigate “the entire range of [those] practices that make it possible for images to be embodied in the world as pictures”, according to Mitchell (2005, p. 198). Because comics are a visual medium, visualization facilitates a grasp on the “entire range of practices” possible in comics narration (ibid.). In other words, visualizing the narrativity of comics entails the visualization of the entire possible comics configuration that creates a narrative.

On the one hand, illustrating the theories expands on the conceptualization of this narrativity by providing embodiment for the entire range of theoretical applications. Observing how narration unfolds in the corpus texts provides an insight into not only the potential of an expansion of practices, but also into those practices that already have been used. The particular visualizations that are of interest for this study are those targeted towards researchers of comics and comics artists. The data types of the visualizations are meta-comics as visualization of comics theories, and they comprise direct-visualization timeline interfaces of comics images in sequence.

The challenges and limitations of this research study were of various types. ‘Visualization’ is a very broad term which refers to visual representation of information and its meaning differs when used in academic discourse and scientific journals and when applied in practice. In graphic design,
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‘visualization’ means diagrams and illustrations and is a rather inclusive term, referring to the range between abstraction and realism. Scientific or data visualization refers to computational images in computer science and are drawn from scientific data, also known as InfoVis. Michael Benton (1999) describes visualizing narratives as a productive method to reveal temporal progression and contextual information. This study focuses on models of visualizations of large image data sets for the research, and is supported by visualization techniques used for designing information specifically for the purpose of analyzing comics.

Among the challenges posited by the material image in comics are that such images originate from different traditions and have been created by various visual techniques in diverse formats that, in many ways, hinder an analysis focused on formal categories. The variety in traditions also means that there are numerous different attributions for the term ‘comics’. For example, the word ‘comics’ as describing early humorous works is a term that often is mistaken for the humorist attribution of comedians; while ‘dailies’, and later ‘comic strips’, refer to comics adaptations for the design grid of a newspaper page. The word ‘cartoon’ originally referred to the cardboard on which editorial images were drawn and ‘comic books’ to the first printed publications of comics. Thus, as a consequence of geo-cultural, professional, and theoretical usage the meaning and concept of ‘comics’ vary – however, they all are imaged narratives.

The Lebanese corpus of war-related comics is various and wide, and also multilingual. Instead of being limited to a small number of books or series, Lebanese comics span various formats, authors, and techniques¹ – including photography, drawing, painting, and mixed media in both analog and digital formats. Moreover, most Lebanese comics are written in Arabic, English, and French, which, in addition to translation, pose also the challenge of the Latin and the Arabic fonts reading from opposite directions. The most common formats are printed books and albums, anthologies, magazines, and web comics. Because images can be painted, printed, filmed, and projected on

¹ ‘Technique’ here refers to the methods used by graphic designers.
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screen, or digitized and projected from the screen, they also may be adapted to such other media as graffiti, film, and web images.

In this research study, the term ‘comics’ includes all the above; however, there is an inherent formal distinction among the following categories: ‘strip’, ‘short’, ‘novel’, and ‘series’. Moreover, rather than a genre classification to unify all the attributions and traditions, the term ‘comics’ is used to refer to all kinds of graphic narratives, short or long.

The method of visualization has proven useful for exploring, analyzing, and gaining insight into multifaceted scientific spatio-temporal, multivariate, multimodal, multi-run, and multi-model data (Kehrer & Hauser, 2013). It refers to the process of fragmenting, redistributing, and reconfiguring images, and is an appropriate method to deal with the analysis of comics. Both Bateman (2013b) and Lev Manovich (2012) list a proliferation of visualization methods that enable the processing and analysis of large images and documents. Andrea Lau and Andrew Vande Moere (2007) describe visualization as “representing abstract data, providing an interactive interface, and using visual appeal to engage the user [with] little concern for aesthetics” (p. 3). Colin Ware (2012) portrays visualization design as the organizational operation of transforming ideas into graphics ranges on a spectrum of interactivity with a user (p. 23); while Connie Malamed (2009) presents it as a method used to enhance communication by making large sets of data accessible and credible.

Manovich (2011) adds spatial variables to the configuration, including position, size, shape, and, more recently, movement “to represent key differences in the data and reveal patterns and relations” (p. 36). Johannes Kehrer and Helwig Hauser (2013) use a multimodal data visualization to compare the “modalities for difference and similarities” by utilizing the raw data and often “intermediate information” from the rendering processes (p. 505). These visualization studies focus on an interface that includes the material; in the words of Manovich (2011), “[d]irect visualization [can] handle large corpus [of comics] material, and create new visual representation from [that] material” (p. 36).
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In this research study, visualization played the role of actualizing the range of the theories and identifying possible examples for their application in comics which, ultimately, led to an extensive search for the narrativity and different potential canonical narratives used in a panel. In addition, a direct visualization method was designed and used as the interface for this analysis. The research that was conducted in order to design the interface of the analytical system focused on comics narratology, multimodal analysis, and the formal and narrative categories of the comics corpus. Furthermore, it borrowed from such precedent analytic and visual interfaces as computer software, web applications, and examples in interface design. The visualization was designed to distinguish the modes on tracks and layers through the articulation of the units of graphic narratives researched in the corpus. Therefore, a direct visualization method was used in order to unify the corpus into one interface. The corpus was digital or digitized, the formats were adjusted so that they more or less would fit within the same frame height, the translation was applied directly in the transliteration of the text from the image into annotation, and the reading direction was imposed from left to right to follow that of this thesis.

The design is presented in greater detail in Chapter 4, which follows the discussion of the comics system and narratology. The methodology used in this research study to analyze both ‘events’ and ‘characters’ through the method of visualization is detailed in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, respectively.

2.2.2. VISUAL NARRATOLOGY AND MULTIMODALITY

Most contemporary comics researchers emphasize the visual nature of the medium and its sequentiality (Miller, 2007; Pratt, 2009), and they attribute comics to a “narrative species of visual dominance” (Groensteen, 2011, p. 89). In this research study, the methods applied in order to conceptualize a comics narratology combined theories and methods from classical and visual narratology with visualization techniques. The focus was on the narration, the story, and the
narrators, and also on how these occurred in a multimodal graphic system. The fundamental theories that Gérard Genette (1980) put forth, in addition to the visual narratology of Mieke Bal (2009) and the multimedia narratology of Marie-Laure Ryan (2010), established the contextual ground on which a narratology of comics could be conceived in this research study. As they are a sequence of images that articulate spatially to create a story, comics are graphic narratives and, thus, require a particular narratology that combines theories from visual and classical narratological concepts. Moreover, this research taps into Thierry Groensteen’s (2011) proposition for a comics narratology and further research in comics studies.

In this research study, after having introduced the narratology and its theories, the units and modes of the corpus were described and visualized. The two principles of narrative are ‘succession’ and ‘transformation’ as defined by change (Todorov, 1990). A narrative is composed of either an event or of a series of events that are on levels, either embedded or parallel. The narrative always is being played out by characters and, implicitly or explicitly, told by a narrator (Bal, 2009; Genette, 1980). Narrative texts are characterized by the narrativity or the degree by which they employ transformation in the telling of their full text. The indicator of the narrativity is the presence of change and of a narrator, as well as the choices the narrator makes and the confrontations the narrator engages in.

Focalization, on the other hand, is an inflection on the narration whereby a certain meaning is stressed or framed in a specific manner. Thus, in this research study, a narratological approach was used to distinguish the narratives, the stories, the narrators, and the focalizors, and also to interpret and formulate the narration and the focalization of events and of characters in the corpus. Narrative analysis, however, is a wide field of research that includes a great variety of methods that may result in a limiting of the analysis to narratological methods. In this research study, preference was given to the narratology at the expense of those broad methods that exist in the narrative due to the
already-present complexity in the multimodal material which indicated numerous limitations, but also because this is an area of research application which still is untested.

The focus was given to the relation between the narrators, their narratives, and their stories. In addition, Genette’s (1980) narrative levels were applied in order to reveal embedded narratives and their level of embeddedness in a larger narrative. In other words, importance was given to narratives revealed by narrators and focalizors, and to the modal combination in comics, rather than to the structure in which the narratives were constructed with a ‘beginning’, a ‘middle’, and an ‘end’. Such other researchers as William Labov (1967) in linguistics, Syd Field (2007) in film, and Neil Cohn (2003, 2013) in comics focused on the narrative points – discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 – and how they can be applied to the analytical system.

The multimodal construction of comics articulates on two layers; namely, the “ribbon of images” and the ‘ribbon of words’, which intersect, combine, or accompany the other (Groensteen, 2011, p. 106). In this research study, the application of the narratological analysis took into consideration the multimodal aspects of comics and distinguished the modal narratives and their combinations. Even though words are not part of the essential definition of comics, they often occur in them and they always coincide with a verbal attribution that is also material – namely, the title.

Known as the “father of comics”, Rodolphe Töpffer wrote that comics are a “mix” between drawing and text (Peeters, 2010, p. 103). As emphasized by Lawrence L. Abbott (1986), “the comic artist must be a story-teller in words and pictures, but a story-teller above all, because the medium is a narrative one, in which the pictorial is best thought of as para-literary” (p. 176). David Harvey (2001) underscores this idea by stating, “words usually contribute to the meaning of the pictures and vice versa” (p. 76). On the other hand, Groensteen (2007b) argues that imposing the “verbiage” on the definition of ‘comics’ in fact reduces it to another category, and he provides numerous examples of wordless comics that otherwise would not have been considered ‘comics’ (p. 15). He stands by Ann Miller’s definition, being the production of “meaning out of images which are in a
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sequential relationship, and which co-exist with each other spatially, with or without text” (Groensteen, 2007b, p. 75).

In actual fact, some type of text – even though not defining in character – always is accompanying the visual sequence that constitutes the graphic narrative, or at least when the format is referred to. Thus, in this research study, the multimodal distinction on the two layers of comics articulation – the visual and the verbal – was imposed on all the corpus, in addition to a layer that considers the narrative that arises from the modal distinction.

2.3. APPLIED APPROACH

The methodological process, as illustrated in figure 2.1, started with image gathering and archiving.

It dealt with issues related to finding an appropriate format in which the images could be stored, and
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then creating an appropriate digital architecture for the files and their folders. Research into visualization facilitated access to the image files and optimized their preview appropriately to the size and number of files. Finding such precedents as existing tools and experimenting with such graphic-design methods as publishing contributed to the image-browsing solution. Twenty-nine different formats of adult or independent comics related to war were found, concentrated between the years 2003 and 2011, and the total number of pages constituting the corpus became 2,365.

The next step of the process was the theoretical research into narratology, multimodality, and formal comics theories. The foundations of classical narratology lie in the distinction of narrative constituents from a narrated text. They are the narrative, the story, the events, and the characters. The narratological investigation connected to this research study distinguished these narrative constituents in comics articulations using Edward Morgan Forster’s (1927/2002) canonical story “The Queen Died, Then the King Died” as a template (p. 71). In other words, this investigation took into consideration narratives of the visual mode, narratives of the verbal mode, and narratives stemming from their combination. Furthermore, the formal theories in comics provided the basis on which the comics were structured as articulations of units, for example the ‘panel’, ‘page’, and ‘format’. Thus, the narratology of comics investigated events and characters in the visual and verbal modes and their combination according to their occurrences in the panel, the page, and the format.

In addition to providing easy access to the images of the comics, the visualization method – which was the third step in the methodology process of this research study – comprised of sketching and illustrating these theories and testing their application. The theories were visualized by diagrams and illustrations based on previous graphic-design experience, which included information architecture and design. Comics, based on Forster’s (1927/2002) canonical story, illustrated the narratology of comics theories. Moreover, combining research in such visualized precedents as illustrations was used to explain the structure and semantics of the comics. Exploration of large image data sets and quantitative research in comics served as the basis on which the analytical
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system was designed. Direct visualization was found to be the most appropriate method for the application of the analysis of the materiality of the comics, particularly when adapted to large corpora and to all the categories of graphic narratives, not only those that follow the tradition of comics. It enabled formal, modal, and narratological constituent distinctions on the images of comics in the corpus included in this research study.

The fourth step of the methodological process involved thorough research on the Lebanese Civil War and the identifying of visual narratives of war in literature, film, and graphic design which could benefit the understanding of the context of Lebanese war comics. It also included research on comics, specifically looking at the history of Lebanese comics and the current situation based on the knowledge and experience gained as a comic artist in the country. The professional connection of this researcher facilitated the access to material in terms of sourcing comics in the market and online, through direct access from other comic artists, and from the archives of Samandal magazine.

Methodologically, the quantitative content analysis complied with the set aims of objectivity, ability, and validity based on the verifications strategies of Janice M. Morse (2002); namely, methodological coherence, appropriate sample collecting and analyzing of data concurrently, and theoretical thinking and development (p. 18). A large quantity of images was reviewed to produce “generalizable prediction” and identify trends in the content of the comics constituting the corpus of this research study (Margolis & Pauwels, 2011, p. 266).

Subsequently, a corpus review was conducted in order to reduce the material from 2,365 to 166 pages. Because of the large number of pages in the particular formats which related to war, and in order to assess what specific narratives of war the investigation needed to focus on, a qualitative corpus analysis was used to sort the material into three categories; namely, ‘events’, ‘characters’, and ‘objects’ related to war. The frequency of the first occurrence of each theme was recorded and then compared with the rest of the material and assessed as to whether it was the most frequent. Finally, the salient events and characters were framed into questions; a visual content analysis
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answered ‘who’ and ‘what’ was represented in the comics and indicated the frequency of occurrence. The main unit was defined as ‘adult comics related to war’ and the codebook contained ‘event’, ‘character’, and ‘object’ as the three main categories used to code the research material.

The encoding of the material and the data analysis were then applied. This resulted in a need to investigate further the material to consider latent narratives present in the abstraction, symbolism, or modal combination, which also could be traced by a narrator search. The reduced material focused on the salient themes through two subordinate questions that demonstrated the analytical system. The first question addressed the nature of the narration and the focalization of the events of warfare. The second investigated the identity, involvement, and focalization of armed men in the narratives of Lebanese war comics. These two questions were answered by placing the comics images in the analytical system. A mapping of the particular narratives in the pages was then applied, and the result was analyzed using narratology. Thus, both narration and focalization were studied; namely, the events of warfare and the armed men. These investigations also functioned as test studies for the analytical system as they determined its applicability and robustness.

2.3.1. INTEGRATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

The research results include: a) an illustrated narratology created to visualize the relevant theory/theories; b) an analytical interface as a unique and novel analytical framework; c) mappings created from distinguishing events of war and armed men; and d) the analysis itself. The relationships between these findings were developed through accumulating pre-requisite methods whereby the first result enabled the development of the second and so on, while still preserving the autonomy of each.

As mentioned earlier, the comics’ narratology was designed by combining theories from narratology, multimodal analysis, and comics studies; and by looking at the narratives in the comics modes and how they articulate in the comics units. The multimodal analysis of comics covered the
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graphic and the verbal and their combination, as well as the spatial and the sequential mode and their combination. These modes operated on particular sites – the comics units. They constituted the panel, the frame, and the format. The multimodal narratives were articulated in them according to the narrative levels that were either embedded or parallel. The comics narratology will be described in greater detail in Chapter 3.

In this research study, the analytical interface is the surface on which the foundation of the comics narratology was built, and it is also the tool that was designed, developed, and used to analyze the corpus. A graphic configuration accounts for the units and the modal articulation of the comics in the corpus so that this narratological study was enabled to distinguish and analyze the narratives, narrators, or narration in the comics by means of direct visualization. The functions of the tool were further developed to include research on image and text mining, and also to propose a comics-mining agent for the tool. A detailed explanation is presented in Chapter 4.

The mappings and analysis are the results that demonstrate the capacities of the analytical system. Materially, these mappings are new images created from the corpus that focus on the particular mappings of warfare and of armed men. They answer the second research question related to the narration and focalization of war in Lebanese comics and, in particular, this research study on warfare events and armed men. The analysis required a structured method to accommodate the materiality of comics and to map the narratives in them. The first study revealed the chronology and the stages of war and focused on describing the narration and the focalization of these stages. The second analysis resulted in a classification of the armed men involved in Lebanese war events, their narration and focalization or implication in war. These mappings are covered in detail in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, respectively.
3. The Narratology of Comics

This chapter presents the fundamental concepts of narratology and how they can be applied to comics. In order to do so, it first presents and visualizes the units and the different modes of comics, and their interplay. Second, it presents the concepts of comics Narratology and how they are applied to the units and the modes of comics. Last, it discusses methods of annotating the research material – i.e., the comics forming the corpus of this research study – with a narratological focus, bridging the theories of comics’ narratology and multimodal analysis, and supported by visualization.

The foundations of Classical Narratology, as developed by Gérard Genette (1980), Mieke Bal (1986), and Marie-Laure Ryan (2004) focus on analyzing the fundamental narrative elements – the narration and the focalization of the story, and the identity and role of the narrator, the characters, and the events. Furthermore, Thierry Groensteen’s (2011) narratology of comics, in addition to narrative research in comics’ studies, present the assumptions of narrative analysis particular to comics such as looking at the diegetic and extra diegetic narrators. Visualization, using interactive visual analysis (Kehrer & Hauser, 2013), was used to distinguish, categorize and analyze and then argue by illustrating the different occurrences and modal combinations of images and text in comics.

The comics’ narrative categories and the multimodal categories of comics constitute two data facets, one related to the narratological elements such as story, narrator, character and events, and the other stemming from multiple data sources. These facets are placed on spatially adjoining grids that are connected by a so-called interface.

The design of the interface is further discussed in the following chapters. Following an introduction to narratology and its theories is a description and visualization of the units, the modes, and the articulation of narratives in comics. The narratology of comics is presented and discussed in terms
The Narratology of Comics

of units and modes, and of their articulation in the material images of the comics. The aim of this chapter is to answer four key questions:

• What is narratology?
• What is the structural and multimodal constitution of comics?
• What is a narratology of comics?
• How can narrative be extracted from comics and according to what annotation procedure?

The first question will be answered by looking at the narratological toolkit and the fundamental elements of narratology. It presents different concepts such as narration, non-narrative elements and focalization that will be further developed for a multimodal comic’s narratology. Answering the second question will present the units, the modes and the modal combinations and answering the third further discusses the narratological concepts in the context of comics. Last, the annotation is presented to explain how data was selected and identified from the material.

3.1. THE NARRATOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Classical Narratology is an approach and a toolkit that consists of analyzing key elements such as narrator, event, focalization etc. The comics’ narratology presented in this study is based on ‘classical narratology’, which is broader and includes a number of narratologies, explored by Ryan (2004). In addressing the question of how narratives transform and create meaning across various media, narrative is versatile and thus, “narratology […] has been conceived from its earliest days as a project that transcends disciplines and media” (Ryan, 2004, p. 1). ‘Narratology’ is the study of the narration and the narrative structures that shapes the narratives (Singer, 2012); exploring the relations between the telling and the showing that stems from the material image. It is distinguished from ‘narrative theory’ which focuses on identifying genre and/or the structural elements in narrative texts for the debated purposes of such narrative classifications as the works of Vladimir
Propp and Algirdas Julien Greimas (Ryan, 2010); and of such cultural or anthropological understanding that Bal (2008) further suggests. Jan Christoph Meister (2012) believes that recent research and debate on the fundamental concepts of narratology are enriching the discipline and he advocates research to develop a “narratological toolkit”¹ (Meister, 2003, p. 69). This study is bottom–up and adopts narratology focusing on what is being said and how, without deepening the contextual aspects.

Tzvetan Todorov (1969) coined the term ‘narratology’ to describe a theory that is grounded in the structural analysis of narratives. Three years earlier, Roland Barthes (1966) edits and introduces in the journal, Communication n. 8, L’Analyse Structurale des Récits (1966) calling for a new theory to describe and classify narratives. The issue contains contributions by Greimas, Christian Metz, Todorov, and Genette, who set out to understand the basic principles of narratology that were founded mostly in taxonomies and the description of the commonalities in literary text (Barthes, 1966). In attempting to arrive at the essence of narrative, Todorov (1973) “dissect[ed] the narrative phenomena into their component parts and then attempt[ed] to determine functions and relationships” (p. 9). These narrative components reside in narrative texts that are “ideally” characterized by: a) an utterance of two types of “speakers”; b) a narrator and an actor; c) three describable layers – the text, the story, and the fabula; and c) a series of connected events (Bal, 1985, p. 10). This is what will be referred to in this study as narrative, in a strict sense. Also, narrative analysis consists of looking at both narrative and non-narrative elements in texts where narrative elements tell a story, while non-narrative elements describe and argue them – hence, it is necessary to identify the elements that are non-narrative (Bal, 1985).

Genette (1980) concerned with literary analysis notably in Figures III, separated the fabula from the story to look at time, mode, and voice construction in narrative text. The fabula and the story are terms equated to what other researchers term, story and narrative. This is the case in this study. Bal

¹The ‘toolkit’ are the fundamental concepts of narratology, which are formal and context-free.
The Narratology of Comics

(1985) emphasizes the role of narrative theory to open up questions instead of finding taxonomy, and a method that “interprets stories around questions” in the wider analysis of narrative text (Bal, 1985, p. 228), moving the analysis from a structural to a political and an ideological one.

Since the publication of Barthes’ article, research on comics narratology has expanded. Comics, like films and digital narrative analysis are fueling narratological research (Ryan, 2012). Thierry Groensteen introduces Narratology of comics in Bande Dessinée et Narration: Système de la bande dessinée, (2011). Groensteen places his work in a neo-semiotic framework (2007), he calls for methods appropriate for the specificity of comics and present a narratology of comics with detailed descriptions of narrative elements such as the narrator, the delegated monstrator and the recitant1, visual narration and focalization (2011). Narrative analysis and research on comics debuted much earlier with the work of Lawrence L. Abbott (1986) in the seminal paper Comic Art: Characteristics and Potentialities of a Narrative Medium, whose research provides key ideas to comics narratological analysis. He presents a first dissection of a comic’s panel into verbal and visual layers and analyzed specific examples of tabular and sequential narration. Most importantly, Abbott argues that words in comics “often serves as the dominant force in overall perception” (p. 159). Although this is true particularly because of the linearity of text, it can be simply argued that his research needed to be inclusive of wordless comics. A multimodal analysis of comics should include comics that are with or without words. Thus, the consideration for image sequences and word sequences in research, shared evidence by most researchers today, is crucial to the narratological method as foundations for the multimodal analysis. In addition to the works of Groensteen (2007b), recent narrative analysis dominates the present discourse on comics, including his own and the works of Pascal Lefèvre (2000), Jan Baetens (2001), Henry John Pratt (2009), Hillary Chute (2010), Neil Cohn (2013), Silke Horstkotte and Nancy Pedri (2011).

1 In French language, monstrator and recitant are both terms used by Groensteen to designate the ‘showing’ and the ‘speaking’ agency.
Narratology as analysis of narrative texts requires a distinction between the different forms of narrative elements that might occur within a text. The value of such an analysis is that it sheds light on what and how some events are told, described or argued in a particular way by a narrator. The three textual forms are the narrative, the non-narrative descriptive, and the non-narrative argumentative text. “To evaluate the ideological tenor of a text, an analysis of the relationship between these three textual forms within the totality of the entire text is a crucial element” (Bal, 2009, p. 33). In introducing the fundamental concepts of narratology, Genette (1980) and Bal (1985) propose a distinction between story and narration, what is being told and how it is being told by the literary text. To Jahn Manfred (2005), there are two orientations in narratological investigation: first, the “story narratology” “focuses on the action units that ‘emplot’ and arrange a stream of events into a trajectory of themes, motives and plot lines” (ibid., N2.1.3.). The study of particular actors in comics, who they are and what they do and tell could be one study. Second, “discourse narratology analyzes the stylistic choices that determine the form or realization of a narrative text” (ibid.). Furthermore, visual narratology looks at the visual as a “distinct representational system, encodes, in its own terms, the processes that are central to all narrative, that are narration and focalization” (Horstkotte & Pedri, 2011, p. 333). Thus, a toolkit for comics narratology should consist a multimodal analysis of the narration and the focalization of comics.

3.1.2. Narrative

The narrative in the strict sense is a narrated event. Unlike Bal’s strict definition of a narrative, most researchers agree that narrative is made up of several events (de Fina & Georgakoupolou, 2011). Indeed, narrative is also a text, in the larger sense, of certain narrativity, such as literary text, film and comics. This research study supposes that the strict narrative is the most basic construction of narrative, meaning that it is the minimum required for a text to be narrative, i.e. one narrated event.
The larger narrative is a collection of strict narratives, already told in a certain way. The later is an accomplished narration of a story and it is composed of either two strict narratives, or a series of strict narratives.

Indeed, the larger narrative is an elaboration on at least two events. E. M. Forster (1927/2002) wrote that: “The king died and then the queen died” is a story; “The king died and the queen died of grief” is a plot; and “The queen died and no one knew why until they discovered it was of grief” is a mystery and a form capable of high development (p. 71), showing the cumulative elaboration on the first strict narrative, the king died.

Based on the strict narrative of Bal (1985), a canonical narrative construction was formulated as the following:

\[
\text{Text} \subseteq \text{Narrator / Narration} \subseteq \text{Story} \subseteq \text{Event and Character (diegesis)}
\]

This formula will be the basis for the narrative construction in the verbal and in the graphic mode as they will further be discussed. It presents the levels of narration, the first of which is the text. In the larger sense, it can be a verbal text, a graphic or an audio piece.

In looking at the larger narrative in the following formula, the larger narrative includes strict narratives, which themselves, are composed of at least an event and a character.

\[
\text{Text} \subseteq \text{Narrator / Narration of the larger narrative} \subseteq \text{Strict narratives} \subseteq \text{Event and Character (diegesis)}
\]

3.1.3. **Diegesis**

The diegesis is the story world of a particular narrative and it is the stage where characters act and the event occurs. Also known as the story world, it is composed of an internal logic. The diegesis is important because it helps distinguish who is ‘inside’ and who is ‘outside’ – or rather, who is
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‘involved’ in the events and who ‘tells’ them. Narratology helps this distinction between diegetic and extra-diegetic narration. It studies narratives by considering the narrators that are exterior, as well as the ones that are ‘inside’ the story or the diegetic world. Bal (2009) presents diegesis as the “frame” or the space a character occupies – or is about to occupy – and that the boundary that delimits this frame “can be heavily invested with meaning” (p. 137). Indeed, narratives endorse, reject, or change the frame and, on the other, the frame over-determines the relation of the narrative and the story (ibid.). The diegesis is where the story, composed of events and characters, happens. Narrators can be either “speaking, looking or acting” from outside (extra-diegetic) or from inside the diegesis (diegetic) (Bal, 2009, p. 42).

3.1.4. Levels

To distinguish events in text, “the larger narrative” will designates the later, as it resides on a higher level that organizes the narrative elements in a particular way. The larger narrative may be one event or a collection of different events told by a common narrator or by several. On the vertical level, the larger narrative consists of embedded narratives. The narrator tells a story that has another narrator that also tells, and so on and so forth. On the horizontal level, the larger narrative may consist of a common event told by different narrators. The more narrators speak about a certain event, the more believable the event becomes. Indeed, conflict is better understood if narrated from different viewpoints (Bal, 2009) or knowledge sources. In this case the narratives in the larger narrative are simultaneous.

3.1.5. Time

The levels of the sequence of events, whether they are straight, vertical or horizontal, are not necessarily ordered in chronological sequence. Some events might be omitted or added, and the duration of each event might vary. To analyze time, Classical Narratology is concerned with the
discrepancy of the order, the duration, and the frequency of events in narration from the story (Genette, 1980).

It compares the time in the narration to the hypothetical time—or the real time that events require to take place (ibid.). Departing from chronology is often the case and the chronology of events is often shuffled in the telling. Diverging to tell in the present an event that happened before or an event that will occur is a strategy often used by storytellers. Different strict narratives or fragments in the larger one can communicate things in the past, future or present, they can last longer or shorter then others and they can be repeated. Indeed, events can be told several times, in several ways or by different narrators, while some others, when conventionally known to be part of that story, are omitted (Singer, 2012). This can be equated to Kress’s and van Leeuwen’s (2006) inclusion and exclusion of social actors; however, in this case the focus is on the event. Figure 3.1 presents the events of the narratives as A, B, and C in the hypothetical time (real time) and in the narrative time (the time in narration). In the figure, the events on the first row are hypothesized to be equal in span, to only occur once, and to be correctly ordered. Therefore, the visualization compares the time in the narrative and the time in the hypothetical story to evaluate the narratological time of the story\(^1\) to be analyzed. Thus, the second row presents a story where there is anticipation, the first event occurs after the second event if it was told before.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events of the hypothetical story</th>
<th></th>
<th>Events of the narrated story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Order</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
<td><strong>Order</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td>A</td>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) In this case, the stories are also hypothetical to serve the visualization of the theory.
Order is related to the chronology of events. When they match the hypothetical time, events are chronological. When they do not, they are anachronic, also known as retrospection/flashback or anticipation/flash-forward/prolepsis.

Frequency is the discrepancy in the number of occurrences of events. There are “singulative narrative, repeating narrative and […] omitted narrative” (Prince, 2008).

Duration is the discrepancy between the duration of the events and the hypothetical duration and is a quality of the following:

The scene is when the story time is a little longer or equals the hypothetical time. It is the most common tempo, usually used for dialogue or for detailed action presentation.

The summary is known as speed-up/acceleration and is when the story is shorter than the time in the hypothetical sense. It is usually used for background information and to make an overview of certain event(s).

The slow-down is known as deceleration and is when the story time is considerably longer than the hypothetical time. It is not often used and interpreted usually as equating real or subjective time or to make an emphasis.

The ellipsis is also known as a cut or an omission and is when it is logically deduced that an event was omitted from the time of the story, making the hypothetical time either equal or infinitely larger than the story (Bal, 2009). Hence, the story halts and the hypothetical time continues.

The pause is when the story time stops and there are no events happening. The time of the story is equal or infinitely shorter than the hypothetical time.

3.1.6. NON NARRATIVE ELEMENTS
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“The whole of a narrative is far more than the sum of its events” (Lefèvre, 2000, p. 1). In narrative, there are elements that do not have a particular narrative function in the strict sense of telling a movement, a change, or a story. These fragments are non-narrative and Bal (2009) categorizes them as “arguments” and “descriptions”; arguments as external text and description as metonymy and metaphor (p. 37). In literary text, description is a fragment in which features are attributed to objects. It is the expression of attributes and qualities of the narrative and the diegetic elements – being the characters, the places, and the events. Argumentation is also a fragment. It is an implied text that gives any supportive information as general knowledge that is outside the diegesis. For instance, a metaphor – if considered an implied narrative – is an argument to the metaphor (ibid.).

Bal (2009) situates description within focalization – the showing aspects of text – and claims that it has “a great impact on the ideological and aesthetic effect of text” (p. 46). To evaluate the narrativity of a text would also mean how ‘narrative’ a text is in contrast to how ‘descriptive’ or ‘argumentative’ it is. Groensteen also distinguishes the narrative (“recit”) from the “infra-narrative” as a narrative type of enunciation (an action) (2011, p. 20). He claims that there are situations with a narrative potential, however the narrative requires a deployment, a rhythm and an effect de chute (ibid.)

3.1.7. FOCALIZATION

Focalization is an inflection– or coloring– of the narration filtering the story. In Todorov´s (1973) terms, focalization ads the narrative position of the narrator and the distance by which it reflects its information to tell the story. Horskotte and Pedri present this distance as “the filtering of a story through a consciousness prior and/or embedded within its narratorial mediation” (Horstkotte & Pedri, 2011, p. 1). For them, the concept of the focalization takes into account the direction of narrative mediation and the possible variables of meaning and mood, which they call “the subjective inflection” (Ibid., p. 334). Most importantly, they arrive at a conclusion that focalization’s main criterion is “aspecutality” (Ibid., p. 351). For Bal, focalization is used to make
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the world of the narrator or the diegesis– the story world– believable by expansion and description (Bal, 1985). The more described an actor is, the more it becomes a character that has a role in the story, or in better words, the more colored the narration is with focalization, the more believable the story is.

A debate around focalization presents the confusion it has with its association with the terms perception or point of view. Genette needed to make a distinction between focalization and narration in answering, “who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective? and the very different question who is the narrator—or, more simply, the question who sees? and the question who speaks?” ([1972] 1980: 186). He introduced the term to distinguish focalization from narrator and his definition is both the “focus of vision” and “the restriction of information” (Ibid. p. 74). It is the point of view of the one that narrates and that restricts the narrative information attributed to ‘mood’ or coloring, by using a fact, a command, a possibility, or a wish (Jahn, 2005; Genette, 1980). Niederhoff shows that Genette’s use of the terms, ‘perspective’ and ‘focus’ of vision, has been associated with perception particularly by Bal (1980). He consolidates the two terms, perception and focalization and claims that the later “may be defined as a selection or restriction of narrative information in relation to the experience and knowledge of the narrator, the characters or other, more hypothetical entities in the storyworld” (Niederhoff, 2011, p. 1). In the debate the two terms are complementary (18), as long as the narrator is the only one that focalizes (ibid. 16). Indeed, characters cannot reveal their knowledge unless they become narrators.

To Bal (1985), focalization is where the ideological voice is expressed and it always presents the ideology behind what the character sees and experiences in the story, or how it is seen. Indeed, analyzing focalization can reveal what drives the narration. Thus it is an important concept to scrutinize in order to understand the ideological tenor behind narratives such as war.

For the account of the verbal text in the comics, this study will retain the definition of literary focalization as the filtering of knowledge, as a subjective inflection, or a colored narration, that
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expands and describes, that can be perceptual or that can be revealing of other knowledge through facts, command and possibility, including all aspects of aspectuality, the term used by Horstkotte and Pedri which will be further presented in the particular focalization of comics.

3.1.8. NARRATIVE COHESION

Cohesion is the accumulation of precedents or “the reappearance” of elements, but also the “tracking and classifying” process of the elements on the sequence as they appear (Bateman, 2013a, p. 19). It is essential to narration because it is an accumulation of knowledge that permits the dismissal of repeated descriptions. Once a character is introduced, everything that describes the state, behavior, and action related to that character is accumulated in the narrative progression, through the process of alternating similarity and difference. Narrative cohesion is used not only for identification, but also to create “textual cohesion” in the larger sense of the term (van Leeuwen, 2008b, p. 133). Baetens (2011) presents how such abstract images as black panels are understood only in terms of their cohesion because of their repetition. According to him, the interweaving black panels in between figurative panels are a visual effect that creates a perception of snapshots over the material (ibid.). The adoption of a similar graphiation for both the abstract and the figurative panels and the regular punctuation of the space by the abstract black panels with no narrative, the total panels become of one diegetic scene, and the narrative cohesion presents the symbolic meaning of the black ruptures as camera snapshots.

3.1.9. NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Examples of narrative analysis that are outside the scope of this research are approaches that look at the structure of the larger narrative rather than looking specifically at how the modes work and intertwine to generate a narrative in order to conduct a multimodal analysis. Indeed, in this study, the “narratological toolkit” is designed to analyze the fundamental elements that are the story, the narrators, and the characters (Meister, 2003, p. 69) as they stem from the material.
An example of such analysis is the approach of William Labov (1967) who classifies narrative segments in linguistic texts as follows: the ‘abstract’ as a summary; the ‘orientation’ as the person, the place, the time, and the behavioral situation; the ‘complicating action’; the ‘resolution’ as the solution; the ‘coda’ as the bridge with the extra-diegetic; and the ‘evaluation’ or the point of view of the narrator (p. 32). This method distinguishes how narration is constructed but not how it stems from the multimodal sources. Thus, leaving open for interpretation large segments of the text and most crucially, not distinguishing between modes. This approach was tested on Lettre à la Mère of Mazen Kerbaj (2011) and presented in figure 3.2.

FIGURE 3.2: Methods of Labov on Mazen Kerbaj’s Lettre à la Mère © Lena Merhej, 2014.

The semi-transparent layer placed on top of the material maps Labov’s segments using braces or curly brackets on the page sequence. Though the mapping of the segments (fig. 3.3) proved to be interesting, it is not relevant to this study or its research questions because it does not identify the characters and their involvement in the story, nor does it investigate the narrative multimodal deployment. Another approach shows how the structure of different Hollywood films is similar, generating a formula for films in general and for audience attention. In order to explain scriptwriting, Syd Field (2005) uses a similar approach to Labov by assigning the structure with plot points. The observation that he makes is that the duration between the plot points is similar in many entertainment films.
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If Hollywood movies abide by such rules and rigidity in the structure, it might be that the corpus of his research study was not large enough, or more likely that his narrative structure is linked to a particular genre of films. Hypothesizing the structure of narratives and the nature of the sequence of events might be effective for studies on comics of same or similar formats. However, the corpus of this study is various in formats. Also, if such an analysis is effective for testing theories or for tracing genre in a certain corpus, it is not pertinent in the study of comics from a material bottom-up approach.

FIGURE 3.3: Sequential structure in oral, filmic, and comics texts © Lena Merhej, 2014.

The problem with top-down approaches is that the analysis adopts the set and taught rules that dictate the narrative to have a beginning, a middle, and an end, which is a resolution or a conclusion and, last, a closure. Going back to the motivation of this research study, particularly as artists tend to regard narrative with lassitude, Xavier Löwenthal (2006), an influential comics critic, underlines that “[h]istory is dead and that we are being buried [by] histories”. For him, the problem with narrative is that it denotes traditional straightforward truths, reminiscing modern ideals that post-modernity rejects. The dictatorship of narrative seems to be suffocating, particularly because
narrative is the construction of identity, and because it is so ‘close to home’ and touches every aspect of life.

Comparative narrative analysis might lead to a comparative labyrinth because of the diverse nature of the corpus, considering the fact that a large amount of variables emerges from it. Indeed, a comparative analysis between the frequency of modes or narratives and non-narratives in text also could have been carried out by this visualization, but this goes beyond the scope of this study.

Nevertheless, narrative theory is used as a tool to study texts and, more importantly, a tool that helps the designation, the organization, and the development of information in texts (Bal, 1985). Like Löwenthal (2006), this research study agrees with his ‘war on narrative’ and with Meister’s (2003) invitation to appreciate the rawness and transparency of the material approached by narratology by relying on narratology as a toolkit to uncover the narration, the focalization and the other fundamental narrative elements. Instead of working with fitting the comics into a narrative structure, such as Labov or such as Fields, the narratological analysis stems from the material itself.

3.2. THE SYSTEM OF COMICS

This section covers the structural characteristics of comics as they are presented in comics studies. First, there is an introduction of the unit of the panel, the page, and the format, as well as a presentation of their different variations. Then follows a presentation of the articulation of these units and how they amalgamate to create sequences. While a faculty member at the School of Visual Arts, New York, Will Eisner (1985, 2001) expounded on the system of comics and explained such principles applied in comics as the use of the panel and balloon through writing about his own experience as a comics artist. In comics studies, Benoît Peeters (1991) presents Case, Planche, Récit: Comment Lire une Bande Dessinée1; while in The System of Comics, Groensteen

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1 Panels, Pages, Narratives; How to Read a Comic Strip (researcher’s translation).
The Narratology of Comics (2007b) describes in depth the units, their function, and the narrative elements in comics in two volumes, Système I and Système II. Groensteen (2007b) adds a cumbersome layer to the analysis—the “content-less comics”—being the imagined “empty” layer that holds the frame, the “hyperframe”, and the “multiframe” (p. 24). This added layer, however, presents a problem to the material image as it interferes with the analysis, particularly when layers are used to enable mapping. In this research study, the surface of the material image, the frame and the content, was conceptually collapsed and flattened to incorporate the entire material image. The use of layers or conceptual frames was reserved to the application of mapping methods. Thus, the mapping of the comics in this corpus was done on layers that were overlaid on the material and Groensteen’s (2007b) theory of frames was disregarded.

Going back to the units of comics and their structural articulation, the types presented below are categories that enable the dissection of the units from the material and create a first mapping of the unit articulation. Most formats include several pages, and pages that include several panels, which is more likely in traditional formats. However, when artists extend the potential of the medium, to use Barthes words, and push the limits of its units, the transgressions present new types of formats, pages and panels. These categories will serve to distinguish elements of the articulation for analytical reference and more importantly, to physically dissect the material into the articulations. Further discussed in the Analytical Interface, this procedure is designed to be computational so that the units are distinguished automatically when the formats are scanned into digital files.

3.2.1. THE PANEL

The panel, delineated by the red dashes in figure 3.4, is the smallest spatial configuration of comics. Its contents might be plastic, iconic, and/or verbal, that configures to create the image and delimits the articulation. Conceptually, the panel is the first degree of the visual articulation of comics. Abbott (1986) describes the panel as “the fundamental unit in which the complex interaction of text
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and picture operates” (p. 156). Similarly, Anne Magnussen (2000) presents the panel as the smallest unit of comics and as “formed by an image, sometimes in combination with other types of signs” (p. 198). More recent research distinguishes the panel in the discontinued fragment of comics text; for example, Jean-Christophe Menu (2011) states that the panel is the unit of the grammar of comics and compares it to the sentence where all elements find their “own justice” (p. 458). Indeed, comic artists have sought beyond the framed image to create new types of units that break from the traditional form of the simply framed panel.

![Panel unit diagram](image)

**FIGURE 3.4:** Panel Unit

© Lena Merhej, 2014.

For instance, white space that holds a space as important as other panels on the page can turn into a panel. It is there because it has a certain function, it being formal need or a visual silence. Not to be confused with the conceptual panel – the “case fantôme”\(^1\), as termed by Peeters (1991) which fills gaps in the narration by the process of narrative cohesion, this is a panel that occupies a material space between other panels to separate them but also to create a balancing composition or to halt the narration. Other uses of white space abide by graphic design solutions. This marginal panel invests in space by creating a punctuation, or focalization, that stops being empty or “absent” (Groensteen, 2007b, p. 175).

Second, a panel may be an ‘organic panel’ that is not defined by a particular outline and that does not form a particular shape. For example, the work of Sergio Aragones in Mad Magazine, who spreads the whole magazine with tiny comics in between the panels are not delimited and confined but rather float in between the panels. However, “the principle of separating of images is never truly

\(^1\) Ghost panels (researcher’s translation).
denied” (Groensteen, 2007b, p. 45) allowing such panels they to be easily delimited by readers, but not to current computational agents. In not using a particular outline to delineate the panel, comic artists transgress the ‘walls’ of panels to serve the narration in a particular way. In building a grammar for a comics language, Cohn (2003) describes an organic panel with no outline as “unbroken by panel borders” (p. 11). It is continuous and creates a visual fluidity, which serves the holistic purposes in the design of graphics.

Third, the ‘outlined panel’ is a framed panel and it is the most common panel. “The function of the frame is to close the panel and confer upon it a particular form,” states Groensteen (2007b, p. 40). It also functions as a “separation, rhythm, structure, and [an] expression” (ibid., p. 39). The outline does not necessarily have to be distinct from the content but, more importantly, it delineates clearly the limits of the panel. The use of the term ‘outlined’ is more appropriate then ‘framed’ as it consists of the material line that surrounds the panel. This term is also used in such drawing application software as Adobe Illustrator.

Fourth is the imbedded panel. Though an outline often is used to delimit a panel, it does not mean that it defines it; For instance, when several panels occur inside an outlined shape, they are embedded panels that fit inside an existing panel. The imbeddedness indicates a relation with the outlined frame that often, but not always, is used to indicate movement. “[M]ultiple movements inside the same scene, requires multiple panels” (Pratt, 2009, p. 113). Imbedded panels may also focalize a certain aspect of the outlined panel.

The fifth panel is the overlapping one. If the panel materially transgresses other panels by covering, intersecting, or overlying them, it is known as an overlapping panel. To Cohn (2003), this type of panel “intersects and affects multiple panels” by partially hiding or framing them (p. 10). Overlapping panels also may create a leveling in the image – one panel is ‘closer’ to the reader, thus establishing a reading order that can be different from what is common or expected.

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1 The problem of delineating the organic panel by computer software will be addressed in Chapter 4.
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The final type is the ‘caption panel’, which may be framed or unframed and which can appropriate the functions of the previously mentioned panels. Not strictly recognized as a ‘panel’ in research, it does configure as a distinct agglomeration of visuals – a ‘panel unit’ – even though its content is typographical. Typography often is utilized in comics to insinuate meaning where text and image become inseparable and the words are drawn from “end to end”1 (Peeters, 10, p. 143). Eisner presents clear typographical examples in his 1996 book Contract with God and other Tenement Stories.

3.2.2. THE PAGE

The ‘page’ unit is a larger spatial unit than the panel and is on the greater surface, the page, that is shaped by the format and that traditionally folds (fig. 3.5). The page unit is not always restricted to the surface of the page because it can occupy just a segment of it, or it can spread on the entire double pages. In general, the tabular aspect – or ‘tableau effect’ – of the page plays a more important role then the linear one. Like the pages of a picture book, the visual impact of the page unit often carries an instance of contemplation. The page unit can be a panel page, a single page, a double page and a page segment, a title page, or margins.

FIGURE 3.5: Page unit
© Lena Merhej, 2014.

In the ‘panel page’, the totality of the articulation is confined to the boundaries of the page. In other words, the panel unit and the page unit coincide. Because it is characterized by its ‘tabularity’ and occupies the whole unit, the tableau effect plays more important role. Panel pages move into the

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1 The original text in French reads “bout en bout”.
“espace feuilleté” and transform the experience of reading from scanning panels to shuffling pages (Menu, 2011, p. 470).

The ‘single page’ is the parameter of all the juxtaposed panels as they imbed on the surface of one page of the format and is, as such, the most commonly used format. When the panel page or the single page is adjacent to another page and relates to it formally as a complete tableau, it becomes a larger unit – the ‘double page’– which, in graphic design, is known as a ‘spread’. The spread depends closely on the format of the book. In cases where the page unit extends also to the rest of the pages in an accordion binding, the spread takes over the whole format on one side and another on the other side.

