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*Heteroglossic tales of two cities: urban rythms, securitization, and racial-spatial politics in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv*

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This paper provides an alternative reading of the politics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by providing a micropolitics of the urban grounded in what Michael J. Shapiro has called an “ontology of the encounter”. It thus seeks to distance the analysis from the macropolitical understanding of the conflict based on official and institutional political ontology of mainstream Political Science. Hence, the paper engages with the micropolitics of urban experience in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in order to expose the way the conflict and the socio-political order of Israel and the Occupied Territories are mutually constitutive. It does so by staging an intertextual encounter between genre and the city in order to illustrate how certain securitization representations and practices are involved in the (re)production of the racial-spatial order of the two cities. The paper illustrates how the autobiographic graphic novels/comics genre – here represented by Guy Delisle’s *Jerusalem Chronicles* and Joe Sacco’s *Palestine* aesthetics – are apposite for reproducing urban dynamics, capturing the cities’ complex spatial structure and temporal flows; thus opening to the mircropolitics of everyday life. Those texts expose the heteroglossic character of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv; cities whose moral and political economies are increasingly subject of critical discursive contention in the context of the J14 movement, the Beit Shemesh urban violence, and the settlers ‘price tag’ actions in so called “Arab neighborhoods”. The genres I explore thus generate exemples of a “poeisis” that escapes conventional understanding of politics of everydaylife.

*Peut-être pourrait-on dire que certains des conflits idéologiques qui animent les polémiques d'aujourd'hui se déroulent entre les pieux descendants du temps et les habitants acharnés de l'espace.[[1]](#footnote-1)* (Foucault 1994, 752)

*Life stories have a geography, too…* (Soja 1989, 14)

**Introduction**

In early September 2011, the Israeli daily *Ha’aretz* (Ettinger 2011)reported that a group of Israeli ultra-Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem suburb of Beit Shemesh harrassed Orot Lebanot elementary school girls on their way home. As the formers surrounded the latter and started shouting insults, parents and neighbors intervened and a fight broke out. It took more than 45 minutes for the police to separate both parties. The mayor of the locality commented that the schoolgirls had to be kept at a certain distance to prevent a “blood bath” because the town’s police was afraid to enter the neighborhood. The latter, according to the mayor, gets worse than an “Arab village”. The *Ha’aretz* piece then explained that the organizer of the protest “promised further protests, including a large rally by the ultra-Orthodox population and daily marches through the neighborhood that would create, in his words, ‘victims on both sides.’” It then added that “someone recently remarked on the group's Facebook site [that Beit Shemesh children] actually face a more serious threat than children of Israeli settlers on Shuhada Street in central Hebron” (Ettinger 2011).

Another daily in the U.S. reporting on similar violent events quoted a *yeshiva* student living in Acre saying that “‘Clearly, there is a war here sometimes even worse than the one in Samaria,” before explaining that

We were sitting in the mixed Jewish-Arab town of Acre in Israel. The war he described was another front in the struggle he knew from growing up in a settlement in the northern West Bank, or Samaria. […] The explicit reason that his yeshiva had been established in Acre was to serve as bridgehead in that struggle just as West Bank settlement are built to bolster Jewish hold on land there. (Gorenberg 2011, SR6)

Keeping this episode in mind, this paper engages with the micro-politics of urban experience Israel/Palestine in order to expose how the conflict and the socio-political order of Israel and the Occupied Territories are mutually constitutive. It does so by staging an intertextual encounter between genre and the city in order to illustrate how certain securitization representations and practices are involved in the (re)production of the racial-spatial order of city.

The paper also illustrates how the graphic novels/comics genre – here represented Guy Delisle’s *Jerusalem Chronicles* and Joe Sacco’s *Palestine* aesthetics – are apposite for reproducing urban dynamics, capturing the cities’ complex spatial structure and temporal flows; thus opening to the mircropolitics of everyday life. I will argue that those texts expose the heteroglossic character of Israeli urban space such as West Jerusalem and Tel Aviv; cities whose moral and political economies are increasingly subject of critical discursive contention in the context of the J14 movement, the Beit Shemesh urban violence, and the settlers ‘price tag’ actions in so called “Arab neighborhoods”.

The genres I explore thus generate examples of “ethnopoeisis” – “the variety of ways that alternative ‘ethnic’ assemblages read the city and, through the literary enactments of their situated intellectuals, deliver up […] a ‘micropolitics’ of the urban.” (Shapiro, 1) Such micropolitics of the urban, playing on the affective register of aesthetics refers to the ways in which various city-subjects are affected by the urban space in ways that can translate into “new ways of being in common” (*Ibid.*).

Could such episodes of violence at the heart of the city be the result of the congealing of a racial-spatial order? For in fact, Israel’s recent history of colonization of the OT is similar to the U.S. colonization of the West in many respects (Cf. Mitchell 2000), and if we heed Robert Crooks conclusions in the context of 19th century America, Israel’s Eastern frontiers would have shifted after 1967 to a “relatively fixed partitioning of urban space … a racial frontier.”(Robert Crook as cited in Shapiro 2012b, 4) We could thus locate an order of violence at the level of the city.

Without a doubt, we can turn to Edward Said to find one of the most convincing arguments in defense of using comics as an aesthetic medium and genre. “Comics,” he writes, “in their relentless foregrounding […] seemed to say what couldn’t otherwise be said, perhaps what wasn’t permitted to be said or imagined, *defying the ordinary processes of thought*, which are policed, shaped and re-shaped by all sort of pedagogical as well as ideological pressures. […] comics freed me to think and imagine and see differently.” (Edward Said. “Hommage to Joe Sacco” in Sacco 2007, vi) In other words, at the risk of repeating ourselves once more, comics can articulate a break in the state and institutionalized frames that shape forms of visibility, “sayability” (Rancière 2010, 37). Playing “havoc with the logic of a+b+c+d” (Said, *Op. Cit.*), comics articulate the politics and power of aesthetics insofar as the reframe the “common sensorium” (Rancière, *Ibid*).[[2]](#footnote-2)

The choice of Sacco and Delisle can be explained by the way they engage the conflict by addressing nonfictional material with the comic. For instance Sacco’s *Palestine* relies on autobiographical, biographical, and reportage content blended with the author’s acknowledge political ambition presenting the situation in Israel-Palestine in his own subjective state of mind. For, certainly, those authors make no claims to represent a ‘reality as it is’. They make no claim to objectivity in favor of a highly subjective vision of their encounter with people, places, and events in cultural situation in which they feel alienated from.

Thus, maybe a little ambitiously, this paper tries to underline two or three different, but related, points. That is, in a first time, this paper explores the ways the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the socio-political/racial order of Israel and the Occupied Territories are mutually constitutive. It does so by staging an intertextual encounter between genre and the city in order to illustrate how certain securitization representations and practices are involved in the (re)production of the racial-spatial order of the the urban spaces and built areas. Put another way, it seeks to reflect on how urbanism and architecture contribute to the (re)production of the conflict by increasingly creating and policing homogeneous ethnic urban spaces. Put in Rancierian terms, we should ask how the aesthetics of the city are being put to the service of policing the partition of the sensible.

In a second time, the paper wishes to formulate an exploration into the genre of the “autographic” (Whitlock 2006), autobiographical graphic novel by asking how the comics of Joe Sacco and Guy Delisle expose such design/features and project and also offer a different aesthetic partition that highlights the heterogeneous racial cartography of the city, a cartography that contests the Israel’s and Hamas’ moral positions attached to a ethnoreligious narration of the nation and state as well as various modes of knowledge production about conflict resolution attached to the cartographic ontology of the nation-state (Campbell 1998) and the “institutionalized forms of non-contamination or non-contradiction (nation-building practices, museums and colonial or post-colonial urban planning)” (Opondo 2008).

The paper proceeds as follow. It first theorizes urbanity and explores the genre-city intertext in relation to war, violence and the politics of race. Second, I succinctly discuss the how others have treated the politics of space, urbanism, and the city in Israel/Palestine. And thirdly, I proceed with the analysis of Joe Sacco’s *Palestine* and Guy Delisle’s *Jerusalem*. I conclude on the theoretical note and opening concerning the problem of the “Metaphysics of presence” (“presence before absence, presence itself is privileged, rather than that which allows presence to be possible at all – and also impossible”) posed by Derrida and how it can partly be answered by aesthetics genres such as comics.

**The New Frontier: Violence and Urbanity**

As the short vignette above suggests, although the State of Israel put considerable efforts in presenting the urban racial/religious conflicts as mere political disagreement within a bounded and unified peaceful organic whole where war only appears at the border the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is ever present within Israel’s ‘society’ in different forms and intensities of violence and Jerusalem, for instance, presented as ‘united and indivisible’ could be said to divided into a complex ethno-racial spatial partitioning. Here, the effects of globalization of violence reflecting an “implosion of global and national politics into the urban world” (Appadurai 1996, 152) trouble the already murky inside/outside boundary of “sovereign states”. The violence increasingly shifts from the traditional Israel’s Eastern frontier (the equivalent of the U.S. West) to what Robert Crooks has called an “urban frontier” (Crooks 1995). That is, taking the example of the U.S. Western frontier, Crook argues that the violence that used to take place on the latter shifted to urban areas and cities, where this new frontier is “articulated as a series of racial fault-lines” (Shapiro 2010, 11–12). As such, the city and urban space increasingly appears as “the durable materialization of a ‘concrete form of war’” that precede the displacement of the frontier (Luke 2008, 128). The ‘enemy’ can thus be found *within* the national space, and is identified with racially defined population identified to spaces such as “Arab towns”, “ulta-orthodox neighbourhoods”, etc. that appear increasingly opaque to state agents. The difficulty to police, control, regulate, and map those spaces as well as the displacement or blurring of enmity gives rise to profound anti-urban military discourse (Graham 2008a, 19).