The ‘page segment’ is a page where only parts of it are considered, particularly when the page is utilized by another segment. Also, The ‘title page’ is regarded a page unit and it manifests as the cover page, the pages that act as separators between the different chapters of a book, or as the cover spread which includes the back cover.

The gap between panels operates as ‘the margins’ of the page, which makes it a unit that operates on the page. Indeed, when pages are analyzed, the margins also should be considered in terms of their formal functions, including color, texture, and size.

3.2.3. THE FORMAT

The ‘format’ corresponds to the totality of the articulation and abides by both tabular and linear principles, regardless of their balance or discrepancy. In his discussion of comics units, Peeters (1991) uses the term ‘recit’, which means ‘narrative’, to designate this larger unit. Although it is true that comics most often culminate into a narrative however the term ‘format’ was found more appropriate because it does not make this assumption before analyzing the narration. Indeed, the term ‘narrative’ for the larger unit conflicts with ‘narrative analysis’, which looks at how narratives
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relate with respect to the larger narrative. Thus, the label ‘format’ is the entire panels or pages that constitute a comics piece.

The format is the largest unit and the global label; it is also where the comics’ articulation starts and ends. The title almost always is on the format, but also the name of the author and such editorial information as copyright details, publishing date, and name of publisher, unless self-published. Usually the formats constitute a unified whole, abiding by such design restrictions as page size, page numbering, and printing and digital specifications. Such limitations nevertheless are productive; the Franco-Belgian so-called ‘album’ standard\(^1\) is one example. In the case of this research study, the corpus of Lebanese comics represents a non-standardized collection of formats. Its format could be considered as the genre category of comics but, in this case, it is the formal characteristics that guide the different types of format rather than historical or market considerations.

The format may coincide with the strip. In the visualization (fig. 3.6), the ‘comic strip’ is a one-off series of panels confined to linear progression and is used in newspapers, on websites, and in other larger publications. When it is part of a larger group of strips, the format becomes a compilation referred in this research study as a ‘comic strip collection’. The format may also coincide with the page. The ‘comics page’ can stand on its own as a one-off; it carries the same characteristics as the strip, however it has tabular qualities in the sequence. The ‘comics short’ or ‘comics novel’ are

\(^1\) After World War II, due to a scarcity of paper - as well as the then-new offset machine - standard printing used the Franco-Belgian album format as A4 paper size with 48 pages, corresponding to three short stories of 16 pages; in other words, three sheets of paper, recto-verso offset standard planographic printing.
agglomerations of pages, either as single pages, as spreads, or even larger as the example previously mentioned of the accordion in one album. The short is confined to a small number of pages and it is often produced by a 24-Hour Comic event and other collaborative and collective workshops. They usually are between six and twenty-four pages long and could be part of, or connected to a larger format such as a collective work or an anthology. They sometimes form chapters of a novel or become a book that is part of a series. The ‘novel’ format is larger and much discussed and debated in recent literature (Baetens, 2010; Chute, 2008); while the ‘book series’ is a collection of several entitled formats, like the chapters, however independently bound or presented.

3.2.4. THE ARTICULATION

The articulation between panels functions on adjacent and distant panels, extended to all units of comics. The logic of a ‘ribbon of units’ abides by two distinct articulations that solidify them in two ways. Adjoining units create a linear continuity on the level of the unit itself, while other units might create continuity across units, a strategy that Groensteen calls, braiding. The articulation binds panels together as one unit, when they abide by iconic solidarity. The panels can be either adjacent or not distant a group, however they have to be iconically linked and to create a serial effect (Groensteen, 2011: 162). It may be consecutive panels on the same page and the same row or they can spread across pages. Arthrology, being the study of comics articulation, identifies the connections between juxtaposed panels, as well as between distant panels, as either “restricted” or “general” (Groensteen, 2011, p. 22).

Arthrology permits the distinction of the strip-unit or the page segment, according to the grouping of panels, or of pages or of complete formats such as strip series. According to Groensteen (2007b), the semantic articulation of a story allows one to “identify and circumscribe a story segment of any length characterized by a unity of action and space” (p. 111). Figure 3.7 illustrates Groensteen’s (2007) arthrology.
The strip of adjacent panels is common, while a strip created across distance is more complex and poetic. Similar to the leitmotiv in poetry, distant panels ‘speak’ to one another across pages, or serve to introduce and conclude to create a cyclical or loop on the format. Luc and François Schuiten, in Nogegon, the third volume of their famous Terres Creuses, present a very interesting interplay between two pages that reveals the mirroring and complementary relations in the spread layout (Peeters, 2010). Two adjacent pages include two reversed symmetrical strophes. On the right page, the strophe is created by panels that show a frontal view; while, on the left page, the strophe is created by a reversed sequence of the same mirrored panels. They show the same images but
everything is from the back (ibid.). The mirroring and the iconic repetition create solidarity across mirrored panels, resulting in the disruption of the linearity by a playful search for the visual correspondence.

Last, there are three levels of articulation: the two homogeneous ribbons of images and of words, and the third one that is the articulation of both the iconic and the verbal sequences of these ribbons (Groensteen, 2011, p. 106). At this point, it is important to move into how these levels function on the level of the units and begin a multimodal affordance of comics.

3.3. Multimodal Analysis

This section presents the multimodal aspects of comics. The modes in comics are the visual, the spatial and the verbal mode. Because of the eventual possibility of the visual mode to combine with the verbal mode, the study assumes that the visual mode is a graphic mode as it includes typography. Each mode is explained and discussed individually before their combination can be elucidated because the visual and the spatial mode in comics have several variables and it is important to look at them first independently. The ‘graphic mode’ is presented as characterized by the modalities of comics’ visuals that are abstraction, figuration, symbolism, and typography. The ‘spatial mode’ is presented as the tabular and linear unfolding of the units and is based on the theory of the ‘telling’ of images as the synapses of graphic elements into graphic narratives. The ‘verbal mode’ is regarded as verbal instances that can be analyzed by the narratological toolkit, which was initiated by the analysis of verbal text. Classical narratological concepts that will be used to identify the verbal mode are the narrators, the narratives, the stories, and the characters in addition to non-narrative elements. It is important to note that the descriptions in this section are explained with respect to narrativity, which will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

Multimodal research provides interpretive tools towards graphic narrative, relevant to the interpretation of comics’ narration and their reception. The term ‘mode’ is defined as “a pictorial
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presentation, writing or oral speech” and multimodal research is concerned with multimodal meaning making (Kress, 2003, p. 5-6). The analysis of multimodal texts is the analysis of communication in all its forms and is concerned particularly with texts that contain two or more modes of communication, which in the case of comics, are visual, verbal, and spatial. When the verbal mode is written and combined with a visual mode, it becomes graphic or, more precisely, typographic; while, when it is stripped from its visual qualities, it becomes verbal.

A modal distinction serves to simplify the complexity of comics and the complex braiding of the different modes; for instance, the question of what mode is employed more, where, and how can be answered by distinguishing the mode. More importantly, a multimodal approach, taken towards the material or corpus, aims at bringing the research closer to an empirical study (Bateman, 2013b). Theo van Leeuwen (2008b) recommends deepening the analysis of visuals “towards an integrated multimodal approach” (p. 130) that focuses on visual sources common to graphic documents as composition, movement, and color. Comics, being visuals that are spatially sequential, are operated essentially by two modes: the visual and the spatial. When comics contain words, the verbal mode also comes into play turning the visual into graphic by adding to it the typographic.

The graphic, the spatial and the verbal modes, in addition to their relation, are the modes the research focuses on. The analysis of comics should take into account the multimodal amalgamation of the sequence (Groensteen, 2007b, p. 146), so the multimodal analysis should look at the information as it is given by each mode and how it interacts with other modal information integrating all sources to distinguish the meaning, and in this case, the narrative from the meaning. The following subsection describes the multimodal uses in comics, while subsequent sections focus on the graphic, spatial, and verbal modes of comics in particular.
3.3.1. COMICS AS MULTIMODAL TEXTS

Comics, like other visual narratives, employ graphic and spatial modes and, thus, are multimodal. Moreover, their meaning can be communicated through such other modes as animation, sound, and three-dimensional spaces. This subsection presents the amalgamations of possible comics modes.

The development of comics is characterized by different experiments in combining images and images with text, as well as other multimodal combinations. Assuming that comics are meant to have a narrative coherence, they are then similar to serial photographs, image slideshows, and other collections of images, no matter how narrativity in them varies. Comics share modal configurations with other image/word texts and, consequently, appropriate their modalities. Similarly, the modalities of comics are appropriated also by other texts such as theatre, film or also music. Some contemporary researchers, including Dale Jacobs (2013), consider that meaning in comics is created also by gesture modalities in addition to the audio in the speech balloons. A problem to this modality is when actual sound becomes a mode. When digitized, comics can be animated or accompanied by sound, since a digital image can easily include music or animation.

Many adaptations or migrations have been made experimenting with the translation of modal strategies, and much research has been done in this regard. One of the focal points of the conference Comics Rocks! in 2012 at Bournemouth University, England, was multimodal adaptation in that half of all sessions were dedicated to discussions on adaptations from comics into film, theater, oral storytelling, literature, journalism, and digital comics. At this conference, film played a major role in promoting the use of visual narratives in a dialogic relation to comics, picture books, artist’s books, and illustrated novels. Among researchers, both Magnussen (2000) and Ann Miller (2007) have focused on film studies to compare aspects of narration in comics and film. Scott McCloud (1994) created a tradition in 1994, a theoretical text about understanding comics created in a comics form. Not only did he then popularize such ‘meta-comics’, but he later explored the potential of adding interactive statements to comics, which he presented in his book Reinventing Comics.
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(McCloud, 2000). His website links to good examples of multimodal combination, including animation and sound in Demian 5’s\(^1\) work. Recent comics multimodal innovations were proposed by Grandpapier\(^2\), as ‘turbo media’ for artists who participated in the 24-Hour Comic in 2011. The history of these hybrid comics has been traced and presented on the website http://ybrik-media.com/bon-anniversaire-le-turbomedia/. Conceived as Digital Lantern by Anthony Rageul\(^3\), ‘turbo media’ exploits the interactive features of the slideshow to adapt to comics using such specific strategies borrowed from animation as maintaining the foreground while changing the background.

Comics have been considered also in relation to photography, as well as to painting, illustration, roman-photo\(^4\), and literature, rather than in the larger corpus of research from a perspective of film studies and, later, to children’s books (Baetens, 2011a; Groensteen, 2007b). Inspired by looking at printed narratives for adults, Lefèvre (2010) proposed a Venn diagram for their classification, where he places image and word narratives at the center, branching into comics, picture books, artist’s books, and illustrated novels. Creating comics also appropriates techniques from other multimodal media. Artists often experiment seamlessly with such different media as music, imaging, and motion design. A common example is the design adaptation of ‘different-but-similar’ visual narratives, as children’s books, animation, and film. Often visual artists also are graphic designers, musicians, plastic artists, or motion designers. In addition, the proliferation of accessible online design programs and manuals is yet another factor that enables artists to create narratives using different modal configurations. Thus, most comic artists are able to create comics that transgress the paper on which they traditionally were printed.

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4 Origin is Italian and French and translated into English as ‘photo-romance’, these are comics with photography as their graphiation.
According to Groensteen, there are particular enunciative devices that correspond to each medium. One has to question the specificities of the medium in order to attempt at extracting modes and analyzing them. Historically, text was thought to be essential to the definition of comics as it played a major role in combining the visual statement of comics. However, Rodolphe Töpffer, who contributed to the earliest comics as well to the earliest writings about comics, believed that the essence of comics was in the ‘mix’ between drawing and text (Kunzle, 2007). Acknowledging that comics are a visually dominated narrative type (Miller, 2007) and that verbal usage is commonly combined with it, the graphic mode, the spatial mode and the verbal mode, in addition to their combination will further be discussed. When comics are ‘silent’ – meaning no text is included in the sequence of visual units – the graphic articulation plays the role of ‘telling’. Otherwise, when comics include text, the ‘telling’ is made by both the articulation of graphics and verbal statements. The verbal mode pertains to text type, vocabulary, genre, and grammar configured by verbal text.

One of the assumptions of multimodal analysis is that it focuses on analyzing all the meaning-making resources used in a certain artifact by distinguishing the different modes. In other words, the modal consideration of how they amalgamate is essential (Bateman, 2013b). Indeed, it would be beneficial to analyze for instance gesture modalities in action comics or audio in a comic about music. Also, the respective analysis of modes in different media could uncover shared categories and/or variables with other texts in the way Barthes (1966) uses the term. However, these modalities add to this research unnecessary variables that complicate the already complex nature of comics. Indeed, John Bateman (2013b) highlights the challenges of the deployment of multimodal corpora in a study, but also points out that the multimodal analysis of artifacts and the description of their behavior can be empirical when adopting corpus-based methods.
3.3.2. THE GRAPHIC MODE

The ‘graphic mode’ of comics units is categorized by abstract, figurative, and symbolic representations, as well as typography when comics include words. It is both modeled by at least one graphic style and by graphic representation.

Groensteen (2007a) identified visual modalities of the graphic mode in describing the content of panels as “iconic [and] plastic” (p. 25). Plasticity turns towards the “graphic trace” and stands for “graphiation”, whereas figurative and iconic traces turn to a degree of representation (ibid., p. 3). Both are regarded as visual articulation in comics and both can alternate and braid.

There is always a graphiation of some sort. Indeed, all visual material represented, is also ‘graphiated’, and is the fundamental ‘utterance’ that enables comics to be visible; “it is impossible to imagine a zero degree of graphic style” (Groensteen, 2010, p. 4). The parameters of graphiation as they are taught in design schools are line, color, texture, shape, form, value, and size. Their combination pertains to experiments made by precedent artists, naming the style itself by the name of the artist or the movement in which the artist engaged in. The compositional principles combine these elements and configure them to represent concepts that range balance, harmony, contrast, directional movement, and rhythm. When the elements are coherent in one text, they are representative of the style. Thus, the ways elements are configured in a particular way constitute the style in the format. Similarly, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) examine visual modalities by looking at photographs. They present visual modalities that are determined on scales or ranges of “contextualization, depth, color differentiation, saturation and modulation, illumination, brightness, and representation” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 160-162). The modalities van Leeuwen (2008b), addressed in his study, on the one hand, create a “textual cohesion” and, on the other, they confer “identity” (p. 132). Textual\(^1\) cohesion is the achievement of a graphic style and is the modality that brings all graphics together to make the text, in the larger sense, coherent. When it is

\(^1\)“Text” is used here in the Barthian sense of the word.
not sure what it represents, it is ‘abstract’ and the graphiation in that case expresses or shows abstract concepts. When graphiation ceases to be abstract and starts to show objects that can be identified; it becomes figurative. Visual material that refers to objects by similarity is ‘figurative’ and may be ‘iconic’. Icons that refer to objects by conventional norms are symbols. Verbal text also needs to be graphiated and in this case it is called ‘typography’ and expresses the formal characteristics of the letters on the page. It can be that its graphiation is symbolic for when a bold type is used to express a scream. Graphiation therefore can be considered a modality that pertains to all the visual materials of comics while maintaining a distinction between the style and the representation. In other words, the comics’ graphic mode is composed of ‘graphiation’ that represents an abstraction, a typographic statement, figures, and/or symbolic images.

Abstraction

Baetens (2011a) writes in Abstraction in Comics that the abstract mode “escapes lexical labeling”; it is non-representational and relies on showing concepts through color, pattern, and form that make these concepts illegible and often translated into a “rhetorical side aspect” (p. 97). As previously mentioned, an abstract image does not refer to any object in particular; It form may contain design principles that project concepts. The graphiation of the abstract image can express a feeling, a movement or other large concepts used as principles in graphic design. In comics, the ghost panel is typical of this category, as it does not figure any particular prior meaning. The meaning that abstract units convey depend either on the type of the unit that they carry, or on the iconic solidarity – the preceding, or succeeding units stemming from the graphic concepts which sometimes can be cultural. The example of Baetens (2011a) is representative. He gives as example of abstract images repeated black panels that alternate panel shots of houses. These abstract panels are understood in terms of their cohesion, and the interweaving black panels in between figurations give them a stroboscopic effect. In other words, as they punctuate the space, the abstract black panels symbolize camera snapshots.
Typography

In graphic design, typography is the graphiation of verbal text and, as such, regulates the variation of its graphiation to balance legibility and expression. The graphiation modalities are therefore modeling the way the verbal text looks. Legibility should follow rules of letter shapes and gestalt theory, whereas expression focuses on embedding by graphiation other meanings that are expressed by visual modalities. Typography is able to realize not just textual, but also “ideational and interpersonal meaning” (van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 139). Traditional and historically bold letters can mean shouting; a script type can indicate a written letter to someone. Van Leeuwen (2006) describes the particular modalities of typography as “weight, expansion, slope, curvature, connectivity, orientation, and regularity”; in addition to distinctive features that often occur with display typefaces which, in comics, also include handwriting and lettering (p. 139). In comics, the typographic principles are based on integration because of the traditional aspect of the pencil trace: like the image, the text is also drawn by hand. Indeed, the graphiation of the text often matches the graphiation of the drawings, and when some digital fonts are still used, particularly in translated books and amateur work, they are often looked down upon. It is usually the handwritten form that is privileged. With this respect, Groensteen (2007a) limits the numerous parameters of “typography of writing” to “reference, composition, lighting, color, [and] qualities of the line” (p. 27).

Figuration

The figurative modality brings images closer to depicting objects, figures, or scenery. It is recognizable in that it can be uttered as “the house” or “the girl looks out of the window”. Figuration transforms the abstract image by adding recognizable objects – eyes in the case of figures, or trees in the case of a background – to the graphiation. Graphiation dictates the figuration in accordance to the graphic style of the artist who draws in a distinct way. In other words, a house at one time drawn by an artist in pencil and another time painted by the same artist with a brush are different in graphiation, but are likely to be similar in style.
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Also, identity is fundamental to figuration as it is the representation of characters and events that may be real or not – as in documentary journalism, and in representations of fictive events or characters in fantasy fiction. These representations are made using such graphiation strategies as ‘detailing’ or ‘not detailing’ the background, depicting depth, using different Chroma values and hues, and abstracting or detailing figures. Again, these pertain to style which, even in the case of graphic memoirs, where authenticity “is not reality ‘as it is’, but reality as it is subjectively perceived by the individual artist” (El-Refaie, 2010, p. 171). Indeed, the subjectivity of figuration in comics, because of graphiation, is high, even if they are based on reality.

Symbolism

Symbols can be particular to a genre or a style pertaining to particular comics artists, and may become conventional and flip into ‘emanata’ pertaining to particular comics movements. Miller (2007) categorizes symbolic images as metonymic and metaphoric and looks closer at the strategy of creating them. A metonymy “operates by showing details out of which the viewer constructs a larger whole” and metaphors work by substitution (Miller, 2007, p. 78). With the development of comics in the twentieth century, “emanata” – or pictograms – were created specifically in comics’ texts as graphical expression of feelings (Groensteen, 2011, p. 136). Known by most comics’ artists and commonly used, they consist of such symbolic images as a speech or thought balloon, an arrow, a lamp, a log, hearts, or birds. These devices include also symbolic abstract images as motion lines and emotional lines¹, which have become conventional comics language devices. Consequently, cultural differences do exist; for example, a runny nose in manga comics means that the character is ‘horny’. Less commonly known pictograms inhabit text balloons becoming thought images, where thoughts are condensed into a visual (Groensteen, 2011). Moreover, like figurative images, symbolic images are also ‘utterable’. The symbol of the balloon, as metaphor, can be substituted by

¹ Graphic devices often used by such visual texts as advertising, the film industry, and picture-book publishing and may vary and differ across genres.
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‘the character says’, and the symbols of hearts as metonymy, near a character shows that ‘the character falls in love’.

3.3.3. The Spatial Mode

The spatial mode is characterized by the articulation of the units on the format; how they are spatially laid out, and how they are broken down into different units and unit sequences. It deploys on the principle of iconic solidarity. To Bal (2008), in visual narratology, units of visuals vectorize the ‘telling’ as they depart from one visual unit to another. She describes the relation between parts of a painting as they “narrativize” by pointing out or gazing (Bal, 2008, p. 744). Groensteen (2007b) regards the concept of “iconic solidarity [...] as the] unique ontological foundation of comics [...] whereby] a relational play of a plurality of interdependent images” occurs (p. 17). Units in comics are not independent. For instance, the panel is always in a stage of ‘overflow’ or ‘pregnancy’1 (Groensteen, 2007b). The modalities of iconic solidarity are spatial complimentary, rhythm, configuration, and perpetuation (Groensteen, 2011). Spatial complementarity, perpetuation, and sequence are characteristics of “traditional narratives”; whereas when the configuration, serial effects, and rhythm are dominant, the comics narratives become poetic (ibid., p. 34). ‘Spatial complementarity’ is the relation between the format and its parts; in comics, this is the comic strip, page, short or novel, or the series in relation to their respective units. ‘Configuration’ is the spatial layout of visual elements on the format’s surface. Both spatial complementarity and configuration pertain to the layout, whereas the rhythm and the perpetuation are modalities of the breakdown. Perpetuation permits the flux of images, whereas rhythm marks the high and low notes on that perpetuation (Groensteen, 2011).

Because of iconic solidarity, the spatial mode in comics is what generates tabular and linear effects that operate respectively on the layout and on the breakdown. In the seminal article Du Linéaire au

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1 Or about to ‘give birth’ to a new narrative.
Tabulaire, Fresnault-Deruelle (1976) presents comics as departing from the linearity of a strip to the tabularity of the page. Presented below, the linear design is a breakdown or a mise en scène of the elements of the narrative. Its quality is sequential and essential to comics. The mise-en-page is a tabular design where elements are simultaneous.

**The Layout**

‘Tabularity’ pertains to the aspects of the tableau as something to contemplate and examine. Like linearity, the second aspect of the spatial mode, it may be achieved by both images and text and their combination. Typography – being the visual design of text letters, the definition of which can be reduced to the material text of verbal statements – is certainly visual; hence, it also attains tabular aspects.

Peeters (2007) explored and presented the relation between the tabular and the linear aspects, which will be further discussed. But to him, the decorative utilization of the page presents a “tabular dimension which quite clearly dominates”; in contrast to the linear system that is “haunted by the model of writing[,] this […] is fascinated by painting” (Peeters, 2007, 13). Tabularity has been widely invested in since comic strips first appeared. Designers and artists have become increasingly aware of the original concern of layout design, engaging in “the passionate research to match the form of expression and the form of the content” (Fresnault-Deruelle, 1976, p. 17). Tabularity may rely on graphic design principles that reflect formal concepts such as unity/harmony, balance, scale/proportion, dominance/emphasis, hierarchy, similarity, and contrast. In his recent publication Building Stories, Chris Ware (2012) who was also a graphic designer playfully uses the accordion binding where the tabularity of page and format dilute into one another.
Tabularity is organized by the layout, the process of putting graphic elements into composition that can be meaningful or not. ‘Layout’ is the breaking-up of the page into a grid of panels (Groensteen, 2007b). It is governed by the spatial complimentary and configuration. Both are the relation between the format and the enunciation, or the organization of the graphic elements on the format. The modalities of the layout in social semiotics are polarization and centralization. Going back to the linear and non-linear spatial compositions, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) present the different realization of visuals as “centered, polarized, triptych, circular, margin, mediator, given, new, ideal, real, salience, disconnection, and connection” (pp. 209-210). Some are illustrated in figure 3.8, showing how these realizations can be adapted to the reading direction.

The layout is at work across all units. The panel trajectory and the page trajectory can be discerned and collapsed, as is shown respectively with the red and black arrows in figure 3.9. The panel is configured by an internal logic, so is the page itself. Thus, the unit brings all the elements together in a coherent way. With this in mind, the polarization of the layout usually is more salient than centralized. The tabular aspects in the case of a central composition on the page spill into a first level of abstraction, where the units might be configured in a spiral or abstract figure that expresses delirium or a voyage into another dimension. Thus, the page layout can represent a figure and a symbol.
The Breakdown

The breakdown is linear and it is the design of unit pulsation on a spatial path. A linear progression that corresponds to a trajectory that uses time is commonly attributed to writing, the literary activity of putting expression in verbal statements. Linearity is not only achieved with the use of verbal statements, the sequence of images in comics also can create such an effect and, once images are put together in a sequence, a narrative relation is built, reinforcing the linear progression. To Groensteen, the panel is a heartbeat (Groensteen, 2011, p. 153) and the structural and rhythmic aspects of the heartbeat are extended in this study to include all units, turning the sequence into a pulsation of elaborate rhythms of units. The span of their formal qualities – including number, size, and shape – results in a larger unit that converts space into time, or duration. The breakdown is linear and organizes the sequence of images into a “path” that author and reader have to “walk together” (Lawson, 2011, p. 394). It is the configuration of the units that impose the reading direction, either by the convention of the natural language used, or by the use of ‘path’ devices (Bateman, 2008a).
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Based on Mikhail Bakhtin’s ‘chronotrope’ to conceptualized space-time envelopes, James Lawson (2011) exposes how interplays of time occur in the breakdown. The root character of the narrative is linear because while multiple activities, processes, or developments may exist all simultaneously as causal forces, they never can be narrated all at once. Author and reader must therefore ‘walk’ together along a narrative ‘path’ if narrative is to evoke geography. The particular path is a construction, the product of a creative act but, wherever it leads and however much it wanders or pauses, it remains a path on a space and thus, very much linear (Lawson, 2011). Thus, the breakdown conventionally follows the reading direction from top left to bottom right unless otherwise indicated or unless they are manga comics, like the reading direction in Arabic, which have been published with a reading direction that goes from top right to bottom left. To avoid ambiguity when the reading is not conventional or intuitive, path lines or arrows are used. In this case, the arrow acts as symbolic panels on the page unit to give it linear direction. Although the layout of comics (or the tabularity) can break this linearity by diverging into other ‘paths’, the sequence of images still is moved by one reading direction – a vectorial time with a beginning or timeline which starts at some point and ends at another.

The path created by the layout is organized by similarity and difference, perpetuation and rhythm. The units succeed harmonious or dissonant rhythms that determine the highs and lows of the comic and the points of rupture. Music and rhythm are present in the structure that holds the comic as “melodic dialogue” (Groensteen, 2011, p. 147). As comics and chrono-photography interacted at the turn of the twentieth century, comics developed the segmented action of the panel sequence and the breakdown, suggesting movement in static images but in a different way than in film. To Scott Bukatman (2006), comics became “a medium of the instant” as they segmented movement into panel events (ibid., p. 93; Kukkonen, 2011). The seamless iconic solidarity between units shows movement. Abbott (1986) illustrates this movement made by panels that depicts the struggle between Spiderman and Sandman that create a continuous stream; To Karen Kukkonen (2011), the
smoothness of the movement is even more reinforced when the ‘frames are dropped’ (p. 49) or the outline is invisible.

3.3.4. The Verbal Mode

In this research, the verbal mode is analyzed based on the study of the three-layer distinction, text, story and fabula (Bal, 1985, p. 6). The structural elements of a narrative text are represented by: a) two types of speakers, “the narrator and the actor”; b) “describable layers, being the text, the story and the fabula”; and c) “a series of connected events” (p. 10). The graphic mode, or the typography, and the grammar are dropped and not considered in the analysis. The configuration and relationship of the elements, text contains a story that contains a fabula, is illustrated as the following:

Text ⊂ Story ⊂ Fabula

Also, instead of using the terms Bal (1985) uses, this research study uses the term ‘text’ as the format of the material, ‘narrative’ as the narration put into the material, and ‘story’ as the sequence of connected events:

Text ⊂ Narrative ⊂ Story (an event + a character)

Verbal text is explicit, allowing specific markers to be matched with the narratological formula. So the analysis looks for the events to determine what the story is, and how events are told to determinate what is the narration. The narration tells the sequence of events in a particular order, in a particular frequency and each event evokes or determines a particular time passing. There are also non-narrative events that enrich the narration with the use of descriptions and arguments, and focalization.

The verbal mode analysis may be illustrated with the sentence of Forster (1927/2002), ‘the queen died and then the king died’. It is composed of two characters, and two different events. The occurrence of the sentence also means that there is a ‘narrator’ that tells (Bal, 2008, p. 9). Matching
3.3.5. MODAL COMBINATIONS

The modal combinations in comics are the relation between the graphic mode and the verbal mode as they combine on the spatial mode. The graphic and verbal combinations are categorized according to how graphic and verbal fragments expand and project on each other. Martinec and Salway’s (2005) classify image-text relation for computational purposes according to logico-semantic relations of expansion and projection. While expansion is the deployment of graphic and verbal fragments on the larger narrative, projection stems from graphic and verbal fragments to bring in new ones. Expansions are three types, elaboration is performed by exposing or exemplifying, extension is the addition of a “new but related” meaning by either one or the other; and enhancement is when temporal, spatial or causal information is related to one or the other (ibid. p. 369). Projections they say are very common in comics and it is the projection of a locution and idea, “where locution is a projection of working, usually by a verbal process, and idea a projection of meaning, most often by a mental process (ibid. p.344). These notions of expansion and projection can be respectively compared with the spatial mode categories of tabularity, where visual expansions are dominant, and of linearity, where visual and verbal projections create the reading path. However, Martinec and Salway’s categories operate on discreet combined elements, which may enrich the analysis of the spatial mode and the workings of tabular and linear progressions.
Moreover, Peeters (2010) and Baetens (2010) argue that comics can be dominated by either their linear progression or their “tableau” effect (Peeters, 2010, p. 48). To Baetens (2010), comics are clearly defined by those that are more or less spatial or temporal, and he describes this binary debate by comparing French comics as employing a distinctly specialized spatial perspective against the American style, which display a more specialized temporal perspective. Through this binary, he questions whether the former is more pictorial and the later more literary (ibid.). Peeters’s (2007) four conceptions of the page are classified in term of whether they are more narrative-dependent or more composition-dependent and whether there is a narrative-composition autonomy or interdependence. Also, Kukkonen (2011a) reveals the level of articulation between the panel and the page sequence, where the first is historically used for the representation of movement, and the second for the representation of acts of focalization. Thus, the spatial combination of the graphic mode and the verbal mode can be more temporal or more spatial depending on the conventional utilization of linear and tabular aspects and the generation of new aspects of focalization.

The Graphic and Verbal Interplay

The modes were combined and the results of the combinations presented the first internal workings of an image, which can be either tabular or linear. Figure 3.10 presents the combinations of the four graphic mode types, the figurative, the symbolic, the abstract and the typographical fragment. Abstraction, combined, stands for a texture-scribble and a shape; figuration for a character and a background; symbolism for a comic balloon and a light bulb; and typography for Times New Roman regular paragraph and handwritten onomatopoeia. These fragments are visualized into snippets of comics’ graphics and are, more or less, representative or canonic, using Forster’s (1927/2002) sentence that was subverted to the king dying after the queen’s death, and then visualized. The abstract scribble and the squared outline show that figuration may come into place when as they combine from a textured shape into a framed tableau. Because the frame outline is
bold and strong, it can represent a picture frame, turning the scribble into an art object. When a
figure is inside the frame, the combination can be interpreted as a portrait. Also, when abstraction is
combined with such symbols as speech balloons or motion lines, it can also transform into a figure.
The frame starts speaking, or the scribble starts running. In other words, when figuration combines
with abstraction, either abstraction is interpreted as texture or a shape that turns into a figure, in this
case a picture frame. When two figurative fragments combine such as background and figure
combine, the diegetic world becomes more complete. Last, symbols create a rupture into another
diegesis that either projects meaning or condenses it. Respectively, the balloon and the light bulb
projects a text from a narrator, “someone speaks”, while the bulb condenses the concept of “idea”
into “there is an idea”.

Typography is presented in combination with a verbal mode only; otherwise it is an intelligible
abstract shape. Legibility must be preserved for it to be considered language. The relation between
typography and language is vital as it inflects the meaning of the words said by showing them in a
certain way. In other words, the graphic mode interferes with the verbal one. Typography graphiates
the verbal text and cannot separate from the material images.
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FIGURE 3.10: Graphic combinations
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Typography combines with abstraction by graphiation, with figuration when it becomes an epitaph or a label and with symbolism when it is in a speech bubble. When it combines with its own kind, hierarchy plays a role to distinguish between verbal utterances. When it is juxtaposed to a figure, the typography-verbal mode insinuates that the character or the background has some kind of access to it; the character either hears or sees it as an external utterance, or becomes an actor that thinks it or speaks it.

The Tabular and Linear Interplay

Both tabularity and linearity create meaning in comics; however, the interplay between them gives privileges one over the other while maintaining a certain tension, or multi-stability. The tabular
qualities describe and argue, while the linear qualities tell. Tabular and linear qualities articulate respectively as the breakdown and the layout of the sequence of comics units. Their analysis elucidates the progression of the narration by first looking at how meaning is created by the linear and tabular aspects and second of tracing where narration occurs, how is it and what is it about.

According to Baetens, the linear and tabular interplay is a play between beginnings and endings, creating a “desire” and “deficiency” for stories in comics that is formed by such interruptions as the transition from reading to looking (Baetens, 2011b, p.126). Groensteen (2007b) describes such interplay in terms of ‘ruptures’, saying that the spatio-topical system holds the units that “stage the meaning” by articulating in various formal ways, impregnated with meanings by the interplay between “regularity and irregularity” (p. 96). To Henry John Pratt (2009), “what happens between panels is a kind of magic only comics can create” (p. 114). A better concept for this magic would be the use of the term multi-stable to describe the medium of comics (Denson, 2011). For instance, the spatial mode may spread the solidarity between units in every direction by combining such modalities as configuration and perpetuation and thereby expanding narratives in different linear projections. Indeed, iconic solidarity maintains a tension between the units. Based on the concept of the ‘suspended panel’ that attaches to one that precedes it and to the one that succeeds it, the suspension may also apply to larger units. In applying arthrology on a series of pages, Marc Singer (2012) demonstrates that the solidarity of the units is not only on the level of the panel, but also on that of pages and in series. Peeters and Frederic Boilet (1997) in Demi-Tour; present an iconic solidarity that operates on the level of pages, grouping them together as a sequence of pages. This can also operate on the level of the format, when the covers and page leitmotivs occur across different comics formats.

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1 The spatio-topical “organizes the co-presence of panels within space” (Groensteen, 2007b, p. 6).
2 As early as 1903, The Upside-Downs of Little Lady Lovekins and Old Man Muffaroo by Gustave Verbeek was published as a series of comics which could be read both right side up, and the right side down.
In the study of the relation between linearity and tabularity, Peeters’ (2007) introduced the “four conceptions of the page” as conventional, decorative, rhetorical, and productive. The layout was classified in relation to how dependent it is on the narration in terms of neutrality, emancipation, expression, and engenderment.

The conventional conception is when the linear aspect is dominant for instance by the regularity of the grid. The repetition of the panels makes the grid transparent and privileges linearity. The reading flow becomes faster because the reader does not stop at each image. Groensteen (2011) labels this modality on the layout as the ‘regularity’ of the gridding. This effect of so-called the ‘waffle-iron’ puts emphasis on the content rather than the shape of the units, pushing the layout towards polarization and linearity.

In the rhetorical and the decorative conceptions, tabular aspects dominate. The exploitation of space by the grid as ‘irregular’ may break this repetition by using panels of various shapes and sizes that bend the polarization. To Baetens, this aspect of Tabularity is generated by the occupation of a marginal space. Tabularity is dominant also when units are connected iconically. Jan Baetens (2010) makes the observation that they “haunt” the particular space by a tableau (p. 8), giving privilege to the tabular aspects over the linear reading path.

When tabular and linear aspects are equal, there is a balance or Peeters (2007) notion of productivity. Groensteen (2007b) presents an example that shapes the spread into a ‘V’, pushing the expression on the unit of the page to almost a typographical expression. He attributes this to the verbal values of ‘living’, which in French is ‘vivre’, with the initial ‘V’ adding on the structural letter on the spread (ibid.). The tabular aspects of the reading flow, which are here typographical, shape the reading into a symbolic parabola maintaining a tension on the spatial mode.

1 Translated from French.
The narrative aspects of comics and their perpetuation determine linearity. By convention, comics are first linear, because they are a text and then they can contain tabular aspects that have been explored by artists in various forms. When tabular considerations impose their expression too much, the flow of the linear progression, which is perpetuated by regularity gets broken. A balance or rather a tension between tabular and linear aspects can be achieved.

After clarify the units and the different modes of comics and their interplay, the research presents the comics narratological toolkit and the particular research in narratology, comics narratology and comics studies.

3.4. COMICS NARRATOLOGICAL TOOLKIT

Comics’ narratology consists of analyzing the “narrative mediation and focal filtering” (Horstkotte & Pedri, 2011, p. 341); the diegetic consideration and the focalization (Miller, 2007); and the multimodal braiding of comics narratives (Groensteen, 2011). This section describes how the fundamental principles of narratology, the toolkit, are applied to this research. This chapter explains the narration of comics and how strict narratives and/or fragments, whether graphical or verbal articulate on the units. It distinguishes the narrative, as strict narrative, from the non-narrative elements as fragments in the larger narrative. It presents the articulation of the narratives and the fragments on the units, the narrators responsible, and the kind of focalizations possible.

3.4.1. GRAPHIC NARRATION

Comics “work as a vehicle for narrative” (Kukkonen, 2011, p.34). “As a multimodal medium, comics combine words and images, plus the panel arrangements that are used to imply temporal sequence”(35). To distinguish graphic narratives, one has to first look at units where events are occurring. Both internal operations within the unit panels, within the pages and their relation to the format determine what total narrative is. The elements of narrative are defined and the events, along
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with the characters, are located in the diegesis that stages the events. To Huhn, an event is “present for every change of state” (Hühn, 2013, n.p.). In the sequence, all events are perceived according to difference and similarity. The agency that tells narratives from images is called the ‘monstrator’ (Groensteen, 2010). Images “do not only show but they also tell” (Groensteen, 2011 p. 89). The monstrator shows what Groensteen calls le montré. What is shown is often read in the succession of images, as events that have happened (l’advenu), that are in causal relation and that determine that time has passed. The happened is governed conventionally by causal relation and by temporal articulation. The following indicates the events occurring (2011, p. 37) from the telling of sequence:

- Changes of space indicate change of location. Whenever the shots shift, time is indicated in the form of traveling that can cross fractions of sections or even traveling in history. The temporal change indicates a movement.
- Perception of movement indicates something being animated which always requires some kind of time; to Pratt (2009), movement can take place across different shots and scenes, or consist of multiple movements inside the same scene. For instance, symbolic movement lines are used to indicate movement and show an event.
- A script is perceived through the logic and coherence of the breakdown. In other words, the sequence of events is more or less conventional making it easily accessible to the reader.

There are two more conditions to narrative that are related to the focalization of comics’ units. The narrativity of a unit may become realized by its focalization, turning it into a narrative. In other words, focalization may turn a non-narrative fragment into a narrative by adding visibility to the showing. To briefly present focalization, the narration is dependent on a focalizor, an agent that shows some aspect of “subjective inflection”, being the criterion of focalization (Horstkotte & Pedri, 2011, p. 334). Focalization is further explained in its own section. The two conditions for narrative are particular to focalized events or event shown in a particular eventful way. Inside the
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panel it is the gaze-gesture internal working. On the sequence, it is the overflow of graphical and rhythmic games.

- To Pratt (2009), movement can consist of multiple movements inside the same scene. Events can be figuratively pointed out and focalized. In other words, a figure can look at something and thus shift the gaze of the reader towards that. It can also speak but projecting a bubble with words in it. This figure is also called actorialized narrator (Groensteen, 2011) since it is a shown narrator. These narratives are born from the reading of the gaze and the hand gesture that points out a narrative that arises from the concept of “narratization” (Bal, 1985, p. 73). In this study, the translation of these symbols would be, ‘she looks at him’, ‘she points him out’, and with the balloon, and ‘she speaks’ or ‘she thinks’.

- Events are graphically pointed out and focalized. To Peter Hühn, these events are “accredited in an interpretive, context-dependent decision – with certain features such as relevance, unexpectedness, and unusualness” (Hühn, 2013, 1.). When things start to shake and cease to follow the logic of the diegesis, the event becomes ‘eventful’, similarly to being focalized. Some movements move in a loop or continuously, like waves and breathing. These movements are uneventful such as the rotation of windmills or the movement on water. On the degree zero of focalization, the movement is only a description of the quality of the character depicted, as the rotation of windmills or the movement on water. If it is instead focalized, the movement becomes meaningful and translates into a strict narrative.

Developed and added by Groensteen with the concept of the poetic narrative, it stems from a showing but instead of representing a logical narrative based on temporal causality, it is ideational. In addition to the advenu, le signifié (the signified) is an ideational conversion of the shown and a particularly modern tool for what Groensteen calls, poetic comics. In other words, le signifié or the signified, reads, when the shown sheds light over the protagonist’s subjectivity, such as dreams, emotions, phantasms, hallucinations, and projects and/or it
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uses figures of style such as analogies, metaphors, and allegories as well as graphical, rhythmic, and plastic games that overflows the narrative (p.38). This meaningful act of focalization creates a narrative.

To sum up, comics’ narratives are indicated by a change of location, a perception of movement, and the perception of a script and they are also indicated by focalization. The narratives that can be indicated by their focalization are the gesture/case narrative and the poetic narrative. These indications however are limited to the condition of comics of being graphically and sequentially dominated. There exist narratives also as strict verbal narratives, which were discussed earlier, and in the combination between graphical and verbal fragments. But first, in order to further explore the multimodal deployment of narration in comics, a distinction is made between the larger narrative, the strict narrative and the fragment in order to classify the levels of narrativity.

Larger Narrative, strict narratives and fragments

On the assumption made that narration is constituted by both narratives and non-narratives, in this study, comics narration is the larger narrative that is on the level of the format, whether strip, page, a short or a book, and it is constituted at least of a strict narrative or of a least two fragments that generate a narrative. A strict narrative is a complete event narrative, and abides by the narratological conditions of narrativity. The narrative requires a minimum of an event and a character (Bal, 1985). To Groensteen (2011) infra-narratives have no narrative logic. These will be called narrative fragments. Figure 3.11 presents the fragments in red as they coincide with comics units. On the level of the page, graphic fragments that are non-narrative are what Groensteen classifies as the “amalgame, inventaire, variation, declinaison et decompositions,” (1988, p. 45-69) to which he ads, “seriation and fragmentation” (2011, p. 16). Until they are completed, either by a strict narrative or a fragment, they remain a potential narrative. These are further presented in the section on narrative visualization.
The narrative analysis presupposes a narrative in comics of at least two restricted narratives to become complete. Comics require a minimum of two units for them to be sequential. Thus, the larger narrative must have at least one strict narrative and a fragment or fragments that color it. Thus, a narrative departs from two units, and the narration of the story of at least one colored event acted out by one or more characters.

In figure 3.12, the panel holds a minimum of one narrative in the narratological sense\(^1\). The strict narrative can span in one unit, a sequence or on the entire narration.

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1 Based on the definition provided by Mieke Bal, the formula is by inclusion: $\text{Text} \subset \text{Narrator/Narrative} \subset \text{Story} \subset \text{Event + Characters (Diegesis)}$. 

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maintains both. Based on Bal’s canonical narrative formula, Comics’ texts simplified result in the following:

Comics ⊂ larger comics narrative ⊂ strict comics narratives

The number of units used to create a narrative depends on the degree of narrativity. If a narrative of a story with one event is narrated in the total units of the format, then not only it is a ‘slow narrative’, but it can be said that its narrativity is at the lowest pace. If, however, many narrative segments constitute the narrative, the narrativity is ‘high’ and the number of events overpowers all non-narrative fragments.

In the larger narrative, strict narratives can be simultaneous and, therefore, horizontally sequenced parallel narratives that have distinct narrators; or they can be vertically sequenced and embedded inside one other while also having distinct narrators (fig. 3.13). Narrative analysis distinguishes between the narrative, which is constructed out of simultaneous narratives and that which is constructed out of embedded ones.

Graphic narratives and fragments

If an assumption is made that the comics’ graphic mode is the only mode operating on comics, the result is silent comics. In truth, there is always the title, the name of the author, and the date otherwise it cannot be distributed. There exist many comics that do not contain in their narration any words except for the verbal information of the format. Considering that the comics are only
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graphic narratives, the monstrator is the only responsible of the narration. When these comics are assumed to be narrative, the condition is a minimum of a graphic narrative composed of at least one event and one character. Otherwise it is a graphic fragment waiting to be completed. The graphic fragment is a representation of a character, its description or arguments however no event occurs. It is a narrative potential. Descriptions and arguments are also graphic fragments considering their non-narrative qualities. Comics’ narrative simplified results in the following:

Comics ⊂ monstrator/ graphic larger narrative ⊂ strict graphic narratives + graphic fragments

The comics are the graphic text, through which a monstrator shows the whole graphic narration, constituted by strict narratives and/ or narrative fragments.

Verbal narratives and fragments

The recitant is to verbal fragments what the monstrator is to the graphics. However, the recitant is always already shown by a monstrator. Verbal fragments are realized by combining with typography. They are also often placed in a caption or a speech balloon, and they operate spatially (Kukkonen, 2011, p. 37). Those aspects are related to both the spatial and the visual mode since it is seen words that are shaped in a particular way and placed in a certain position.

When the words are stripped from the graphic mode, the first degree of enunciation outside the diegesis is the voice-off. Groensteen categorized the different sorts of voice-off from its function. Verbal fragments can be a reminder of previous events; they can articulate two events within time by using temporal indicators. Also, they can be external arguments, which means also non-narrative according to Bal (1985). These arguments are to Groensteen, references, translations or subtitling (2010, p. 7). All these fragments are non-narrative, since they do not complete a narrative.

Like the graphic fragments, the verbal fragments are also analyzed according to the narratological toolkit. To distinguish narrative and non-narrative verbal fragments, the canonical reference based on Bal’s narrative formula was created for this study. Thus, in the analysis of the verbal text that
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occurs in comics, the canonical formula for the verbal fragments that will be analyzed will look first at the larger narrative as presented by the monstrator. The monstrator delivers verbal narratives first through typography, the way the text looks and where it is situated. The verbal narratives indicate a recitant responsible of the verbal utterance. A complete verbal narrative requires a minimum of an event and a character otherwise it is a verbal fragment. The descriptions and arguments are also non-narrative verbal fragments.

On the one hand, this serves to distinguish the verbal fragments in a narratological context. On the other, it serves to distinguish narrative from non-narrative, narrators from the stories they tell, and last narration from focalization. Events and characters are located first, then the recitant or the verbal narrator, and then the different levels of narration in that verbal text. Verbal fragments may explicitly present categories of characters and events by naming them. Otherwise, Van Leeuwen (2005) presents the categories of actors– in this study; the term character is used– beyond the “point-by-point correspondence” of semiotic denotation (p. 38). He proposes pointers that can occur in various combinations (ibid.) using pointers that are relevant to this study such as the categorization that investigates seclusion and inclusion, groups vs. individuals, and whether they are active or not (van Leeuwen, 2008a).

This is realized in the following:

Comics ⊂ Recitant/ verbal larger narrative ⊂ strict verbal narratives + verbal fragments + typography

3.4.2. Narrators

The narrator is the intermediary between the narration and the reader; it is the voice in the narrative text. Distinguished in narratology from the author, it is the ‘organizing intelligence’ that is responsible for conveying the meaning of the story and its representation (Bal, 1985; Kindt, 2003).
The position of the narrator with respect to the narrative is either external or internal to the actions of the narrative text (Genette, 1980). The external or extra-diegetic narrator speaks from outside the diegesis, or total world of the fabula, while the diegetic or the character-bound narrator speaks from inside the diegesis. The position of the narrator defines its involvement, whether implicated or natural, retreated, or intervening (Groensteen, 2011).

In comics, a fundamental narrator already narrates everything; everything is a priori shown with a binding agency that makes decisions on the overall narrative, which coincides with the format. Because of that, comics are already embedded in the fundamental narrator’s narrative.

**Types of narrators**

The types of narrators and their delegation hierarchy are visualized in figure 3.14. The fundamental narrator, or the ‘narratorial voice’, tells a story from the extra-diegetic level, by delegating a constant monstrator that shows everything, including typography, and a recitant that is responsible of the entire verbal track (Groensteen, 2011) when the comics have text in them.

Groensteen (2011) uses the terms monstrator and recitant to designate respectively the showing and the speaking agency. Also extra-diegetic, the voice-over is a type of recitant that delivers the extra-diegetic verbal narrative. The first delegated narrator is the monstrator. With graphiation, the monstrator shows either a description to the material such as ‘rough and energetic’ or *ligne claire*, or a strict narrative such as ‘when things got rough, the *ligne claire* disappeared. In the first case, the graphiation is homogeneous; it may be made with thick strokes. In the second, the graphiation is heterogeneous and started with clean and flat colored and thin lined shapes, and ended with thick strokes. Moreover, the monstrator is responsible of the graphic telling of all the graphic internal narratives and those created by unit sequences, including all graphic fragments. Images tell how characters are perceived, and they also tell how characters perceive themselves in a process of “subjectified objectivation” (ibid., p. 144).
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The second delegated narrator is the recitant and it presents verbal fragments or strict narratives and manifests in different ways. The voice-over is the extra-diegetic voice that speaks for the fundamental narrator. It is also not a drawn character. The voice-over narrator is “hors champs” and “masked”, and is not part of the diegesis (Groensteen, 2011, p. 96).

In the diegetic level, the character shown or drawn is part of the diegesis, since it has already been told. If it tells a narrative and it is in the diegesis, the character that tells a story is an ‘actorialized’ narrator. This actor narrator must tell, it may deliver a verbal narrative; or a graphic one by looking at something or pointing as in Bal’s (1990) gaze/gesture. When extra-diegetic narrator enters the diegesis is also called metalypsis. Also, when characters tell a narrative, they imbeds in the larger narrative and become narrators. Graphic narrators can show a story through the narrativizing gaze or gesture or by the use of the balloon to speak, think or also present a graphic narrative. This graphic narrator is also called “actorialized narrator”, as referred to by Groensteen (2011, p. 106). A verbal narrator may also be inside the diegesis of verbal fragments or narratives referring to Bal’s “character-bound narrator” (2009, p. 58). Last, the character that speaks, however not in full
narratives is not a narrator; rather, it is ‘spoken of saying’ or ‘shown saying’, and can either be verbal or graphic.

Levels of narration

Distinguishing the levels of narration informs research about the intensity, nature, and dependency of the relation between the narrator’s narrative and the actor’s narrative (Bal, 1985, p. 53). This concerns the manipulation of the narratives by the fundamental narrator and how it decides what to tell and by whom.

The larger narrative is a collection of stories about characters, some of which also can be narrators. These characters live in the diegesis and can be images or words, and they can speak as images and words. If this speaking is a narrative, then they are character narrators that ‘point out’, tell, or show. Thus, they create another diegesis – a second-level diegesis – in which characters live. Transgression between one diegesis and another is what character narrators do, and the combination between these different modes creates entanglement and confirms what Groensteen (2011) calls “polygraphic” and “polyphonic narration” (p. 129). The levels of narrator involvement and delegation in comics are illustrated in figure 3.15. The fundamental narrator, the monstrator and the recitant all speak about the diegesis and thus from outside. They are extra-diegetic. Once there is a telling, a diegesis is formed. In this first diegesis, there are possible narrators in the graphic and verbal telling, which also means that they speak about a diegesis. However, they are diegetic narrators because they speak from inside the first diegesis. The second diegesis contain the characters but might also contain narrators.

Narration can alternate from internal to external narrator. The authorial voice of the artist is maintained; however, it is organized through different texts and their narrativity. Narrative levels may consist of several narrators delivering one story, or several stories delivered by several narrators depending on the narrative levels (Miller, 2007). In narratology, a parallel narrative is
when two narratives about the same story are provided, assuming two narrators. Whereas, a simultaneous one is several tellings of the same story.

3.4.3. FOCALIZATION IN COMICS

In classical narratology, focalization is always present on elements of the fabula (Bal, 1985). In other words, the elements are always presented in a way, a point of view, a narrative perspective, and narrative situation (ibid.). In order to distinguish who sees from who speaks: “Focalization is the relationship between the ‘vision’, the agent that sees, and that which is seen” (BAL) but also who knows. In addition, “focalization is an pivotal concept for a visual and multimodal narratology” as it “opens up the possibility of variance in meaning and mood” (Horskotte and Pedri, 2011, p. 351). When Focalization is applied on graphic narrative, which already is a ‘seen’, then a particular knowledgeable seeing is made on this seen, by an accentuation of the showing. When presenting the complexity of the ‘elaborated rhetoric’, Groensteen (2011) speaks of a dialectic balance between the linearity and the tabularity of a particular comics design (p. 47) bringing to light how focalization can turn into another reading that happens between the linearity.
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Graphics are focalized by the use of symbols, repetitions, and any other irregularity of coloration (Miller, 2007). In her elaboration on ostentation, which is equated with focalization by Groensteen (Groensteen, 2010, p. 3), she speaks of “wholly subjective images”, “images presenting the ocular point of view of the character”, and “images which bear traces of subjectivity through deformation” (Miller, 2007, p. 110). The analysis of focalization is significant to the analysis of events because it informs the motivation or the intentions of the narrator. Focalization strategies include the use of symbols, the use of the viewpoint, the use irregularities, and last the use of repetition and alternation.

- First, symbols are also the term used by Horskotte and Pedri (2011, p. 351) and do not involve the objective/subjective debate that “subjective images” suggest. They range between the pictogram and the “image-feeling” (Groensteen, 2011, p. 137). As two examples of symbolic use, the fist and the gaze are presented as key symbols that narrativize and demonstrate how this focalization strategy generates a new narrative. In developing the concept of focalization in visuals, Bal (1985) looks at images and discusses narration and focalization in painting. She presents focalization as “the relation between the vision and that, which is ‘seen’ or perceived (p. 142). In analyzing Rembrandt’s Susannah Surprised by the Elders, (1645), Bal (1990) reveals the emphasis or exaggeration of representational means; Rembrandt’s use of the fist and the “strongly concentrated” gaze “narrativize” by means of “deviant details” the shift from a roughly painted surface to a finely detailed painterly pointer (p. 748). The narrative that Bal constructs becomes the following: “Susannah is threatened with rape” (p. 747). In other words, a narrative is born from the image of the eyes or the character’s position or from the hand that points out at something in particular and projects a narrative into it. Images such as the hand and the gaze become symbolic and are particular visual focalization strategies that point out the object of
focalization. Such visual focalization is generative of a verbal narrative that presents the symbolic meaning of the image.

• Second, the viewpoint is also a strategy used for focalization. It is “images representing the ocular viewpoint of a character” (Miller, 2007: 110). The viewpoint of the character is an immersive technique that positions the reader in the eyes of the character as if looking through. Thus, the hands and the feet are often used as clues to highlight and thus focalize. Moreover, the viewpoint of the character can be a blurred vision or any other kind of ocular filter.

• Third, Miller’s “images which bear traces of subjectivity through deformation” (Miller, 2007: 110) can be categorized as deviant and pertain to irregularities, ostentation and repetition. When an element in the work does not match the logic of the system created, the diegesis, this element deviates to tell. Irregularities are focalization strategies on the sequence when the “dramatic ruptures of interplay between regularity and irregularity” affects the unit articulation (Groensteen, 2007b: p. 96). The deviation is from structural conventions such as the waffle layout, for digital comics, the default font, etc. In other words, when the regular stream of the sequence is interrupted by an irregularity, there is a focalization. Thus, an irregular strategy indicates a focalization. A simple typographical example of an irregular strategy is using a bold font to represent shouting. The regularity would be the use of the simple or default fonts as Helvetica and Times New Roman, which are neutral, but also convey the totality of the ‘normal’ world of the story – the ‘degree zero’. Interrupted by an irregularity is a focalization and must mean something and generate also a narrative. To Groensteen ostentation means it “attracts attention to some remarkable quality of itself” (Groensteen, 2007: p. 98). El Refaie presented ostentation in terms of style. In looking at autobiographical comics and responding to Kress and Van Leuuwen’s categories, Elisabeth El Refaie (2010) says that ostentation “depends not so much on how much a style diverges from normal perceptions, but rather to the degree to which it deviates
from conventions associated with the genre” (p. 171), revealing a narrator behind ostentation and thus, a visual focalization that filters the information through style. Referred to as ‘marked’ or ‘unmarked’ by Lefèvre (2010), the extent to which one can decide what is ‘discreet’ and what is ‘ostentatious’ should be clearly visible. A neutral perception is unmarked and discreet and does not turn attention to itself. It is a strategy to create cohesion and to build the logic of the diegesis. The first deviation that can be made is on the first showing at the degree zero. To further discuss style, is the graphiation that is dominant, whether homogenous or not. When the style is not expected for the genre or type of story, the narrator already is ‘telling’ something about that story. Also, Groensteen (2011) argues that “the stylistic deployment serves the narrative ambition” and that the changing in the style is ‘telling’ (p. 126). Illustrated in figure 3.16, the first narrative is homogeneously stylized, while the second narrative is inflected twice at the breaking points as the graphiation shifts from one style to another.

- Last, the ‘repetition’ and ‘alternation’ of visual or verbal statements on the sequence can exaggerate, inflect, or substitute the visual, the verbal, and their amalgamation into a metaphorical sequence (Groensteen, 2011). Focalization may be done through repetition on the level of the panel, and through multi-stage braiding of identical visual material on the level of the sequence (Horstkotte & Pedri, 2011). Groensteen also demonstrated the multimodal amalgamations in comics and how they express thought and emotion (Groensteen, 2011).

FIGURE 3.16: Graphiation as narrative fragments
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Levels of comics focalization

As mentioned earlier, narratives may be embed on different horizontal and vertical levels and, thus, focalization also occurs on different levels (Genette, 1980; Bal, 1985). In the case of comics, because everything already is visually described, there is already an embedded narrative in the first narrative that can be matched with the sentence, narrator graphiated. It is materialized with graphiation, the degree zero of narration. Ann Miller adapts the theory of narrative levels to comics and proves that bande dessinée allows for zero, internal and external focalization’ (Miller, 2007, p. 110).

External focalization

External focalization is when the graphic narration reflects the traces of a monstrator through symbolic images or on the sequence. The internal focalization pertains to the actorialized narrator, the figure that tells the story in the comics. So far, the focus was on graphic narratives. Nevertheless, the levels of narratives in verbal texts and how they braid with these levels must also kept in mind, to account for the verbal mode of comics. In this case, focalization pertains to a recitant that can affect the narrative by zero or by an external focalization, or a ‘character narrator’ (CN) that affects the narrative at the internal level by actorial or scenic meaning in the diegesis. Both recitant and CN tell a narrative that can be colored. When it is a character narrator, the narrative is already imbedded in the fundamental narrator´s telling.

Zero focalization

Zero focalization is when the graphiation bears no presence of a narratorial voice. Visuals already describe and present a coloring, and they are not necessarily so to tell something in particular. A priori, everything material in the comics’ narrative is shown. The showing may not affect the narrative by any inflection while, at other times, it can overpower the narration by focusing or by “coloring” it (Horstkotte & Pedri, 2011, p. 333). Graphic narration is assumed to cover the totality of the format and comics are already shown as they are narrated. The visibility makes the
focalization transparent and everything is shown without a strong inflection (Mikkonen, 2008, p. 312). In this case, focalization maintains the status of narration and is called “zero focalization” (Groensteen, 2011, p. 138).

**Diegetic focalization**

Narrators inside the diegesis are the character narrator and the actorialized one and their focalization is diegetic. These terms, character narrator (Bal, 1985) and actorialized narrator (Groensteen, 2011) mean the same thing in the large narratological sense, however, they are useful to distinguish the graphic from the verbal mode. Extra diegetic narrators show characters, and they may also tell how character narrators perceive themselves in a process of “objectivation subjectivée”\(^1\) (Groensteen, 2011, p. 144). Groensteen (2011) worked on this concept of focalization by presenting it as part of an ‘elaborated rhetoric’ with high traces of subjectivity (p. 47).

Comics also might contain words and thus verbal narratives, but graphic narration always have some sort of relation to text, even if it is solely towards the title and the author’s name. When considering the recitant that gives the verbal narrative in comics, classical focalization must be accounted for. Also, the relation between text and image when it is deviant draws attention to itself. Thus comics’ focalization also includes the focalization in the text and the focalization born out of the relation between text and image.

In the visual narration, the monstrator graphiates abstract, figurative, symbolic, and typographical concepts. The ‘regular’ coloring allows comics to be visual. Visual focalization is the attention drawn on it. According to Groensteen (2011), the fundamental narrator – the one that projects the total narrative – delegates first the monstrator, being the one that ‘shows’, and then the recitant, or the one that ‘tells’. In other words, comics contain two kinds of narratives: a visual and a verbal one and they combine on different levels. Indeed, comics’ narration can be delegated to a recitative, but also “subordinated to an narrative process which works through both text and images” (Miller 2007,\(^{1}\) Or focalized objectification.)
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108). On the one hand, the recitative is already verbal, which might contain its own focalization. On the other, the “narrative process” stems from the narrativizing relation between text and image. Thus, comics’ narration includes visual narration, verbal narration and the interplay between them. The interplay is ostentatious, meaning it draws attention to itself most probably by the meaningful gap, and thus is a focalization, a generated meaning or narrative. Narrative is also inferred and generated from the interpretation of the symbolic image. This study adopts this consideration for generated narratives born out focalization and out of interplay of image and text, and attempts to verbalize the attention drawn to narration that shows some sort of unconventional aspect.

To sum up, visual focalization is an inflection on the visual narration. It is signaled through the character point of view, the introduction of symbols, and through deviations, that can be shifts in the visual vocabulary, including style, repetition and the use of motifs, and the play between similarity and difference. It may reveals an agency and generate a new narrative and it may act upon the panel, the page and the format.

3.4.4. Time

Baetens (2010) presents the binary understanding of how comics unfold through their structure which focuses, on the one hand, on spatiality and, on the other hand, on temporality. As mentioned earlier, narratives are an indication of movement or change in space and time. “Any examination of the narrative dynamic of comics should take the form’s graphic and spatial representations of time into account” (Singer, 2012, p. x). It should also take the verbal indicators of time when there are words in the comics. The temporal development in comics is not prescribed but perceptible. There is nothing that obliges the reader to spend a certain time reading the comics; time is flexible and depends on the reading. This is the result of the representation of time in comics being spatial and temporal. Not only does it depends on the content of the comics and the way it is configured in the layout, it also depends on how comics “register temporality spatially” (Chute, 2008, p. 452).
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Time is complex because of the discrepancy between the graphic and verbal mode in communicating time. Time can be created by both the verbal and the graphic mode, including abstraction, figuration, symbolism, and typography. Verbal fragments or narratives can make time perceivable. Pratt (2009) argues that time is determined precisely by words and that the “pace of reading a comic is literary, constructed by the reader” (p. 110). In verbal utterances, time is explicit, such as dates, historical events, and temporal clauses. To Pratt (2009), the whole indeterminacy of time in comics is the result of the timelessness of graphical media that is usually implied. Also, verbal utterances are in the past, whereas expansions, which are tabular, are in the making (Martinec & Salway, 2005). However, time can still be precise with the use of graphics in case figurative or symbolic images indicate the precise time by the use of objects like a watch or symbols like the Twin Towers in New York to indicate a precise date. They can also loosely refer to a time, such as the case of a tree covered with snow or a moon as background descriptions respectively conveying the time of the season or the time of the day. Also, graphic events are inter-determinant by iconic solidarity and the perception of time can be estimated. Groensteen (2011) states that the recitant speaks in the present, while the actors and actorialized narrator that speaks in comics are doing so in the past or they have already spoken. The sequence of images is a succession of moments in the present telling of past a event, that creates a temporal ambiguity between past and present, while time is felt – or “ressenti” to use Groensteen’s (2011) term (p. 166). Still, the expression of time in “[c]omics should be constitutively perceived as being in the past” (Groensteen, 2011, p. 94).

Calculating the time of the narrative is ambiguous; however, it can be estimated. The following section estimates the narratological time as it occurs on the different types of comics’ narratives. This time is also compared with the hypothetical time to reveal the divergence or irregularities in the ordering of the events, their frequency, and their duration.
The minimum requirement for comics is a sequence of at least two units, the smallest unit being the panel; thus, two panels can achieve a larger narrative. The aim of this section is to explain how the different modal combinations of strict narratives and the fragments can achieve the larger narrative.

The different combinations presented are based on McCloud’s (2006) panel-to-panel closures and Groensteen’s (2011) sequence amalgamations, set here as ‘spatial modalities’ which include the consideration of the ‘breakdown’ and the ‘layout’. Groensteen’s (1988) presents the different types of sequential configuration, which he calls ‘primary distributive functions’ which are the amalgam, inventory, variation, declination, and decomposition. These five primary distributive functions define the logic that motivates and commands the grouping of units together and his more recent research adds two others functions, namely; the wallpaper and the fragmented background (Groensteen, 2011). This study ads a category, the ‘framed-to-non-framed’ (fig. 3.17). This type of sequential configuration was inspired from the conception of the narrative and its relation to the diegesis. The framed-to-non-framed transition is the transference of a character from inside a unit into another and vice versa, thus, creating a closer or farther relation to the reader. These modalities were categorized according to the narratological duration and with McCloud’s (2006) panel-to-panel relation that he revises in Making Comics: Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels provides some additional support for Groensteen’s (1988, 2011) categories as they insinuate a particular duration span.

FIGURE 3.17: Framed-to-non-framed transition
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The short duration of a long action in comics groups both Genette’s (1980) ‘scene’ and ‘summary’ – the scene is a series of units of a similar scene, it may also be an inventory, or subject-to-subject; the summary is a series of units that compresses the story by variation from scene to scene also called ‘compressed time’. The pause and the present duration indicate a time that stops. The decomposition describes aspects, nuanced or emotional. The fragmentation describes the grande image or the ‘seriation’, which repeats the same pattern as a wallpaper panel and impregnate both the page and the format with a potential narrative. The ‘extended time’ stands for the long duration of short actions. It is a ‘slowdown’ and consists of ‘moment-to-moment’ units that show nuances or emotions. The ‘action-to-action’ remains a felt time that can be compressed, paused, or extended; last, the non sequitur, remains ‘unborn’ until diegetic logic governs it.

Figure 3.18 visualizes the different combinations that can arise starting from a particular verbal narrative and moving into the different modal combinations presented that ‘tell’ and ‘show’ a narrative. This narrative is based on ‘the queen died, then the king dies’ and is adapted from Forster (1927/2002). The queen and the king are illustrated in Lebanese traditional clothing with a tantour\(^1\) and a turban, and the setting stereotypically a desert and a luscious mezze\(^2\). The first column presents the different types of sequential configuration, which are amalgam, inventory, variation, declination, decomposition, wallpaper and fragmentation. The second column contains the graphic snippets, which visualize what can be narrated from the sentence in the particular spatial modality; while the third is its verbal equivalent. There, red indicates a restricted narrative, black a non-narrative, and green a complete narrative. The fourth column includes the graphic fragments that would be needed to complete a narrative. The fifth and final column shows the complete narrative combined from the first and third columns.

The larger narrative is composed of ‘the queen dies’, a restricted narrative which requires another, ‘the king died’, to become complete. The graphic modality includes the following:

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1 A coned headpiece decorated with precious metal and stones, tied to the head with a length of cloth in wool or silk.
2 Selection of small appetizer served before the main course of a traditional Arabic meal.
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• The amalgam is based on the unit transition and is known also as non sequitur. The amalgam is juxtaposed images in a trivial manner. The snippets are two panels, a figurative and an abstract one. The only utterance enabled in the verbal modality is that of the figure, ‘the queen’ because there is no focalization on it by the means of repeating elements and, thus, no narrative to speak of. This non-narrative requires the killing of both ‘the queen’ and ‘the king’ to be complete.

• The inventory gives no direct access to the events and, thus, remains a non-narrative fragment. ‘The queen’ and ‘the king’, as figures in two panels, is a list of characters. Known as the subject-to-subject transition, it offers a possibility of exposing everything and narrative by focalization. The inventory requires the complete narrative to become itself complete.

• The variation groups together elements from the similar paradigmatic class and is also known as scene-to-scene transition. The scene expects a certain strict narrative to occur; otherwise it remains an amalgam or inventory. Because of the ‘telling’ in the sequence and the past tense being implied, a complete narrative is induced, becoming ‘the queen died then the king died’; thus, no additional snippets are required to complete it.

• The decomposition juxtaposes details taken from the same motif and results in the “emergence of a latent content” (Groensteen, 1985, p. 45-69). It is tightly related to the gestalt theory to complete its meaning; however, it remains a restricted narrative loaded with the focalization in the decomposed units. The latent content arises from the distinction of the focalization. From here on, the graphic modality is a strict narrative that requires another to be complete.

• The fragmentation or the ‘grande image’ is an image that was cut into units. It spreads spatially to focalize the elements in each unit, while still preserving a play or narrativity in the larger image/unit. Because it spreads in units, the ‘telling’ produces at least a restricted narrative either ‘uttered’ from figuration or ‘born’ through focalization.
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- The seriation is the repetition of the same unit on the larger one. It is a pattern that is also called wallpaper. The repetition is a focalization on the unit, which, in this case, is a figurative panel of ‘the dead queen’. The sequence produces the restricted narrative of ‘the queen is dying’ in the past or ‘the queen is dead’.

- The ‘framed-to-non-framed’ transition is a repetition and, thus, a focalization of the unit. ‘The queen died’ (inside the diegesis) and ‘the queen died’ (outside of it) is the first restricted narrative of the fundamental complete narrative.

- The plastic declination is the repetition of the same motif with a different graphiated treatment on each unit. In other words, it is the substitution of the graphiation of color and/or texture with another, while maintaining the graphic modality. The focalization made by the repetition produces the restricted narrative ‘the queen died’.

- Iconic declination is also the repetition of the same motif; however, in this case, the repetition is within the graphic range of abstraction, figuration, symbolism, and typography. In contrast to plastic declination, the substitution is of the graphic modality while maintaining the graphiation. Again, the focalization made by the repetition produces the restricted narrative ‘the queen died’.

- The moment-to-moment spatial configuration is, like the snippets used for the fundamental restricted narrative of the queen, the decomposition of the action or the event into shots of the same scene. Like chrono-photography, it extends the time of the action, making it slower than hypothetical time. Because of this effect, the restricted narrative is set in the present as it happens and, thus, becomes ‘the queen dies’.

- The action-to-action spatial configuration is the decomposition of an event into scenes of different events. In this case, the action of falling and the one of lying on the ground are the two actions of the units that convey the restricted narrative ‘the queen dies’.

- The non sequitur is not yet a narrative. The completion of that narrative needs first to convey the death of the queen and, second, to convey the death of the king.
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Last was added the verbal mode:

- The verbal fragment is a typographic unit, a caption or a balloon of a subject or character, here ‘the queen’. It might include, like the graphic fragment would, a focalization such as, ‘the fierce queen’ or ‘the queen with a tantour on her head’.

- The verbal restricted narrative must be composed of a character and an event: ‘the queen died’, which, like the previous transitions, requires another restricted narrative to become complete, namely ‘the king died’.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spatial modality</th>
<th>Graphic fragment</th>
<th>Equivalent in words</th>
<th>Graphic fragment needed to complete the narrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fundamental narrative</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>The queen dies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgam non-sequitur non-narrative</td>
<td></td>
<td>The queen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventory subject-to-subject</td>
<td></td>
<td>The queen and the king</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variation scene-to-scene</td>
<td></td>
<td>The queen died/it’s dead and then the king died/it’s dead</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decomposition aspect-to-aspect nuanced or emotional</td>
<td></td>
<td>The queen died/it’s dead</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragmentation grande image</td>
<td></td>
<td>The queen died/it’s dead</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seriation wallpaper</td>
<td></td>
<td>The queen died/it’s dead</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framed to non-framed</td>
<td></td>
<td>The queen died/it’s dead</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plastic declination</td>
<td></td>
<td>The queen died/it’s dead</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iconic declination</td>
<td></td>
<td>The queen died/it’s dead</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moment-to-moment nuanced or emotional</td>
<td></td>
<td>The queen dies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action-to-action</td>
<td></td>
<td>The queen dies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic non-narrative fragment</td>
<td>The queen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic narrative fragment</td>
<td>The queen died</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 3.18:** Graphic snippets: Reference to narratives and fragments in comics © Lena Merhej, 2014.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spatial modality</th>
<th>Completed Narrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fundamental narrative</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graphic snippets" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalgam non-sequitur non-narrative</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graphic snippets" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inventory subject-to-subject</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graphic snippets" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Variation scene-to-scene</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graphic snippets" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Decomposition aspect-to-aspect nuanced or emotional</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graphic snippets" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragmentation grande image</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graphic snippets" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seriation wallpaper</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graphic snippets" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Framed to non-framed</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graphic snippets" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Plastic declination</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graphic snippets" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Iconic declination</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graphic snippets" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moment-to-moment nuanced or emotional</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graphic snippets" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action-to-action</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graphic snippets" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic non-narrative fragment</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graphic snippets" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic narrative fragment</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Graphic snippets" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 3.18: Graphic snippets: Reference to narratives and fragments in comics (cont.) © Lena Merhej, 2014.
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In the last column, both graphic segments are added to reflect ‘the queen dies and then the king dies’, ‘the queen died and then the king died’, or ‘the queen is dead and the king is dead’. The amalgam, the inventory, and the non-verbal narrative fragment remain non-narratives and require additional information to become a segment and emerge as a story. The rest of the amalgamation, however, can develop a strict narrative by turning the action into a focalized state of repetition, description, or symbolic use. In addition, the verbal modalities also are presented to account for the words that occur in captions or balloons. The snippets are visualized to provide a visual reference for a narrative mapping in comics.

3.5. Annotation

In this study, the annotation of comics should exploit the potential of the medium by covering all its parts with a focus on the units, the modes, and the narratives of comics.

An annotation system that is open to research implementation can be useful to integrate comics’ analyses. Bateman (2013b) insists that the accumulation of multimodal analysis is valuable for a broader research community and calls for methods that make data usable for multimodal corpus research. He stresses the importance of theoretical focus and empirical openness, which is enabled by zooming in on the property and behavior of multimodal corpora and describing them in an open dynamic network that echoes William J. Thomas Mitchell’s continuous reinventions and renegotiations of word and image texts (Bateman 2013b). Multimodal corpora are commonly described on a variety of levels that are dependent on the artifact, on the one hand; and the researcher’s question, on the other. In fact, annotation makes data much more useful for research with annotated categories that open up new questions (ibid.). Comics are constantly being reinvented, thus it is quite valuable to capture these new developments through quantitative research and with the collaboration of different researchers. To Groensteen (2009), the practical and the theoretical work on comics are dynamic and, as soon as comics practice is pinned down in
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Theoretical work, artists break the boundaries of comics’ definition and subvert them. Indeed, word and image is a complex concept, and like class, gender and race, they should be constantly questioned and reinvented (Mitchell, 1986). While designing a comics multimodal analysis system, this research investigated existing archiving software that enable the annotation of visuals. Software for images and for film annotation was useful, since one accounts for the image mode and the other for both the image and the verbal mode as it unfolds in time. However, the annotation of comics should consider the spatial mode and this is lacking in the properties of film software. Thus, this research proposes software designed to archive and annotate comics, and it particularly focuses on annotation is the information that distinguishes the different units, the modes and their relation, and the narratives.

Chapter 4 presents the different software available for comics’ production and archiving and reveals that there is no software that annotates comics units. Image and film annotation software do not accommodate images in spatial sequences. Archiving software for comics exists only to cover the format information and disregards the artwork ‘inside’. Photo archiving software accounts for panel units and not the rest of the units; while film archiving does not account for the spatial modality of comics, which unfolds like film in the breakdown, but also in the layout – something that does not apply to film. Groensteen (2011) questions the constituents of a comics archive in the digital age but does not develop or propose a comprehensive archival system. Thus, the challenge of comics archiving is raised here with respect to archiving and annotating all the material of comics, not only covers.

The objectives of this study as they were specified earlier in chapter one, require a particular narratological annotation of the material. According to the narratological toolkit, the narrative elements, what the stories tell and how, are to be distinguished in the multimodal construction of comics while considering also comics’ structural units. It seeks the narrative, the non-narrative and how the larger narrative is constructed out of strict narratives and fragments, and last it looks for
narrators to understand the narrative levels and the manipulations in the larger narrative and to reveal hidden ones. The concern was much less on the complete narrative and analyzing the relation between the different restricted narratives, than on what those restricted narratives told and how. Indeed, the comics were not studied each in their particular format; rather, all the restricted narratives of the entire corpus were presented with respect to the nature of the telling. The mapping, however, required a preceding step—that of the arranging of the material and annotating it in order to ensure all the units were covered, the modes considered, and the focalization registered. The annotation included the transcription of the words in the comics, annotations produced from the utterance of the graphic mode articulation, and annotations of the narratives produced by the sequences of units and by the focalization. Thus a comic’s narratological annotation targets the format, the page and the panel, and the multimodal construction. It looks for the strict narratives and fragments in the material and put them in words if they are graphic or a graphic and verbal combination.

The translation of the graphic story into its supplementary text is problematic and requires categories to pinpoint the background and the characters, and also the events, including descriptions and argumentations if any. A kind of ‘catalogue’ can be used and replace the graphics to reach ‘ekphrasis’¹. A combination of social semiotic and visual archiving aids this maneuver. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) have developed social semiotic approaches of categorization for large corpus material where characters are identified by denotation and analyzed by connotation. Van Leeuwen (2005) presents the categories of actors for both verbal strings and for images beyond “point-by-point correspondence” of semiotic denotation (p. 38). He proposes pointers that can occur in various combinations (ibid.). The relevant pointers to this research study are categorization that investigates typification, groups vs. individuals, distancing and surrounding text, their relation to

¹ Ekphrasis is defined as a “literary description of or commentary on a visual work of art” in Merriam-Webster.com. Merriam-Webster, 2013. Web. 19 May 2013.
The Narratology of Comics

reality, and whether they are active or not (van Leeuwen, 2008a). Such categories expose the social status of identified characters by verbal and visual pointers. While van Leeuwen’s (2005, 2006, 2008a) work analyzes press photography and editorial advertising, presenting images that visualize their concepts, both Eisner (1985, 2001) and McCloud (1994, 2006) introduce visualizations of comics categories to demonstrate how to create comic characters, resulting in comprehensive visual libraries of object-characters distinguished by the way they look and the way they move. They are labeled by captions and often by further interpretation (Eisner, 1985, 2001; McCloud, 1994, 2006). The “outlook” of the design, body language, and facial expression of the characters are all stereotypes developed through “experience” (McCloud, 2006, pp. 62-65). Eisner (2001) created a “posture library” using examples from his own comics that provide a categorical reference to body, posture, and facial expression (p. 103). These devices enabled the translation of the graphic sequences, and the graphic and verbal combinations to be worded out and matched to either strict narratives or fragments and how they are leveled in the larger narrative.

The theories around the comics’ narrative, both relating to the system and the narrative interpretation, were visualized with minor additions and modifications. The narratological toolkit presented the main concepts of narratology and the narrative formula on which the study bases itself on. The system of comics and how its units articulate were enumerated and discussed in terms of their combination. These developments enabled the discussion of a narratology for comics with its foundation in classic narratology. Visualization provided quick references to the theories. Last, the annotation of the material was presented to explain how the comics’ modes would be worded out, before they are analyzed. The narrative formulas shaped the narratological content and formal aspect of the material into words.

The additions made were on the panel unit and the narrative sequence. The first was the classification of the meaningful blank space into the unit of the panel, the ghost panel, and the second is the ‘framed-to-non-framed’ sequence. These brought the narrative analysis closer to the
material and enabled a slicing that did not exclude any part of the material pages. The analysis consisted of slicing the images to distinguish the narratives in units; a technique borrowed from web design and refers to the operation of cutting a large continuous image – for example Bitmap – into smaller agglomeration of pixels or smaller clusters of parts to account for the entire material.
4. Comics Analytical Interface

Comics analytical interface acts as an interface between data and metadata, and also as visualization between theory and practice – one of the main aims of this research study. The presentation in this chapter is a simulated interface that enabled the annotation and mapping of the comics in the corpus, and which proved to be efficient for accessing hidden and global aspects of narration in comics narratives. Also included in this chapter is an explanation of the methodology of the analysis and the overall design of the analytical framework of the research study. The design was based on published research on multimodal narrative units in comics and aimed at answering the practical research question: How can events and characters in comics be analyzed?

The general approach, as outlined in Chapter 3, set the basic categories of comics narratology. The narrative approach was based on the fundamental concepts of classical narratology and aimed at distinguishing the analytic elements and their categories as a narratological toolkit – as advocated by Jan Christoph Meister (2003) – consisting of such formal and context-free abstract fundamental concepts as ‘event’ and ‘character’. Because narratives in comics are multimodal, the toolkit was based on a multimodal approach by distinguishing the modes in comics. Visualization was created as comics snippets for category reference and as an analytical interface; with description – consisting of the distinction, annotation, and mapping of the comics in the corpus – used to simulate the application of the analysis. The simulation workflow was compared to an automated workflow and revealed the possible computational application of the interface.

The analytical interface of comics is a visualization that realizes the methodology of analyzing narratives in comics. Describing the procedure of the user interface means presenting a set of methods designed to archive, distinguish, extract, annotate, and map snippets of comics. The first question that arises is related to the method of presenting a visual approach of comics analysis, as well as to what role visualization plays in visual and graphic research, especially as both the
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approach to comics and to narrative are various and proliferate. “There is a great deal of variation in approaches to data analysis, data-gathering techniques and conceptions of narrative itself” (de Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011, p. 25).

A large array of methodologies of comics analysis are covered in Mathew J. Smith’s and Duncan Randy’s (2012) book Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories and Methods, which compiles different interdisciplinary studies, some of which are from a narratological perspective, including the research entitled Time and Narrative (Singer, 2012) focusing on the formal, semiotic, narrative, and cultural critical perspectives. The workshop Interdisciplinary Methods: Comics Studies between Literary Studies, Art History and Media Studies held at the University of Bern, Switzerland, in October 2011, grouped together scholars from various disciplines working on comics. Their interdisciplinary debates noticeably overlooked visualization and studies in computer sciences that focus on graphic documents, literature, film, and comics. Thus, one of the intentions of this chapter is to bridge the semantic gap that exists between comics theory and computer science with the support of visualization as the material interface.

Alan Bryman (2008) considers methods as research instruments and tools, and aspects as research techniques. Methodology, on the other hand, is the design of these methods and “is concerned with uncovering the practices and assumptions of those who use methods of different kinds […] it is the study of the methods that are employed” (Bryman, 2008, p. 159). Gilian Rose (2012) characterizes visual methodologies as consisting of an introduction, a description of the process, an assessment, and a summary; while Smith and Randy (2012) adopt a different strategy by starting with the underlying assumptions, procedures, and terms for the analysis, artifacts selected for the sample analysis, and sample analysis.

For this research study, following the overview done on direct visualization and based on the assumptions of narrative distinction and analysis, the functions and the specifications of the analytical interface then were presented. This section covers the research on computer science
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which could provide the background to the interface; while the main focus, however, is on the
graphic design of the interface and how it links to the categories of the analysis. The discussion of
the methods is presented through visually sketching theoretical concepts for comics analysis. The
result includes both comics snippets presented in the previous chapters and in the figures in the
form of diagrams showing how the various concepts are linked to one another – also known as
flowcharts.

Direct visualization is specifically relevant as it integrates comics within a larger material structure,
and enables their mapping and accommodates both visual and textual annotations for further
analysis. As regards the method of presenting the narrative methods proposed, a distinction must be
made between the methodology applied to this research study and the two proposed methodologies.
Direct visualization is a methodological proposal for comics analysis that can be independent from
those elements which are particular to Lebanon and the Lebanese comics corpus. After the
analytical interface has been explained, the specific methodologies of the analyses of events and
characters will be discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, respectively.

Direct visualization bridges the distance between the material image with its visual features and the
meaning that the research intends to identify by configuring the data in a particular layout that
includes annotative space. A group of computer scientists – Konstantin Todorov, Nicolas James,
and Céline Hudelot (2011) – describe the “well-known distance between low-level visual features
and high-level meaning” as a semantic gap in their work on semantic image retrieval and archiving
(p. 402). Visualization is designed to be an instrument of data collection for scanning, archiving,
and structuring. It enables annotative methods, used as references to customized categories, and it
facilitates the transmission of the relation of the methods to comics and the process of analyzing
their narrative.

Together with visualization, textualization also was among the main methods applied in this
research study. A dialogic approach was maintained between visualization and textualization; in
fact, the design process moved back and forth and in response to the theoretical and graphic design development of the different models inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1981) productive concept of dialogic imagination which transformed poetic texts into prosaic ones and vice versa, as well as translating them into other modalities.

4.1. TIMELINE VISUALIZATION: RELEVANCE AND BENEFITS OF THE ANALYTICAL INTERFACE

Such visualizations as graphs and maps explain concepts otherwise left unclear and diffuse, and enhance communication by representing and making large sets of data accessible and credible (Malamed, 2009). In addition, as Jarke Jan van Wijk points out, visualization has proven useful for exploring, analyzing, and gaining insight into multi-faceted scientific data (as cited in Kehrer & Hauser, 2013). Current examples of direct visualizations of fixed visual narratives address only one facet without considering also spatio-temporal, multivariate, multimodal, multi-run, and multi-model facets of data (Kehrer & Hauser, 2013). When analyzing narratives in comics, visualization provides space for observing, scanning, mapping, and matching the corpus material to the various categories of the narrative units – something that requires a visualization of both the categories and the interface.

The methods of the design presentation are based on a trans modal translation of the application of Bakhtin’s (1981) dialogism; in other words, the descriptions in relation to the visualization elucidate and facilitate access to the methods and their credibility. These corpus-based methods are made possible by such technological advancements as access to large quantities of recorded data and newly developed mapping tools (Bateman, 2013b). Comics’ pages are widely available on the
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Internet as digital bitmap\(^1\) files, ranging from such meme comics as Rage Comics\(^2\) or poetic comics as on the Grandpapier\(^3\) platform.

A wide range of imaging software exists that permits editing and modifications of images, images in sequence, and images and text layout. These tools accommodate varying sample sizes by enabling a ‘zooming-in’ and a ‘zooming-out’ of the material analysis, and “[v]isualization allows the perception of emergent properties that [are] not anticipated” (Ware, 2004, p. 3). Thus, visualization eases the presentation of hidden or veiled narratives – which are revealed through the analysis and partly through the tracking of narrators – from the tracking of the multimodal narratives and the focalizations. This also helps the material exploration by bottom-up argumentation using the theoretical foundation developed in Chapter 3 and putting the corpus in relation to a hypothetical narrative.

Achievement of such visualization is facilitated by the fact that comics themselves are a type of visualization; as Hillary Chute (2010) states, “the authors show us interpretation as a process of visualization” (p. 4). The question that was raised refers to the visualization content and which characters and stories are to be used as a pertinent reference and example. Scott McCloud (1994, 2000, 2006) and Neil Cohn (2013) used visualization to create comics from their own resources, rather than applying ‘real’ examples to supported their theories. Bateman points to McCloud’s (1994) work to designate references of comics snippet that categorize techniques of production. Comics snippets were used also in Cohn’s (2013) visualizations of narrative categories and they correspond to his theory presented in Visual Narrative Structure (p. 416); while Karin Kukkonen (2011a) uses extensively the verb “visualize” and the term “visualization” to substitute for the notion of comics as being intended in research (p. 38). Such comics snippets are one aspect of visualization. Comics are made to provide the research with conceptual visualization that refers to

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1 Bitmap images - also known as raster images - are continuous and made up of pixels in a grid; while vector images are made up of vector projections of defined mathematical equations that create flat shapes.


the categories of comics narrative since real comics panel are charged with an overload of information. In this research study – by choosing the basic narrative of E. M. Forster (1926/2002) – the interference, or ‘charge’, was reduced and the focus placed on the bare minimal elements; however, Forster’s (1926/2002) sentence had been modified to have the queen die first.

The other kind of visualization that operates by direct visualization is the timeline, meaning the space such visual narratives as film and animation deploy. Fixed visual narratives similarly can adopt a timeline, though software applications designed for comics are limited and research conducted on visualization – as the production of visual methods to organize theoretical concepts for particular comics narratives – tends to have been based on existing production competence of the researchers in question, as well as on practical design strategies of producing visualization. Building on Michael Benton’s (1999) ideas of visualizing narratives as a productive method to reveal temporal progression and contextual information, this research study focuses on models of timeline visualizations of large image data sets and was supported by visualization techniques used for designing information in graphic design.

Moreover, there is comparative visualization that reveals the similar and different aspects that could be relevant to a specific research study. Johannes Kehler and Helwig Hauser (2013) present the classification of comparative visualization by Michael Gleicher et al. that includes three categories – juxtaposition, visual fusion, and computation. In this research study, the differences and correlations in the data show that an organizational platform is needed to enable a distinction of the various narrative elements to be carried out before they could be compared.

Lev Manovich (2002), who wrote The Language of New Media, calls for digital humanities and computer science to join the field of research in humanities. His more recent research is concerned with large corpora of visual material, and his research laboratory works on a wide array of experiments on timeline visualization, including “one million fan-translated manga pages” (Douglass, Huber, & Manovich, 2011). Such studies, however, are limited to the materiality of the
image and to the mapping of visual properties, while disregarding how meaning takes shape. Nevertheless, they still provided the foundation for a new visualization category – a graph that uses images as quantifiers.

To Manovich (2011), “information visualization is the mapping between discrete data and a visual representation” (p. 37). In this study uses this kind of visualization to map research categories and to represent the findings while maintaining the original material to realize the analytical system. Computer scientists add dynamic and interactive features to visualization through the use of interactive computer-driven visual representations and interfaces (Manovich, 2011). Direct visualization is an analytical tool where the user-researcher fully interacts with the total material being analyzed (ibid.). Although the interactive features of the analytical system are simulated, the interactive features benefit the analysis. Technological development enables designers to ‘zoom in’ and ‘zoom out’ of such digital workspaces as imaging, publishing, and film software. In analyzing the comics material for this research study, direct visualization was adopted because it does not require the reduction of the data. This adaptability rather emphasized the importance of visualization in comics mapping.

“Displaying the actual visual media as opposed to representing them by graphical primitives helps the researcher to understand meaning and/or cause behind the pattern [he/she] may observe, as well as discover additional patterns” (Manovich, 2011, p. 48). Manovich (2011) discusses the plastic variations of manga pages across a certain time and in relation to their intended audiences (fig. 4.1). Using software, he analyzes large data sets of images by placing them on a timeline according to visual characteristics to facilitate visual access to media collections for the purpose of recognizing patterns (ibid.). From measuring such visual properties as gray scale value and contrast1 in comics pages as they unfold on a chronological timeline, the visualization method also is developed to distinguish shots in films, for example units of montage (Manovich, 2013). These visualization

1 Including gray scale value, contrast, number of shapes, number of edges, relative proportion of different colors, texture properties, and so on.
techniques, however, enable a comparative visualization method by measuring visual properties on units only, and do not account for the articulation of comics units.