If those “racial fault-lines” are increasingly made more obvious in large cities and their suburbs – such as Baltimore, Washington, LA, Miami ghettos in the U.S. or Paris and Marseille and their *cités* in France for instance – it is in part due to dynamics attached to globalization but also to the fundamental character of the city that challenges the basic premises of the nation-state. The city, as Martin Coward – following the works of Louis Wirth – points out, is characterized by its “size, density, and heterogeneity of the populations of cities that constitute ‘those elements of urbanism which mark it as a distinctive mode of life.’” It is heterogeneity that is its principal aspect of urbanity according to Wirth. For a greater population basically means a greater number of different identities, and a greater density means greater frequency of encounter between those differences. Hence, “*Heterogeneity*, then, can be said to be the defining characteristic of urbanity” (Coward 2008a, 166).

When confronted to this increasing heterogeneous character of the contemporary urbanity marked by the presence of the colonial ‘Other’ within large urban centers, nation-states, city administrations, and other institutions attached to the Enlightenment premises of the ‘Third Estate’ reinforced by the dyamics of globalization often react with strong ethnonationalist impulses that translate into a partitioning and walling of urban spaces, in gated communities and neighbourhoods, and oppositely, in ghettos and *cités* where the Other is confined*.* The spaces in-between, where the privileged and those shunted to spaces of ‘defered death’ (Puar 2007) meet become the terrain where violence is exacerbated: “Increasingly, the differences, tolerances, and hatreds of the globe are inseparably related to, and constituted through, day-to-day encounters, and cosmopolitan accommodations (and frictions) in the streetscapes, schools, city halls, and neighborhoods of cities.”(Graham 2008a, 9) Thus, the processes of globalization and their impacts (increased heterogeinity and presence of the ‘Other’ within amongst others) when paired with the threats of terrorism (real or imagined) lead to the militarization of urban space, which take various forms. This trend is all the more exacerbated in spaces of conflict, such as ex-Yugoslavia republics and in Israeli-Palestine where architectural and urbanistic spaces constituting symbols of the ethnic and religious heterogenous past and present, and the cosmopolitanism of cities such as Sarajevo and Jerusalem become the target of ethnonationalist ideology like Zionism. Ethnonationalist ideologies are translated into urban and architectural development and policies that amount to urbicide (Coward 2008b). The latter should be understood as “the deliberate denial, or killing, of the city.” (Graham 2008a, 25) Martin Coward – following Michel Foucault – summarizes this process:

Insofar as existence is characterized by agonistic heterogeneity it is characterized, to borrow from Foucault, by ‘reciprocal incitation and struggle… a permanent provocation’. That is, alterity provokes identity into defining its boundaries, as it is only through the definition of the borders of identity/difference that identity can perform itself. […] Ethnonationalism seeks to establish identities free of any relation to difference. […] Urbicide thus comprises a denial of the agonistic heterogeneity that characterizes urbanity. The destruction of urban fabric transforms agonistic heterogeneity into the *antagonism of separate ethnicities*.” (Coward 2008b, 168)

Amongst the condition of possibility and maintenance of this heterogeneity are the mobilities of the various inhabitants, goods, as well as the maintenance of architectural plurality and the design of urban space and cityscape that allow for various rhythms to be sustained. Has Henri Lefebvre pointed out, the notion of rhythm is central to grasp the heterogeneous character of the city, its heterogeneous spaces-times coordination (*coordination d’espaces-temps hétérogènes* (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 385)). Lefebvre writes that “Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm” (Lefebvre 2004, 15). Rhythms are thus constituted by the everyday life energies of humans, the successions of gestures (*mouvements*, or *‘gestes cheminatoires*’*)* – as well as non-humans, such as weather patterns, etc. – and there repetition in time on a defined space; “No rhythm without repetition in time and space, without reprises, without returns”. Seemingly drawing on the work of (Deleuze 1995), Lefebvre points out that repetition is a condition of possibility of rhythm but

there is no identical absolute repetition, indefinitely. Whence the relation between repetition and difference. When it concerns the everyday, rites, ceremonies, fêtes, rules and laws, there is always something new and unforeseen that introduces itself into the repetitive: difference. […] Not only does repetition not exclude differences, it also gives birth to them; it produces them. (Lefebvre 2004, 6–7)