Cohn’s (2010) visualizations of ‘tree-structure’ diagrams also act as timeline visualizations that can be relevant. In addition to their modal spans, he measures the spans and ruptures of narrative elements and analyzes the structure in sequential images in order to identify a system of segmentation in “whole sub-episodes of sequential images” (ibid., p. 138). He presents a different kind of arthrology to Thierry Groensteen (2007) and diagrams temporal and spatial shifts on the panels to research the “complex groupings of panels motivated by principles in the human mind” (Cohn, 2010, p. 128). As previously mentioned, Cohn’s (2010) visualizations are based on a linear reading order (fig. 4.2). The images are put as a ribbon where their linear progression is understood as a hierarchy between scenes and shots. “The grouping of spatial information can work against temporal information in complex and interesting ways that undermine any viewpoint that linear relations alone guide the comprehension of sequential images” – hence, his visualization is based on a linear reading order (Cohn, 2010, p. 141). The system groups panels into snippets of spatial environments and into snippets of temporal sequences. The visualization is depicted by ‘tree-
structure’ diagrams overarching the linear ribbon of comics where the hierarchy is of diegetic nature and encloses the total world of the story under time shifts in order to trace the break between one narrative point and another.

FIGURE 4.2: Narrative Arches on the Linear Sequence
Source: Cohn, 2003.

Cohn’s (2010) categories operate on the articulation of the narrative regardless of their modes, but with an assumption about the structure of narratives – in other words, the structure has to be in certain way. Categories included in his visual narrative ‘grammar’ are the “[e]stablisher”, who sets up an interaction without acting upon it; the “[i]ntial”, who initiates the tension of the narrative arch; the “[p]rolongation” that marks a medial state of extension and often the trajectory of a path; the “[p]eak” that marks the height of narrative tension and point of maximal event structure; and the “[r]elease” that releases the tension of the interaction (Cohn, 2013, p. 421). Furthermore, “except for [p]eaks, they each can be left out of a sequence with no significant structural consequences” (ibid., p. 421).

In this research study, the ‘peaks’ are accounted for as narrative focalizations and distinguished by looking at the ruptures and shifts of their focalizing nature. Cohn’s (2010) research has much potential; however, using his narrative categories go beyond the narratological scope – which
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proved to be more suitable for analyzing events and characters – and the manipulation of delivery in stories.

Building on John Bateman’s (2013b) research on methods that interact with the data in ways that are appropriate for framing and exploring research questions, this research study turned to simulation and interactive features from digital software that were applied manually\(^1\). Imaging software is software applications that are tools for the editing of images. Software that aids artists creating comics is limited to the editing of visual properties and does not enable the creative process to delve into the narrative constitution. Moreover, existing imaging software applications lack timeline interaction support and disregard the design that is done on the linear progression. Manga Studio Debut, Sketchbook Pro, Comic Creator, Comic Life, and Pixton all use ‘click-and-drag’ technology that enables users to make comics by using such tools as a ‘text editor’, pens and rulers, and libraries of such objects as word balloons and special effects. Most also provide layering techniques to compile and re-use images. They focus mainly on the layout and undermine the design of the articulation; in other words, designers have no control over the material progression of the sequence, only on the page and the panel. The potential and relevance of the layout that comics provide by their spatiality undermines the design of the linearity. These software are like storyboard application that focus on pages and do not give a general overview of the format. Working with them is restricted to a page-by-page design, while a more holistic – or spatial – approach is needed to cover the awareness on the totality of the comics format.

Comics database applications are also archiving software, as are Comic Base (2007) and Book Manager (2010). These view the data according to such prescribed categories as ‘publisher’, ‘series’, ‘title’, ‘issue’, ‘price value’, ‘autographed date’, ‘condition’, and ‘character details’, as well as ‘colorer’, ‘inker’, ‘penciler’, and ‘writer’. These features were developed further in the Comic Book Collector (2012) where categories are customizable; however, the interactive features of

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\(^1\) To be more precise, the analysis was done using digital publishing software without the use of such agents as algorithms to compute certain mining features.
existently comic archiving and editing tools are not appropriate for a narrative analysis, as they do not accommodate a timeline or a space for the unfolding of the sequence. Most software focus on file-sharing – often comic-magazine covers or manga pages – across the social media¹, while what is needed is an interface whereby the whole comic is visualized for both production and analysis of discrete data.

Unpublished research on large data sets of images on a timeline made in an interactive environment – in particular games – distinguishes modes on a timeline using layers. On Manovich’s (2008) media lab website², this visualization technique distinguishes modes and is presented to measure temporal changes on a timeline. The modal distinction made is between cinematic, navigation, save-screen, menu, and camera modes, measuring the temporal span of use before shifting to another mode. This feature exemplifies the use of modal distinction on large data sets of images configured on a timeline, very much like the spatio-topical system of comics that unfolds images in space. Thus, comics’ artists and collectors use visualizing tools that do not take into account the specificity of the comics system³ or the specificity of narrative construction, respectively.

Part of this study involved ‘hands-on’ research, managing the pages of comics and accommodating a space next to them, as margins or tracks; or on them, as layers for the annotations. The Adobe InDesign publishing tool was used to accommodate the bitmaps of comic pages and apply vectored mapping and text annotations. On the other hand, few software tools exist whereby sketching narratives is enabled, with artists adopting visualization techniques while sketching and working towards the final output of their artifacts. Sketching layout compositions, mood boards, and storyboards, artists use visualization to develop their narratives – with visualization often generating and developing further their ideas, concepts, and new narratives.

¹ Social movements that share media on the Internet.
³The available tools can be divided into two categories: production tools that provide formal production with no consideration for narrative production; archival tools, which provide annotative tools that could be narrative. They, however, do not take into consideration the formal aspects of the system.
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The existent software for archiving comics is based on the visual reduction of the data, often only comprising of the cover page; while editing or production software is limited to storyboard templates where pages are seen one at a time, instead of all together on a timeline. For this research study, the search for appropriate digital applications revealed the needed specifications and functions of a tool for fixed graphic narrative analysis where visualization was augmented by the timeline of the format, of the pages, and of the sequence of the smallest unit – the panel.

4.2. The Functions of the Interface

The design of the direct visualization proposed for this research study was comprehensive and targeted generic, fixed visual narratives and a generic sampling. It was adapted to the wide range of comics realizations that are found in Lebanese comics and designed to adapt to other types of studies as it encompassed categories of comics in general. It was made to accommodate comics and comics annotation in order to analyze the narratives by looking at the events and the characters, thus following the general aim of this research study. For instance, for the distinction of narrative segments a technique of sampling that was generic and customizable was used. The technique was adaptable to different kinds of data and various types of sampling.

Based on its designated research question, the sampling determined the objects of analysis from the corpus and the parts to be analyzed or not – thus, the sampling varied depending on the research question. Narrative inquiry encompasses ‘the what’ and ‘the how’ of the narrative and how it is manipulated. Elliot Mishler describes this as the “content/theme narrative analysis” and the “language/style narrative analysis”, respectively (as cited in de Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2011, p. 23). The method proposed for this research study distinguishes the articulation of narrative in comics to answer both the ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions. Using visualization, it mapped categories from the corpus; and the interface enabled the distinction and the mapping to interpret the discrete data as to whether or not it reflected a ‘hypothetical Lebanese war’.

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The visualization was based on existing applications of interface design and dynamic media. In this section, the functions of the interface are presented to show how and why it was built in this particular way, followed by the simulation which presents the process by which it operates. The simulation describes the user experience. The interface layout comprises the collection of comics pages, in addition to the spaces needed for mapping and annotating them. The software, Adobe InDesign – a layout program that accommodates and manipulates images and text – enabled the simulation of the interface which, ideally, would be a software application proposed to include interactive manipulation functions, as well as such computational operations as calculating the frequency of text or color saturation in the visuals.

This research study, however, is limited to describing the interface with no dynamic animation or interactive demonstration, because program development – in computer-science terms – remains beyond its objectives. Although all analysis was done ‘manually’ without automation, the visualization was intended to be dynamic; thus, simulation was required to test the functionality and the flexibility of the interface. With or without the use of automated operations, the user interacts with its parts to dissect, cluster, and annotate. This section presents a description of the interface for analysis. Interactive elements were first developed in 1968, much earlier than the computer ‘mouse’. In contrast to automation, interactive functions include cut-and-paste, drag-and-drop, zoom-in/zoom-out, in addition to a whole range of possible ‘manipulations’ of imaging software.

The interface is similar to a computer desktop and is a surface on which researchers view material and implement analyses. The interface was inspired by both digital and analog surfaces, and the “digital panorama combined with techniques of motion media and interactive layering can provide makers with ways to integrate diverse research materials in a common environment” (Coover, 2011, n.p.). In a less ideal situation, where images were harder to find and when information was still analog, Abi Warburg (1979) worked hands-on with a huge collection of about one thousand graphics to make the so-called ‘renaissance context’ visible, using the pathos formulas to categorize
clustered representations. Entitled Mnemosyne-Atlas, it is “a picture series examining the functions of preconditioned antiquity-related expressive values for the presentation of eventful life in the art of the European renaissance.”¹

Steven Johnson (1997) describes the computer interface as an extended metaphor to “the desktop”, with its files and “trash bin” (p. 45). The interface designed for this research study is a metaphor of the desktop of the comic artist/researcher, with tools that can edit the layout, span, and order of comics, but also add annotations and tags with highlighters and markers – and it became ‘the workspace’ of this researcher. A computer was used to process both comics pages and text. The first visual interface that “revolutionized the way we imagine computers […] and] endowed the computer with space” was the 1968 on-line system – NLS – of Douglas Englebart (Johnson, 1997, p. 47).² With development of computation, the graphical user interface – GUI – is an interactive graphic desktop used by operating systems, as opposed to text-based interfaces. It is also the interface for what is visible and spatially organized on the screen of software applications. In addition, the GUI is a browser interface, meaning the desktop of a program that retrieves, presents, and mediates data both offline and online. Online interfaces and dynamic graphics are designed and mediated across the Internet.

The analysis presented used the proposed and simulated methods, and the interactive functioning of this tool is only hypothetical and presented to further develop a computational program enabled for comics analysis and that can be adapted to comics production software. Using the technological device that is the computer, the solutions found were intrinsic to the handling of the material. Comics pages of the corpus were scanned or downloaded and unified both in digital .pdf formats and in numbered series of images that stand for the pages as .jpg; and the path was the following: Artist Name > Artist Name.pdf + Comics Name > Page Number .jpg.

² Englebart’s demonstration of experimental computer technologies is also known as the ‘Mother of All Demos’.
The browsing of images was tested on such simple tool-browsers as Picasa or Adobe Bridge; however, these image browsers are designed to accommodate single images and annotations, not sequences where the solidarity of comics or the overlap of discrete data related to the articulation of comics cannot be annotated. Therefore, Adobe InDesign was used because its fundamental function is to arrange in a layout place-holders that contain bitmap-image files and text files that can be either imported manually or through the importing of XML data, and ‘refreshed’ when changed externally. In other words, it combines dynamic images and text in one layout, with its interface described by the timeline that consists of added placeholders for the ribbon of images and for the annotations (fig. 4.3).

This brings in the problem of the layout in the visualization and of what it comprises. Using the publishing software Adobe InDesign proved to be more appropriate to accommodate all the sequence of images of the corpus, while still providing accessibility to the layout and enough editing flexibility, for example text editing, shape drawing, and the use of layers. After ‘the workspace’ had been tested on different formats, including the adding of margins to all the comics, the using of ‘post-its’ and other devices to give access to all the pages of the corpus, the next step was to design how metadata interacted with the pages.

An intrinsic feature of imaging software that has become revolutionary is the use of layers. There are numerous types of imaging software that use layers as it has become inherent to the visualization process of comics artists who use layering to make comics. Layers have accompanied

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1 Extensible Markup Language.
narrative production since cavemen used their hands as a masked layer to print on the rocks. Visual artists creating still and moving images often use layers, first resorting to tracing paper\(^1\), light tables, and other instruments to substitute for layer use. Layers were introduced in the imaging software Photoshop\(^2\) in 1994. Other imaging software also enables users to use layers, including the open-source program Gimp\(^3\). “Layers allow the user to isolate different parts of the image onto different layers and have probably been the most important addition to Photoshop since its release.”\(^4\) Also used in the motion-compositing tool AfterEffects, the layers in this case are set on a timeline and stacked on top of each other as tracks to create the ‘composition’.

Layers originate from such analog techniques as the multi-plane camera first used by Lotte Reiniger for her animation film The Adventures of Prince Achmed (1926). In computer animation, this layer is called the ‘onionskin’. Mapping can be made using tracing paper in the traditional manual way, or by using imaging software that supports layers\(^5\). In this research study, one of the first attempts to test the methods was the use on a mock-up of the format and to apply the mapping on tracing paper over the pages. This application, however, proved too rigid to experiment with because it became confusing to handle the large corpus and required a reliance on computation.

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\(^1\) Canson developed tracing paper in 1809 (source: http://en.canson.com/).
\(^5\) For example, Gimp. See footnote #15.
Looking at the work of H. Porter Abbott (1986) provides some guidance on how an exploded view of a panel can give access to elements by placing them on different layers. Abbott’s (1986) seminal paper on comics and their narrative characteristics and potential introduces some of the first comics analysis visualization. Abbott (1986) separates the frame of the panel and the text block and balloons from the depicted scene and places them at an angle to show the viewer the different levels of each mode (fig. 4.4). This is what is referred to in visualization as the ‘exploded view’. Using an orthogonal perspective, Abbott (1986) explains the concept of layers to differentiate the various narrative functions in the panel. This visualization elucidates and permits the description of the concepts of narrative hierarchy and of the order of perception that Abbott (1986) discusses in his

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article. Abbott’s (1986) visualization sets forth the grounding principles of the method of distinguishing narrative layers.

The problem is that this technique fails to address the length of the page sequences. It stops at the unit level, similarly to the available comics-making software. The span of the corpus of this research study stretched to approximately ten meters to preserve legibility. With a narrower span, the text would become too small to read and some details in the images would be lost. With Adobe InDesign, the ten-meter-stretch was divided into a format of seven pages, each 175 cm in length and 20 cm in height. Thus, Abbott’s (1986) diagram was stretched to accommodate images in a strip and to cover the linear articulation of the units and tabular configuration that might produce significant meanings (fig. 4.5). In the visualization of the interface, the layers were stacked on top of each other, allowing the distinguishing of the modes by tracks and the mapping of the narrative elements that were on the tracks on layers. For instance, narrators and the focalization were mapped on a layer from both the graphic track and the word.

In figure 4.6, different views are provided to explain the relation between core and secondary tracks and how the views can be collapsed to facilitate access to the element and explain how the grid is conceptualized based on Abbott’s (1986) work. The juxtaposition of visualized categories permits the visual fusion (Kehrer & Hauser, 2013).
The interface provides a space for visual data to be ‘fused’ by juxtaposing tracks to the layered timeline. This method “intermixes different facets of scientific data in a single visualization, using a common frame of reference” (Kehrer & Hauser, 2013, p. 498). It permits the tracking of the modes of comics on the units. In other words, both the linearity and non-linearity were taken into account by providing a space to annotate ‘distinct modes’ on the panel-timeline, the pages-timeline, and the format-timeline, in addition to the tracks of their multimodal configuration. These core tracks were the sequences of the units, namely; the format, the page, and the panel sequence. The units were placed in a sequence to give access to the linearity of comics, while the core tracks held the material image and accounted for the focalization of its spatiality. There were three core tracks, each supporting the particular unit sequences. The core tracks were reflected by other tracks that represented their modal configuration as words or as text, but also their narrativity and their focalization. This created a grid by juxtaposing the other tracks to the core tracks, as illustrated in the interface (fig. 4.7).
The multimodal consideration on the timeline looked at the graphics as modulated by the spatial mode. First, the panel core track included all the graphics put in sequence. Then the annotation was enabled on the other tracks, with the narratological approach maintained and based the textualization on the following formula that corresponds to comics narrative constitution:

\[
\text{Monstrator} / \text{Graphic Narrative} + \text{Spatial Narrative} \subseteq \text{Story Fragment} / \text{Story}
\]

\[
\text{Comics Text} \subseteq \text{Monstrator} + \text{Recitent} / \text{Comics Narrative} \subseteq \text{Comics Story}
\]

\[
\text{Recitant/Linguistic Narrative} + \text{Typographical Narrative} \subseteq \text{Story Fragment}
\]
Comics Analytical Interface

The process required that the material matched/did not match the formula. The words in the units were extracted and transcribed and placed in the word track. This procedure allowed the text to become dynamic – meaning searchable and editable. The graphics were interpreted into words on the graphic track, and the textualization process transformed the visuals into text based on a concept called ‘ekphrasis’, which is employed in art history to give as close as possible a description of visuals. The same process was applied to the focalization track; thus, the textualization of the graphics in the image track was based on the so-called ‘monstrator’s formula’:

Monstrator /Graphic Narrative + Spatial Narrative ⊂ Story Fragment/Story

While the words transcribed were matched to the so-called ‘recitant’s formula’:

Recitant/Linguistic Narrative + Typographical Narrative ⊂ Story Fragment

The formula – Monstrator + Recitent/ Comics Narrative ⊂ Comics Story – stands for all focalization tracks within the sequence, on the page, and on the format. As discussed earlier, focalizations in verbal text are descriptions; and from graphic focalization new narratives arise. Therefore, the mapping of the focalization looked for such inflected visual features as symbols, repetitions, and ruptures, and includes the descriptions in the ‘word track’. On the ‘format track’, the focalization was described as the general style of the illustrations and their expected meaning. On the ‘page and panel track’, it was the heightened or inflected focalization that was recorded as otherwise everything had been focalized already. The focalization of the typography and of symbolic images and sequences, in addition to the narrative produced from the relation between the text and the image, required first textualization, then mapping. This was taken into consideration as the ‘focalization textualization track’ and a mapping layer were provided under the category of focalization.

Finally, the totality of the narratives – which included the narratives and the non-narratives – was visualized in the core tracks and textualized in the subordinate tracks, providing the analysis with
fragments of images reflected by fragments of text that were used in the analysis. The snippets developed in Chapter 3 were the visual references used to put down in words the modes and the unit articulation. The presence of a narrator indicated the presence of a narrative and vice versa, even when the narrator was invisible and outside of the diegesis. The textualization paid particular attention to the relation between text and image and what narrative arose from focalization. A common example of the panel relation textualization was when a text balloon pointed at a visual – the textualization was then ‘the visual said the text’.

The main structure of the interface includes the following tracks:

- **Core tracks**, which are the placeholders for the material corpus as units.
  - The panel track, which is when all panels are put in sequence.
  - The page track, which is when all pages are put in sequence.
  - The format track, which is when all formats are put in sequence.
- **Mode tracks**, which are placeholders for the annotation of the modes.
  - The word track, which is a transcription of the words in the comics.
  - The graphic track, which is an interpretation of the graphics into words.
  - The focalization track, which is an interpretation of image sequences, symbols, graphic inflections, and linguistic focalization.
- **Mapping layers**, which reveal and highlight the pertinent elements on the core and modality tracks; they can be infinite and, for this narratological research study, limited to the following elements:
  - Events
  - Time indicators
  - Characters
  - Narrators
  - Focalization
Comics Analytical Interface

In analog terms, the mapping is a kind of tracing or ‘onion-skin’ paper, a semi-opaque layer that permits the inclusion of both the reference graphic and the added categories. In any environment, the layers act as mapping instruments and tag elements from a surface onto their categories. In this research study, the surface was both the core and the mode tracks. The layers were added spatially on top of the grid, permitting the mapping of the narrativity of the corpus material on the modal tracks. The tagging was made by coloring the surface areas of the tracks using shape and color to differentiate the categories. Mapping was applied by tracking areas that reflect a category variable and could be applied to all the tracks to distinguish between modes and between narration and focalization, as well as identifying the relation between them.

The narrative analysis was made on layers that map the narratological elements; the events, the time indicators, the characters, and the narrators. In this research study, to analyze the events, two layers were required – one that mapped the events by looking at the narrative constitution and the way the narrative segments articulated as embedded or as parallel; and the other was the time-indicator layer, which tracked the chronology and evaluated it in relation to the hypothetical time. To analyze the characters, the layers mapped characters and narrators, as well as their focalization, the level of their delegation, and which characters overlapped with the narrators.
With the interface described, the grid, the material units, the placeholders, and the layers then were visualized and the function of navigation of the data detailed (fig. 4.8). The navigation was related to how the material was accessed for identification, counting frequency and/or comparison. It included, among others, the navigation of the visual interface, the access to the data and the metadata by zooming in and out and panning, but also the accessing of verbal data by means of search engines and filters. Andrew Salway and David Herman (2011) consider filters as search categories that allow scrutiny of the text in large narrative corpus analyses.

First, images and texts were searched and identified by the source of their annotation as this is essential to image referencing. Despite the absence of comics annotation software that provides a
Comics Analytical Interface
timeline annotation, there are numerous interfaces that uses the timeline for various other purposes. For example, Soundcloud\(^1\), a music website that calls itself “social sound platform”, has enabled a large social network of a very simple annotation system based on a timeline. Users comment on a soundtrack placed on the timeline that looks like the sound waves of the sound file. The comments are visualized by small images in .jpg format of the profile face of users, placed on the soundtrack and they are again listed at the bottom. Such a function can be appropriated and applied on the interface when it is developed as computer software, because it a dynamic feature that is efficient by its economy of space. Panning digital surfaces can be manual, automatic, or dynamic.

Navigation is the operation of zooming, rotating, and/or panning (Kehler and Hauser, 2013). Digital comics have more navigational aspects than printed ones. Established by McCloud (2000) in his book Reinventing Comics, the term “infinite canvas” refers to his theory that web browsers expand infinitely and may create new comics layouts, in contrast to the constraining paper format (p. 27). Digital media provides access to digital pages by scrolling and panning, as inherited by such early browsers as Apple IIGS (1986), or by shuffling or swiping, as such recent mobile apps as Flipboard or BBC News simulate across pages. Both experiences are different and intervene on the level of the comics format and on the experience of reading the page sequences. On the one hand, it can be a map that one can scroll across, giving vertical and longitudinal space of a comic canvas; while, on the other hand, shuffling requires a consistent format or frame and operates on the level of the page or the experience of the panel sequence and is closer to the principles applied to film or page sequences.

Another aspect of navigation on a visual surface is the multiple views. Multiple views – including top, side, or front view – show volumetric data, like three-dimensional, or 3D objects through 3D-modeling software. In such programs as Latex, the views are the coding-frame Latex file and the typeset file. All the views stem from the same data but, as with narration, each focalizes some

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\(^1\) Available at: https://soundcloud.com/pages/contact. Accessed on August 21, 2012.
specific aspects. In this research study, the views were on specific filters for comics annotation, with multiple views related to isolating the elements in one view, while still showing them in their context in another view. To achieve such a ‘show-and-hide’ operation imaging software allowed for a semi-transparency of the layers, or simply features a ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ button. Moreover, multiple views were needed to show the narrative time in relation to the order, the frequency, and the duration of the hypothetical time – to be further developed in Chapter 5 – and related to the function of editing.

Visualization, particularly with the use of digital software and because of its materiality, is editable. In other words, it permits cutting, pasting, and reordering of distinguished elements and segments. While still preserving the original material as intact and unedited, a second view can show how a certain reshuffling of the material is made; for example, this kind of intervention was done on the material of the corpus for this research study to reorder the event fragments according to the hypothetical time. It is regarded as a fundamental function of sampling, which means that some elements are distinguished from others and therefore grouped together. In this research study, such ‘clustering’ techniques required the cutting of extra units that were not relevant from in between the units of the sample. The tool used for the simulation was the ‘slicer’, which, like the ‘blade’, is borrowed from the process of slicing in interface design.

Following this introduction to visualization and functions of the comics analytical interface, the actual process will be explained with respect to its application as a software program. In other words, in the preceding paragraphs the functions were described as they were simulated and applied to the corpus of this research study while, in the following section, they will be described as to the possibility of them being automated based on other studies and research – in other words, exploring the automated methods that can be applied on the interface. This will be followed by a presentation of the actual workflow.
4.3. The Analytical Interface Amphibian

Theory and practice have been central to the development of digital narratology, both creative and critical, “exploring new architectures, uses and platforms for narrative” (Page, 2011, p. 13). This section explores the extensions that can be made from the previous ‘static’ narrative analysis into the possible automation of certain methods.

The automated interface is called Amphibian, based on the idea of ‘in-between-ness’ developed in the Samandal1 mission statement. The name is relevant particularly because it is closely related to the amphibious ‘in-between-ness’ of comics – or multi-stability between text and image, past and present, fast and slow, line and table, traditional and experimental, high and popular art, and all mentioned in the first editorial of the magazine issued by Samandal. In this research study, the annotation system for comics – being based on direct visualization – also was an interface not only between the researcher and the comics, but also between static and dynamic, manual and computational, and, more importantly, between the data and the metadata.

The development of Amphibian would have required further research in computer science and the acquisition of programming languages to develop the code, something that was beyond the scope of this research study. Thus, the focus of this section is to draw upon other studies and research and apply those elements that enable computation of certain static features of the proposed analytical interface. Various dynamic methods from different software features were combined, and the simulation clarified what and where further developments could be made. In addition to the comics software mentioned earlier, some production functions in digital imaging software and graphical timeline software also were found useful. Examples of such software are many, ranging from commercial software including Photoshop, AfterEffects, TOONBOOM, Flash, FinalCut Pro, and Notate It, as well as open-source software including GIMP, KINO, Jahshaka, and HyperFrame.

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1 Samandal is a Lebanese comics collective to which this researcher belongs.
Comics Analytical Interface

They include as well such image and video annotation software as ANVIL and VIA, and algorithms in computer sciences.

In fact, a link can be made between the interface and the research available on data mining and image-text detection. The interface presented in the previous section functions as a layout that is editable by using place-holder text and images to import and annotate other images. All these placeholders were references to external files that can be XML data. The task of importing and exporting external files were the first automated functions enabled by Adobe InDesign. Data mining can be applied on these external files, including text-mining, image-mining, and image-text-mining methods. Computer scientists, for the purpose of analyzing narratives, have researched text-mining techniques extensively, for example as the analysis of themes in time, characters, and actions relations. Text-mining algorithms can perform different operations. They extract information from text data, summarize text, use “supervised and unsupervised learning methods from text data”, use the indexing and retrieval method of latent semantic indexing (LSI), deduce dimensionality for text mining, transfer learning, use probabilistic techniques, use cross-lingual mining of text data, and mine opinion in text data (Aggarwal, 2012, p. 20).

4.3.1. AUTOMATION

Automated quantitative narrative analysis of linguistic text can be used to analyze narrative in different ways. For instance, to analyze events in narratives, theme occurrences are evaluated in time. Danyel Fisher et al. (2013) developed software that isolates specific themes in the text and visualizes the connection between them. It provides a timeline of the changes in the themes and the interactive features of selecting and clustering on a surface, while further research extracts key actors and actions and classifies these actors according to their role and involvement (Sudhahar, Franzosi, & Cristianini, 2011).
Comics Analytical Interface

The computational language, narrative structure language (NSL), is used to support the representation of non-linear narrative structures and enables users to create new stories in a narrative space where abstract graphical representations of narrative elements are used (Williams, 2007). Automated quantitative research is applied also on visual narratives. Algorithms have been developed to extract not only the text, but also images. Data-extraction methods help interaction with large visual corpora. Janko Calic et al. (2007) developed algorithms aimed at adapting film to comics. The adaptation extracts shots from film and turns them onto a layout. The methods used are based on such filmic concepts as shot detection for the purpose of summarizing video and producing pages of comics (ibid.).

Research at Université de La Rochelle, France, developed specific comics software that performs panel and speech-balloon extraction. By handling border-free frames and text-area segmentation, the research “proposes a method based on region growing and mathematical morphology to extract automatically the panels of a comic page and a method to detect speech balloons” (Ho, Burie, & Ogier, 2012). The method is further developed to simultaneously extract frames and texts from comics, and is fast and especially robust to the variations in page formats and to border-free frames. It is based on connected component analysis that is able to extract all the text inside or outside the speech balloons; however, the method is not related to large overlapping elements, narrative text extraction, or image content (Rigaud et al., 2013).

The final step is mining of icono-texts. Zhixin Li et al. (2009) propose a method of automatic image-text annotation based on probabilistic latent semantic analysis (PLSA) to capture semantic information from visual and textual modalities, respectively, and, thus, perform automatic image annotation using a training model. In this research study, the extraction and ordering of the panels were a priority to test and develop the first material distinction between tabular and linear reading of comics. The extraction was problematized to adapt ‘irregular corpora’ with no typical panel behavior.
Using a method that is more tolerant against structured background and, thus, taking into consideration the transgressions in the Lebanese comics corpus that do not fit within one category, Martin Stommel (Stommel, Merhej, & Müller, 2012) from the University of Bremen worked on an algorithm that detects panels by their outline, rather than the separating space between them. The algorithm was tested on the comics: Cola and Une Enfance Heureuse created by Mazen Kerbaj (2010, 2003), and on Malaak created by Joumana Medlej (2007) (Figure 4.9). The findings show the detected panels in dashed red rectangles, and the estimated reading order by the numbers (Stommel, Merhej & Müller, 2012). The detection of comic panels proved difficult when a white background did not separate the panels; however, the analysis of the rectangles was able to resolve most conflicts that were caused by ambiguities and overlaps (ibid.). In the design of the interface for this research study, the scanning was teamed with Stommel’s (Stommel, Merhej, & Müller, 2012) algorithm and automatically displayed the red-dashed and numbered panels which this researcher then would tweak and fine-tune the selection to account for misinterpreted estimations.
Comics Analytical Interface

The description of the methods and how a researcher uses the interface to analyze the material is termed ‘user experience’. The user generally follows the same basic workflow, though he or she may decide to repeat or skip some steps. The multimodal narrative distinction in comics units was presented in Chapter 3, and the user knows what the units and narratives, as well the non-narratives, are. The workflow is presented in the following steps over three main procedures; annotation, mapping, and re-narration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simulated and static methods</th>
<th>Automated and dynamic methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of the document</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1- Import and organize digital comics pages</td>
<td>- Automatic sampling can be used: The data extraction of comics panels replaces the manual method of ‘creating the sequence of the panels’. It identifies automatically the panels in the pages; however, as previous research shows, only up to a certain level of accuracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Open New: Create a new project</td>
<td>- Data mining can be used: As first mentioned, the data available in the interface can be data-mined, which can facilitate the import function and the update function. Allowing the data to be modified while still keeping the document of the interface intact – with the great benefit of this method being it can export XML data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Scan: Import the covers and the inside covers into the format track and the pages into the page track.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fine tune: Identify the panels and the order in the pages scanned.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Make the timeline: Using imaging software features, open the pages and place them in the sequence. Duplicate the layers, and extend the duplication to create the sequence of the panels. Import this sequence into the panel track.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annotation

3- Annotation of format:
Note the citation of the format that consists of the title, author, year of production, publisher, and name of city in which it was printed.
- Note the focalization of the format based on layout concepts in design.
- Automatic text filling can be used: This data can be placed automatically in the assigned placeholders.
4- Extract text from the graphics and input on the word track.
  - Note the typography in relation to the text in the word track. If the text is bold, speaking becomes shouting.

5- Note the name of the characters that are responsible of the words, in conjunction with the text. i.e. “The reporter says it is calm in Beirut.” The description, reporter, is appended to the words “it is calm in Beirut”.

6- Textualize the graphics and describe the events in the panels, the pages and the format and in their sequences in the graphic track:
  - Interpret the symbolic meaning of abstract sequences and describe them.
  - Describe the figures and what they do.
  - Describe the visual metaphors.

7- Describe the inflected narration in the panels, the pages and in their sequences in the focalization track:
  - Note the focalized narration produced from irregularities.
  - Note the literary focalization: the non-narrative elements of the text

8- Map the layers by shape and color;
  - the characters as narrators, character-narrators, or actors;
  - the events as parallel and embedded; and
  - the time indicators.

9- Use the annotations to ‘reconstruct’ the mappings and create a text file for the interpretation.
  - 10- Use the snippets to ‘reconstruct’ the mappings and to create an image file of the extracted comics units.

- Text, image, and text-image detection can be used.
- The extraction of the text from the graphics can be automated.
- The text balloon detection as well facilitates point 6.
- The textualization of the images and the focalization also can be automated.

Image- and text-mining algorithms can extract the formal categories from images to categorize them as focalization and descriptions in the verbal text.

Automatic shot detection can be used in this case to differentiate the recurrent characters and the recurrent backgrounds to deduce by similarity and difference.

- Automatic reordering of images from maps, or automatic reordering of text annotation can be made, providing two views of the material; one that is the original sequence and the second the re-ordered sequence.
The editing functions of text and images enabled by the static interface were transposed into the dynamic interface without conflict. The tracks already had been customizable and added, named, and renamed. The units on the tracks were sliced, expanded, contracted, and reshuffled. All the text in the text placeholders were linked to dynamic text, including the names of the layers and of the tracks and all the annotations which also were dynamically called upon, platform-independent, and could be used with XML. Editing and spell checking are provided in most text-based software, as well as a slide bar for overset text. Imaging software enables navigation, though restricted to panning, zooming in, and zooming out, and does not enable the contraction and expansion of comics segments or timeline compression which, in case of a large corpus, is particularly helpful for mapping and comparative visualization.

As illustrated in figure 4.10, the visualization shows how the timeline of the sequence of panels can be stretched or contracted, instead of a proportional zoom-in-and-out that would lose the legibility.
Comics Analytical Interface

of the panels. This allows the mapping to be preserved, and extended to a larger sample and is a function used in the file-shuffling features of Apple OS X. Imaging software also includes the use of the layer is also a feature which enables hiding and showing of certain elements by using an off–and on–button to render the mapping layers visible or not (fig. 4.11).

![Layers](image)

**FIGURE 4.11:** Hidden and visible layers
Source: Snapshot from Adobe Photoshop.

4.3.2. **Flow Chart**

The flow chart represents the process flow of the user experience. The researcher distinguishes the units and partitions the comics in the core tracks. The panel sequence, page sequence, and format sequence then are all put on distinctive tracks, or distinguished by the computer and then tweaked for errors by the researcher. This is explained further with the support of visualizations to illustrate the flow.
FIGURE 4.12: Amphibian workflow
© Lena Merhej, 2014.
Comics Analytical Interface

The comics short, Une Enfance Heureuse (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2003), was chosen as a case study to present the flow. In this case, the visualization was limited to the analysis of one page only, though this research study was conducted on more than five hundred, as discussed in Chapter 1. The overall format of this example consisted of six pages. The format had no cover or cover page, as it was part of a magazine. The first page was scanned and imported in a placeholder. No pattern or repetition was recorded on the level of the page, and the demonstration in this case was limited to the panel sequence. Figure 4.13 illustrates how areas of the scanned image were distinguished as panels and then placed in a linear order to account for the sequence of panels.

![Figure 4.13: Panel sequence distinction](image)

FIGURE 4.13: Panel sequence distinction
© Lena Merhej, 2014.

Zooming in on the panel sequence, the first is a caption panel. It has a graphic poly-graphical panel that includes a talking figure, two other panel-captions, and a three-framed panel. The words were transcribed and the “man says” and “boy says” added to the sentences to account for the characters in the images. The textualization of the images was simple, being a ‘transparent’ or utterable image, though describing the events that characters create or that they are affected by. The annotation

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started at this point by filling first the word track and transcribing all the verbal text that appeared in
the images. There were no inflected typographic messages and all the typography was regular
except for the title – Une Enfance Heureuse (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2003), – which revealed the hierarchy
of what constituted the title or not. In the last panel, the text in the image of the book that the
character holds is hard to read, except for “Gaston” but refers to Gaston Lagaffe, the lazy anti-hero
created in 1957 by André Franquin (2007). The annotation continued by textualizing the utterable
images in the panel sequence, until the focalization track also was filled by textualization.

After transcribing the text and interpreting the images, the focalization is analyzed. The analysis
recorded all visual and verbal focalization. The focalization in the visual narration was
distinguished by the occurrence of graphic shifts that can also be considered modal ruptures such as
the introduction of a symbol in a figurative language. Other visual focalizations are the use of
repetitions and the use of graphical irregularities or exaggeration. The mapping also included the
verbal focalization. The annotation is demonstrated in figure 4.14, using the first page of Une
Enfance Heureuse (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2003).

The white borders of that page unit emphasize the centrality of the figure by a concentric
configuration. The layout is not regular, but symmetrical, organizing the title and the introduction at
the top. The war precedes the title, Une Enfance Heureuse (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2003), by repetition
emphasizing even more what the character says; the war started, and then the child was born. The
page is regular, though divided by three rows of strips; an introduction, a focalization of that
introduction, and a narrative. The focalization on the format may also be interpreted by external
research, which, in this case, indicated that the publisher, Ego Comme X, promotes
autobiographical work over ‘escapist fantasy’ (Beaty, 2009).

“The war is Lebanese and civil,” says the text. In the next panel, the boy holds his finger out,
interpreted as: “The boy shows the militiamen and the war as being ‘behind his shoulder’ [meaning
something from the past]”. He distances himself from them. The graphiation of the image behind
him looks like a tracing of a real photograph. It contrasts with the boy, who is closer to Kerbaj’s (2003) style. The militiamen are more real.

The third and fourth panels also are caption panels. The repetition of Mazen’s name by delegation twists into a non-delegation since they are one and the same and this emphasizes the autobiographical nature of the work. The title, Une Enfance Heureuse (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2003), is a focalization of a happy childhood, which overflows and turns into sarcasm. “Scribbled words are framed by white stripes, staked roughly to look like a diary in an underlined notebook, an object that carries personal notes and reflections that could tip also towards the symbol of autobiographical work”. The last panel consists of three narratives; “a boy who shoots, a boy who reads, and a boy who is being hit by a bomb thrown by the first boy, who is also drawing”. “Focalization [is] of the similarity of the character of the perpetrator, the victim, and the public. The perpetrator is blinded by his cask, however he points out the comic book of the boy reading and ‘threatens to shoot’.” The reading boy is not involved in the war directly; he is an observer and commentator. Last is the one that is getting shot: “The victim draws the war” as he gets scolded by his mother. “He has a consciousness, in contrast to the blinded perpetrator.” His mother is there to straighten him up. On the page track, the focalization that already is described in the panel sequence continues here with the additional information configured by the page layout. The annotation says: “The militiaman is [at] the center top.”

Kerbaj pushed the autobiographical tone using repetition, exaggeration and the introduction of graphic shifts. However, he presents a critical stance and a dual political position in the depiction of himself as both a child-soldier and war-child. This duality can be considered a full employment of the medium of comics as a multistable one when the panel sequence can also be read as a whole or page segment–coinciding the units employment and the narrative.
Comics Analytical Interface

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Page numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**FIGURE 4.14: Annotation in Une Enfance Heureuse**  
Comics Analytical Interface

Once the annotation was fulfilled, the mapping started. Considering the example of both mapping on the core track and on the mode tracks, the characters were mapped on the panel track and the narratives on the graphic track respectively in figures 4.15 and 4.16. They correspond to the layer of the characters on the sequence of panels and the layer of the narratives in the image sequence. The figures of the panel track correspond to the characters in the story and were mapped by shape and color; the shape distinguishing their silhouette in terms of size, which can be a simple circular shape. Imaging software provided tools to select images by shape, ‘lasso’ and ‘magic wand’\(^1\). The selection of one particular shape indicated the formal significance of each in terms of size. The color, on the other hand, was particular to each character and tracks each character’s development.

\[
\text{FIGURE 4.15: Character layer on the panel track in Une Enfance Heureuse} \\
\text{Source: Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2003. © Lena Merhej, 2014.}
\]

\[
\text{FIGURE 4.16: Narrative layer on the graphic track in Une Enfance Heureuse} \\
\text{Source: Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2003. © Lena Merhej, 2014.}
\]

\(^1\) Magic wand is an Adobe tool that permits automatic same-color pixels to be selected together.
Comics Analytical Interface

The second example was a text-mapping layer that functioned on the mode tracks. The mapping by color distinguished narrative segments from the non-narrative ones. Since the first panel did not reveal any typographical difference from the general graphiation, it was skipped. The second panel, however, showed the following narrative segments: “Man points at militiamen” and “The figures are pausing”; while “in the background” is left out as a description. The mapping of the narrative permitted not only the distinction of the segments, but also showed the narrative levels. The levels were indicated also by color; in this case, the segments were all on the same level and no embedding occurred.

Finally, the description of the analytical interface was completed. The interface was both simulated and presented with computational solutions. The process of distinguishing the units and the narratives in the units was described and visualized in Chapter 3, while the annotation and the mapping are described and visualized in this chapter. The created model was designed to accommodate the format diversity as well as the multilingual aspect represented in Lebanese comics, and permitted a step forward to answering the research questions on the narration of the events of the war and on the characters involved in it. Thus, the comics’ analytical interface was simulated and turned into a demonstration for the proposed software.¹

Flexibility of the framework analysis is essential to the robustness of the design and proves that it can be applied to a variety of comics’ formats. The foundational elements of the design are the partitioning categories of the core and multimodal ones by considering the core as the material images, configured both as a tableau and a sequence; and the multimodal dissection as the interpretive annotation of the material image, the layers are useful at this point to map the elements of interest from the material. By highlighting the surface of this material image, the mapping shows

¹ A ‘demo’ is non-interactive presentation or demonstration of the benefits of a tool, method, or methodology by showing and describing how it works.
Comics Analytical Interface
patterns, differences, and ruptures that can indicate a certain narrative themselves. The research itself, however, turns into a narratological study.

Before presenting the demos assigned to this research study, it is valuable to consider other applications of this model. Indeed, various additional approaches can be applied to this analytical interface, Amphibian, as it provides the foundation of comics on the tracks and allows researchers to map categories on various layers, including the approaches of William Labov (1997), Syd Field (2007), and Cohn (2013) mentioned in Chapter 3.

This model was designed based on the units of comics and it may facilitate the analytical and creative work of both researchers and comics’ artists on this grid. As previously mentioned, existing software applications made to produce comics are not appropriate for the linear aspects of comics, while Amphibian gives equal importance to tabular and linear aspects and is designed to cut, paste, and reshuffle units in a tabular and linear and, a flexible – meaning infinite – and navigable environment. The benefits of developing the core requirements for software that accommodates media and, in this case, comics, is that it sets the grounding for the manipulation – both productive and analytical – of this medium. Artists would benefit from these operations to design their comics, edit them or remix them with other units. A more detailed interaction would be a ‘double click’ on fragment from the timeline, which opens into an editing panel, just like in animation-making software.

As an objective for this thesis, this junction between artists and researchers is important to target. Particularly related to the narrative distinction in this research study, ‘remixing’ is a concept that is, as such, a juncture between art and research. Conceptually based on kind of database of comics’ snippets, the remixing tool could be manual and could be mimed. There is comprehensive remixing support available on the Internet, though not for the remixing of narratives that braid visual, textual, and spatial modes. Manovich (2007) says that “[t]he remixability does not require modularity – but
it greatly benefits from it” (p. 77), which could combine even more the snippets with other modes such as music or animation. Oshani Seneviratne et al. (2010) examined the ways in which microblogging, social networking; video, photo, music and scientific data-sharing websites support content reuse. Meme-sharing is one model of comics remixes, but limited by the articulation of its content as it, like offline software, suffers from its rigid canvas.

The Comics Analytical system, Amphibian is a proposal for comics’ software that is designed to analyze comics and that could be also a tool for artists to create, organize and remix. The numerous appended additions to the proposed model can function and are feasible, and the model itself has been proven to be adaptable to all sorts of formats and types of research dealing with the analysis of discrete data in comics distinguished by units and mode.
5. Sampling Narratives of War in Lebanese Comics

The contribution to a living archive of Lebanese comics about war is the focal point of this research study. The development of a comics narratology and of the software Amphibian – which can be applied to a corpus of comics that are traditional and conventional, or diverse and marginal – were prerequisites for undertaking such an analysis. However, the analyses of this contribution also demonstrate the functionality and the flexibility of the proposed software.

In Lebanon and elsewhere in the region, various small communities of about two to three thousand followers are creating new comics. Indeed, since around 2005, a network has been forming in the Mediterranean region linking countries through projects, festivals, and other types of cultural exchanges. Samandal is an example and similar communities are the Crack! Festival in Italy, the Stripburger magazine in Slovenia, L’Employé du Moi in Belgium, the FIBDA festival in Algeria, and the more recent Risha Project that publishes comics-related material from Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa.

For this study, further research was made related to war in Lebanon, as well as to narratives of war in general. Section 5.1 presents a brief history of comics in Lebanon and a discussion about war in literature, film, and graphic design. The war debate that arises from this discussion will be presented, followed by a description of the sampling, starting with the characteristics of the corpus, including format synopses and corpus review. The last section presents a primary analysis of the quantitative content.

5.1. COMICS IN LEBANON

This research study looked at adult and independent comics. Though considered as important as adult comics, commissioned works found in children’s magazines were excluded due to the restrictions and limitations of this research study. Adult comics are marginal and scarce productions
but, since 2000, they are gradually emerging in Arab countries, and particularly so in Lebanon. They often are networked across Arab, Mediterranean, and international comics festivals and frequently appear in alternative markets; and a large portion of such comics deals with the subject of war – the focus of this research study.

The Lebanese comics market is multinational and multilingual. The use of words in Lebanese comics in many ways is unique due to the fact that Lebanon is a multilingual country. Many Lebanese use three languages interchangeably. Although their perception of foreign languages is influenced by their religion and/or income, they tend to maintain Arabic as their national symbol (Shaaban & Ghaith, 2002). Indeed, the new generation of writers¹ is at ease with using and mixing languages both in Latin and Arabic script² despite the fact of opposing directions of script (Khalaf, 2009). Fida Bizri (2010) looks at the use of Arabic by Levantine populations as they mix with people using other languages, while Anna Gabai (2010) coined the term ‘Frarabic’ as referring to the mixing of Arabic with French. Indeed, many Lebanese happily use the greeting “Hi, kifak? Ça va?” and have proudly turned it into a cliché for their identity³. On the other hand, the use of Arabic has been negatively affected by the slow development of Arabic type. This has produced a generation who writes Arabic in Latin letters, substituting the sounds that are not found in Latin by numbers that can be compared to the original Arabic letters; for example, the letter ha’ is replaced by the number ‘7’ most probably because, if rotated 45 degrees, it looks like the original Arabic letter as written in the beginning of the word. For instance, the word in figure 5.1 in phonetic script is [hayati]⁴ and in Latinized Arabic it is written ‘7ayete’.

¹ As example, Roseanne Khalaf’s working group.
² Reflected in the mission statement of Samandal.
³ This sentence is seen printed on t-shirts and souvenirs.
⁴ International phonetic alphabet (IPA).
Arabic font and keyboard on smart technology, however, are becoming widely available. Thus, the use of Latin to ‘speak Arabic’ in Latinized Arabic sentences has become somewhat less popular on memes, printed t-shirts, and posters. Still, a resistance towards such changes is observed and is pronounced among graphic designers, who consider this ‘the fashion of the last decade’. Social-network users are also increasingly typing Arabic letters to write English on social websites, subverting the practice to re-appropriate the Arabic language by enforcing the use of Arabic letters.

However, comics could be considered a fertile ground for Latin and Arabic mixing. Indeed, the graphic combination of Arabic and Latin type is more feasible in graphic documents, such as comics, than in literature and large printed text, according to the work of the Khatt Foundation\(^1\) and the typographic matchmaking projects of Huda Abi Fares (2012).

Despite all this potential of use, subversion and mixing, Arabic comics have a clear disadvantage, probably because publishing abroad brings more exposure and because there are few comics publishers. The experiences of Mazen Kerbaj (1999, 2000) and Zeina Abirached (2002) of self-publishing in French provided them with access to international markets and, today, they are considered international comics artists and their works can be found in such major cultural centers as L’Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris and the Lilly Library at Duke University, Durham, NC, USA.

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\(^1\) “The primary goal of creating the Khatt Foundation in 2004 was to bridge and establish dialogues between East and West through design and typography” (quoted from Huda Abi Fares; available at: http://www.whatdesigncando.nl/. Accessed on May 4, 2012).
The publishing of adult comics in Arabic is limited to very few local publishing houses and a handful of independent publishers, in addition to those artists who self-publish.

Samandal magazine struggled to find comics contributors who wrote in Arabic and, for this, they developed strategies to encourage writers to do so. In some comics, Arabic is Latinized in an English or French text. In Malaak, Joumana Medlej (w, p, i; 2007) provides the readers with a glossary to explain the important Latinized words. An example of such practice can be found on page 27 of her comic book, when Malaak, the super heroine, says: “Yella! Let’s try to save this country!” (Medlej (w, p, i), 2007, p. 27), she explains the yella. In other comics, the Arabic and the Latin type are used on the same page, the most pertinent example of this being the so-called ‘flippy page’ in Samandal comics. To tackle the problem of integrating Arabic and Latin comics in the same publication when each is written from the opposite direction, the magazine uses a page that indicates to the reader to flip the magazine upside down and continue reading. This design is one example of the many that graphic designers in Lebanon have invested an effort in designing Arabic and Latin type mixes.

As mentioned before, such aspects of integrating Arabic and Latin add to the variables to be considered when analyzing Lebanese comics, particularly in the conception of the page with respect to Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2001) categories of ‘ideal’ and ‘real’ and the creation of narratives out of the layout, as illustrated in Chapter 3, Figure 3.8. To expand on the use of Arabic and Latin on the level of format and page, the articulation of comics formats in Samandal spans on average alternations from English to Arabic, then back to English and again to Arabic and English formats, interchanging ‘ideal’ and ‘real’, while the cover page indicates the beginning starting from the Arabic direction. At each span, the reading direction is kept until a ‘flippy page’ breaks it, then the

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1 According to estimation by Samandal, only 20% of contributions are in Arabic. To encourage the use of Arabic, editors sometimes have been more lenient when accepting Arabic contributions; moreover, competitions for serial comics in Arabic have been organized and promoted in the magazine, as example in issues 9-12.

2 The explanation is as follows: “Yella: A highly versatile word that implies getting moving (literally or metaphorically). Here it’s used in the sense of ‘let’s go!’ The difference in pronunciation with the yalla of p. 12 is dialectal.”
Sampling Narratives of War in Lebanese Comics

book is flipped as indicated in the instruction on that page. Thus, a ‘flippy page’ represents a mixing of directions that often results in symmetries on the axis of rotation of each page. Such page represent the space of negotiation between the Latin and Arabic scripts, right and left, and up and down; and, in consequence a potential to use binary concepts and narratives.

Still, the mixing of languages sets clear limitations to speakers of one language only. The text in the other half of the comics format cannot be understood by all, already restricting the general text not only to Arab speakers, but those Arab speakers who understand also French and/or English. Otherwise, in the mixing of languages, the reader negotiates the understanding of the whole text at the expense of mixing, or getting as close as possible to the other language. Moreover, this mixing of languages could be related to comics communities being rather small in nature; also, a parallel possibly may be drawn when comparing other cultural forms where English or French are more dominant in artistic domains and on the Internet.

The making of alternative comics in Lebanon started in the 1980’s and has witnessed several revivals in popularity. Actually, early Lebanese comics emerged in the 1960’s and were published in local or foreign children’s magazines (Matthews, 2010). Since then, the market for children’s comics has waned, yet still remains fairly steady. Historically, contributions to these comics were of artists with a background in fine art, some of whom themselves influenced comics aesthetics and political engagement (Douglas &Malti-Douglas, 1994). With the introduction of advertising and graphic design to the arts curriculum in institutions of higher education and at universities in Lebanon – including the-then Beirut University College in the mid-1980’s, followed in the early 1990’s by other universities – produced a new generation of artists trained as graphic designers.

In contrast to children’s comics, those aimed at the adult market tend not to be commissioned work and are few. Artists cannot make a living working solely in this field. This makes the narratives self-expressions and carry ‘subjective world views’ that are closer to the autobiographical comics described by Elisabeth El Refaie (2010). They are ‘alternative’ comics, as opposed to children’s
Sampling Narratives of War in Lebanese Comics

comics magazine, zines, series, and adult comics in general. Adult comics were introduced in the early 1980’s with Georges Khoury’s (1981) Carnaval which, today, is accessible only on the Internet using a password from the author. Khoury, along with Edgar Aho and May and Lina Ghaibeh all belonged to the collective Jad Workshop. They published a series of formats related to war under the title From Beirut (Khoury et al., 1989). Khoury, Ghaibeh, and Ghaibeh have influenced some of the present generation of artists as they also are among the faculty of graphic-design programs at various universities in Lebanon.

In the late 1980’s, other collectives also were publishing magazines, including Hazar, which unfortunately has no record, and Tosh Fish by Motaz Al Sawaf (2011a). Walid Zbib channeled his comics through posters, postcards, and t-shirts. His satirical comics focused on the chaotic absurdity of war depicted by drug use, sex offenses, and transgressions and open violence at familiar Beirut crossing points, intersections and areas like Mathaf, or the so-called Museum crossing and the Corniche. Zerooo magazine appeared in the late 1990’s featuring satirical comics depicting the boom in popular culture, the obsession with plastic surgery and latest fashion, and the great following of reality shows. It folded in 2002. Henry Matthews (2010) compiled a comprehensive resource on Lebanese comics in an anthology compiled of all comics ever published in the country. Many of these comics, however, are difficult to source because they were printed and distributed during or before the civil war and no archives or records of them are kept at the National Library or other major resource centers in the country.

After Zerooo magazine, the published albums that can be found in the market or in libraries today were supported by L’Académie Libanese des Beaux Arts (ALBA) and by Cédéthèque, a Lebanese independent publisher. Among their publications are the early comics of Kerbaj (1999) and Abirached (2002), who also worked with international publishing houses; while Medlej (2007, 2008) published her books online and/or printed them independently. In 2007, Samandal took the initiative to create an open-call trilingual adult zine. Al-Akhbar, and published the series This Story
Sampling Narratives of War in Lebanese Comics

Happens by Kerbaj from 2009 to 2011. By 2011, a market of new comics in Lebanon had been created by the independent publications of Samandal and Furie des Glandeurs, as well as the Arabic publishing house Al-Adab and Dar Onboz, addition to such international publishers as Camboukakis or L’Association in France. The works of Kerbaj (2007) during the 2006 war initiated the online presence. However, online comics community remain small, though more artists continue to join, including social-media activists Maya Zankoul, Zina Moufarreg, Sareen Akarjalian, Omar El Fil, and Nadine Feghaly.\(^1\)

In summary, some Lebanese comics in French and other foreign languages tend to be published by French and international publishers, while Lebanese independent publishing houses including collectives and non-governmental organizations involved in issuing books, print in Arabic, French, and English. Most comics published before 1990 are not archived; however, they are very limited in number and may not be deemed worthy of further research. This research study focuses on the small comics ‘boom’ that occurred at the turn on the twenty-first century when adult comics started emerging in marginal communities.

Lebanese comics can be considered as marginal and as a market on the rise. Although the market is small there is a constant reemerging interest among the Lebanese. The community around comics in Lebanon is active on both local and international levels. Comics always are present at the Beirut International Book Fair – Salon du Livre, as well as other literary festivals in the capital. In 1988, in the midst of the civil war, Nadim Tarazi, owner of a bookshop specializing in French picture books and comics, was the organizer, together with Centre Culturelle Française, behind the first comics festival in the country. The second festival, postponed to “right after the war” in 1991, as Tarazi

Sampling Narratives of War in Lebanese Comics

puts it,1 with the guest participation of Edmond Baudouin and René Arnoux. The Syndicate of Professional Graphic Designers & Illustrators in Lebanon – S.P.G.I.L. – with Rita Saab-Moukarzel organized the 1er Festival de la Bande Dessinée in 2002, as well as two other events in 2003 and 2005, as part of the activities of the association. In 2009, the festival was reduced to Rencontres de la Bande Dessinée, organized again by Tarazi with the contribution of ALBA and Michelle Standjofski, both generous contributors to the comics community in Lebanon.

Also, the comics community benefit from the activities in illustration and children’s books. Workshops for writers and illustrators organized by such children’s book societies such the Lebanese Section of the International Board on Books for Young People, LIBBY; Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators, SCBWI; the Assabil association for the promotion of public libraries and Aqra for that of children’s books; the Tarazi bookshop; and La Maison du Livre, a non-profit organization promoting activities related to books, reading, and illustrating. Among the international artists who came to give workshops in Lebanon were Tord Nygren from Sweden, Ihab Chaker from Egypt, and Anya Tickerman from Germany. Comics-related exchanges include the Samandal’s 24-Hour Comics in 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012; the storytelling workshop given by L’Employé du Moi in 2010 with Stéphane Noel and Sacha Groeg from Belgium; ALBA’s Rencontres de la Bande Dessinée in 2009 with Edmond Baudoin from France, Gianluca Constantini from Italy, and Aleksandar Zograf from Serbia; and the Let’s Comics workshop and artist exchange in 2008, 2010, and 2012. International festivals where Lebanese comics have been exhibited include Komikazen 2008 in Ravenna, Italy; and Crack! 2010 and Lucca Comics and Games 2010 and 2012, both held in Rome, Italy. Recent exhibitions of Arab comics included works by Lebanese artists, among them the 2012 Stripdagen exhibition in Harlem, the Netherlands; the 2012 Internationaler Comics Salon at Erlangen, Germany; and the 2013 Fumetto in Lucerne, Switzerland.

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1 New Media, Art & Culture Department. “NadimTarazi: La BD c’est sérieux et en même temps très agréable.” 
Moreover, comics were recognized as an art form in Lebanon rather early on. In 1986, Goethe-Institut in Beirut exhibited the work of the Jad Workshop collective; and in 1994, Galerie Janine Rubeiz recognized comics as being a distinct art form by hosting an exhibition of the works of Jean Giraud aka Moebius, followed in 2010 and 2013 by comics by Kerbaj.

### Comics Festivals in Lebanon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Organizer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd Festival de la Bande Dessinée</td>
<td>Centre Culturel Français au Liban Beirut</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Antoine, Dedicace, and Tarazi bookstores with Centre Culturel Français au Liban <a href="http://www.institutfrancais-liban.com/">http://www.institutfrancais-liban.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salon du Livre – Centenaire de la Bande Dessinée</td>
<td>Beirut Hall Sin el Fil, Beirut</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>La Maison du Livre (Nadim Tarazi) <a href="http://maisondulivre.liban@gmail.com">http://maisondulivre.liban@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BD En Bulles</td>
<td>Centre Culturel Français au Liban Beirut, Saida, Zahleh, Jouniyeh, Tripoli</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>La Maison du Livre (Nadim Tarazi) <a href="http://maisondulivre.liban@gmail.com">http://maisondulivre.liban@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1er Festival de la Bande Dessinée</td>
<td>Biel Exhibition Center Beirut</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>S.P.G.I.L. (Rita Moukarzel) <a href="http://www.spgil.org">http://www.spgil.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3eme Festival de la Bande Dessinée</td>
<td>Unesco Palace Beirut</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>S.P.G.I.L. (Rita Moukarzel) <a href="http://www.spgil.org">http://www.spgil.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rencontres de la Bande Dessinée</td>
<td>Academie Libanese des Beaux Arts Beirut</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td><a href="http://alba.edu.lb/">http://alba.edu.lb/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to children’s comic books and the emerging sector of adult comics, Lebanese artists are exposed to international comics and cartoons, often mainstream material available in local bookstores or at magazine stands in Beirut. Franco-Belgian and American comics are widely sold in the Lebanese market and manga has been popular since the early 2000s. Also, a large number of French comic books have been donated to the public-library network across the country. The first wave of the Franco-Belgian album tradition of the 1960’s and 1970’s expanded in the 1990’s to include what Thierry Groensteen (2011) calls “new poetic comics” published by L’Association, Les Éditions Glénats, and Les Éditions Lapin. The American comics include Marvel Comics and DC, but also Fantagraphics by Chris Ware and the Canadian publications Drawn and Quarterly. The
Japanese influence can be traced in such animations and cartoons as Sindibad Arabian naito: Shindobaddo no bôken, 1962; Grendizer, UFO Robo Gurendaizâ, 1977; and Treasure Island, Takarajima, 1978; in addition to the manga introduced by Glénat with Akira by Katsuhiro Otomo and followed by Casterman and Soleil by Pika Graphics and Kana.

The narrative focus of this research study is Lebanese war narratives in comics. A relatively significant part of these comics also are part of the general national ‘war debate’. These war narratives are quite peripheral to comics traditions, and thus contribute to a global literature by their “cross- and intra-cultural representation [...] of the richness and complexity of an artist’s cultural environs”¹ (Copley, 2011, p. 144). Moreover, war is part of a national debate – represented in film, music, theater, and visual arts – with comics contributing largely to this debate. Despite arrested developments, the market, community, artists, and language have contributed to a varied corpus. This contribution to the narrative of war coincides with a ‘comics boom’ that occurred around the 2006 war on Lebanon. The period of years between 2003 and 2011 is the most inclusive of adult comics, even though the preceding years were also productive. Children’s comics were excluded to restrict the number of pages, which already was too high, and despite the loss of important or interesting case studies. A series format titled Resistance published between the years 2007 and 2011 by the magazine Al-Mahdi² would be an interesting source because of its connection with the Hezbollah³ resistance movement; however, the magazine is labeled for a readership of four-to-seven-year-olds and, thus, could not be included in the corpus of this research study.

The comics of this research study are characterized by differences in authorship, influence, genre, and format, in addition to the use of three languages which involve two opposing directions of writing/reading. They are adult comics and they are restricted to being published between the years between 2003 and 2011. They form a diverse corpus and this variety in the sampling is used to

¹ In analyzing Persian and European influences of Satrapi’s Persepolis.
³ Shi’a Islamist militant group and political party
demonstrate the flexibility and adaptability of the software Amphibian in accommodating a wide range of comics.

### 5.2. War Debate

Much research points at a war debate currently taking place in Lebanon that moved from an ‘amnesic’ period following the Taif Agreement\(^1\) to a ‘living archive’ (Fadda-Conrey, 2010; Georgis, 2013; Haugbolle, 2010). Ongoing wars and unrest have been occurring on the geographical territory of Lebanon from confrontations of Phoenicians, Assyrians, and Babylonians; to Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, Arab, Ottoman, and French rule. War-related artifacts, like the first example (fig. 1.1) that figures in this thesis, are displayed at the National Museum in Beirut and include Bronze Age warriors, a pharaonic stele of Ramses II slaughtering the enemies of Egypt, and a Greek sarcophagus with reliefs of an army of horsed warriors crushing their enemy. The country’s memory is paved with numerous traumatic experiences, including invasions, wars, and colonization.

Since the proclamation of the Republic of Lebanon in 1943, the country continues to witness similar reoccurrences – the most debated of which being the 1975–1990 Civil War. Ignited by Christian factions and the PLO\(^2\) in 1975, the war included the following phases, listed chronologically; a period of sectarian violence and massacres, the Syrian occupation, the ‘Hundred-Day War’, the 1978 South Lebanon conflict, the ‘Day of the Long Knives’, the Zahleh campaign, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Israeli siege of Beirut, the Israeli massacres at Sabra and Shatila, the ‘War of the Camps’, the ‘War of the Mountain’, the ‘Aoun War’, and the infighting in East Beirut.

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\(^1\) Known also as the National Reconciliation Accord, agreed and signed in in 1989 in Taif, Saudi Arabia; based on the principle of a balanced “mutual coexistence” between Lebanon’s different religious parties with regard to their political representation - an issue still debated today.

\(^2\) The Palestine Liberation Organization.
During and following the Civil War, the cultural production had diminished up until the late 1990’s, when public manifestations of war commemoration and representation were starting to bud. The Taif Agreement of “no victors, no vanquished” and a so-called ‘general amnesty’ were made to cease the war; however, they generated what Samir Khalaf (1993) coins “collective amnesia” (p. 19). Less pronounced since 2007, this amnesia, according to Carol N. Fadda-Conrey (2010), has turned into a “living archive” – a form of war debate voiced by civil society (p. 170).

The war in 2006 – ignited this time by Hezbollah and Israel – brought back old memories to the public surface in a “renewed cultural resistance and social mobilization” (Haugbolle, 2010, pp. 234-35). The debate inherited schisms created by the Civil War that had not been mended by the Taif Agreement, nor by successive governments. In Al-Silm al-Ahli, The Illusion of the Civil Peace, Husayn Yaqoub (2011) describes how sectarian gangs established democracy from the chaos and maintained the sectarian schisms of the Civil War. The media channels that had emerged in the later years of that conflict carried on the divisions created by that war and, thus, maintained the conflict (ibid.).

5.2.1. THE DEBATED NARRATIVES

Cultural production – although alive and bubbling with new archival material – still maintains the conflicts inherited from the past. The recent debate is not only obstructed by the state in a deadlock for civic development, it is also perpetuating deep-rooted divisions in the Lebanese social tissue (Yaqoub, 2011).

The cultural production around the Civil War started as early as the onset of that war. In 1977, Etel Adnan wrote Sitt Marie Rose about the events that led to the murder of Marie-Rose Boulos in the hands of Christian factions for her support of the PLO. The early war years in Lebanese women’s literature, as described by Miriam Cooke (1987), focused on narratives of empowerment and responsibility, exemplified by the Beirut Decentralists Group. Their perspectives on the war were
that “all is answerable, yet most – and particularly the men – resolutely rejected responsibility” (ibid., p. 5). In later studies, Cooke (1996) presents the war narratives of women as the projections from the personal and the ‘motherly’ to that of national narratives.

Following the Civil War and up until the mid-1990’s, the debate revolved around amnesia, reconstruction, and commemoration (Haugbolle, 2010). Lebanese narratives of the war in literature covered trauma, also fragmentation and liminality, as well as diaspora, exile, and repatriation (Seigneurie, 2008; Khalaf, 2009; Hout, 2012). War narratives in Lebanese films tended to center on the loss of hope and of utopian ideals, and on the emergence of minority voices and memory (Hourani, 2008; Khatib, 2007). Yet, as regards the 1975-1990 Civil War in Lebanon, many narratives point to “the continuation of war” and the replacement of violence by a war of “bulldozers, connections[,] and money” (Haugbolle, 2010, p. 67). The debate became woven with political and socio-economic discussions (Barak, 2007).

The 2006 war instigated a large production of voices that identified, represented, and imagined “life through war and the postwar” (Haugbolle, 2010, p. 64). Several organizations started lobbying for a draft law on the missing and forcibly disappeared persons; and civil society began requesting a commemoration of the war, war justice, and a resolution for the disappeared (Barak, 2007; Fadda-Conrey, 2010; Haugbolle, 2010).

In parallel, a mobilization towards archiving and research started to become pronounced. Zeina Maasri (2009) includes posters of parties active during the Civil War in her research and mappings. She redraws her 1975-1992 chronological and thematic poster maps in categories – ‘belonging’, ‘commemoration’, ‘leadership and the cult of the zaim’, and ‘martyrdom’. The signs of conflict are summarized as: (a) distinction from other; (b) demarcation of territory; (c) use of ideological language, including representation of Israel as a war machine; and (d) use of the logic of martyrdom.

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2 This is an overlord in feudal times; today a political leader with whom favors are exchanged for electoral loyalty.
and sacrifice, for example the framing of photographs taken from identity cards (Maasri, 2009).

“Acknowledging Lebanon’s relatively recent past requires that important evidence and artifacts of its history be carefully collected, protected, and promoted to the public.”

Gradually, the political activities of civil society started spreading to the street, for example the performance Nesbsamneh w nesbzeit by Zoukak Theater Company. In March 2014, it was staged during the protest against gender-based violence organized by the campaign group KAFA (enough) Violence & Exploitation. Like many proposed draft laws on social-justice issues, the law criminalizing violence and rape against women has yet to be ratified. Thus, a ‘cold war’ still is going on in Lebanon between the sectarian parties and their corporate allies, and a civil society that, despite a hard struggle, is finding a way to voice its political views and demands (Yaqoub, 2011).

5.2.2. THE ACTORS OF THE DEBATE

Although war amnesia is collective, a debate is also becoming collective. In the decade that followed the war, the amnesia seems to be dominant, however the recent years engaged more parties at debating what the war is and was.

The amnesia was perpetrated by those who lived the war want to forget and move on; and those who were abroad, or had not been born then, have little or no recollection of it (Haugbolle, 2002). Lebanese people deliberately try to avoid the memory of the violence that has been bestowed on and between them (Barak, 2007). This amnesia, however, became transformed when civil society started to organize itself to deal with the issues of war. It became a “state-sponsored amnesia” whereby the government avoided confronting the memory of war, particularly with the support of the Taif Agreement (Barak, 2007, p. 57). However, civil society slowly replaced the amnesia with a national debate based on personal narratives (Barak, 2007; Gabai, 2010; Haugbolle, 2002). Art

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organizations – including Beirut Theater, Ashkal Alwan, and the Arab Image Foundation, among many others – flourished in the late 1990’s and have provided a platform for debates and public discussions. Also, in 2005 – after the political engagement of the Lebanese in protests following the assassination of former prime minister Rafic Hariri and the so-called Cedar Revolution against Syrian domination - the middle classes relived the past and became central agents for the production of historical memory (Haugbolle, 2010).

On the other hand, the state-sponsored amnesia – regulated by “sectarian gangs” and reinforced by the Taif Agreement – found support among some cultural figures, particularly Lebanese pop-music artists (Farran, 2014, n.p.). In addition, and probably as a consequence, the religious parties until today maintain the censoring power to suppress artists in the debate of the Civil War from working with religious concepts which “reinforce sectarian and racial boundaries” (Al Taee, 2009, p. 29).

The various post-war governments have failed to answer the demands of civil society. Yet, a civic movement – made up of civilian organizations, artists, and researchers – continues to be engaged in the debate in the form of archival and documentation activities, and in legal and social action.

In 2006, the Internet helped produce “the first really ‘live’ war in history” in Lebanon, and this contributed to the emergence of a multitude of artists and researchers working on that conflict (Kalb & Saivetz, 2007, p. 44; Choubassi, 2012). Yaqoub (2011) shows ongoing “forces of the war” that are very much involved in “the construction of the civil peace” (p. 21). To him, the conflict continues from the past to the present, while the parties involved in that conflict are restricting transmission and openness of the debate (ibid.). Najib Hourani (2008) sees it as a “global neo-liberalist war” on who gets to narrate the Civil War (p. 305). This war of narratives is between the state alliance of the militia and the corporations on the one hand, and “the excluded poor and refugees” on the other (ibid.).
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Still, “the open discussion of political issues through social media and the fact that [participants] can be incognito” have given a voice to criticize political regimes and “to suggest alternatives through continuous debates among different layers of the society from different countries” (Choubassi, 2012, p. 6). These voices are exemplified by Jadaliyya, which in Arabic means ‘dialectic’, an independent e-zine produced by the Arab Studies Institute – ASI. By 2011, civil society had acknowledged the amnesia, differentiated itself from the state’s approach taken towards the Civil War, and empowered itself to voice its own narratives towards a negotiated conflict which aims at moving beyond violence; however, it is restricted to a closed debate that has little or no influence on legislative or any other kind of state reform.

In the corpus of this research study, the comics format related to war was restricted by the year of publication, ranging between 2003 and 2011 as the assigned period for the ‘boom’. In total, they are 28 different formats made by 14 artists. What do these comics – as alternative channels – present as narratives of wars in Lebanon; and who are the actors and what role do they have in these wars?

5.3. THE CORPUS OF LEBANESE WAR NARRATIVES

A large proportion of the comics published since year 2000 contributes to an archive of war. These war comics are deployed in almost half of all comics published during the years of the ‘boom’ – i.e., between 2003 and 2011. The number of narratives that tell the same story is important because it sheds light on the parties who tell about the war – either from their own point of view or from delegating points of views – as they design how ‘the telling’ is to be known. As Mieke Bal (1985) suggests, the deployment of narratives around the same subject can bring a better judgment on the story. Narrative analysis distinguishes the narrative from the telling of the event, or story, and enables an analysis of the different points of views of narratives on the same events (Bal, 1985, p. 77).

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The comics constituting the corpus of this research study cover the various comics formats of Lebanese comics related to war. The citation for each format includes the name of the writer, the pencil sketcher, and the inker – indicated as ‘w. p. i.’; the name of the format, the publishing house, and the year of publication (Ellis, 1998). In addition, the number of pages, printing specifications, and size are included, as well as information about the cover page. A small thumbnail of the first page or cover accompanies this information, and a short synopsis supplements this data.

   (186 pages book format, 16 x 24 cm, black. Soft cover, 2 colors)
   Translated into English as A Game for Swallows: To Die, to Leave, to Return, this format tells the story of the author and her brother waiting one afternoon for their parents to return home. With the division of the city and the bombing that happens outside, a small community builds around the children; the babysitter, the driver, and the neighbors all gather and share games and stories until the return of the parents.

   (96 pages book format, 13.5 x 18 cm, black. Soft cover, 2 colors)
   I Remember is a collection of memories that start with this phrase. Zeina remembers the displacement, the snipers, and the division of the city, but also the games, the books, the films, and the toys she played with. The memory of war is still with her after she discovers the re-unified city. It is also revived when war and divisions come back.

   (32 pages book format, 10 x 15 cm, black. Soft cover die-cut, black)
   This panel-page format starts with the introduction of a child, born in a blocked street where the street dwellers surround her and the war that is happening behind the sandbag wall. When that wall is removed, the child discovers the open street and the city, and she reflects on her misinterpretation of the war in her childhood.

   (22 pages book format, 17 x 24 cm, black. Soft cover, 2 colors)
   Based on the stories of seven Palestinians and Palestinian refugees from around the world, the reality of their lives of displacement is put in contrast to the application of the related UN agreements.
Sampling Narratives of War in Lebanese Comics

   (1 page 3 strips format, 23 x 16 cm, black)
Composed of three strips, only the first two are relevant. The top strip shows a militiaman shooting men right and left until he is left with a group of mice campaigning for religious unity. In the second strip, an army of men marches in a parade. The third shows a crowd watching and discussing this militia parade.

   (1 page format, 23 x 16 cm, black)
It is the story of a whistling street cleaner who gets shot and dies as he is sweeping the streets. From their balconies above, neighbors – the barrels of their rifles still smoking – discuss how annoying his whistling had been.

   (6 pages format, 23 x 16 cm, black)
It tells the story of kidnapped civilians caught in the crossfire between two militias. After having shot each other, the militias – without themselves knowing – turn out to belong to the ‘same side’.

   (182-195) (14 pages format, 23 x 16 cm, black)
During a flight from Beirut to Sofia, a male passenger – concerned for his sick cat – is suspected of having a bomb, thus causing the plane to crash. This story intertwines with the rebellion of a Bulgarian Hadjuk who ambushes a train during the Ottoman rule. The plane and the train collide and the Ottoman captain is killed. The passengers are confused about the time shift, and the story is open-ended, left to be continued.

   (1 page format, 23 x 16 cm, black)
A soldier on the corner of a street points his rifle and waits. Another soldier runs towards him, though hidden by tall buildings. When he reaches the corner of the street, the first soldier shoots him.

(10 pages format, 23 x 16 cm, black)
Fakhr El Din and his troops march down a modern-looking street, only to be stopped by a honking car and as they are blocking the way. The driver starts arguing, Fakhr El Din is killed, and the troops disassemble. Ghadi appears and starts discussing society, culture, and politics in Lebanon with a woman in the street who he ends up killing.


(8 pages format, 23 x 16 cm, black)
A Happy Childhood is explicitly a biography of Kerbaj as a child born and growing up during the Civil War. It is a collection of his observations as a participant, an observer, a negotiator, and a skeptic in the games of war.

12. Kerbaj, Mazen (w, p, i). Suspended Time, number 1: The Family Tree

(22 pages format, 23 x 16 cm, black)
This story is closer to an animated portrait of Kerbaj’s family, haunted or even embraced by the heaviness of war that lingers from one generation to the next and from one comics unit to another.


(9 pages format, 23 x 16 cm, CMYK)
Based on a poem by Khaled Saghieh, in the imperative form, this comic ironically calls external forces to use, invade, and build fortresses around our traditions, natural resources, geographic areas, and also around women, and use our tribes to create war.


(150 pages format, black. Soft cover, CMYK)
After nineteen days, Mazen starts to cry; after two months, he is a journalist commenting on the war – a war that is lied about on the news. He talks about the people and the absurdity around him, and also about the war that is happening inside of him as he copes by drawing, drinking, and philosophizing.
(67 pages in 4 chapters, 23 x 16 cm, black)
It tells the story of how the Department of Mental Security prohibits and confiscates any production and distribution of images. A few friends form a group; however, some of them are operating in secret, drawing and sharing information among one another. The Freedom Party is being hunted by the Security after a bomb explodes in the city. The story is left to be continued.

(27 pages book format, A4 size paper, CMYK. Soft cover, CMYK)
Malaak was born out of a cedar tree during the Civil War. She discovers her superpowers and her mythical guardians – the Sea and the Mountain – who watch over her as she fights the djinns and their militias in the streets of Beirut.

(41 pages book format, A4-size paper, CMYK. Soft cover, CMYK)
Malaak is a Lebanese superhero who fights alongside the Lebanese Army against the havoc made by the djinns. A super djinn confronts her, so she calls on the Sea – one of her mythical guardians – and her friends to gain strength and defeat him.

(45 pages book format, A4-size paper, CMYK. Soft cover, CMYK)
Malaak, the Lebanese superhero is upset. A red-haired djinn shot her friend Zeina, and Adrian is jealous of Malaak’s new friend Amer, who she met in her dreams. In her fight with the redhead and during the attack with the Lebanese Army, she meets the phoenix-looking Mountain. To fight the djinns gives her the strength and she succeeds, and all her friends are well and by her side again.

(118 pages book format, 17x24 cm, black. Soft cover, CMYK)
This is a biography of a German mother in Lebanon, facing all the differences and similarities of wars experienced in her two countries, as well as about the people, their reactions and ways of living.
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   (1 page format)
   It is a story of two Arabs who get eaten by a crusader lion. Together they make a bomb and manage to escape; however, they then start fighting over the trophies and end up making bombs to target one another, like in a Spy v/s Spy® episode.

   (22 pages book format, A4-size paper, black. Soft cover, black)
   It is a collection of notes of how Merhej coped with the war, by panicking and acting in absurd ways, to strategies of helping on the street, and then going back to work in difficult circumstances.

   (77 pages, 23 x 16 cm, black)
   John, a student at the institute, is attacked by the nihilists and then saved by the Educator. This means John owes the Educator a favor, which turns out to be the killing of the headmaster. John refuses; however, Mila convinces him to steal the antidote for the poisonous gas used by the nihilists. They succeed, only to discover that the gas and the cure both are government strategies to control the population.

   (5 pages, 23 x 16 cm, black)
   Abou Dam, literally ‘the father of blood’ is bionic militiaman with no control over his armed limbs. He shoots the visitor who came to complain to him, he shoots his son who came to see what was going on and then he is greeted by his wife who console him by promising him a new more handsome and cleverer child.

   (5 pages, 23 x 16 cm, black)
   Abou Dam, the bionic militiaman tries to drink his coffee with his armed limbs. After several failed attempts, he unleashes his anger and starts shooting frantically everywhere, killing his son. His wife consoles him by bringing him hummus.

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1 Spy vs. Spy is a wordless short comics format by Antonio Prohías, published in Mad magazine since 1961.
5.4. Corpus Review

For this research study, a preliminary thematic review pinpointed the significant themes related to multimodal characters in order to reduce the material. In total, 1,025 pages in 28 formats had been gathered. Because the analysis was a simulation and, hence, required considerable manual work, a

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1 Child character of Palestinian cartoonist Naji El Ali; today a Palestinian resistance icon.
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A selection criterion was needed to reduce that large number of pages. The review of thematic narratives revealed all the themes that occurred in the comics related to war without implicating other parameters or ‘getting too close’ to the actual material. A qualitative content analysis was used to extract the relevant pages of each format of the corpus by reviewing both visual and verbal ‘first-instance’ characters that related directly to the theme of war; however, without great attention being paid to multimodal distinction in the units, but rather more emphasis being based on intuition (Schreier, 2011). All the themes related to war in each format were then listed. A word-frequency counter collapsed the same themes, which had been grouped into three categories – events, characters, and objects – based on the narrative elements. Though objects also were considered ‘characters’, they were distinguished by being ‘inanimate’ or ‘non-human’. For example, an ambulance is a ‘character’ because it implies a driver; however, a screen is an ‘object’ even though it can show and tell or convey news reporting or some kind of other story.

When carrying out the review, first a preliminary filing system was applied to the corpus. The following path visualizes this system:

Author Name > Format Name > Format Name.pdf + Images > Image1.jpg.

The review required browsing the images of the comics corpus and noting down all related instances. To be able to smoothly browse the images of the comics pages, several instruments were tried, including Adobe Bridge CS5.1 and Google Picasa 3.9. Both are image organizers and image viewers that organize digital images and make them available for viewing in particular ways. They require a re-filing system and can enable such simple editing operations as image rotation.

Adobe Acrobat was the primary instrument chosen because it was simple to use, and enabled the exporting of Format Name.pdf into a series of .jpeg images. The display screen is simple and clear and access to the original files followed the logic of the filing system. This enabled the viewing of the pages for evaluation, based on which pages to select and which to dismiss when a page was are

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1 A program that counts the frequency of word occurrences such as http://www.writewords.org.uk. Accessed on July 6, 2013.
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not related to war in any particular way. Also, the themes were noted down, disregarding repetitive ones reoccurring in the same format. This was carried out with the understanding that further analysis would account for all units selected in the same format.

To create a code frame and to note down the themes, a grid was made using simple office software, with each column standing for a format and including the entire theme ‘first instances’. The coding frame was tested and revised as the material was segmented and the main coding was carried out in a Microsoft Excel sheet (Annex A). Instead of noting down all the occurrences of the same theme of one format, the ‘principle of cohesion’ allowed the ‘first instance’ of an element to stand for the rest of the occurrences. Thus, when the same character occurred many times in the format, it was noted down only once.\(^1\) Finally, the coding was simplified by the merging of words, for example ‘abduction and kidnapping’ into ‘kidnapping’. Then all the first-instance occurrences of intense war-related text and image-diegetic elements were collapsed and divided into events, characters, and objects. The frequency of each term in all the formats was counted, using a simple online word-frequency program, and then visualized.

An analysis was made to find the salient themes across the formats in order to reduce the material. The corpus included all the pages of the various formats where some kind of war occurs. That meant that included also were all the fragments unrelated to war – while this research was aimed at war narratives only. Thus, the quest was to find the relevant themes in each text, as well as in the Lebanese war corpus as a whole. The total number of first-instance themes related to intense war in Lebanese comics was 535. The frequency of all the first-instance themes in all the pages was calculated. Synonymous themes were merged – for example ‘victims’ and ‘wounded’ – and then grouped according to the three principal categories or elements related to narratives of war as first-

\(^1\) The frequency of occurrences of that character in the format would be a more detailed study; however, it would not reduce the material for general theme extraction. Moreover, it would be biased in favor of short formats or poetic formats where the traditional narrative strategy is to deploy the character over the format.
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instance themes; namely, events, numbering 144; characters, totaling 180; and objects and spaces, counting 211 (fig. 5.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Objects/Spaces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 5.2:** First-instance theme mapping in Lebanese war comics © Lena Merhej, 2014.
Sampling Narratives of War in Lebanese Comics

The results of this review reveal that ‘casualties’ classified as the most frequent image or ‘word first instance’ with 44 occurrences, followed by ‘armed men’ with 29. The other sub-categories of characters that are related to war in the corpus are also presented. Among the category ‘events’, the sample of ‘battle events between groups’ was the most frequently occurring at 37 occurrences; followed by ‘emotional reactions’ at 34; and ‘battle action’ at 29. Of note is that the number of pages to be analyzed was reduced from 1,025 to 141. Those 141 pages were kept in order to isolate the pertinent narrative fragment from the total narrative in their respective formats.

In summary, the story of war in Lebanese comics narrative was narrated by a variety of texts. The content analysis elucidated that the most frequently-narrated events related to ‘the battlefield’, while the most frequently-present characters were the ones that were portrayed as suffering, followed by the ones carrying arms. Lebanese comics are diverse, not only in style or genre, but also in format, language, and reading direction; however, those included in the corpus all deal with the same story –namely, ‘there is war’. The narrative elements vary, but all revolve around a similar narrative, which, in turn, presents a particular narrative analysis of war and how it is mediated by different voices.

This research study aims at gaining an understanding of the organization of narrative elements, which also meant the use of war narrative strategies. The initial analysis led to the questions of how the stories were narrated, how the events and the characters were narrated, and what was focalized in them. In addition, the corpus proved suitable for demonstrating the design of the software Amphibian because it consisted of a diversity of formats and could thus test the robustness of the software.

To bridge theory and practice, artists use narrative strategies, while researchers interpret them. By revealing strategies, new ones also may be conceived and used; thus, contributing to a constant reinvention of comics. This section introduced the corpus material and its context, as well as explained why Lebanese comics about the war constitute a relevant sample for this research study.
6. War Narratives

Because war narratives in Lebanese comics are multiple and range over different genres and formats, artistic traditions, languages, and reading directions, they provide good material to test methods of comics-narrative analysis. The proposed methods of the narrative analysis applied across this corpus permitted the testing of the flexibility and reliability of Amphibian when applied on the various genres of graphic narratives that Lebanese comics about war provide.¹ These methods could be applied also in other research studies to similar complex corpora², as well as those more complex or less so. In this research study, the focus is on events and characters of armed conflict. The following chapter, Chapter 7, portrays the armed characters that populate comics about war. This chapter presents first the results of the quantitative content analysis; and, second, the results of the mapping, which used Amphibian to apply a narratological multimodal analysis on comics units.

“The term ‘event’ refers to a change of state, one of the constitutive features of narrativity” (Hühn, 2013, n.p.). Events can be told in a straightforward manner with a clear narrative that covers the whole page/s and includes a beginning, middle, and an end or resolution. The conventional way of analyzing events would include also looking at the structure of the telling; however, this research study focuses on the nature and the identification of events with respect to narrators and characters and their involvement and, for this, the focus is on fragments rather than total narratives.

From the 144 events related to war identified in the corpus, the highest occurrences were ‘battle events between groups’, accounting for 37 occurrences; followed by ‘emotional reactions’ in response to the violence with 34, and ‘battle actions’ with 29. Indeed, war, occupation, persecution, confrontation, siege, and battle operations and attacks all are characterized by violence carried out

¹ Comparing different narratives using one method (+ coding frame).
² For example, such material as narratives of colonialism in Algerian comics, revolution in Egyptian comics, and human rights in Croatian comics, among others.
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by beating, burning, fighting, killing, shooting, and bombing. The only instances that are not characterized by violence are ‘ceasefire’ and ‘surrender’, each registering one occurrence.

The most frequent emotional responses included ‘fear’, with seven occurrences; ‘crying’, with six; and ‘forgetting’ with five occurrences. Coping mechanisms included praying, smoking, getting angry, traumatized, and hurting. Responses to violence were characterized by population movements and re-organizations such as ‘migration’ and registered ten occurrences, while ‘isolation’ or ‘confinement’ registered two occurrences. Furthermore, a transformation occurs from a productive and active life, to a life of ‘waiting for the bombing to stop’ and ‘queuing for bread and water’, noted by three occurrences. ‘Getting in and out of groups’ occurred a total of ten times and is characterized first by characters that convert to another social group, either by ‘following orders’ with five occurrences, which also entails ‘pledging an oath and allegiance and, thus, the promise of obedience, which registered two occurrences. Second, there are characters that actively segregate a group by ‘boycotting or censoring, with two occurrences, or forbidding/banning which registered one occurrence. Characters also diverge from their group by corruption or by making parallel alliances with other groups, which may be in conflict with the one they originally belonged to. Physical assault, not including bombing and shooting, carried out by one group on a character was observed in four instances of ‘massacre’ – one instance is Sabra and Shatila and another is the Qana genocide, as compared to war events in 2006. ‘Kidnapping’, at two occurrences, and ‘interrogations’, at three, imply torture and overlap with the previous-mentioned category of ‘confinement and captivity’. In addition, there also are preventive events that occur, for example ‘securing a space’ occurring six times, and ‘protecting an individual’ with two occurrences. Moreover, three events that relate to the planning of a conflict were identified and analyzed: namely, conference, agreement, and meeting.

Isolating these instances and becoming familiar with the related content prompted the question of focalization and which events are particularly significant. Events are either narrated, or narrated and
focalized; thus, inflecting a narration transforms ‘uneventful’ events to ‘eventful’ ones and the focalization is on the actual event. According to Peter Hühn (2013), “two types of event correspond to broad and narrow definitions of narrativity, respectively: narration as the relation of changes of any kind and narration as the representation of changes with certain qualities” (n.p.). The ‘uneventful’ events are everyday occurrences that are not particularly dramatic or exaggerated. “The everyday is uneventful [and] the recent growing presence of the everyday in comics from different traditions […] works where ordinary situations and apparently insignificant events take the place of extraordinary worlds and adventure stories” (Schneider, 2010, p. 37). As Greice Schneider (2010) points out, “slowness” in comics – despite being lengthy in uneventful units – ‘rescues’ ordinary events from neglect (p. 38). Thus, there are uneventful wars and eventful ones, and people who live in war on a daily basis create a normative relationship with ‘extraordinary’ events. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, the Lebanese refer to the Civil War as “the Events”, relieving or rather stripping the war from its extraordinariness. The focalized events brought forth new categories, which include ‘absurd events’, ‘gaming’, and ‘comparing wars’. This time the categories are considered ‘focalization strategies’ as they show the war in a particular coloration.

Absurd events are focalized by a certain unexplained or unjustified inconsistency. ‘Shooting’ is focalized in Motaz Al Sawaf’s (2011a, 2011b) comics as frantic and random; neighbors shoot at a street sweeper because he is whistling, or militiamen discover that they have wrongfully fired on their allies. In a slowness that subverts the ordinary, Ghadi Ghosn (2008) turns an event of ‘shooting’ into an ordinary event to focalize the absurdity of that act, using four elaborate panels to not say much other than ‘a soldier shot another’. In Angel of Peace by Joumana Medlej (w, p, i; 2007), a djinn\(^1\), laughing hysterically, fires arms at a house. Mazen Kerbaj (2007) focalizes absurdity through the difficulty of documenting war and shows a miracle, a massacre, and then the inability to make a drawing of it; or he focalizes the endless bombing and the impossibility to

\(^1\) A demon or mythological creature able to interfere physically with humans as mentioned in the Quran.
document or resolve it as the bombing is faster than the act of writing and also seemingly endless. The absurdity also is focalized on the blank faces of survivors and shown by the contrast between listening to Stayin’ Alive and sitting in the shelter while bombs are exploding above in Lena Merhej’s (2011) work. Zeina Abirached (2007) uses a similar strategy by focalizing people dancing and music playing despite the loud “BRRAAAAAM” that covers the whole spread page (p. 134-135). ‘Gaming’ is focalized by children ‘playing war’ or other games that arise from war and computer games. Abirached (2007) expresses her incomprehension of the war and her naivety as a child, thinking that was all ‘Red Indians’ with bows and arrows. Also Kerbaj (2003), in his autobiographical work, shows a child in army gear shooting at another child with a bomb. On the next page, the war child counts the bombs, takes pictures of the detonations, and focalizes his learning of how the sound is heard a few seconds after the explosion is seen (ibid). Merhej (2011) shows children playing war on a balcony overlooking Israeli ships on the horizon; while, in another format, the conflict between two groups of children is more balanced with in a tug of war in 2006 (ibid., 2007).

Abirached (2007) presents a morbid, but well-known game played, in this case, by adults guessing if bombs are outgoing or incoming. Another game is snakes and ladders, which focalizes the constant displacement of the Abirached family (ibid.). In addition, elements for computer games are used to focalize collateral damage, intentional bombing, and destruction of civilians and their environment. The bombing in Jana Traboulsi’s (2009) work could be of a child’s drawing or a computer game, which, in both cases, can bring a whole building down. In the works of Abirached (2008) and Kerbaj (2003), the bombing forms a pattern; for Abirached (2008), it is bombs, and for Kerbaj (2003) aliens focalizing the dehumanization of the bombing from their targets which, in fact, are photographs in contrast to the pixilated computer graphics. Kerbaj (2007) emphasizes this idea more by literally transforming a pinball machine into a battlefield. He concludes his format with

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1 Song by the Bee Gees and released in 1970.
War Narratives

Israeli airplanes, suggesting PlayStation as a game console to entertain and while away the time after bombing Lebanon in 2006.

Comparing wars and war experiences focalizes generational and ongoing wars. In Merhej´s (2011) work, a comparison is made first by the mother, who sees similarities between the state of hospitals in Lebanon during the 1982 Israeli invasion and the health-care situation during the Israeli attack in 2006. Second, it is between the author’s own fear during the so-called ‘Aoun War’ and that of her mother during the bombing of Hannover in 1945 near the end of World War II (Merhej (w, p, i), 2011). Third, a comparison also is made between the 2006 and the 1975-1990 Civil War, this time bringing back the memory of the Civil War into the present reality of another war (ibid.). This focalization on generational and ongoing wars is brought in also by Kerbaj (2007), as his mother was 10, 45, and 75 years old in the wars she lived through – and she wonders if she will have to live through yet another.

These comics presented above were analyzed according to the ‘eventfulness’ of war or, more precisely, the focalization of war events in contrast to their non-focalization. The analysis indicates the strategies used to focalize war in Lebanese comics – which is focalized as ‘absurd’, ‘familiar’, ‘distant’, and ‘ongoing’. The qualitative content analysis helped reduce the material and focus the analysis on certain patterns and repetitions that could be interpreted as focalization on war; however, the interpretation was made in a rather intuitive manner, without paying close attention to the units and the multimodal interplay. As mentioned before, comics fragments can be on different narrative levels – either parallel or embedded – and have a multifaceted narrativity. Events are multi-stable by their multimodal nature which combines explicit and implicit events, and which also creates new events. By applying Amphibian, focalizations on events were further developed in the analysis. To deepen the analysis, a chronology was reconstructed that organized the events related to war in a sequential order based on the theories of narratological time. In addition, a closer analysis of the material accounted for the multimodal intertwining of comics units.
‘Absurdity’ will be discussed in relation to armed characters, as presented in Chapter 7, Section 7.4. Fragments of ‘gaming’ narrative are developed in Section 6.1 below, particularly in the events of the Civil War when the authors mentioned above themselves were children. The focalization is on the war as ongoing.

6.1. WARTIME IN LEBANESE COMICS

What are the events of war in the narratives in Lebanese comics? How are they presented? This section deepens the analysis by considering the units and the modes of comics, and how the violent war events in Lebanese comics are articulated, narrated, and focalized. The events are grouped by dated and undated events. First, a chronology of these events is presented, followed by a discussion of the narratological analysis of time – meaning order, frequency, and duration – and of the focalized events.

The criterion that was used to extract the violent instances of war events is related to weaponry use and ‘war occurrences’. Using Amphibian, all the elements in active war were mapped to distinguish the relevant events of this demonstrative analysis. By extracting the annotations from Amphibian, the analysis consisted of the text of the images, accompanied by the text of the words in brackets and the focalizations, while identifying the narrative fragment in the units and the modes. Each fragment was introduced in the format and, if needed, the pages that it appeared in. Its analysis spanned the paragraph until another format was introduced. Unless otherwise indicated, if several fragments were relevant, then the description of the analysis continued without mentioning the citation, until another format was introduced with another citation. The citations refer to the authors as ‘writers’, ‘pencillers’, and/or ‘inkers’ – indicated ‘w, p, i’. After each paragraph, a brief interpretive summary is added. Moreover, the intervals of the chronology were visualized, with each combining fragments of ‘intense war’ from different pages and formats but from the same time.
frame, thus allowing the analysis to look at how these particular intervals were narrated and focalized.

In its definition of ‘war’, The International Handbook of War, Torture, and Terrorism lists numerous categories, while nonetheless restricting the meaning to that of “armed conflict” as synonymous with war (Malley-Morrison, 2013, p. 19). The multiple narratives participating in the Lebanese war debate refer to ‘armed conflicts’ and use different terms to designate war – for example, the date ‘1982’ for the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, such geographical references as ‘the war of the mountains’, and, more often, simply the term ‘the Events’. The ‘Lebanese events’ refer to several wars and can be determined only by the context (Haugbolle, 2010; Traboulsi, 2007). The words ‘the Events’ in Lebanese colloquial language were used to refer to the war in 1863 (Traboulsi, 2007), but nowadays usually mean the war from 1975 to 1990 or the so-called Lebanese or Civil War, which in fact is several wars each referred to by a different name. For instance, the 1975-1977 war was called the ‘Two-Year War’, the ‘Hotels War’, or the ‘War of the Militias’. Other conflicts that were part of the Civil War are the ‘Hundred-Day War’ in 1978, the ‘1982 Lebanon War’ and the ‘Israeli Invasion’, the ‘Mountain War’ in 1983–1984, the ‘War of the Camps’ from 1984–1989.

The same applies to the war in 2006, which is referred to as the ‘July War’, the ‘Israeli Attack on Lebanon’, and the ‘Israeli-Lebanese War’; as well as the “Sixth War” by Al-Jazeera and other Arab media and broadcasting outlets, and the “Second Lebanon War” by Israel (Kalb & Saivetz, 2007, p. 60). The list of wars presented above is not inclusive but, rather, illustrates the idea of the multiple narratives that exist in the title of ‘war’ in hypothetical events – in other words, what might be expected to be observed in the corpus. In this research study, the focus is on the wars that emerge from the material, with the year 2010 marking the end of that chronological map as the material does not project stories ‘in the future’ but only ventures from ‘today’ back to ‘the past’.

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They are the distinct intervals of armed conflict and their disparate occurrences over time and geography. Their distance in time or space and – even more so – the constant change of adversaries, make them more applicable to ‘events of war’ than to ‘war’. Amnesia in this case omits ‘war’ and gives the weight of war on “the Events” because they are more generic, inclusive, and applicable to the Lebanese reality of living in a country where violent conflict occurs frequently. Logically, “the Events” would start when the country gained independence on November 22, 1943; however, this research study is not restricted to full-blown war events, but includes all wars and violent conflicts between parties, even if they took place before the existence of Lebanon or on another territory. This distinction permits the inclusion of pre-independence full-blown war events, fictional full-blown war events, and full-blown war events that did not take place on Lebanese territory. As a reminder, the criterion is restricted by the corpus, which includes adult comics either created by a Lebanese artist or published by a Lebanese editor between the years 2003 and 2011.

Looking at the analytical interface, the events of armed conflict were extracted and reordered with respect to a hypothetical chronology based on the war timeline presented by Fawwaz Traboulsi (2007). The narratological analysis of time is based on Gérard Genette (1980) and looks at event frequency, duration, and order. In the survey to reduce the material to those pages related to war, the largest number of events actively involved in war numbered 37 ‘battle events between groups’. This number was added to the 29 occurrences of ‘battle action’, as described earlier in Chapter 5 and illustrated in Figure 5.2.
FIGURE 6.1: Simulation of Amphibian on Adobe InDesign

With the support of Amphibian, the mapping of ‘battle events’ was simulated on Adobe InDesign layers, as shown in figure 6.1. The highlighted areas in this figure show two occurrences of embedded stories on three levels. On the right side are the Adobe InDesign ‘windows’ of pages and of layers– the first window shows all the pages of the mapping; and the second indicates the layers with text, where all the text is placed; then, the first, second, and third level of the embedded fabulas, and the ‘pages layer’. The colors correspond to the mapping on the left of the images and the text of annotation snippets. The mapping criterion includes all the images and the words, or their combinations related to violent conflict. The word and the combination between word and image can present explicit dated and named events, as well as implicit war narratives. In the image, the war is implicit, undated, and unnamed – but still referred to. Thus, in this research study, moving from the general to the more specific, the mapping of the words in the comics included terms related to active war, armed conflict, use of armament, bombing, shooting, killing, and kidnapping. Likewise, in the image, the mapping included also scenes of armed conflict.
FIGURE 6.2: Chronology map of war events in Lebanese comics © Lena Merhej, 2014.
The events extracted from the corpus were categorized by their direct reference to war. The mapped events are images that all tell of an armed conflict, and the words that all explicitly or implicitly tell about war. As illustrated in figure 6.2, first, the explicit and dated war events are presented on a track or row of a chronological map in the top row. Second, the non-dated but historical war events are placed corresponding to their period on the chronological map – as illustrated in the middle row. Third, the non-dated and non-historical war events that allude to stages of a Lebanese war are placed with respect to the event reference to dated and/or historical events in the corpus – as shown in the bottom row.

With all the mapped events presented, described chronologically, and discussed in terms of their focalization through analyzing the occurrences of repetition and shifts in the narration, the dated events then were placed according to a timeline of five-year intervals – with the exception of the earliest interval, which extends to the seventeenth century. The intervals on the timeline are irregular because they accommodate the length needed by the material to economize on the size/legibility ratio. Six intervals are delineated by shades of brown and indicate the occurrences of war names in the corpus. First, the ‘Pre-Civil-War’ interval is marked by World War II, followed by the ‘Civil-War’, the ‘Post-Civil-War’, the ‘2006-War’, ‘Post-2006-War’ intervals, and ‘Today’. The following sub-sections will introduce the dated and non-dated narratives of Pre-Civil-War and Civil-War intervals and their focalizations, which then are discussed in relation to one another and also to the debate of war. Figure 6.3 distinguishes the six intervals and condenses the material for an easier overview.
FIGURE 6.3: War event intervals in Lebanese comics
© Lena Merhej, 2014.
The Pre-Civil-War interval (fig. 6.4) spans a longer duration than the other periods in the timeline. It includes occurrences from 1635 in the Adventures of Fakhr El Din (Ghosn (w, p, i), 2010) to 1967 in Beyrouth (Rima (w, p, i), 2011). “Prince Fakhr El Din II ruled the state of Lebanon in the 17th century. He united the peoples of Lebanon and fought the Ottoman Occupation until […] 1635” (Ghosn (w, p, i), 2010, p. 97). The non-historical event that occurs is a clash between Fakhr El Din’s army and a civilian wearing contemporary clothes, ending with the death of Fakhr El Din. It involves – in a dance of unjustified and absurd behavior – a present that clashes with ancient authority and legitimizes it, and also a stubborn and angry contemporary driver. The temporal shift could be interpreted as mocking the unification of “the peoples of Lebanon”, if not killing it by shooting Fakhr El Din (ibid.).

Another non-historical event with a similar parallel anachronism is Schrodinger’s Riddle (FDZ (w, p, i) & Khouri (w, p, i), 2010). Two parallel narratives evolve and meet in the middle. One is
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projected in the past and the other in the future, like a flashback analysis and a flash-forward prolepsis collapse in an ambiguous presence – a blank explosion, or a collision between a train and a plane (fig. 6.5). In Ghosn’s (2010) work, the events are linear; however, the build-up occurs twice. In both, the two temporal narratives culminate towards a clash and a death. The first time, it is the clash between Fakhr El Din and his army against the contemporary civilian; and the second is between the biographical narrator, Ghadi, and his friend, a woman. Their political opinions clash, leading to her killing (Ghosn (w, p, i), 2010).

FIGURE 6.5: Pre-Civil-War violent events in Schrodinger’s Riddle
Source: FDZ (w, p, i) & Khouri (w, p, i), 2010, pp. 90-91.
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In FDZ’s and Khouri’s (2010) work, the two temporal narratives are interwoven. Instead of from the start mixing within the panels, the two narratives remain on distinct page units, opening with an image of a plane and a narrative of a passenger from Beirut to Sofia worried about his sick cat, whose box ‘beeps’ and is mistaken for a bomb. The second page unit presents a scene where a man uses seemingly old technology from inside a train (FDZ (w, p, i) & Khouri (w, p, i), 2010). He is shot by another man in a hadjuk costume – identified as Petko Voyvoda, a fighter from the Ottoman period of the Bulgarian uprising at the turn of the nineteenth century – who then says: “Welcome Turkish” (Elchinova et al., 2012). Thus, the alternating pages shift in time, which then is repeated back and forth in the five subsequent units. On the fifth page, a spatial narrative spreads to join the two parallel narratives (fig. 6.5) and then clashes in a blast to meet in the last spread, with the hadjuk then being onboard the plane (FDZ (w, p, i) & Khouri (w, p, i), 2010). The final words of the hadjuk – “Good-bye Turkish” – reveal the anticipation of his welcoming remark in the introduction and the accentuation of the resistance. The narrative of Bulgarian resistance as heroism prevails over the false alarm of the ‘terrorist attack’ that brought mistrust and enmity to the stewardess. This narrative might be extended to imply that war through terrorism is unjustified, while war conducted by resistance fighters is heroic.

FIGURE 6.6: World-War-II events in Lebanese comics
© Lena Merhej, 2014.

World War II also is included in this interval. This historical event was discussed in Section 6.1, and it occurred in Beyrouth: Juillet-Aout 2006 (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007) and in Yogurt and Jam, or How My Mother Became Lebanese (Merhej (w, p, i), 2011) as figure 6.6 shows. To focalize the many wars his mother survived, the narrator in Kerbaj’s (2007) diary, on July 20, 2006, says: “My
mother was ten years old in the Second World War”. Merhej (w. p. i; 2011) presents the story of her mother and her first memory of fear “when the Russian army entered Hannover” as an image of soldiers’ boots going up cracked stairs, a tank in the middle of destroyed buildings, and bombardment of a city (p. 108). Fear is also focalized by showing the mother being anxious “when the bombardment destroyed 45 percent of the city of Hannover” (Merhej (w, p, i), 2011, p. 105).

Again, in these fragments, the narrative strategies resort to the identification of ‘war’ with other wars from a different time or place. These narratives widen the debate to include narratives from the Ottoman Empire, as well as from mid-twentieth-century Europe.

Another narrative strategy used in this time interval is the accumulation of historical details from personal accounts of interviewed characters in Barrack Rima’s (w. p, i; 2011) Beyrouth (fig. 6.7). A bus says: “With the Nasserite Arab Youth we organized trips by bus. We sang anti-Israeli songs.” (Rima (w, p, i), 2011, p. 11). The bus appears alone in the panel. “Then there was the ‘67 War” (ibid. p. 11), referring to the Six-Day Arab-Israeli war. On the strip, the bus hides and reappears. In the third panel, its black filling transforms into a ghostly graphiation that shows that the bus has been deleted and then redrawn. The bus gives a reference to the 1975 incident of the massacre of passengers in a bus in Ayn al-Rummaneh1 and the swaying movement as the bus is moving is

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1 On April 13, 1975, “a car fired shots at a congregation of Phalange partisans in front of a church in `Ayn al-Rummaneh, wounding a number of people, to which Phalanges militiamen reacted a few hours later by machine-gunning a bus heading for the Tall al-Za'tar refugee camp, killing 21 Palestinians. Fighting broke out throughout the southeastern suburb of Beirut between the Phalange and the Palestinian resistance and their Lebanese allies” (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 183).
transformed into a Danse Macabre or ‘dance of death’ as “if it is by singing that we can liberate Palestine!” (ibid., p. 11). The swaying is almost like a warning sign of the pregnancy of the moment – since 1967, everyone still are on the ‘death bus’. In the next panel fragment, the narration shifts to a Jewish-Lebanese man who tells his story of war: “In 48, I remember very well, she wore the flag of the Arab struggle against the Israeli enemy […]” (ibid., p. 17). The focalization is on his portrait, bald with eyeglasses and a moustache, wearing a suit – in other words, an educated man. “It was in the ‘60s, with the beautiful speeches of Nasser, that she was the most committed […]” (ibid., p. 17).

In another panel, a Beiruti expatriate says: “Before the war, I lived in a sumptuous Beiruti house […]” (ibid., p. 7). A haunted bus, a woman engaged in the so-called ‘Arab struggle’, and a rich Beiruti are what Rima (2011) focalizes from the violent conflicts of the pre-civil-war period, shedding light on the educated who struggled and the rich who left as death lingered on.

By comparing non-Lebanese wars to the Lebanese Civil War, Merhej (2011) presents her fear in relation to that of her mother’s during World War II in a two-panel strip that each shows a scared child; one is the mother as a child, the other is the daughter as a child (p. 105). By identifying with the war that the mother had lived through, a first resilient narrative is built from the earlier experience; however, it is fear that most of all is focalized in the repetition of the scared child.

The historical chronology shows that in May 1958 there was an “armed revolt against Kamil Sham’un”, and in December 1968 there was an “Israeli raid on Beirut International Airport” (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 250). The violent events happening from 1943 to 1975 are omitted from the overall corpus narration of this research study though they, in fact, fall within the date and geography as defined on November 22, 1943 – the independence day of the Republic of Lebanon. Still, narratives of invasion and occupation evoke the history of modern Lebanon and its present.

The freedom fighter in FDZ’s and Khouri’s (w, p, i; 2010) work represents the heroism of resistance against occupation and a dismissal of the scare of terrorism. In Ghosn’s (w, p, i; 2010) work, the resistance is being questioned–the army of Fakhr El Din, who fought against the Ottoman
occupation and for the unification of the “Peoples of Lebanon”, is ridiculed in the present time. It is obsolete in a present where men make their own laws, and a man simply can pull his gun and shoot his opponent. These comics narratives focus on resistance during the various Arab wars; including the Ottoman occupation, World War II, the 1948 “Arab struggle against the Israeli enemy”, and the 1967 War and the Nasserite youth movement, all set in a world where man makes his own law, children are scared, and people die in masses.


As indicated in the chronological map (fig. 6.1), the civil-war interval is the largest, making it the most popular narrative. It ranges from 1975 to 1990 (fig. 6.8). In Une Enfance Heureuse (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2003), “the Civil War started on April 13, 1975” and is focalized by the ‘character-narrator’ telling his birth date as being that same year, implying the possibility of a relation but, more precisely, in order to introduce ‘childhood’ and ‘war’ in the same diegesis (p. 1). Focalized as the “1975 war” in Beyrouth: Juillet-Aout 2006 (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007), the nomination here is a function that indicates the many wars the mother has lived through. In Le Jeu des Hirondelles: Mourir, Partir, Revenir, (Abirached (w, p, i), 2007), “when the war exploded in 1975 Chucri was 16 years old”, emphasis is given to the age of those characters who live through the start of the war (p. 49). Each age experience the beginning in a different way; being born at the beginning, or being a teenager or a mother at the start of the Civil War are all very different personal experiences. This narrative reinforces the narrative of war passed on over generations. In Suspended Time, Number 1: The Family Tree (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2008), a long panel series makes an animated progression of the father in the panel. “The first generation in the beginning of the war in Lebanon in 1975” (ibid., p. 18). The war lingers in the panels as the father slowly transforms into the Holiday-Inn building that is set on fire. The words “and also a birth” mark the lingering of war as “the second generation” (ibid., p. 19) replaces the “first” (ibid., p. 18).
In 1976, Chucri’s father is kidnapped (Abirached (w, p, i), 2007). Several other dated events occur in Yogurt and Jam, or How My Mother Became Lebanese (Merhej (w, p, i), 2011). In 1977, the airport is closed and passengers are taken hostage; in 1978, the snipers at the Murr Tower building fight; and in 1979, a sniper is shooting (ibid.). In that same year, the mother is stopped at a checkpoint; the armed man checks her identity, then he kidnaps and interrogates her (ibid.). In 1980, the streets are destroyed (ibid.). In Une Enfance Heureuse (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2003) in 1981, “I learned how to distinguish a departing bomb from an arriving one,” says Kerbaj. In Je Me Souviens, Abirached (w, p, i; 2009) focalizes on a snake-and-ladder game the many places where the family took refuge during the Civil War. On the spread page, it is written in the cells: “We take refuge from East Beirut to Bzommar”, “back to East Beirut”, then the “summer in Beit-Mery”, to “Beirut and then to Kuwait City” (Abirached (w, p, i), 2009, pp. 42-43). As illustrated in figure 6.9, the only occurrence of a narrative of resistance is given in Rima’s (w, p, i; 2011) Beyrouth in 1982: “I refused to leave my city. In 82, during the Israeli siege, I expelled an American journalist who dared to ask me why I don’t go [and] live in Israel” (p. 17). This statement exposes the narrator as
Jewish, but also as the Lebanese-Jewish community as resisting the Israeli invasion – the least–expected group to do so because of their religious allegiance. This strategy focalizes on the resistance of Lebanon to Israel as supported by Lebanese Jews. In the same year, in Yogurt and Jam, or How My Mother Became Lebanese (Merhej (w, p, i), 2011), “the hospitals are chaotic and full” (p. 53). A sniper shoots and children get caught under bombing (ibid., p. 7). “Are they going to kill us?” (ibid., p. 7). Israeli warships are on the Jounieh horizon while children ‘play war’ (ibid., p. 18). “The mother works at Gaza Hospital. The hospital takes the victims of the Sabra and Shatila massacre” (ibid., p. 37). The camp is deserted. In 1983, tanks are in the streets. American Marines are hospitalized at the German hospital where the mother worked (ibid., p. 37).

In November 1983, in Je Me Souviens (Abirached (w, p, i), 2009) (fig. 6.10), the character-narrator describes the first episode of a long spiral of displacement: “We take refuge in Tabarja”; in February 1984, “we take refuge in Larnaca”; and in May, they go to Aramoun; while in 1985, it is Tabarja again (ibid., pp. 42-43). In 1987, the Abiracheds move to Ajaltoun. The dates in Abirached’s (w, p, i; 2009) and Merhej’s (w, p, i; 2011) work interweave. In Yogurt and Jam, or
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How My Mother Became Lebanese (Merhej (w, p, i), 2011), between destroyed buildings, a soldier in a tank shoots with an RPG\(^1\). Merhej (w, p, i; 2011) focalizes on fear by repeating the scared face of the mother onto the daughter: “I remember a terrible fear and dust caused by one of the bombs in Aoun’s war in 1989” (p. 105). Finally, Abirached (w, p, i; 2009) says, in the summer 1989, “the war moves to East Beirut. It’s the first time we go to West Beirut [where] everything [had returned] back to normal” (p. 63).

In this chronological sequence of violent war events in Lebanese comics, the narrative of war is focalized by kidnappings, snipers, bombings, displacement, resistance, siege, massacre, and fear, but also children ‘playing war’ and learning about war, to finally discover, when Beirut is reunified, what it is to be ‘normal’. The undated events of the Civil War also are related to the conditions of the civilians, but more so to their strategies of survival in the war. The conditions of living in a war situation are related to death and absurdity. The city is dead and the civilians are targets for bombs and absurd sniper shooting.

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\(^1\) Rocket-propelled grenade launcher.
A ‘madness spiral’ on the first page of Angel of Peace (Medlej (w, p, i), 2007) (fig. 6.11) is composed of rotated photographs of the old city of Beirut in ruins, militias behind barricades, and civilians walking among the destruction. The vertiginous circles of the spiral bring out a nauseating and delirious narrative of war photographs deployed on the page (ibid.). In Le Jeu des Hirondelles: Mourir, Partir, Revenir, Abirached (w, p, i; 2007) focalizes implicitly the no-man’s-land where snipers rule and fighting is taking place. The narrator introduces the neighbor, saying: “[D]uring the ceasefire, he crisscrossed the deserted streets” (ibid., 2007, p. 67). The danger is focalized by a single car in the bottom right corner of an otherwise blank page (ibid., p. 67). Civilians are “killed by snipers” and they are being bombed; in a series of panels, a radio broadcasts that there are confrontations at “the Primo-Sodeco axis, there is bombing of the Berjaoui-Chayla Stadium zone, bombs are falling on the perimeter of [the] Mansour Villa, the Ring and Sodeco crossings are closed, and there is concentrated bombing on the hippodrome sector, the Hotel Dieu sector, the Barbir Hospital sector, the Olivetti sector, the Palace of Justice sector, and the Museum sector” (ibid., p. 80). The text focalizes the demarcation line between East and West Beirut, then a divided city; however, when the text again is repeated– this time in a single panel– it focalizes the absurdity in the repetition of the narration that marks the gravity of these events (ibid., pp. 82, 85).

FIGURE 6.12: Bombing events in Our House and We Have a War Itch. Yes, We Do … Sources: Traboulsi (w, p, i), 2009; and Yakan (w, p, i), 2009, respectively.

1 Abirached (w, p, i; 2009), in Je Me Souviens, presents a ‘displacement spiral’ in the shape of a snakes-and-ladder board game (pp. 39-40).
Our House by Traboulsi (w, p, i; 2009) and In We Have a War Itch. Yes We Do… (Yakan (w, p, i), 2009) are also bombing events (fig. 6.12).

Our House is a format of two volumes with a four-page series of bombing in each. The units are not clearly bound, as buildings or windows stand for panels or for elements on the larger unit – the page – thus creating a constant tension between the panel and the page placed on a highly tectonic narrativity. Bombs start falling while the members of the family are on the stairs and a boy is on the balcony. Then bombs fall on the building while the family is in the shelter and the boy dies, represented by the obituary certification of the child with a diagonal black stripe on the right of the paper-panel. Bombs fall on the building, and then more bombs fall on other buildings, one of which is in ruins. The repetition focalizes the effect of the bombing, while the minute calligraphic attention given to the details of the buildings familiarizes the reader with the city and implicates him or her – however subtly – in the intimacy of each window and building and with the catastrophic event of losing one’s home.

In We Have a War Itch. Yes We Do…, “the war began with the prick of the infamous bombheads […] with the] boomba”, with a family representing bomb heads with long spider-like legs (p. 84). “With the gunfire, the fights and the murders, it all began to make sense!!!” (ibid., p. 84). Mariam Yakan (w, p, i; 2009) here uses a similar graphiation to Traboulsi (w, p, i; 2009) with patterns of dots, dashes, and henna-like decorative elements. In this case, however, the decoration – instead of familiarizing the reader with the represented elements – is disjunctive when it combines with the bombs. The narrative is of mayhem caused by a “war itch” in a diegesis where criminal action is the norm (Yakan (w, p, i), 2009). On the next page, the first panel presents a screaming girl, howling as it is focalized by the stillness of the other panels, which look more like advertisements: “Today’s news”; “The war itch epidemic” (Yakan (w, p, i), 2009, p. 85). The diegesis of the playful bombs with their dancing patterns overflows with the instructional words “don’t share the same straw; don’t use the same towel” to avoid contamination (ibid., p. 84). These elements all seem to be
orchestrated to ‘laugh at’ the tragedy of war, halted by the howling of the girl and, hence, recognizing – despite everything – some silence or absence of the pain represented.

FIGURE 6.13: Why War?
Source: Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2008.

In Une Enfance Heureuse (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2003), “when there was intense bombing, the school closed and we went to the shelter. The shelter and its electricity cut offs. The shelter and its idiot adults who were scared” (ibid., p. 17). This illustrates that shelters were familiar places for children. The second generation of Kerbaj’s (w, p, i; 2008) in Suspended Time (fig. 6.13), slowly coming out from the fire of the burning hotel and transforming into Mazen, smoking, the words form: “Why” add to the “war?” bringing the incomprehension and absurdity of war into the narrative, but also referring to the intensity of the ‘Hotels War’ (ibid., p. 20). In fact, many events are centered on that absurdity. As will be discussed in Chapter 7, the events of shooting that occur among armed men are unjustified and unreasonable. In Beautiful Morning in a Quiet City, Motaz Al Sawaf’s (w, p, i; 2011b), the war is shown through ‘the law’ of armed civilians. They shoot a street sweeper on the street for no constructive or legitimate reason while, in another series of panels on a page segment of Tosh Fish, a militiaman shoots a man without any particular purpose (Al Sawaf (w, p, i), 2011c). In Fattoum Sees the Future (Al Sawaf (w, p, i), 2011a) a series of panels expose militiamen shooting, then realizing that they have shot the wrong people which, finally, exposes the absurdity of suggesting to one another to go and apologize.

These violent events in Lebanese comics seem to be as familiar and as absurd as living in a war that is a persistent reminder of life and death. The narratives of these fragments are deployments of
violence, destruction, and displacement, and they focalize war as delirium, absurdity, and solemnness.

“I lived a similar experience” of coming from a city under bombardment (Merhej (w, p, i), 2011). The experience of war is shared with others who have lived through similar events. In Le Jeu Hirondelle: Mourir, Partir, Revenir, Abirached (w, p, i; 2007) uses a map to explain the “choreography” of steps needed to avoid the sniper (p. 15). It is focalized to the reader as if to a tourist, sharing tips for survival of combining what is familiar or every-day routine with the character-narrator. In another instance, Abirached (w, p, i; 2007) guides the reader by war instructions. In a sequence of panels spread over two pages, she presents a game of from the sound guessing whether it is an outgoing or incoming bomb. Two neighbors play: “Do you hear the bass? It fell right nearby” (Abirached (w, p, i), 2007, pp. 110-111). The dialogue, “departure” and “arrival”, is repeated ten times, focalizing on the many bombs that are falling and that are being launched (ibid.). The panels do not change much, but alternate between the neighbors, until the last panel where everyone is joining in to play this absurd game (fig. 6.14). In another fragment on a spread, large letters say “BRRAAAAAM” in bold white Sans-Serif font, floating over a black background and a dark city (ibid., pp. 134-135). The only lit window is a panel that says, “tchitiktchitkitkitchitikutkitchitik” and shows shadows of people dancing (ibid., p. 135). The lesson given in this case is to ignore the war despite its omnipresence, even with something as futile as a “tchiktchik” (ibid.).
In fact, Abirached’s (w, p, i; 2007) war seems harmless up until the last page, when a dramatic disjunction is made by the displacement of a dragon that was featured on a tapestry into the children’s diegesis. The dragon, unleashed, becomes threatening as it combines with the words: “The bomb fell in my room” (Abirached (w, p, i), 2007, p. 165). The dragon breathes smoke on the sequence of units, but does so in the opposite reading direction, rising above the smoke and floats over the stacked chairs where, previously, the neighbors had been sitting together, focalizing the emptiness and the comment Zeina makes earlier “All of a sudden, I didn’t hear anything (ibid., p. 163). The identity and role of the dragon of burning, is revealed earlier by the tapestry as it “represents the flight from Egypt of Moses and the Hebrews” (p. 36). Instead, the dragon refers to her own flight during the war when her family had to escape, leaving behind empty chairs (ibid., p. 169). Furthermore, in Beyrouth Catharsis (Abirached (w, p, i), 2006), the war is focalized as a game of ‘cowboys and Indians’; however, in this case the two groups that shoot at each other are both ‘Indians’, thus interpreted as denouncing the ‘brotherly’ killing of a civil war. The young boy in Une Enfance Heureuse (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2003), like with the neighbors of Abirached (w, p, i; 2007), indicates acquired knowledge of bombing directions again focalizing learning war by playing war. Indeed, an explosion is seen and the boy says, “the image travels in time faster than sound!!!” (ibid., p. 2). Kerbaj presents this experience and this knowledge shared among children that survived wars which becomes ironic when contrasted with the urgency of the situation. 

In Yogurt and Jam, or How My Mother Became Lebanese (Merhej (w, p, i), 2011), a rocket-countdown panel is squeezed between two others – a game of “we drew a rocket launch base” and the ‘game’ of war (p. 35). At zero, a massive bombing of the mountains occurs in front of the balcony where the narrator stands, conflating the countdown of the rocket launch with the bombings, and drawing the children’s games closer to the ‘game’ of war (Merhej (w, p, i), 2011). The mother uses the familiarizing strategy as a coping mechanism to deal with war: “She distinguished [herself] from the war, [created] days for […] holiday[,] for [walks,] and [for]
discovery, ignoring the siege and the barriers” (ibid., p. 58). “When the bombing became fiercer” the family went down to the shelter, focalized by three dark repetitive shelter panels filling the page (ibid., p. 60) (fig. 6.15). Other than the explosion and the shooting, the “Boouuum”, “Bommm”, and “Tatatataaaaa” fill the page (ibid., p. 60). The repetition of the identical dark panels and of the onomatopoeia focalize the repetitive, normalized, and familiar event of going to the shelter (fig. 6.15). Despite the panic of a woman who does not want anyone to panic, and the one who does not want to go underground, life in the shelter seems quiet. The Jamaleddin family are introduced, a group of persons, ironically, listen to the Bee Gees’s song Stayin’ Alive, another group play cards, children exchange Barbie dolls and eat fries, and a cat feeds her kittens. Another series of a page segment explains the strategies set by the school to evacuate children during bombing (ibid., p. 61).

FIGURE 6.15: Bombing events in Yogurt and Jam, or How My Mother Became Lebanese Source: Merhej (w, p, i), 2011.

The strategies of resilience and of dealing with war are ‘normalizing’ the conflict by comparing it to a dragon and to the exodus of Moses, or to such historic events as the launch of a spaceship. The strategies of dealing with war from experience are explicitly passed on; avoiding snipers, knowing if one is a potential target for a bomb or not, evacuating schools, and coping with death when it is so near. Some of these are presented in a playful manner, as the experience being told from the perspective of a child who has lived through war and who, as an adult, writes the story.
Abirached (w, p, i; 2009) says “I don’t remember the last day of the war” (fig. 6.16). There is no day of commemoration of the end of the war, nor is there an indication in Traboulsi’s (w, p, i; 2007) chronology (p. 254). The fundamental narrator in Je Me Souviens (Abirached (w, p, i), 2009) combines a clearly-delineated panel of the character-narrator’s verbal statement with an image of graffiti in the center of a wall that says, in French: “Christians + Muslims United for Lebanon” (p. 67). On each of its sides there is more graffiti; on the right it says in small handwriting in Arabic: “Aoun in coming back”; on the left is a section of the logo of the Lebanese Phalange Party (ibid., p. 67). The wall is full of shrapnel and bullet holes. This image shows a public wall where different political parties mark their territories and the graffiti on it represents the lingering reality, in contrast to the fleeting or even absent memory of the day that marked the end of the war (Abirached (w, p, i), 2009). What is focalized, however, is the union between Muslims and Christians that the fundamental narrator presents very clearly to the reader; namely, that multi-stability does flourish between the pride of such a union and the knowledge of the existing internal conflict as it cohabits with a clearly-identified political party whose main supporters – despite the organization being officially secular – are Christians.

Moreover, the end of the Civil War is put into perspective as compared to the pre-war/post-war interval, rather than a commemoration of a particular day. “Suddenly, the war ended and peace
began” (Merhej (w, p, i), 2011). Pictured each in a series of seven panels, seven grubby armed fighters are transformed into politicians, shown in the second series of panels below as clean-shaven and well-dressed, facing the reader. Thus, their image changes from that of the memory of them as criminals in the war, to projecting a present that implies they have become ‘innocent’. Both the narrative of Abirached (w, p, i; 2009) and Merhej (w, p, i; 2011) expose a lingering conflict, stemming from the war and seeping into the post-war period. In Je Me Souviens, Abirached (w, p, i; 2009) exposes her own lingering unease or fear in the transition from war to peace: “In the beginning of the war, a bomb destroyed the partition wall between two hairdressing salons [and] Liban St. was exposed to bursts of snipers. After the war, it was rebuilt [and the] inhabitants started using the sidewalk” (p. 61). In the original French, she says: “Je rase les murs”, which is an expression that means: “I keep a low profile” (Abirached (w, p, i), 2009, p. 61). Her father seems to have adopted a habit that he could not rid himself of after the war, as he “took the habit of listening to very loud music” (ibid., p. 23).

In the back, from the window, a helicopter pattern transforms into bombs in the next panel, insinuating the loud noise of propellers and bombs covered by “The Ride of the Valkyries by Wagner” that stems out of the father’s earphones (ibid., p. 23). The father’s lingering escape from the bombing is focalized as “he continued to listen to music very[,] very loud” (ibid., p. 25). The music competes with the repetitions in the patterns, in addition to the repetition of “very” and the similarity of both panel pages (ibid., pp. 23-24). The narrative that arises is about the habits that war imprints in humans. The focalization of the character-narrator is on the irony of the situation. Zeina sits beside her father, who is listening to Hector Berlioz on his earphones; she looks straight at the reader and engages him/ her and her expression almost says, how can a [requiem] erase a war? (ibid., p. 24)

The Civil War in Lebanese comics is a conflict that civilians lived through and coped with, rather than the wars of historical events. The narratives are survival tips passed from one generation to
The earlier years are marked by kidnapping, bombing, and sniper wars. In 1982, the Israeli siege, bombings, massacre, and invasion are presented. The suicide bombing of the American embassy is mentioned in 1983. Then follows a series of events of displacement as a biographical account, and of shooting and bombing as regular events that turn into familiar experiences. 1989 is marked by the so-called ‘Aoun War’, crooks, shootings, and bombings; but also by a West Beirut “where everything came back to normal” (Abirached (w, p, i), 2007, p. 63). Indeed, the end of the war is not clearly demarcated and – despite its end – lingers on into the post-war period. Civilians are marked by the memory, but also by the inevitable presence of militia groups turned into political parties.

6.1.3. POST-CIVIL WAR (1991-2006)

Thus, the post-war narrative is of a lingering war, but also of reconstruction and, more importantly, of a realization that peace is an illusion. The total sequence of panels in the post-Civil-War interval is relatively short (fig. 6.17), particularly because the search was for ‘armed conflict’, something which ceases in post-war eras. “Suddenly, war ended and peace began” and the politicians look neat and seemingly innocent (Merhej (w, p, i), 2011, p. 51). In Je Me Souviens (Abirached (w, p, i), 2009), the metaphor in “quand la guerre s’est tue” raises multi-stability in the event: Did the war go away silently and die, or did it kill itself? Ten years after the end of the war, “I realized that the street in front of ours, the one which […] for 15 years [was] ‘on the other side’ […] was also called Rue Youssef Semaani” (ibid., p. 70). A sequence of shots creates a zoom-in on the character-narrator looking at the street sign. The slowness focalizes the street name which, particularly because of the war, is a territorial demarcation point. Realizing the separation, Abirached (w, p, i; 2009) raised the narrative of disillusionment – the premise that, during the war, the two sides of the same street were different was, in fact, wrong.
Reconstruction in post-war Beirut was considered the second largest after that of Berlin. The focalization on cranes to mean reconstruction occurs in several fragments. The cover of Je Me Souviens (Abirached (w, p, i), 2009) is a spread segment of a wordless city planted with cranes. The graphiation focalizes the cranes and the reconstruction in contrast to the city, which remains a
suggestion, a thin white outline of rooftops. In the context of reconstruction, the back cover says: “I can’t remember the last day of the war”, making a connection with the format’s purpose of trying to remember, and of the forgetfulness that reconstruction creates (Abirached (w, p, i), 2009, n.p.). Again, in the hairdresser’s salon, “the partition wall is [being] reconstructed [as] the inhabitants started using the sidewalks again”; however, Zeina remains wary as the memory lingers (ibid., p. 60). Two more reconstruction narratives in Merhej’s (w, p, i; 2011) Yogurt and Jam, or How My Mother Became Lebanese show a small panel with cranes over a short cityscape; both are labeled “Post-War” as if it is a logo with its typographic inscription. To push the interpretation of something being abrupt and un-contextualized, these logos focalize reconstruction as a corporate operation, bringing the controversy of Yaqoub’s (2011) illusion of peace into the format.

6.1.4. The 2006 War

The “2006 Israel–Hezbollah War” was also called the “July War” by the average Lebanese, and “the 7th War on Israel” by Hezbollah – referring to the previous six Arab-Israeli conflict. It was fought between Hezbollah paramilitary forces, who abducted Israeli soldiers to demand the release of Lebanese prisoners in Israel, and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), which responded with airstrikes on south Lebanon, the southern suburbs of Beirut where Hezbollah’s headquarters are, and the infrastructure of the country, including the airport. The narrative fragments gathered from the corpus of Lebanese comics focalized mainly by chock and panic (fig. 6.18).
“I remember July 2006,” says the character-narrator standing on one side of the pit, a cloud over her head (Abirached (w, p, i), 2009, p. 83). Seven characters stand on the other side, bombs are over their heads, too. “I am in Paris, they are all there” (ibid., p. 83). Abirached (w, p, i; 2009) focalizes her powerlessness. With sadness, she recalls a recent memory, and the gap in the divide emphasizes her physical distance and her inability to help and to stop the bombing (ibid.). The strategies of using symbols and very simple graphiation illustrate an amnesic state and incapability at imagining, from far, the war. The lingering of the situation is created by the page unit, which emphasizes the stillness, and the character-narrator’s paralysis in front of this new memory of war.
The character-narrator Zina, in the blog Zina Comics (Moufarreg (w, p, i), 2009), is similarly paralyzed (fig. 6.19). She stares, eyes wide open, at the television broadcasting of the war (ibid.). A plane hovers over a destroyed wall of fire and smoke, a bomb falls, and a character lies on the floor in a puddle of blood (ibid.). The image of war floats between the television set and Zina, clearly presented to the reader in the center of the panel (ibid.). In I Think We Will Be Calmer in the Next War (Merhej (w, p, i), 2007), war constantly invades the news, thoughts or privacy, and dreams (p. 10). As warplanes fly over and bombs fall in a series of two panels, the character looks at the sky: “[W]hat happened” (ibid., p. 1). She lays her head on the panel, again asking: “[W]hat happened” (ibid., p. 1). By repetition she focalizes the tragic realization. The narrative that is dominant is the one of paralysis and of shock in front of such immediate media coverage of live events of a violent war. The broadcast of news in times of war was noted in Abirached’s (w, p, i; 2009) radio during the earlier Civil War; however, in 2006, the prevailing narratives focus on watching the news on television and on the Internet. “During the summertime war in Lebanon, it [the Internet] helped produce the first really ‘live’ war in history” (Kalb & Saivetz, 2007, p. 44). According the Marvin L. Kalb and Carol R. Saivetz (2007), the live broadcast in 2006 was in the hands of bloggers who, for the first time, reported their own stories and covered the war.

Ironic narrative fragments show that war reporting may be biased and that war is disproportional and terrorizing. In I Think We Will Be Calmer in the Next War (Merhej (w, p, i), 2007), “Hezbollah captured two Israeli soldiers and demanded the release of Lebanese prisoners” is in the middle of the panel unit (p. 6). Two bearded men move to the left, each carrying an Israeli soldier. The
graphiation is a ‘gag cartoon’ – intended to provoke laughter – rather than a heroic war, alleviating the weight of Hezbollah’s actions. In contrast, the next panel is a dramatic scene of warplanes and warships bombing a city and some villages up in the hills. “So Israel invaded […] Lebanese [airspace] and bombed the villages in the south” (Merhej (w, p, i), 2007, p. 1). The contrast and, thus, the irony between the action and the reaction are heightened by the monstrator’s manipulation of the graphiation that draws attention to the disproportionality of the conflict.

Irony is also a key strategy that Kerbaj (w, p, i; 2007) uses extensively in Beyrouth: Juillet-Aout 2006. This is a diary that Kerbaj (w, p, i; 2007) he posted online during that war and which became viral; later he had it printed, bound, and published as one volume. The format includes numerous dates, historical and personal events, and commentaries. The mother, who had lived through World War II, the Lebanese Civil War, and now the 2006 war, wonders: “Do you think I will live [through] another war?” (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007; July 20, 2006; n.p.). On July 21, 2006, “our reporter Mazen Kerbaj” ironically focalizes the contrast of the war as “relatively calm around Beirut. Some bombing on the south[ern] suburbs [during the] night” (ibid., n.p.). The war is focalized also as “the real fun [that begins] when the evacuation ends”, implying that the events will escalate when all the foreigners have been evacuated (ibid., July 21, 2006; n.p.). On July 23, 2006, an electricity pole broken in half and the caption reads: “[T]hey are bombing all […] communication [links]” (ibid., n.p.). A United Nations jeep delivering food supplies is bombed on July 23, 2006, and a bus explodes, with the caption: “[O]ne more bus bombed” (ibid., n.p.). On the night of July 26, warplanes hover in circles over Beirut (ibid.).

On the “night of […] August [3 and 4,] 2006 [at 3:10 a.m.] the character[-]narrator, Mazen Kerbaj, counts the bombs while 19 of them explode around him in 55 minutes” (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007, n.p.). On the night of August 4, 2006, warplanes hover over the city, the narrator waits for the first strikes. On August 7, Mazen reports that “1,000 [have been] killed since the beginning of the war

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[and each] day brings another massacre[. Today it was Chiyah]” (ibid., August 7, 2006; n.p.). On the “[n]ight of […] August [10 to 11] 6 [a.m.] in the morning”, warplanes are still bombing (ibid., n.p.) “The raid does not sleep” (ibid., August 11, 2006; n.p.). Mazen, with huge black circles under his eyes, does not know what to do; he assumes the role of journalist and focalizes the events as a documentary, using strategies such as the counting of bombs and the dead, and by noting down the precise time (ibid.). Focalized as advertisement or poster text blocks, the words read: “They are saying […] war is [o]ver” on August 13, 2006 (ibid., August 13, 2006; n.p.) (fig. 6.20).

The character-narrator is repeated in different stages of his life, from newborn to adult, saying: “How many times did I hear this sentence?” (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007; August 13, 2006; n.p.). That same panel is repeated and put in a “mise en abyme” strategy – meaning a parallelism between first and second level narratives (Miller, 2007, p. 130). It is zoomed-out from a window, showing the war on television in the other window, and showing exploding buildings in the background; “[twenty] bombs fell in less than a minute on the suburbs as I write that the war is over” (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007; August 13, 2006; n.p.). The event that occurs in the next panel cancels the previous – the war is not over. The strategy of using statistical data is marked by the size of the type and the weight that is given to the text, as the rest of the panel is more or less repeated. “On […] August [14], at 8 [a.m.]. in South Lebanon” the warplanes leave (ibid.).

FIGURE 6.20: End-of-2006-war violent events in Beyrouth: Juillet-Aout 2006
Source: Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007
The situation sways between the familiar and the unbearable. A sign says: “[T]hank you for your visit”; a boy waves his amputated hand, saying: “Bye-bye!” (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007, August 14, 2006) (fig. 6.20). He is in the center, focalized by the composition and by the sunrise, which transforms the road behind him into a long shadow that reaches the reader (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007). The focalization is on the results and the resolutions engendered by the war (ibid.). “One asks what they are going to do tomorrow, and the other answers: ‘PlayStation’” (ibid., August 14, 2006; n.p.). The apparent normalcy is disrupted by the twist of the amputated arm of the child and the warplane’s remark, and further disrupted by the irony in the road sign and the rising sun. The playful decoding of this panel is charged in each instance – the war is either a romantic scene, or a game. The warplanes focalize the bombing as replaceable or comparable to a video game. Moreover, the romantic scene reinforces the twist of the normalcies and heightens it. The narrative of ‘disaster’ and ‘terror’ is subjected to a narrative of ‘reality’ and ‘irony’.

The non-dated events in this format are of bombings and insomnia. The strategies of narration are reportage of outrage, but also of resilience. Bombings pass and “we bark” at them, as sixty bombs fall and as “[w]ar is worse and less fashionable” (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007; July 28, 2006; n.p.). Again, “[t]he situation worsen[s, and] Sour burns under siege”, turning the city into an inflamed “island” (ibid., August 8, 2006; n.p.). Mazen establishes in a relationship with the warplanes and the bombings, which anger him and keep him from sleeping. He ‘barks’ at the bombing. He awaits the bombs and counts them as they fall. He goes on to play music accompanying the bombing, and recorded in Starry Night2. Other than his outrage at the magnitude of the war, the coping strategy of Mazen is to familiarize himself with the bombs, by overemphasizing them, drawing them many times over, and by counting them like sheep.

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1 Series of video-game consoles developed by Sony Computer Entertainment and available since 1994.
“Invade them!” –meaning ‘us’ – “We have clans and tribes bracket bracket. Use them in your wars” are captioned in the poetic format Cola (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2010, p. 7) (fig. 6.21). The images are of heavy armaments, warplanes, fortresses, and warships, focalizing the armed procession moving from right to left. The poem of repeated offerings, or proposals, culminates on page 7 into a clash between two groups of armed men. The fundamental narrator imperatively addresses the second person ‘you’ to present what “we have” and what the addressee can “invade” and “use”, focalizing the scene into a marketplace and the war as a transaction to offer Arab assets and goods. The events are fictional and do not refer to any war in particular; however, the use of the word ‘armada’ to designate the warships is a reference to the war in 2006. In this case, the outrage at the massive attack is both obvious and ironic in its resilience.

FIGURE 6.21: Violent fictive 2006-war events in Lebanese comics  
Source: Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2010.

The narrative of the repeated bombings and armaments is multi-stable between the familiarization of war into a non-event, and a focalization of bombing and extremely violent fighting. The focalization of this war is of an endless conflict that lasts throughout generations and it persists. It is common to live several wars and there is no future or imagination beyond war. Again, in Beyrouth: Juillet-Aout 2006 (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007), a page panel represents this trap by a man shouting at another: “God is the greatest”; and the other shouting back: “Freedom and democracy” (ibid., July 27, 2006; n.p.). A small squeezed figure in between them asks: “Can I say something?” (ibid., July 27, 2006; n.p.) (fig. 6.22).
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The immensity of the Islamic ideology and democratic principles suffocates the minority in the middle trying to start a debate and work out a strategy. This minority, however, is stuck and bounces between the two giants, indicating the narratives of the so-called ‘March 8’ and ‘March 14’ coalitions, the national schism that was created after the ‘Cedar Revolution’, and the withdrawal of the Syrian army from Lebanon.1 “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists”2 seems to be the adopted narrative of everyone.

FIGURE 6.22: Beyrouth: Juillet-Aout 2006
Source: Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007.

6.1.5. POST-WAR LEBANON (2006-2011)

Post-2006-war Lebanon is focalized by national division and the symptoms of the other post-war periods are carried forward. Starting this time with the non-dated violent events of the 2006 post-war period, they are presented as the outcome of that war (fig. 6.23). “I got the numbers related to the destruction of the Israeli assault” captions a computer screen that says “new civil war?” (Merhej

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1 A chain of demonstrations, one of which is the so-called ‘Cedar Revolution’, was triggered in Lebanon following the killing of the politician, Rafik Hariri, on February 14, 2005. The demonstrations led to a national division between the ‘March 8’ and ‘March 14’ coalitions, the withdrawal of the Syrian troops from Lebanon, and the resignation of the government led then by Omar Karami.

Merhej (w, p, i; 2007) then presents the results in a series of three panels. One of the panels combines “1,183 martyrs” with a character that says, “you mean victims!”, thus pointing out the difference in how the Lebanese focalize war deaths. The terminologies used to designate the violence are debated in the format. Another instance shows two groups on either side of the panel playing a tug of war. On the one side, the characters say: “Iranians! Traitors” “Economy! Tourism! Mama!” On the other side, the characters say: “Americans! Traitors” “Resistance! Defense! Victory is ours!” (Merhej (w, p, i), 2007, p. 11). Focalizing war as a game to distance it from physical violence, the narrator places herself “outside this unproductive dispute” (ibid., p. 11).
The war persists. Its outcome is not a resolution, but rather a polarized conflict. The narrative of the ‘squeezed middle’ arises again, here by highlighting the choice of not getting involved in the middle of this polarized conflict. “I remember the sound of the bombing,” says Abirached (w, p, i; 2009) in Paris two years after the war (p. 82). “[C]huuuuu […] it’s the thunder”, informs the character focalizing of the bombing. The war remains despite the physical and historical distance. Je Me Souviens (Abirached (w, p, i), 2009), as a collection of memories, explicitly defies the amnesia of war. Instead of filling it with historical events, the author fills the amnesia with
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childhood memorabilia that are closer to an anthropological documentation that replaces the violence with normal childhood games and exposure to culture – however, up until 2008, the author still remembers the bombings (ibid.).

6.1.6. WAR EVENTS OF THE PRESENT TIME

There are four comics’ snippets of violent wars in Lebanese comics that ‘speak’ explicitly in the present (fig. 24). Two thousand years ago, in Qana, “Jesus transformed […] water into wine” (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007; July 30, 2006; n.p.). This event is mentioned to situate the bombing: “[T]oday, in Qana, the Israeli raid transformed the children into ashes” (ibid., July 30, 2006; n.p.). The words focalize Qana and the transformation – and also the contrast between Jesus, the water, and the wine, and the Israeli raid, the children, and the ashes, respectively. Moreover, “today, in Beirut, I cannot transform this page into a drawing […]” inflects the failure of representation and the amnesic response to trauma (ibid., July 30, 2006; n.p.). “Today I tumble from station to station. From a news report to a news program to a new […] investigation to a news debate” (Merhej (w, p, i), 2007, p. 3). The character-narrator fixes the reader and turns the remote control towards him or her. “It [is] all live broadcast, and it is happening now, and now, and now […] and it doesn’t stop” (ibid., p. 3). The character-narrator hides its wide-open eyes, looking sideways and shrinking gradually in three embedded panel series, followed by a black ghost panel. The present is a witness of what is happening and it is pressing and oppressive.
The events in this case hit the reality of the present and paralyze the absorption of any event. The events of war pass in the series of five screens. Instead of being focalized, their linearity flattens them and they pass unmarked – live war-news reports are both various and overwhelmingly present. In other words, today is exaggeratedly ‘present’ with war; today, there is identification with Gaza, a war that is not on Lebanese territory. Also, the generational response to war is different; each reacts in a different way – the mothers are angry while Mazen, in Beyrouth: Juillet-Aout 2006 (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007) and Lena, in Yoghurt and Jam, or How My Mother Became Lebanese (Merhej (w, p, i), 2011) are in shock.
6.2. Summary

The irregular intervals on the timeline show the weight given to the Civil War and to the 2006 War, in contrast to the other periods. Most the narrative fragments are concerned with these two wars as this research study concentrates on ‘armed conflict’ which – logically speaking – should not occur during peacetime or post-war periods. The timeline, however, is lamentable in that – rather than indicating clear, set resolutions and agreements – it shows that war lingers on. The narration is focused around war reporting and the passing on of war experience as a resilience mechanism. The focalization, on the other hand, often is irony, but also outrage and pain.

In Lebanese comics, though the experience is shared, the history of the wars is not to the same extent. Historical accounts cover selected events only and often without much accuracy, with the exception of Kerbaj’s (2006) blog which is an online diary. Personal accounts and the sharing of the experiences are much more the focus. The narratives that arise from the material are of outrage and pain, or normalization and acceptance, and of resistance and irony. To Aaron R. Denham (2008), the expected narratives that arise as trauma responses to war are “narratives of suffering, resilience and resistance” (p. 411). The narrative of suffering that arises from the accounts of the Lebanese Civil War alternate from being absurd to normalized, however, their narration becomes an act of resistance to the absurdity by the mere fact of exposing it as is.

The violent war events as mentioned in Traboulsi’s (2007) history and which occurred before 1975 are not mentioned in Lebanese comics. Rather, fragments focus on the Ottoman and Arab historic events and are used as models to compare with the Civil War and the 2006 War. The comparison can be viewed as aiding the resilience based on past events. The personal narratives of the Civil War in Lebanese comics are reinforced by the experience of war passed on over generations, and relived in 2006. Again, the strategies of resilience are of normalizing the war by comparing it to other events and to the experience of other generations. On the other, resistance is presented as
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heroic events, but also criticized with respect to the present. In this research study, the only instance of explicit resistance, however, is focalized by a Lebanese-Jewish resistance.

The end of the Civil War is not clearly demarcated and its characters linger into the post-war period. Narrative of realization and reconstruction also are occurrences during the post-Civil-War interval. Kalb and Saivetz (2007) focalize the narratives of 2006 as related “disproportionately to Hezbollah’s initial provocation” and to the “traditional Arab feelings of victimization” (pp. 50, 52). In the violent 2006-war events in Lebanese comics, the live coverage of that war is indeed of paralyzing ‘victimization’. The live coverage creates an overly-present war; however, the coverage also is used as a strategy for the familiarization with war events, for the use of instructional strategies to disseminate knowledge of living in wars, and – for the coverage of war – using documentation of bombing, death, and destruction, and opening live debates over the Internet. Finally, the war is focalized as a transaction of Arab assets and goods, and as a conflict between two extremists groups that face minor resistance. In response to Schneider’s (2010) focalization, the ‘everyday’ of war is already eventful; however, in comics, an effort is made to turn the extraordinary into uneventful events.
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The study will look particularly at the armed men in Lebanese comics as characters that have an active role in the war. The term ‘character’ is used to refer to participants in the worlds of stories, while ‘characterization’ is the process of ascribing property traits to characters (Jannidis, 2013). The narratological analysis of a character comprises the basic type – the character models – and a “store of information ranging from everyday knowledge to genre-specific competence” (ibid., n.p.). It is motivated by moral standards that might or might not coincide with the character’s own morals. “The narratives we spin about others (and ourselves) are not simply descriptions of a character; they always imply the prescriptive dimension, the assignment of a moral evaluation” (Kukkonen, 2013, p. 155). This confirms the ideological tenor of narrative manipulation (Bal, 1985).

In this research study, the first evaluation of the material reviewed characters with implicit and explicit traits, while a more detailed analysis looked at the narrative fragments from the modes and units of the comics in the corpus. Armed characters were identified by their traits and their participation in war, and then analyzed in terms of narrator and character manipulation. This section presents, first, the results of the quantitative content analysis of the characters of war in Lebanese comics; and, second, the results of the mapping of armed characters using Amphibian to apply the narratological analysis on these comics.

The corpus is populated by 180 different characters related to war that were classified in the qualitative content analysis. The most-frequently-occurring group is ‘casualty’ at 44 occurrences in total. Their representation is radical and characterized most often by ‘death’, which registered 14 occurrences; in addition to ‘grave’, five occurrences, and ‘corpse’, four occurrences. In order of frequency, ‘refugee’, with four occurrences, ranked fourth, followed by ‘blood’ and ‘injured person’ with three occurrences each; while ‘skull’ and ‘victim’ registered two. Also included in this
category is ‘martyr’, at two occurrences; as well as ‘suicide’, ‘hostage’, ‘ambulance’ and ‘hospital’, each occurring once.

The second-most frequently-occurring category is ‘armed man’, dominated by ‘soldier’, while other groups for which the legitimacy of holding guns might not be as clear are much more dispersed. Eleven occurrences of ‘soldier’ are contrasted in number by just four occurrences of ‘militiaman’ of various affinity, three occurrences each of ‘Hezbollah militant’ and ‘sniper’, and two occurrences of ‘mujahidin’. Also registered once include the following groups: ‘terrorist’, ‘fighter’, and ‘vandal’, as well as ‘the marines’, ‘the police’, and ‘army’. Ideological concepts also were considered a category of characters related to war; in this case, the ideological coloration is explicit.

With respect to narratives of war in Lebanese comics, the concept of ‘history’ is the most frequent, at five occurrences; followed by ‘resistance’ and ‘peace’ with four each, including the dove as symbolic deployment. ‘Liberty’, ‘beauty’, ‘democracy’, and ‘rivalry’ each occur twice; while ‘courage’, ‘virtue’, ‘freedom’, ‘equality’, and ‘justice’ occur once. The weight given to history, resistance, and peace reveal the trace of the ideological tenor. Moreover, also media is considered a character category with respect to communication and information exchange during war: the most frequent are ‘news’, which registered four occurrences, and ‘media agency’, at three occurrences; followed by three occurrences of ‘journalist or reporter’, and such specific media as ‘newspaper’, at three occurrences, and ‘television’ at two; and one occurrence each of ‘photography’, ‘the Internet’, and ‘poster’.

Non-Lebanese characters were gathered in one category, this time comprised of ‘Israeli’ as the largest group with five occurrences, followed by ‘Ottoman’ at two, and one occurrence each of ‘French’, ‘Palestinian’, ‘Egyptian’, ‘Phoenician’, ‘Canaanite’, and ‘foreigner’, as well as ‘the East’ and ‘the West’.

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‘Religion’ as a category included five occurrences of ‘religion in general’ and one occurrence of ‘sect’. Also included were three occurrences of ‘god or divinity’, two occurrences of ‘church’ and one occurrence of ‘mosque’, in addition to ‘prophet’, which registered two occurrences.

Women as a category also figured in the review; however, only prominent war-related figures were selected, totaling six non-veiled and three veiled. Among war-related characters, both male and female, are individuals working for state organizations, including ‘guard’ and ‘spy’, at three occurrences each; and ‘informant’ and ‘special agent’, with two occurrences. State representatives include ‘leader’ and ‘politician’, registering two and three occurrences, respectively; while civilian organizations are ‘the opposition’, two occurrences, ‘corporation’, also two occurrences, and ‘national organization’ occurring once. ‘Civilian groups’ represented are ‘family’, with two occurrences, ‘tribe’, and ‘generation’ – the latter two registered one occurrence each. The final category, ‘animals’, also is included under ‘characters related to war’ and comprise snake, horse, mule, ogre, monster, and a mythological animal – each registering one occurrence.

A more detailed analysis of characters related to war was carried out on the sample of ‘armed men’, numbering 29; rather than on the larger group of ‘casualties’ of 44. Those classified as armed men take ‘active’ positions – the ones who ‘make war’, in contrast to ‘casualties’ – and provide information on the various parties involved in the conflicts depicted; while causalities are consequences and the result of the conflict. Ho-Won Jeong (2008) says that “in character analysis, mapping can focus on individuals or groups that are in a position to alter conflict dynamics in one way or another” (p. 22). In images, in words, or in their combination, ‘men with guns’ are the mapped characters and they correspond to Jeong’s (2008) criterion of being a party in a conflict by “having a main stake in a conflict outcome” (p. 23). The armed man actively holds the power at stake at the stage when arms are involved. Such an actor is in extreme tension in the situation of conflict, which is mediated by multimodal information related to who he is, what he does, and how he and his narrator think and focus.
This research study questions what and how Lebanese comics contribute to the debate of war by focusing on the ‘armed-man actor’. The active elements in war are armies, governments, and armed civilians, though, of course, there is an overlap, particularly when ‘causality’ also being called ‘martyr’ – meaning a casualty who is active in the war either during their lifetime or by the use of his/her name as a fighter for a certain cause. In this research study, however, unless a ‘martyr’ is pictured with a gun, he/she remains a ‘civilian’.

The following section presents the results of the mapping of the reduced material in greater detail. The mapping of the re-occurrence of elements across comics texts provided the relevant active themes related to war across the various formats. The analysis reduced the material to include only pages related to war and, particularly, active involvement in war.

7.1. Men with Guns

This section looks at armed characters in Lebanese comics on war, their focalization and how they are focalized. The characters are grouped by their social status and their involvement in war. Direct and indirect characterization may unite to build the character; it is ‘direct’ when the traits are explicit to the character and ‘indirect’ when the traits are implied from the context (Jannidis, 2013). There is a trait build-up that makes characterization coherent; otherwise, it is destabilizing and “subverting the first conception of the character” (ibid., n.p.).

In this research study, the criteria used to extract all the instances of ‘man with gun’ are graphic and linguistic. The images that are ‘transparent’, or that tell through straightforward narration are characterized by: (a) the presence of a character combined with a weapon; or (b) a smoking gun, a shooting path indicated by lines, or the shot target. A shooter – or armed character in action – is not necessarily a figure. The presence of a gun, a smoking gun, shooting lines, or the use of passive forms in sentences and balloons indicates the presence of a character. Characters, like narrators, also are revealed by fabulas – they may not always be present, but are hinted at by passive
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sentences or focalization projections. The extraction of the verbal occurrences of ‘men-gun’ took into account terms related to armed men, armies, and armed groups describing the narration, meaning the verbal instances that the characters say, think, and feel. All non-English verbal texts were translated.

With the support of Amphibian, the mapping of ‘men with guns’ was simulated on Adobe InDesign layers. Like the analysis applied on ‘events’, annotations were extracted from Amphibian and the analysis contrived by the text of the images accompanied by the text of the words in brackets and the focalizations, while identifying the narrative fragment in the units and the modes. Presenting first the format, and then the particular and relevant unit, the analysis spanned the unit until another was introduced. Unless otherwise indicated, if several fragments proved relevant, then the description of the analysis continued – without mentioning the citation – until another format was introduced with another citation. The citations refer to the authors as writers, pencillers, and inkers – (w, p, i).

After each paragraph, a brief interpretive summary is given. Moreover, the map for each armed character is visualized and presented, and the ribbon of panels extracted from the units. Once extracted, the multimodal distinction is already made because each is on a distinct track layer; the word track, the image track, and the focalization track. The first distinction grouped together ‘official army’, ‘non-official army’, and ‘individual’ – their spread being 12, 10, and 18, respectively, of the 26 texts in the corpus. With the mapping, through multimodal precision, being more detailed in registering in the material, the observation that official armies in Lebanese comics are nearly as frequently represented as unofficial armed groups is a noteworthy distinction to be drawn.

The characters were grouped into three social categories; ‘state group’, ‘non-state group’, and ‘individual’. In the case of a punctual or sequential narration – in other words, one panel or a sequence of panels – these could be depicted or interpreted as real or unreal, and active or inactive
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participants. Thus, fictional and non-fictional characters also were included, and a distinction made between what was told and what was focalized.

Focus was placed on the characters and on how they were represented, not on the narrators themselves though, in fact, narrators tell about characters, and some of these characters might also tell about other characters and, thus, become narrators themselves. In comics, the extra-diegetic narration mediates the entire story by graphiation and narration, or ‘transparent focalization’. There is no intermediator between the character and the reader; rather, the image of the character – including face, body, and dress – reveals the clues about its physical, emotional, and social status. The characters occur in words as subjects when they are active, and as objects when they are not. When in the diegesis, the active characters also can tell, think, and indirectly think of stories and, thus, are able to focalize. Hence, narrators are referred to as such only when they are character-bound.

In this research study, the characters were described in terms of three categories – state group, non-state group, and individual – reducing the discussion to fifteen sources. The mapping layer acts as supportive visualization for the analysis based on the sequence of panels that include all armed characters from a single format, both graphic and linguistic. The characters, in words and image, are highlighted in green and the rest of the panel that they inhabit a lighter, more subdued Chroma to focalize on the object of the mapping.

7.2. Armed State Groups

Armed state groups are such recognized state organizations as armies and security forces. These armies can be represented as an organized or a disorganized unity. The mapping of all armed men include grouped historic armies: the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), the United States (US) army, the Crusaders, the Ottoman army, the French army, and Fakhr El Din’s army, as well as such fictional armies as the “Internal and Mental Security Forces”, the
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“Religious Police”, and the “Security Forces of the Institute” (Khoury (w, p, i), 2008, 2010). Each group is illustrated by the panel sequence that refers to it, using the arthrology of Thierry Groensteen (2007) to include adjacent and distant corresponding panels. The mapping proved helpful to put on a ribbon of panels, including units that were directly connected to previous ones or that appeared a few pages after. These panels became maps of armed characters found in Lebanese comics about war and, in the panel-visualization, were distinguished from the background by saturation (fig. 7.1).

FIGURE 7.1: Lebanese army in Battles and Scars
Source: Meledej (w, p, i), 2008.

The only format of the corpus that represents the LAF is Battles and Scars by Joumana Medlej (w, p, i; 2008) (fig. 7.1). Two armed Lebanese soldiers sit behind an overturned truck, looking relaxed but puzzled. They have ambushed a djinn and, from behind a barricade which is the truck, are watching the building where it is. The first thing one of them asks is, “What do we do?”, thus marking the dependency and uncertainty of the army (ibid., p. 6). When Malaak, the heroine, asks if things are quiet, the soldier replies: “Not really, but we have to keep watch here” (ibid., p. 30). Being loyal and sincere, the soldiers do not engage actively in Malaak’s fight. When she waves goodbye to the two soldiers, one of them is depicted surrounded by hearts. The other says: “I told you to shave off that beard, Raffi!” Physical height distances Malaak from the soldiers; they look up to and flirt with her, though she remains unattainable. The insecurity is further focalized by the comment about the beard, being what probably pushed Malaak away.

In the fourth volume (Medlej (w, p, i), 2008), two soldiers, probably on watch duty, fail to see a dark shadow sneaking up behind them. One of the soldiers, who is female, is frowning and her
companion is yawning. Medlej’s (w, p, i; 2008) formats are the only ones in the corpus that feature armed women. Although on watch, the soldiers, being bored and tired, disregard the danger. These unsure and insecure soldiers represent the LAF, expected to be an assured and solid entity. This noticeable focalization gives insight into the debate on the weakness, dependency, and reliance on external help of the LAF. Indeed, between 1975 and 1993, many LAF soldiers defected to sectarian militias; moreover, in 2006, the LAF refused to disarm Hezbollah and fight the IDF.

The comment referring to the beard not only points to the sometimes perceived unattractiveness of beards in general and shows up the insecurity of the LAF, but also highlight their distinction from Hezbollah, whose soldiers very often sport two- to three-day growth. The LAF is made of loyal and genuine informants who, however, tend to be disengaged in the conflict. It is neutral and friendly – though ineffective as an army – and this contributes to the question of its status. Only in Medlej’s (w, p, i; 2008) work is the potentially active LAF represented and focalized as friendly but useless. Moreover, the focalization on the beard draws the narrative of the LAF status as being regained only when its soldiers can be clearly distinguished from those of Hezbollah.

FIGURE 7.2: Israeli army in Beyrouth
Source: Rima (w, p, i), 1995.
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As for armies of other countries, the IDF also have rather a ‘shy’ presence in Lebanese comics. In Beyrouth by Barrack Rima (w, p, i; 1995), a Lebanese living abroad claims his right to repossess his former home from those occupying it (fig. 7.2). A voice says, “I saw Israeli soldiers pass”, and then argues, “But it’s mine [as it was occupied] during the whole war!” (ibid., p. 7). Even though these instances are verbal, the Israelis were seen in Beirut. Rima (w, p, i; 1995) superimposes two occupations in a multi-stable way: first, the occupation of the house by refugees or displaced persons; and second, the IDF occupation. The narrator focalizes the argument by adding another multi-stable visual disruption; namely, an ‘evil hand’ – conceptualized from scattered ink-blots – which stands for an organic tree. The narrative deployment shows unclear boundaries between who occupies and who speaks, bringing closer a comparison between the occupation by the IDF and that of the real-estate moguls of post-war Beirut.

In Kamen Sine (Abi Samra (w) & Merhej (w, p, i), 2009), IDF marines are indicated by a verbal text that says, authoritatively and in broken Arabic\(^1\) (fig. 7.3): “Stop Israeli Defense Forces!! Stop!! Hands up! Up! Remove your clothes! Undress! Undress more! Swim towards me!” (ibid., p. 16). Shots are heard “tatatatattata”– paralleled by a light projected from the horizon, suggesting shooting from a patrol boat. Less critical, this second instance of the IDF emphasizes the distancing from control and oppression by focusing on the bodiless sound and light projections that pushes the source far in the background, however blinding and dangerous it may be. The IDF is never seen, only implied – an absence that focalizes the unknown or unsaid, but also non-recognition and, thus, the army becomes delegitimized. Moreover, what the patrol sees under the light are men raising their hands and then jumping in synchronized, paralleled, three-panel sequences. The repetition emphasizes the disobedience of the men and suggests their resistance to the Israeli orders.

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\(^1\) The first “hands up [yadak faouk]” lacks the conjunction lam, which is corrected in the second enunciation “up [la faouk]”. 239
In Yogurt and Jam, or How My Mother Became Lebanese by Lena Merhej (w, p, i; 2011) (fig. 7.4), the US Marines in 1983 are “welcomed” at the German hospital in Beirut, where the main character, “the mother”, works (p. 37). The focalization in this case is on the verbal instance of ‘welcomed’, rather than ‘hospitalized’ to buffer the event of a suicide bomber killing 241 US Marines in Beirut that year. In the same work, four gunmen are captioned with the verbal statement: “She says that every time a person close to her dies. She read a book on history” (ibid., p. 34). The graphic fragment that combines with this linguistic one is a series of panels that contain armed characters which look like they are from different historical wars, enforced by the graphiation which is more or less loyal to the historical depictions corresponding to these wars. A linear pattern, as of an infantry, is made by the visual rhythm of soldiers and the vertical weapon each one carries.

Not only is the history created by the soldiers repetitive, but also the visual repetition contributes to Aaron R. Denham’s (2008) “resilience” narrative, though in a multi-stable way; in other words, the act of reading ‘heals’ despite – or because – someone, maybe a soldier, dies. Reading about wars and assimilating reoccurring armies in history alleviate the pain of death. This ‘coping-with-war strategy’, from personal history and knowledge about strategies used in the past, is confirmed through the story being passed from mother to daughter to sister as the ‘memory of war’. Armed soldiers in the Russian army are depicted by boots and by the words: “When the Russian army
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entered Hanover, my grandmother hid [my mother] while she was still a newborn in the basement of the house” (Merhej (w, p, i), 2011, p. 108).

Another ‘welcoming’ strategy is represented in the Ottoman soldiers of Schrodinger’s Riddle (FDZ (w, p, i) & Khouri (w, p, i), 2010) (fig. 7.5). The main character, Voyvoda, says: “Welcome, Turkish!” as the Ottoman soldiers are introduced (ibid., p. 183). The FDZ and Omar Khouri (w, p, i; 2010) accelerate a rhythm that interweaves tabular and linear deployment. Two sequences are emphasized: (a) a three-panel ballet of shot men, their weapons falling (pp. 187, 189, 191); and (b) a two-panel dance of soldiers (p. 194). In the first ‘ballet’, the repeated falls are dramatized as they hang in mid-air and culminate in a final fall, this time fully on the ground. In the second sequence, the armed Ottomans stand at the door and move synchronically in a semi-circle, all pointing their arms and turning together towards one target. Another man is shot, adding to the previous rhythmic beat of the three panels. The soldiers shout in a unified voice: “Captain!” (ibid., p. 195). The narrative focalization is on the rhythm, building the defeat of the army by the shootings and by bodies flying, culminating in the desperate scream of the soldiers for their fallen leader. This rhetorical visual deployment is a jahili\(^1\) strategy, which focalizes the strength of the enemy to imply their own strength in defeating that enemy.

\(^1\) This is an attribution from "Jahiliyyah", the pre-Islamic period that refers to Arabic culture before the arrival of Islam.
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The Adventures of Fakhr El Din (fig. 7.6) by Ghadi Ghosn (w, p, i; 2010) represents the army as a group of foot soldiers carrying spears. A car obstructs the road and two soldiers are in disbelief: “What? I can’t believe this!” A third calls the driver “the Mogul”¹ (ibid., pp. 88-89). A bearded soldier steps up: “Stand aside, knave. The sign clearly indicates our right of [way]” (ibid., p. 89). Again in disbelief, the bearded soldier unleashes his anger: “A pistol?” He leans forward, saying: “The bastard [son of a whore]! Is he trying to intimidate us?” The soldiers behind him confirm: “He has a pistol.” All in profile, angry and gritting their teeth, they move forward from the bottom left to the center. The bearded soldier shouts again: “Damn you! You get back! The Law is on our side!” (ibid., p. 89). The diagonal angle of his spear opposes the other spears, differentiating him from the others. Finally, the soldiers gather around the killed Fakhr El Din, their heads low.

The bearded soldier is weeping as the others leave the scene, one by one. The narrative focalization of the army of Fakhr El Din is presented first as a unified horde, divided by the bearded man; and then by even greater division following the death of Fakhr El Din who, himself, had remained inactive all along. The two historical references, created by the army and the contemporary-looking driver, overlap the narrative of Lebanese unity. Indeed, Fakhr El Din is killed by the intolerance of the driver, putting into question the value – today – of unity and tolerance, and of what has been inherited from the times of Fakhr El Din. This stands in comparison with violence, aggression, and what is happening on the streets of cities in Lebanon today.

¹ Another reference to a foreign army.
A lion represents the crusaders in The Crusaders through Four Arab Eyes (Merhej (w, p, i), 2010) (fig. 7.7). With crosses on his shield and flag, Richard the Lionheart, standing between two turbaned men at the helm, steers his ship towards the reader. The invasion of the crusades is put into the perspective of the Arab coast. The title refers directly to Amin Maalouf’s 1985 work The Crusades through Arab Eyes, focusing attention on a post-colonial reading. The lion is small and alone, but has a big mouth as he frowns and roars. The asymmetrical transformation of the panel emphasizes the disruption of the scene; the turbaned men fly, their coffee cups fly – both in a synchronized fashion. The centrality of the image and the movement of the figures put the reader as the target of the lion’s attack, whose impact – ironically – caused the coffee cups to fly. The narrative focalizes the ridicule of the invasion, rather than its reverence. Moreover, the device used for the irony, with the two opposite but similar men, with their beards and bombs, resemble the characters from Spy Vs. Spy.

FIGURE 7.8: “Internal and Mental Security Forces” and the “Religious Police” in Salon Tarek El Khurafi
Source: Khouri (w, p, i), 2008.

Fictional state groups fall under the category of armed state groups. The “Internal and Mental Security Forces” and the “Religious Police” are broadcast on the news in Salon Tarek El Khurafi (fig. 7.8) by Omar Khouri (w, p, i; 2008, p. 121). A blank, featureless face, flanked by a ‘play-button’ symbol, is presented as the ‘spokesman’ of the “Mental Security Forces”: “The possession and the distribution [of] all images and films taken of the building after the explosion [is] illegal” (ibid., p. 121). Not only are these characters in a position of power to secure and enforce religion,

1 Spy vs. Spy is a wordless short comics format by Antonio Prohías, published in Mad magazine since 1961.
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the ‘play-button’ on their forehead instead of using eyes, nose or a mouth. This feature implies their corruptive nature; namely, being ‘playable’ and, particularly so in comparison to the news presenter who, instead, has a quotation mark. In control of media and censorship, these playable “Security Forces” are focalized as corrupt oppressors, bringing back the ‘sectarian’ narrative and its relation to media (Yaqoub, 2011).

![Security guards](image)

FIGURE 7.9: Security guards in The Educator
Source: Mezher (w, p, i), 2008a.

In The Educator (fig. 7.9) by Fuad Mezher (w, p, i); 2008a, 200b, 2009, 2010), the armed group has sophisticated army gear and heavy rifles, often poised ready for use; hence, “the Institute is kept secure at all times” (Mezher (w, p, i), 2008a, p. 39). A security guard – reflected in the glasses of one of the Educator’s followers – does not see those who see him (Part 4. p. 160). These men remain silent and only oversee the events of the story (part 3. p. 40). At the end, gas is released among the security guards, who fall and die (Part 5, p. 44). The general articulation of these figures reveals a focalization of the ‘security’ status; from seemingly strong, to clearly weak and ineffective. The inactive, weakened group contrasts with its heavy artillery, like the giants who turned into mills in Don Quixote’s tale¹. The armed group brings out the narrative of national security and the politics of fear, hence contributing to the debate around civil peace (Yaqoub, 2011).

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¹ In one adventure, Don Quixote, the chivalric hero of Miguel des Cervantes Saavedra’s known novel, The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha (1605-1516), attacks on ferocious giants who turn out to be windmills.
Another army group is the djinns in Angel of Peace (fig. 7.10) by Medlej (w, p, i; 2007). Demon-heads wearing army uniforms, the first djinn – with a despot’s laughter “nyahahahahaaaa…” – evokes evil associations and he orders the civilians: “Yella, quick!” (ibid., p. 12). He forces a man out of his home, shooting randomly at the façade of the building; while another djinn tries to kill Malaak and a third is looting and stealing. The focalization of the djinns by their anthropomorphic depiction – instead of that of a crawling or floating genie – brings their behavior closer to that of humans. In fact, their actions are not only disruptive, but most often performed in collaboration with or by the manipulation of humans or civilian characters. Such narrative presents the identity of those responsible for the war as ‘foreign’, ‘evil’, and ‘inhuman’.

Figure 7.10: Djinn army in Angel of Peace
Source: Medlej (w, p, i), 2007.

Again in Salon Tarek el Khurafi (Khouri (w, p, i), 2010) (fig. 7.11), the “Party of Religious Freedom” is focalized as a militia by the broadcast by the “Mental Security representative”. The combination of the words “Party of Religious Freedom” and their logo focalizes them as an organized group, and one which is particularly threatening due to the implication by the “Mental Security” which was manipulated to regard the party as criminal and, hence, a militia, because they commit infractions to ‘mental’ security. Instead of visualizing the characters holding weapons, which realizes the focalization of violence, the ‘showing’ narrator provides a corporate identity symbol – a reversed fist surrounded by the initials of the party. The restriction of information draws attention to and focalizes the group’s identity as a brand, though anonymous, which heightens the suspense in the series. The narrative of this group, the “Party of Religious Freedom” that calls – but

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1 A demon or mythological creature able to interfere physically with humans as mentioned in the Quran.
War characters does not fight – for the freedom of religion is also carefully organized and well established, rendered almost as a corporate organization that could also be the heirs of the militia (Yaqoub, 2011).


The Indians in Zeina Abirached’s (w, p, i; 2006) book, Beirut Catharsis (fig. 7.12) also are considered a state group, as corresponding to tribes of American Indians. A page panel shows two parties, both consisting of riders on horseback with feathers, bows, and arrows. The two Indian armies shoot at each other. The graphiation of the stick figures look like Zeina, the character-
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narrator of a coloring book. The arrows hang in mid-air in the middle of the panel, where a totem pole is looking at the shooting. Multi-stability is created by this central symbol of deity, giving both groups equal relation to it, while not revealing its explicit reason or role. Focalization is made on the absurdity of the situation where two similar groups fight over the object of their mutual veneration. Moreover, omitting from the diegesis of typical Westerns, the cowboys bring out an ironic narrative on the internal conflict of the Lebanese Civil War.

7.3. ARMED NON-STATE GROUPS

Armed non-state armed groups include mafia, militia, gang, and poacher, as well as any other armed group that does not adhere to or operate under state authority. Like state groups, they often wear matching uniforms and may be both fictional and non-fictional characters.

FIGURE 7.13: Armed men in Une Enfance Heureuse
Source: Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2003.

The militia men in Une Enfance Heureuse (fig. 7.13) by Mazen Kerbaj (w, p, i; 2003) are identified from traced photographs\(^1\) that appear to be from the Civil War – mustachioed and in 1970’s dress code, with rifles in their hands, their pauses describe inactiveness. The focalization is made by the contrast between the traced photograph and the graphiation\(^2\) of the rest of the comic, which adheres more closely to Kerbaj’s (w, p, i; 2003) style and acts as a reminder that reality – in this case, that of war – is not what the character-narrator thought it was; namely, that they were “super sympas”\(^3\)

\(^1\) Process of drawing over a photograph, often using another layer; as example, tracing paper (calque) or digital layer (imaging software).
\(^2\) Graphic quality of the work supplemented with ‘monstration’, or the showing of the visual content (Baetens, 1996).
\(^3\) Sympathetic.
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and “friends” (p. 8). The narrative exposes the confusion of the reality of war and the lessons that children learn from it, and from playing – specially as seen when the toy-soldier carrying both a pistol and a rifle, salutes Mazen as he shoots “Pan! Pan!” It presents a critical distancing from the fascination with armed factions, particularly militias, and presents the first instance of resistance – this time against one’s own upbringing.

In Tosh Fish 1 (fig. 7.14) by Motaz Al Sawaf (w, p, i; 2011a), a page segment with five vertical panels with no outline face the reader, showing a man in army uniform and a scarf shooting at four civilians in a choreographed motion. In the fifth panel, the militiaman stops, confused by mice holding Christian and Muslim symbols – which one should he kill? The sectarian narrative emerges in the repetitive mechanical shootings; however, the narrative is resisted by unified factions, even though they are ‘just’ mice. On the same page, another fragment is featured in a panel of a pattern of identical figures parading in army gear with scarves over their faces. The silhouetted crowd is in front, between the militiamen and the reader, commenting heavily: “God is with you. God keeps them [safe for] their mothers. Why do they have masks? So they don’t catch a cold. These young, educated [men] can protect us from the enemy. They can also return to us our dignity and our lands” (ibid., n.p.). One man, wearing a shirt and not in silhouette, stands out from the crowd; he
War characters says: “Finally the Kataeb\(^1\) decided to attack Israel and free Palestine?!!” Another replies: “Are you stupid? They’re going to free the Murr building!!” (ibid., n.p.).

The narration plays on the layering of the shadow cast by the crowd paralleled by the parade, and it focalizes the allegory of the cave. The crowd reflects spirituality, intimacy, and fondness for the mass-produced militiamen, but the ironic comment at the end reveals the critical stand that is taken regarding the militiamen wrongfully regarded as being the enemy of Israel and the supporters of the Palestinians, focalized as a mistake – and a stupid mistake at that.

![FIGURE 7.15: Armed men in Fattoum Sees the Future](Source: Al Sawaf (w, p, i), 2011c.)

In Fattoum Sees the Future (Al Sawaf (w, p, i), 2011) (fig. 7.15), the militia group is introduced in identical neat uniforms, pointed rifles, moustaches, and frowns. “There are Muslims behind the pillars!” (ibid., p. 18). They kidnap Fattoum and her companions because “the zaim\(^2\) wants to see them” (ibid., p. 18). A second group, composed of a sniper and a lookout, plot their ambush: “The group arrived. Tell the guys to prepare the weapons and position themselves” (ibid., p. 19). Again on the same page, when Fattoum, her companions, and her kidnappers arrive, everybody starts shooting and gunmen on both sides fall. On the next unit, a man runs and then is shot, falling to the ground to reveal the shooter behind him who, nonchalantly, walks out of the panel. “We miscalculated. We thought they were the Abu Fares group,” the lookout says as the sniper’s gun is seen still smoking (ibid., p. 20). The miscalculation, kidnapping, and killing focalize the ease and randomness of violence and turn the narrative into one of suffering (Denham, 2008).

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\(^1\) Lebanese Phalange Party.  
\(^2\) Overlord in feudal times; today a political leader with whom favors are exchanged for electoral loyalty.
The snipers in Le Jeu des Hirondelles: Mourir, Partir, Revenir (fig. 7.16) by Abirached (w, p, i; 2007) are only worded. On a page panel, a play of typography positions the word “sniper” on a map separating the children – “my brother and I” – from their “parents” (ibid., p. 15). The map explains the path the neighbors need to take to avoid the sniper; “walk, run, climb, jump, walk along the wall, run, run, walk, duck, run, climb, jump, wait, wait, wait, run, run, run” (ibid., p. 15). The sniper not only enforces a danger zone, but also dictates the activities of pedestrians, like jumping, running, and ducking. Later in the book, a caption panel reveals that the “killing of Victor”, the brother of one of the neighbors, brings about the erecting of the barricade that protects the neighborhood from the snipers (ibid., p. 80).

The snipers in Je Me Souviens (fig. 7.17) by Abirached (w, p, i, 2008) are also worded.
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The barricade also can divide the street into two, as revealed in the last pages of Je Me Souviens (Abirached (w, p, i), 2008) (fig. 7.17). The graphic absence of the snipers focalizes them. Actually, they are never seen, but always there. They hide from their targets to kill and divide the family of Zeina. A sniper changes the path of pedestrians, thus creating a schism between civilians, who remain the target of this hidden threat. In both comic books, the absence of a visual sniper is pertinent and focalizes the presence of the targets, randomly pending between life and death. Abirached (w, p, i; 2008) shows us what the sniper sees; namely, civilians who have renegotiated their space by creating strategies to avoid these snipers in order to get on with their daily life. The narrative here is of resilience and how civilians manage their everyday life despite the danger and the risk of being shot by a sniper.

FIGURE 7.18: Armed men in Yogurt and Jam
Source: Merhej (w, p, i), 2011.

In Yogurt and Jam, or How My Mother Became Lebanese (Merhej (w, p, i), 2011) (fig. 7.18), a sequence of nine panels shows a sniper – captioned “1981” – shooting another sniper – captioned “1979”, while others are firing arms at the airport – “1977”, from a building – “1978”, and from a tank – “1983” (ibid., p. 43). A sniper shooting another from an earlier period is permitted by the spatiality of the page, focalizing a disjunction between the verbal and the textual track and the absurdity of sniping. On another page, armed men captioned as “War Leaders”¹ are included in a row of seven portraits of men; four are armed – a rugged butcher with a knife, a hunter and a soldier with rifles, and a straight-haired civilian with a gun (ibid., p. 51). This is followed by another row of the same men, this time all are wearing suits. All characters point towards the middle, where a

¹ Zoamaá, the plural of zaim.
suited man celebrates and raises a champagne glass at the reader, while another is wearing an eye mask like the depiction of robbers in cartoons.

These focalizations act on the sequence and contribute to the irony of “[s]uddenly, war was over and peace began” focalizing one more time the illusion of peace and the inheritance by the politicians of the militia (Yaqoub, 2011). A series of panels show first an armed man standing at a checkpoint, checking the protagonist’s documents; he orders her to get out of the car, then kidnaps and questions her (Merhej (w, p, i), 2011). Three armed men in the interrogation room are bent over, suffering from the questions asked by the protagonist. The “mother”/protagonist repetitively asks them about their female relatives – a strategy to make them feel guilty. This narrative adds to the debate about the 17,000 disappeared, as many had been kidnapped during the Civil War and never returned. On the other hand, it adds also a comical situation that cannot be true and used only as a device to rationalize aggressors. The bodies of the three men, twisted from the pain of the questions, furthermore focalize the stupidity of them and their ridicule. The absurdity and stupidity of war and the illusion of peace are narratives of suffering, but also of subversion that draws motivation for resistance.

FIGURE 7.19: Militia in Angel of Peace
Source: Medlej (w, p, i), 2007.

A group of snipers introduces the ‘madness spiral’\(^1\) in the first page, a unit of a page segment, in Angel of Peace (fig. 7.19) by Medlej (w, p, i; 2007). Two women cut out from photographs kneel behind sandbags, indicating the “war of militias” and the onset of the Lebanese Civil War (ibid., p.1). The use of photography, in contrast to the rest of the format which is draw in *ligne claire*, is

\(^1\) A displacement spiral is presented in Abirached’s (w, p, i; 2009) *Je Me Souviens* (pp. 39-40).
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focalized by graphiation and the truthfulness of these characters and their actions. This is the second occurrence of women with guns and, in this case, the main character Malaak is the heroine. The kneeling women seem to echo the role women have in war of either being part of ‘destruction’, or of being the saviors.

In cartoons, a spiral, here formed by photographs, is used as a symbol for dizziness. In Angel of Peace (Medlej (w, p, i), 2007), the configuration of twenty-two photographs mainly of ruins of the war ‘drains’ into a hole in the center of the unit and expands the dizziness, further emphasizing the madness of sniper wars. The militiamen are represented as civilian allies of the fictional djinns. A hooded civilian points his gun at the forehead of Malaak as the djinn holds her tight. Militiamen collect the loot as they laughingly show their trophies to the djinn. The narrative of horror that Malaak focalizes with the civilian defectors, fits the category of suffering which comes as a motivation and agency for her to fight and resist.

FIGURE 7.20: Nihilists in The Educator

The Educator (fig. 7.20) by Mezher (w, p, i; 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2010) presents another fictional militia; namely, the so-called nihilists who are civilians armed with knives and rifles. A man emerges from a fog of gas in which “everyone loses their mind” and beats another man with a stick (Mezher (w, p, i), 2008a, p. 40). John, the actorialized narrator, reveals that the nihilists release the gas “at random” (ibid., p. 40). Looking like punk survivors, the nihilists have knifes and are dressed in black leather with spikes, and have blackened eyes and zipped mouths. Four distant fragments show them fighting with the Educator. As the story develops, the nihilists’ alliance with “the System” is revealed as they are seen talking to a security guard at “the Institute”, and their defeat is
War characters focalized by repetitive martial-art falls as they spread across the panels. The narrative that Mezher (w, p, i; 2008-2010) unfolds focalizes the violence and corruption of a militia that allied itself with “the System” to spread and enforce fear among civilians.

7.4. Armed Individuals

The ‘man-weapon’ category, titled ‘armed individuals’, includes all other characters which do not actively adhere to the actions of armed groups, or which act somehow independently in terms of explicit party alliance. These characters act and behave as individuals rather than as being part of a group.

FIGURE 7.21: Armed men in A Beautiful Calm Morning in a Quiet City
Source: Al Sawaf (w, p, i), 2011b.

In A Beautiful Calm Morning in a Quiet City (Al Sawaf (w, p, i), 2011b) (fig. 7.21), neighbors comment on the shooting that they engaged in: “How can [he] tolerate others when he can’t tolerate himself? They say there is security and calm. Show me where? What is that, hey you? These days one is not able to rest in [one’s] own house” (ibid., p. 12). Another neighbor swears and says, “we can’t sleep in this country”; while yet another says, “there is no more decency, people are sleeping and he is whistling” (ibid., n.p.). Yet again Al Sawaf (w, p, i; 2011b) ironically ridicules the narrative of the irrational and the unjustified killing. His characters seek calm, sleep, and security through killing, and their targets are seemingly arbitrary as they kill an innocent man – a whistling
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street sweeper. Not only do they not acknowledge the murder they have committed, they actually justify it. This denounces their irrationality and their futile justifications for shooting and, more importantly, the individualism of outlaws who kill for the price of their comfort.

Another such example can be found in Ghosn’s (w. p, i; 2008) Untitled 4 (fig. 7.22). Four rows of horizontal panels fill the page; on the right, a soldier is in a shooting position behind the corner of a building, though he still cannot see his target. Another soldier building, runs down the street in the direction of the first soldier who still cannot see him. In the third panel, the shooter can see him and fires. The last panel shows the second soldier bleeding on the ground. Although both are wearing army gear, they are not an army; they are two individuals who act independently from one another. Thus, the expectation of their alliance is misguided and the explicit narrative is of a conflict between similar/similar-looking individuals, implying some kind of vendetta due to military desertion or treason.

FIGURE 7.22: Soldiers in Untitled 4
Source: Ghosn (w, p, i), 2008.

Armed individuals are presented in Abou Dam the Canaanite (Mouawad (w, p, i), 2010a) and Abou Dam the Phoenician (Mouawad (w, p, i), 2010b) (fig. 7.23). Both Abou Dam the Canaanite and Abou Dam the Phoenician are depicted in the same way – as bionic militiamen. Their hands are prosthetics of a knife and a rifle, and they are wearing underwear – a tank-top shirt and boots, similar to the stereotype of the militia. Abou Dam the Canaanite screams, “Impossible!!!” when the doctor who comes to visit him complains about his colleagues. In his excitement, Abu Dam shoots the doctor by mistake: “Gh…Ghadanfar?!” (ibid., 2010a, p. 8). Then he shoots his son who came to

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1 Name of the doctor.
see what was happening: “Baba¹, quick! Call the ambulance!” (ibid., p. 9). The rifle of Abou Dam the Canaanite is never under anybody’s control; rather, it fires independently and in full attire.

FIGURE 7.23: Abou Dam the Canaanite and Abou Dam the Phoenician
Source: Mouawad (w, p, i), 2010a, 2010b.

In Abou Dam the Phoenician (Mouawad (w, p, i), 2010b), several rifles indicate the movement–arc of bullets being fired, backed by an array of movement lines and the “taktaktak” onomatopoeias (p. 124). Abou Dam the Phoenician is a bionic destruction machine in no control of his arms. The shooting mistakes seem to be a recurrent narrative that could, on the one hand, absolve responsibility because of his mistake and alleviate the blame while, at the same time, delegitimize him for being irresponsible, highly impulsive, and emotional – and a bionic weapon at the same time.

FIGURE 7.24: Armed Man in The Adventures of Fakhr El Din
Source: Ghosn (w, p, i), 2010.

¹Baba informally means ‘father’; also commonly used by fathers to call their children. Mama means ‘mother’.
Another crazed individual is the obstructer in The Adventures of Fakhr El Din (Ghosn (w, p, i), 2010) (fig. 7.24). He remains anonymous, dressed in a shirt and jeans, and is driving a car, in contrast to Fakhr El Din on his horse and with his infantry. “Where do you think you’re living? Fuck off!! It’s hot, I am sweaty. So just stand aside” (ibid., p. 89). As the anonymous individual clearly distinguishes himself from the army, he points his gun and screams: “Get back I tell you!” (ibid., p. 89). This character knows where he is going and is outraged at the absurd presence of Fakhr El Din and his army. He quickly gets angry and, without hesitation, raises his gun, asserting furiously his manhood by both raising his gun and repeating “I am a man!” “I am a man, I tell you!” before the gun is fired “bang!” killing Fakhr El Din (ibid., p. 89). This fragment reinforces the ease shown at the use of armament against another, and blurs the boundaries between militia and independent armed men who use their guns for their individual needs.

Two fragments feature in the surreal comic by Fgrdietch and Twstdtwn (w, p, i; 2010) Pretty People Wearing Impractical Things (fig. 7.25). Set up on a backdrop and costumes based on Pablo Picasso’s 1937 painting Guernica¹ the graphiation made from photography and collage. The ‘man-gun’, in a dark suit and black-framed glasses, first points his ‘hairdryer-gun’ on himself saying, “the wild boys were in town”; and he points it at a woman and drinks from a flask, saying “out of my way, wench! Don’t make me rearrange that face” (Fgrdietch (w, p, i) & Twstdtwn (w, p, i), 2010, p. 207). He points it to the head of a three-eyed man, saying: “when the light came on he could taste his nostrils” (ibid., p. 208). He pauses on the right with the three-eyed man and another man, saying “the wild boys had found their man. They began blue velvet and clockwork orange” (ibid., p. 208).

¹ Pablo Picasso painted Guernica in 1937, in response to the German bombing of Spain during the Spanish Civil War.
FIGURE 7.25: Armed men in Pretty People Wearing Impractical Things
Source: Fgrdietch (w, p, i) & Twstdtwn (w, p, i), 2010.

The reference to noir narratives borrows from William Burrough’s (1971) novel The Wild Boys set in an apocalyptic late-twentieth-century gay youth movement, the surreal mood of David Lynch’s 1986 film Blue Velvet, and Stanley Kubrick’s dystopic 1971 film Clockwork Orange. The disfigured characters set in Picasso-esque diegesis and backdrop are created by a graphiation that is multi-stable and that sways between photography and collage, two-dimensional and three-dimensional, real and unreal. The reference to noir narratives is focalized by the suicide in the image, prostitution in the word ‘wench’, and the torture in image and words, bringing violence to a crescendo that spills into the narrative of the Picasso Guernica tragedy and the killing of the innocent. The title reinforces the dystopic reality of war that becomes unrecognized in – or rather unrelated to – the Pretty People Wearing Impractical Things. The war narrative that their dress and their graphiation, such as the hairdryer, the collages, and the photomontages, holds is ‘impractical’. The ‘amnesia narrative’ is repeated, with the combination of the title contrasting with the rest of the format and introducing a disjunctive irony.

In addition to violent and irrational individuals, other types of individual armed characters are presented in the comics in the corpus of this research study. They include resistance fighter, armed child, and individuals clashing. A resistance fighter falling into this category is the hadjuk Voyvoda in Schrodinger’s Riddle (FDZ (w, p, i) & Khouri (w, p, i), 2010) (fig. 7.26). He is introduced by his dark moustache, ornate uniform, and smoking rifle barrel (ibid., p. 183). He says, “Welcome
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Turkish” after having shot an Ottoman army lookout on a train. He enters the train, makes a series of acrobatic exploits and, while upside down, shoots at the soldiers who scream “Hadjuk! Voyvoda!” – thus revealing Voyvoda’s Bulgarian militancy against the Ottomans, as with the likes of Petko, Kiryakov, and Kaloyanov (Leersen et al., 2010). A close-up on his face, upside down and surrounded by two blasts, is followed by a larger blast and, finally, Voyvoda ends up behind an airplane seat, this time right-side up but frowning in the same way.

FIGURE 7.26: Hadjuk Voyvoda in Schrodinger’s Riddle
Source: FDZ (w, p, i) & Khouri (w, p, i), 2010.

This last panel repeats the first welcoming scene when he, standing behind an airplane seat and with his gun smoking and his face in close-up, says: “Goodbye Turkish…” (ibid., p. 195). The focalization of Voyvoda’s fast acrobatics, interrupted by pauses and exchanged words of welcome and goodbye, makes him the one in control of the story, particularly the beginning and the ending. The resistance fighter, in this case, is a winner; his targets are met and his work is skillful. Here, the narrative of the resistance fighter is pushed towards heroism and is explicit to give space for the interweaving and play of the narration in the multimodal units.

In the first volume of The Educator (Mezher (w, p, i), 2008a), the main protagonist plays a similar role of resisting the system. He “calls himself… [t]he[E]ducator” wears a graduation gown and mortar board; his weapon is a pen which he throws at a nihilist in defense of John, the character-narrator (ibid., p. 47). His identity is masked and John’s study partner, Mila, says “what makes you think the educator is a he?” (ibid., p. 57). He throws books at security guards and recruits others identified by similar attire. He sways between a loner and a godfather, as he explicitly tells John “you owe me [a] favor and I will be back to collect it” (ibid., p. 50). In the third volume, Extra-
Curricular Activities (Mezher (w, p, i), 2009), other characters adopt the Educator’s mask, including an educator-woman who waves a saber at her nihilist opponent (ibid., p. 162).

Another instance of an armed individual appearing in The Educator (Mezher (w, p, i), 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2010) series is when a pen is thrown at the principal. The pen and the book as weapons bring out the narrative of education and knowledge and their dissemination as ‘resistance’. By keeping the focalization on the pen, however, rather than on the responsible character – the Educator, the identity of ‘resistance’ remains uncertain and multi-stable (fig. 7.27).

On the other hand, Mazen Kerbaj, as the character-narrator in Beyrouth: Juillet-Aout 2006 (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007) (fig. 7.28) uses his pen to directly attack his enemy. He barges out from a building in the dark of night, looking angry and with blackened eyes. He waves his pen at the warplanes hovering in circles above his head and screams: “Come down you cowards! I will kill you all with
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my pen!” (ibid.)¹. The pen symbolizes freedom of speech and is very much used by editorial cartoonists across the Arab world, including editorial cartoonists Naji El Ali and Bahgat Othman. In The Educator (Mezher (w, p, i); 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2010), the pen and the book is a subdued legitimized weapon. In Mazen’s case in Beyrouth: Juillet-Aout 2006 (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007), however, the pen refers to the act of writing about and drawing the war as ‘journalistic resistance’ – resistance that is not actualized by shooting but, rather, in the act of making the comic itself, because the character-narrator is assumed to be the creator-resistant. Kerbaj (w, p, i; 2007) explicitly brings out the narrative of resistance by realizing comics journalism on his blog, which was the original format of the book.

FIGURE 7.29: Armed individuals in Une Enfance Heureuse
Source: Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2003.

Other armed individuals in the corpus of this research study include the children in Kerbaj’s (w, p, i; 2003) Une Enfance Heureuse (fig. 7.29), in Abirached’s (w, p, i; 2006) Beyrouth Catharsis (fig. 7.30), and in Merhej’s (w, p, i; 2011) Yogurt and Jam, or How My Mother Became Lebanese (fig. 7.31). This is a continuation of the earlier discussion of the playing of games in times of war in the introduction of this chapter. In Une Enfance Heureuse (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2003), the child-narrator in soldier’s attire demonstrates the firing – “Depart!”– and landing of bombs and their sound with a dashed path crowned by a “zwiieee” (p. 1). Children learn war strategies and techniques and can

¹ The pages of this comic book are not numbered but dated. This page is dated: “20 Juillet 2006(dessiné le 19 Juillet)”.

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imitate war, thus perpetuating conflict. In another instance, a door opens by itself, indicated by a small arrow, and a character barges into the shelter, casting a shadow on the floor – making a reference to the comic the boy is reading in the toilet, Asterix and the Soothsayer (1972). The narrative of the war premonition and its omen to the people in the shelter might be as doubtful as the narrative of the soothsayer in the Uderzo and Goscinny comics.

Also in Une Enfance Heureuse (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2003) is a PlayMobil toy-figure shooting a gun in the air, “pan pan! Salut à toi, mon ami Mazen!” as he carries a rifle in his other hand (p. 8). The character-narrator says “it’s curious” as he thinks his friends, “the fighters”, resemble him. The toy-soldier focalizes the game of war. In Yogurt and Jam, or How My Mother Became Lebanese (Merhej (w, p, i), 2011), the only instance a child-gun is pictured is when associated with displacement from one home to another, which, “in 1982, overlooked the Israeli warships in the [bay] of Jounieh” (p. 18). The children watch and focalize the warships in the image. The child has his rifle and is enacting an attack. The reader – also involved in this fight – is in the house and sees the children on the balcony. This presents the child-soldier narrative, with the focalization pushing the narrative to the status of fighting the enemy and, therefore, of resistance to foreign warships – but it also transfers the responsibility of war to children, and the manipulation of children by war.

FIGURE 7.30: Armed girl in Beyrouth Catharsis
Source: Abirached (w, p, i), 2006.
The child soldier in Abirached’s (w, p, i; 2006) book Beyrouth Catharsis (fig. 7.30) is the character-narrator. In one page panel, she waves a bow and arrow, captioned: “But for me, the war was the Indians with feathers, bows and arrows” (ibid., p. 18). The past tense refers to the childhood narrator through which she lived the war in the format. With a braid, feather, and bow and arrow, the character only is implied as the narrator as a child who remains a separate caption, clearly distinct from the rest of the page. The voice, however, conveys an explicit relation to the reality of war and its disillusionment; namely, the reality of war is not a child’s game. The child soldier in Merhej’s (w, p, i; 2011) Yogurt and Jam, or How My Mother Became Lebanese is in the center of a ghost panel, inside a larger one that represents several children in different positions, pointing a stick and looking in the direction of the warships (p. 18).

Kerbaj (w, p, i; 2003) presents the fascination of Mazen the narrator-character with his friends, the fighters, but – like Abirached (w, p, i; 2006) – also with war, which Mazen had thought would be different. In addition, Abirached (w, p, i; 2006) presents the identification of the girl with the
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Indians, while the child in Merhej’s (w, p, i; 2011) work could be interpreted as a distancing from the Israeli army. In addition to irony and intimacy, the strategies of presenting childhood war in Lebanese comics adopt an inter-textual dialogism worth bringing to attention (Gabai, 2010, p. 148). For example, Abirached (w, p, i; 2008), in Je Me Souviens, builds the representation of war on references to the 1980’s music, comics, and children’s anime.

The two bearded men in The Crusaders through Four Arab Eyes (Merhej (w, p, i), 2010) (fig. 7.32) are examples of an instance where clear, inverted symmetry is shown. As they stand, forehead to forehead, like the Spy vs Spy character, ready to attack, one is wearing a black turban and the other a white one – referring to a distinction between Shiites and Sunnis. The symmetry of the turbaned men adds to the narrative; the flattening of status between the two groups and crediting both with the responsibility. Such symmetrical depiction of confrontation between two parties is shown in Abirached’s (2008) battle of arrows. Abirached's party confrontation shows the absurdity of killing when the other is the same. Similar absurd confrontations are also presented on the street in Ghosn’s (2010) work, and Al Sawaf’s (2011b) men that kill men from their own group.
Kerbaj’s confrontation in Cola (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2010) (fig. 7.33) is colorful, more varied, but still symmetrical. Almost like a matching game, the characters however differ on each side. There is no clear delineation to the party alliance of the characters, however it is implied that the left side is supported by a man with kuffiyeh\(^1\), and another that looks like the author himself, while the right side is occupied by a man in a E'gal\(^2\) carrying a knife, and a soldier with roughened beard. These armed men could imply militancy to respectively ‘March 8’ and ‘March 14’ coalitions. The Kerbaj’s (w, p, i; 2010, p. 7) further polarizing corporations, armament, army, and militancy.

In addition, the representation of the conflict itself often is a symmetrical relation indicating an intractable conflict. On the other hand, the potential of multi-stability in comics often is used not only to transform the explicit into ambiguous meanings and blur boundaries between established categories. Moreover, multi-stability brings out narratives otherwise unsaid that indicate ridicule,

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\(^1\) This is a type of white headdress weaved with black lines mostly associated with Palestinian militancy.

\(^2\) This is a type of clothing worn in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries that consists of a white dress and a white headdress.
absurdity, and the uselessness of violence. Some comics transgress the boundaries established by
the social categories of van Leeuwen (2008) as the characters presented show multi-stable
positions, particularly when referring to children, who are also soldiers, and with such armed
characters as the Indians in Beyrouth Catharsis (Abirached (w, p, i), 2006), the Party of Religious
Freedom in Salon Tarek El Khurafi (Khour (w, p, i), 2010), and in the characters in conflict in Cola
(Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2010). Such other groups as army, soldiers, security companies, militia, resistance
fighters, civilians, and children are not resolved categories and, therefore, not presented as stable
identities. An army may be represented as individuals, as is the case in Angel of Peace (Medlej, w,
p, i; 2007) and in Untitled 4 by Ghosn (w, p, i; 2008), in contrast to the coherent Ottoman army in
Schrodinger’s Riddle (FDZ (w, p, i) & Khouri (w, p, i), 2010).

Despite its fluidity and ‘multi-stability’, the categorization proved to be an efficient first grouping
of the characters as it created an initial clustering of the material. On the other hand, the shooting of
the Indians in Beyrouth Catharsis (Abirached (w, p, i), 2006), the fighting over the bomb in The
Crusades through Four Arab Eyes (Merhej (w, p, i), 2010), the confrontation in Cola (Kerbaj (w, p,
i), 2010), the tug of war in Yogurt and Jam, or How My Mother Became Lebanese (Merhej (w, p,
i), 2011), and the two extremists in Beyrout: Juillet-Aout 2006 (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007) all are
symmetrical, but also deadlocked between two forces in an “intractable conflict” which Jeong
(2008) describes by saying “a high level of intensity and destructiveness is maintained by a
sustained period of escalation, before intense physical or psychological fighting eventually
subsides” (pp. 13, 12). Rather, the symmetry clashes with the dynamic movement of the characters,
which are violently projected against one another, and this brings them to a halt or a pause. It is a
situation that is frozen between equal forces. The narrative of the symmetry in these panels
represents war to the reader, as the fundamental narrator sees it by focalizing the situation instead of
the particular characteristics of the parties. The reader is squeezed into this situation of war, yet
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does not take part in it. The war is intractable; however, one can stand aside and look at it, like the focalization of the fundamental narrator, or the cat that watches the children playing tug of war.

7.5. SUMMARY

To sum up, strategies used to tell narratives that involve armed characters emphasize narratives of ‘resilience’ much more then ‘suffering’ or ‘resistance’. The armed state groups that populate the narrative of war in Lebanese comics are, first, the LAF, an inadequate group during the Civil War. The IDF is compared to the post-war real-estate moguls and are resisted by disobedience. Resistance against the Ottomans also is shown and the strategy focalizes the power of the enemy to heighten the strength of their defeater. Narratives show the telling of these armies aimed at resilience and the searching for strategies to cope with war. The ideology of such heroes as Fakhr El Din, as well as such concepts as unity and tolerance are ridiculed for being inappropriate in present times. Also the crusades are ridiculed. Sectarian narratives arise in relation to media. State groups are violent and aggressive, their behavior absurd, random, and recurrent; and wars that they make are ‘foreign’, ‘evil’, and ‘inhumane’. They install narratives of national security, freedom of religion, and politics of fear.

Armed non-state groups, on the other hand, may be fascinating, but some critical distancing proves that it is only an illusion. Indeed, civilians and militia are not very distinct, though civil resistance still is practiced. Thus, the militias are shown as violent and absurd and as a group that causes a lot of suffering. Despite that, civilians find ways to accept and live with them. These groups make an absurd war, a subversive act that denies the reasons of war and gives no justification for violence, which often turns into horror. Moreover, militias are not only shown as violent, but also as corrupt and allied with the system to install fear.

Armed individuals are irrational, vicious, and/or violent, killing in cold blood or by mistake. They are emotionally unstable and socially inapt, and their ambiguous position alternates between that of
War characters

militiamen and criminal with no intended political agenda. Another type of armed individual, however, is the hero and the ‘good guy’ – here the one who fights not only with a weapon, but also through education and journalism, with the resistance and against occupation. Moreover, war is responsible for turning children into soldiers, even though they are the same children who lived the war and who are resisting or subverting it by making these comics.

Regrettably, the conflict between two armed groups is shown to be intractable. On the one hand, this might be a positive thing for it shows that there is no alternative but reconciliation; on the other, this means also that the conflict is a deadlock, where no resolution will be reached. This analysis opens new questions as regards the effectiveness of education and dissemination of knowledge against irrational and ruthless violence. What can be done when war is perpetual and the people who were in militias now are the very same who are in government?
8. Conclusion

The results and findings of this research study contribute to comics’ narratology, to comics’ analysis of large corpora, and to the Lebanese war debate. The dissertation topic is highly relevant, the mixed methods created are innovative, the creation of a visualized comics analytical tool (Amphibian) that could be used by both researchers and artist, and last, a qualitative content analysis and a large corpus narratological analysis of war in Lebanese comics. The empirical results can be found in the section 8.1 and the methodological and theoretical implications can be found on 8.2.

First, the theoretical and practical methods for comics analysis and digital archiving were revisited in order to understand the narrativity and the multi-stability of comics and how they can be developed further for analytical and production purposes. Second, the analytical interface was created. Called Amphibian, it uses direct visualization and enables an analysis on the material of comics and facilitates the narratological study. This interface permits the distinction and the narratological identification of units, modes, and narrative fragments. The visualized analytical interface enabled a qualitative analysis of a large comics corpus to be conducted, and facilitated the organization of the material in order to map the events and the characters in the narration according to the narratological toolkit. The analytical process on the interface was simulated and applied manually for lack of programming resources. The software tool for comics’ analysis was presented in terms of its affordance and tested on two studies. Amphibian may contribute to reconcile comic’s artists and researchers with the term ‘narrative’. By enabling the distinction, the annotation, the editing, and the re-mixing of discreet comics elements, indeed the software is also designed to create new narratives out of comic snippets. The analytical interface, Amphibian is a proposed blueprint for a comics-annotation program, which also can be a design tool for comics’ artists.
Conclusion
This research study set out to explore the narratives of war in Lebanese comics, and has identified the narrative fragments in the modes and in the units of comics, which motivated and guided the design of an analytical tool. Using visualization, this study sought to develop a tool to contain the comics units – including panel, page, format, and series – as well as graphic, linguistic, and focalization tracks, for a multimodal analysis. The interface enabled the annotation and mapping of ‘eventful’ and ‘uneventful’ events, and of characters that included fundamental narrator, actorialized narrator or character-narrator, and ‘simple’ characters or actors.

A corpus review and a qualitative content analysis reduced the material to its most pertinent narrative fragments – events of violent conflict and characters that are armed. The application of the analysis on the interface consisted of transcriptions and interpretations of the images and of the focalization traced on mapped layers over the tracks, which then superimposed the relevant elements for analysis on the pages of the corpus.

The results show the chronology of war events, which emphasize the Lebanese Civil War that was played out when most of the authors/artists of the comics in the corpus themselves were children. Included also are events that occurred much earlier even than the founding of the Republic of Lebanon in 1943, as well as later during the 2006 war and the post-2006-war period. The results of the character analysis show that narratives of suffering, resilience, and resistance are transmitted by armed factions of local and foreign armies of these wars, but also by children, civilians, ‘heroes’, and freedom fighters.
8.1. **Empirical Results**

8.1.1. **Comics Narratology and the Analytical Tool**

The first research question – What is the narratology of comics and how can it be applied? – relates to comics narratology and its application. This is a study of comics narratives from a narratological approach, examining narration and focalization, narratives events, narrators, and characters, in addition to the level of narration in comics. The research revised the narratological toolkit of classical narratology, including concepts from visual narratology, and based itself on comics narratology (Genette, 1980; Meister, 2003; Bal, 2009; Groensteen, 2011; Horstkotte & Pedri, 2011).

The formal, multimodal, and narrative constituents – or units – of comics were scrutinized and visualized; namely, the panel, the page, and the format. The different comics formats are the strip, the short story, the novel, and the series. The graphic mode was categorized as abstraction, figuration, symbolism, and typography, and these categories and their combinations were visualized. The constituents of the narrative, as the ‘telling of change’, are – by order of inclusion – the narration/narrator, the story, the character-agent, and the event of change. The multimodal consideration duplicates these constituents into narratives that are graphic and/or literary and arise from the combination between word and image, both by sequential and spatial mode.

In this research study, the analysis of the comics material included both the tabular and linear narratives that arise from the sequential configuration of the visual and linguistic mode, including typography, in addition to the spatial configuration which contained implied narratives from the focalization on the tableau, whether on the panel, page, or format. The analysis was facilitated by direct visualization – in other words, the analytical interface. The main structure of the interface included the material and its duplication into a ‘ribbon’ of images, tracks, and layers. Again, the core tracks consisted of the panel, the page, and the format tracks, while the mode tracks included the word, the graphic, and the focalization tracks. Last, the mapping layers which, in the case of this
Conclusion

research study, included events, time indicators, characters, and narrators, as well as focalization.

Having distinguished the units and the modes, the verbal narrative fragments were then transcribed and the graphic narrative fragments annotated.

The interpretation of the graphics into text was based on the narratological structure:

\[ \text{Narrator} \subset \text{Story} \subset \text{Character + Event} \]

It resulted into this formula:

\[ \text{Comics Text} \subset \]

\[ (\text{Monstrator} \subset \text{Graphic Narrative} + \text{Spatial Narrative} + \text{Typographical Narrative}) + (\text{Recitant/Linguistic Narrative}) \]

\[ \subset \text{Comics Story} \subset \text{Character + Event} \]

The framework of the analysis was designed to be flexible and accommodate also other graphic narrative corpora. The essential features of the interface as a direct visualization comics-annotation system include the means to execute the fragmentation of pages into sequence, transcription, and translation of the visual narratives into text, in addition to annotation features which, in this case, is particularly important for the interpretation of the focalization. All these ‘material’ data – also called ‘snippets’ – are superimposed on the various tracks, then layers are mapped on top of them to highlight such analytical categories as event/narrative level and character/social semiotic category.

8.1.2. THE CORPUS REVIEW

Based on the qualitative content analysis, the salient themes revealed by the corpus review were fragments related to war and categorized into ‘events’, ‘characters’, and ‘objects’. The research focused on events and characters as narratological events, which were further examined to reveal discreet and implied narrative fragments. This was enabled by the analytical interface and the
results show that the ‘events that occur in the battlefield’ are the most frequent, followed by emotional reactions to living under war. The character review indicates the largest/most frequently occurring group being ‘casualties’, followed by ‘armed men’. Of note is that the analysis is weighted as to ‘battlefield’ and ‘armed men’ because they are active elements in war and presented a more dynamic outlook to conflict and war. On the other hand, ‘objects of war’ were disregarded in order to limit the research to ‘events and their agency’ and, thus, abiding closely to the narratological approach.

What are the narratives of war? This is the first question that was posed followed the initial survey. The second question – What is the Lebanese war narrative in comics? – relates to the ‘agency of war’ and examines the armed characters and their actual involvement in war.

8.1.3. THE WAR EVENTS

As expected, suffering, resilience, and resistance are the resulting narratives in violent events of war in Lebanese comics. They are portrayed as irrational and resisted or refused violence, but also as ‘suffering-turned-familiar’. In fact, by the ongoing and repetitive war events, ‘resilience’ is presented by normative events that are generational and historic; while ‘resistance’ is presented as heroic events that occurred in the past, but also by such private interventions as debating, documenting, and reporting war.

This research discusses the distinction between the narration and the focalization of the events – eventful and uneventful – and organizes them according to the narratological analysis of time, which consists of looking at the chronology or precise order, frequency, and duration. Thus, it was necessary to identify the events and place them in a chronological order to understand what has and has not been said and to register the frequency. Described in Chapter 6 and presented in the chronology is ‘what has been said’.
Conclusion

The chronology reveals six intervals of war in the sample of Lebanese comics. Many of the violent war events occurring before 1975 are not mentioned, while Ottoman and Arab historic events often are used to compare episodes of the Civil War – which is a conflict that stretches into the post-war periods and even lingers into the present. The post-Civil-War events present a narrative of realization and of reconstruction. In narratives of violent events of the 2006 War, resilience and familiarization with the suffering use instructional and documentation strategies, while re-emerging minor resistant events focalize war narrated as a conflict between two extremist groups.

The experience, over generations, of living in war is shared in Lebanese comics; however, the history of war is not. The results indicate that not all wars and violent conflicts are mentioned. In fact, several important events in the history of Lebanon, particularly those of 1863 and also the independence struggle, are absent. The probable reason may be these events are too early to be remembered by the comics artists/authors or by their parents, or because they are joyfully evoked rather than intensely war-related and violent. Either way, such events – as judged by the corpus material – are outside the collective narrative of comics and not revised or revisited in the larger national debate of war. In the comics material, some pre-Civil-War narratives, particularly World War II and the Six-Day Arab-Israeli War, are compared to more recent wars as strategies of resilience; however, these conflicts barely are described, nor are their narratives revisited The same is true as regards those having taken place in the Ottoman narrative and also later during the Civil War and the 2006 War.

In addition, the focus on the generational war results from personal narratives; in other words, instead of investing in describing the military steps of the conflict, they focus on from personal narratives rebuilding the moments of war lived and re-experienced to form a larger picture, as well as covering artistic, aesthetic, and poetic deployments of suffering centered on resilience. Resistance, in return, comes as a heroic act against occupation, while a clear distinction is made between ‘Israel’ and ‘Jewish’.
Conclusion

The frequency of the presented events, on the other hand, was analyzed as focalization, the reason being they are more-or-less similar and, thus, use repetition – a focalization strategy. Hence, based on frequency and the number of occurrences, focalization was both ‘discreetly’ analyzed on the level of the format, and also in the summaries, whereby similar events become ‘eventful’ because they are mentioned several times in different comics formats. Moreover, the analysis of the various narratives of a similar story – although it makes them focalized – did not overshadow more ‘discreet’ narratives, thus adhering to the understanding and approach of this research to account for all material without disregarding the implied narratives that stem from it.

Other than the intervals chosen and the density of each, no particular judgment or privilege was given to compare their length. The duration was more difficult to evaluate as it was not a variable of ‘eventfulness’, although it can be a focalization strategy as in a long, slow, suspended, or generational war (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2008). Events that took longer time to happen, however, are not necessarily more revealing. All events that occurred before the Civil War were brief, as the encounter between the Ottomans and Voyvoda in Schrodinger’s Riddle (FDZ (w, p, i) & Khouri (w, p, i), 2010); or they are wars of which the duration is well established, for example World War II and the Six-Day Arab-Israeli war (Kerbaj (w, p, i), 2007; Merhej (w, p, i), 2011; Rima (w, p, i), 2003). This applies to the rest of the fragments whereby their narration and focalization are weighted over the narratological time analysis. More importantly, the event analysis shows there are many historical events still waiting to be told.

8.1.4. War Characters

The characters that were involved in war were the objectives of the question: Who are the armed men, and how are they narrated and focalized? Their identity and their involvement reveal that state groups and non-state groups in times of war and extreme conflict are not very different from one another. This confirms that the ‘agency of war’ has not been resolved, but rather the weapons
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transformed from those of hard metal into media terror of televised live broadcasts and computer games. The analyzed ‘armed characters’ in war are classified into state, non-state, and individual groups. The results show that some are not stable and do not always belong to defined groups, but rather alternate from state to non-state groups, or from groups to individuals, and vice versa. An assimilation of history, disillusionment with the ‘peacefulness’ of war, and state-sponsored amnesia are the reflection on war.

The results of the mapping of armed men are, as expected, local and foreign armies, internal security forces, militiamen, and criminals, but also heroic figures that resist occupation and oppression. The civilian agency in war is attributed to nihilists that spread fear, civilians that collaborate with demons, irrational and individualistic men, politicians who are militias, war children perpetuating the violence, and snipers that are irrational, invisible, and who create a schism in the city. The resistance fighter is presented as a hero, as a heroic outlaw, and as militant artist and journalist. Conflict with external parties is focalized as distant from the reader and asymmetrically violent; while internal conflicts between two local parties are in a symmetrical, emotional, and physical momentum.

The Lebanese army during the Civil War was weak and, later, non-existent. On the other hand, Israel remains present with the same – or more – violent narrative; moreover, it is compared to the post-war authorities, state and non-state, with a focus on media that inherited the conflict from the Civil War. These authorities are represented as violent, and even inhumane, and – more remarkably – absurd and, thus, rejected by the narration because of their oppressive politics of nationalism, sectarianism, and terror. Indeed, the narratives are critically distanced from war, rejecting the fascination and the heroism attached to it, and focalizing the illusion of its resolution, the horror and absurdity of violence replaced by corruption and the politics of fear. This is not limited to groups, but also to armed individuals who are, on the one hand, focalized as criminals even if they are part of a militia, and being vicious and irrational. On the other hand, some are heroes who resist the
Conclusion

violence of war and of occupation and fight back with education and media activism; furthermore, children who lived through war are the ones to insist on fighting with non-violent means. The aspiration for resilience is faced by the deadlock of inherited sectarian conflicts, leaving resistance to this arrested development sidelined and a marginal act.

In addition, the transformation of these characters also is underlined by a shift; namely, from conflict to intractable conflict, from the multiplicity of parties during the Civil War to a duality of two parties suspended in confrontation since 2006. Implied narratives sometimes allow the reader to judge through the means of zero focalization or such extra-diegetic characters as a young boy or a cat expressing alienation from this stark duality. These fragments stemming from outside the conflicts of pro-Hezbollah v/s pro-American, ‘March 8’ v/s ‘March 14’

8.2. Theoretical Implications

The main objective of this research is to narrow the gap between theory and practice of comics analysis by means of visualization used to illustrate comics narratology and, more importantly, as a surface on which an analysis can be applied. The interface that exists between the theory of narrative analysis and the practice of mapping and analyzing comics was conceptualized and developed, and an analytical system was visualized based on the theoretical assumptions drawn from the research.

1 The national division between the ‘March 8’ and ‘March 14’ coalitions were triggered in Lebanon following the killing of the politician, Rafik Hariri, on February 14, 2005, were further divisions related to conflicts between pro-Hezbollah v/s pro-American, and Shi’a v/s Sunni Lebanese.
Conclusion

8.2.1. **Assessment of the Methodology**

Direct visualization was able to handle the analysis of the large corpus of comics. The use of digital media, however, was essential to accommodate the numerous images and the size of the analytical interface, which both were difficult to handle manually. The corpus analyzed demonstrated the flexibility of the analytical system and revealed new narrative strategies. Focused on Lebanese comics, the research found that war is a debated narrative in Lebanon and that comics also contribute to that narrative. On the sample of twenty-eight comics formats related to war and to Lebanon, the comics narratology distinguished what is told, which narrator tells, what is focalized and by whom.

The analytical interface, *Amphibian*, applied direct visualization that duplicated the material, placed it on a double-faceted grid, and enabled layers for mapping to be applied on top of it. Digital tools, and particularly Adobe InDesign, enabled the navigation of the tool. The interface and the usability of the proposed software application of *Amphibian* are presented in detail in Chapter 4 of this thesis. Its design includes suggestions for software development to benefit archiving and filing of comics narratives for easier content retrieval and use. In fact, *Amphibian* is a blueprint for graphic narrative timeline software that could be added to existing imaging software designed for comics production.

The main organizing specification of this proposed software is the modal separation, annotation, and manipulation of narratives, enabling user-friendly editorial application. The main features facilitate the browsing of large corpora of comics pages, with the use of layers and tracks to isolate analytical or production elements, sequencing, and re-sequencing on a chronological timeline, ‘zoom-in and zoom-out’ of material by getting closer or further from the patterns that serve the narration, and observing frequencies and omissions. The structure of the interface is similar to timeline software for motion-graphics production and for film-annotation software. The default sequence of the user steps is scanning, importing, sequencing, cutting, layering, sequencing, and
Conclusion

labeling, which also are present in other graphic imaging software. Both the timeline and the imaging features can adapt into Amphibian.

On the one hand, the challenges of narrating comics narration steered the research to focus on the methodology of analysis and constrained the analysis to a reshuffling, a reorganization, and an observation of the material. Delving into the material required this researcher to sketch and research a way to approach it. On the other hand, reaching a solution was problematic and translated the fears, or rather skepticism of narration – as expressed by Xavier Löwenthal (2006) – to capture the multi-stability of comics. When narrative is considered a life, an identity, and a survival strategy, however, the narrative of Lebanese comics becomes also a witness. Entering a new world and leaving another behind is no longer an accurate description of the experience of narration and particularly not of comics, where internal textual play and diegetic transgressions occur.

In this research study, the duplication and fragmentation of the material into comics units and modes, both linguistic and graphic, enabled the mapping of particular narrative elements and could cover such additional categories of analysis as duration and rhythm of events, and on multimodal frequency distinction. The supplementary research questions that may be answered using this tool are discussed in Chapter 4, illustrating the flexibility of Amphibian to accommodate other corpora.

In this research study, the most significant limitation is that the actual analysis was simulated, instead of using a developed automation of the methods. The simulation was laborious due to the large data, but also because of revision and dialogic work being done which involved going back and forth between testing theories and applying the analysis. During the research stage, the software development had to be postponed for further exploration as first the design and blueprint proposed were required. In fact, the analysis was simulated or handled manually on the digital interface, though mining and other computational methods were proposed to indicate the potential of the interface.
Conclusion

8.2.2. DISCIPLINARY CONTRIBUTION

Though this research study delves into multidisciplinary theories, it contributes mostly to comics studies. Based on the research competence proposed to the image (Müller, 2008), it examined the production strategies of comics with a focus on the interpretation of comics’ narrative, which revealed the perception and reception of comics based on the narratological theories of focalization and narrative manipulation. Thus, it covered research competence proposed for comics.

In addition, the development of the design of the analytical interface, Amphibian, contributes not only to comics studies, but also to the field of computer sciences concerned with graphic narrative-analysis and production tools. It facilitates the access and the retrieval of ‘discreet’ elements of complex nature from a large corpus material and, thus, can contribute to research related to archiving methods and annotation systems of comics. More comprehensive cultural and authorship-related research in cultural studies or art history can further add to the proposed interface, because the analysis carried out in this research study was limited to the material and contextual restriction, and to the aim of developing a tool foremost for comics analysis.

Further research that examines closely the historical, cultural, or psychological contexts would bring deeper insight into the narratives of war in Lebanese comics. With the emphasis on Lebanese comics, this thesis is opening a door to studies on peripheral comics that are new and multilingual, including from the Middle East and North Africa, or with a focus on Lebanon. The production of comics for an adult readership, as opposed to those published in children’s magazines, started in the 1980’s in Lebanon and is still sustained, despite its ‘hiccupping’ nature. This thesis provides a link between Georges Khoury’s (2011) “renaissance” and the Zer0oo collective magazine, Samandal, and Furie des Glandeurs. Chapter 5 illustrates how non-sustainable and poor business planning are among the reasons for the arrested developments of comics in Lebanon – something which also may apply to other such peripheral comics as those originating and produced in Jordan, Egypt, and Algeria. They have added to the debate on the wars currently taking place through a comprehensive
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narrative that encompasses multiplicities of focalization, shedding light on the different ways war is and was experienced, thought of and reflected upon, and represented. Finally, this research study has highlighted online graphic cultural trends, their limitation and their potential to develop with the use of archival, re-mixing, and editorial graphic-narrative tools which all present potential further research and investigation of peripheral nature.

8.2.3. Final Observations

As a researcher who has studied and analyzed comics close colleagues and the researcher herself have contributed to, has had to make a conscious effort to limit her own focus in the development of the analytical text, and maintaining a material bottom-up approach in order to avoid personal bias when interpreting the material. Contextual interpretation consciously was subdued to a minimum by excluding any type of additional interpretation to the analysis other than strictly related to the narration and focalization of the material of violent events and armed characters.

Moreover, the narrative of war in Lebanon is at present unstable, further presenting a difficulty to the resolutions obtainable by this research study – particularly as war is so ‘close to home’. This study was conducted between the years 2010 and 2014, a time when Lebanon and the surrounding countries are witnessing various conflictual events or outright war which are bound to affect the evaluation of the violence present in the narratives of war in Lebanese comics produced between 2003 and 2011. Here too, the contextual influences on the material were subdued to avoid emotional or political reaction and judgment on the material.

8.3. Epilogue: Narrative Comics Experiments

Comics can be highly artistic or poetic, and may inspire new models of graphic literature (Groensteen, 2011). In response to the theories reviewed in the course of this research, visualizations were made to elucidate the concepts and test them. Also full-fledged comics based on
Conclusion

These theories were created. The researcher made comics that experimented with the different concepts that arose from the theories reviewed, and in addition to being new graphic narrative experiments, these comics also fed back into the analysis as application of narratological concepts on visualization.

The most relevant experiment is The Years of War recently told in Comics (fig. 8.1), Assafir Newspaper published in commemoration of the first day of the Civil War, on April 13, 2013. This editorial comic occupied the top half of the last page of the newspaper and it was created out of the snippets of events found in Lebanese comics by chronology. The snippets were compiled by rows from right to left; respecting the reading sequence and imposing it when the text was originally set in Latin and here translated.

Other experiments targeted more theoretical questions. The first experiment was based on Gérard Genette’s (1980) analysis on embedded narratives in A la Recherche du Temps Perdu by Marcel Proust. The aim was to test the embedding of different stories on several levels. Called Bird Migration (fig. 8.2), the story starts with a bird that writes his memories as it moves from one place to another. It recalls its birth and the memory of its birth, and the memory of when it was traveling, thus embedding the different memories inside each other over five different embedded levels. Originally a so-called ‘flippy page’ in Samandal, issue number 12, published in 2011, the figure presented here illustrates this experiment; however, it has been edited from the original for legibility purposes. It is based on a bird that writes his memories, and that remembers his memories as he writes.
The second work involves an infra-narrative to the main narrative, all put on a one-page comics format. Vol Beirut Frankfurt (fig. 8.3), published in Furie des Glandeurs, number 5, 2012, is a story of a trip from Beirut to Frankfurt in which a character moves from the airport to the plane, transforming into different situations depending on the context. For instance, such implied
characters as Bin Laden or Hitler focalize the character’s hostility towards the other Lebanese passengers. The infra-narrative consists of the actorialized narrator critiquing her own identity.

Third, in response to Jan Baetens’s (2010) and Thierry Groensteen’s (2011) work on wordless comics and narratological rhythms and rupture, L’Homme Réussi (fig. 8.4), was made as part of a 24-Hour Comics event in Bremen, Germany, in May 2011 and published on the Grandpapier.org comics portal: http://grandpapier.org/lena-merhej/l-homme-reussi. A regular rhythm was made by the narration of the life of a man doing regular everyday chores related to family and work. A rhythm is deployed, only to be disrupted by two dark pages that illustrate a rough graphiation dissipated to showing hanging naked bodies and a table with tools on it, focalizing the torturer in the man.


Using color this time, a fourth experiment is a narrative of re-occurring events of war and displacement presented in Machine (fig. 8.5), available on: http://grandpapier.org/lena-merhej/machine. It also was part of a 24-Hour Comics event in Bremen, Germany, in October, 2012. A woman turns the wheels of a machine, gives birth to a girl, and faces war and displacement. Her daughter grows up and gives birth to her own children to live, again, the events
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of war and displacement her mother had experienced. In a leap of faith – through the strategy of comics of shifting geographical location with ease to create multi-stability – the granddaughter jumps into the air and then down into the water, only to find herself swimming with yet another machine.

![Machine, Grandpapier, 2012](image.png)

FIGURE 8.5: Machine, Grandpapier, 2012
© Lena Merhej, 2014.

The experiments with the interplay and interweaving of the analytical elements examined the modes and narrative elements – or units – of comics proved they are numerous and responsive in combining in various different ways. If it is true that the ultimate aim of literature is to invent people and create life, then – in comics – the construction of new agencies and events is multiplied by these analytical elements. Thus, following the recommendation of Mieke Bal (1990) that
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narratology should open up further questions about the narratives, a new project can be proposed. It builds on the results of this research study and expands on the potential of the analytical interface, *Amphibian*, in addition to an open-source policy to give access of the material – in this case, fragments of war narratives. If put online, this project displays the fragments presented and offers the possibility for their editing and re-mixing in an organized fashion that accounts for the units and the modes of graphic narratives, but also would allow users to share their own fragments, thus widening the debate to a larger, online narrative of war.
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