And it is the difference produced by this repetition that is rhythmic, not the inverse (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 385–386). Hence, the city becomes the space where a high number of practices across multiple spaces create an everyday life, with its level of flexibility partly owing to the repetitions and regularities that become the tracks to negotiate urban life such as the routine practices of care, repair, policing and maintenance. Each of these spaces in the city has its order, and when the rhythms emanating from these spaces encounter each other, there is a polyrhythmia, “Polyrhythmia? It suffices to consult one’s body; thus the everyday reveals itself to be a polyrhythmia from the first listening.” (Lefebvre 2004, 17) Polyrhythmia, thus, as a fundamental component of the heterogenous character of the city, and the city as an overlapping of disparate rhythms, an articulation from within of an inter-rhythmicity without the imposition of a cadenza or measure (“superposition de rythmes disparates, articulations par le dedans d'une inter-rythmicité, sans imposition de mesure ou de cadence” (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 405)).

The destruction (or alteration) of urban fabric such as roads connecting various neighbourhoods, of building establishing common/shared spaces, or the imposition of measures that disrupt or kill the rhythms essential to urban life and encounters (i.e. curfews), restriction of movement of individuals belonging to certain classes (i.e. checkpoints, magnetic cards), ethnic or religious groups through various apparatuses of restriction, and ‘denial of access’ strategies (Warren 2008, 218) and even the construction of urban devices that permit to reduce friction between various subject positions(i.e. overpasses and underpasses) all participate in urbicide. The mobilities of ones, and the *im*mobilities of others become the result of a complex interplay between state intervention, regimes of power/knowledge, and the capacity of inhabitants to negotiate restrictions, flow deceleration or acceleration (Cresswell 2006, 2–4).[[3]](#footnote-3) For some to keep their rhythm unimpeded, others end up living an arrhythmic everyday life. For instance, in public spaces, “life is being saturated by ‘intelligent’ surveillance systems, checkpoints, ‘defensive’ urban design, and intensifying security” (Graham 2008a, 16; See also Marcuse 2008; Lyon 2008) Those technologies and surveillance system also contribute to the taming of urban polyrhythmia, inter-rhytmicity, and *cross-rhythms* by policing, disciplining and controlling subjects.

Appadurai had already pointed out in 1996 how urban violence and even urban warfare takes its energy “from macro events and processes […] that link global politics to the micro politics of the streets and neighbourhoods.” These processes would lead to “a new phase in the life of the cities, where the concentration of ethnic populations, the availability of heavy weaponry, and the crowded conditions of civic life create futurist forms of warfare ” (Appadurai 1996, 152–153) Needless to say, contemporary accounts of the conflict provided by the disciplines Political Science and and I.R. – and especially the institutional ones – have largely ignored the impacts of the globalization and its effects in terms of various forms of political violence, and urbicide.

Hence, in the following section, I propose to quickly gloss over the work of scholars who have tackled the urbanicity-violence nexus in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and demonstrate how these violence, or even, this war does not belong to the future anymore.

**Policing the Urban, (Re)Producing the Conflict Israel/Palestine**

A whole history remains to be written of *spaces* – which would at the same time be the history of *powers* […] – from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat […] anchorage in a space is an economico-political form which needs to be studied in detail. (Foucault 1980, 252)

In this short section, I simply review the works of others who’ve explored the effects of the Israeli “architecture of occupation”. I turn to Eyal Weizman ambitious project, *Hollow Land*, as a starting point to think critically the city. The latter – heeding Foucault’s insight on the relationship between the *space* and *power* (epigraph) – investigates how the various forms of Israeli domination and rule inscribed themselves in space in the Palestinian Occupied Territories (POT) since 1967 by analyzing “the geographical, territorial, urban and architectural conceptions and the interrelated practices that form and sustain them” (Weizman 2007, 5). The book effectively demonstrate how the most mundane Israeli expressions of architecture and planning methods serve as a powerful tool of domination and colonization and “how overt instruments of control, as well as seemingly mundane structures, are pregnant with intense historical, political meaning” (*Ibid*., 6), thus directly impacting the lives and livelihood of Palestinians and Israeli ‘domestic’ politics (what I would preferably call, following Michael J. Shapiro, ‘cultural gorvernance’).

Moreover, Weizman describes how this “formal manipulation” and “spatial organization”, in their form and organization, have been directed by aggressive intent – cutting major traffic roadways, surrounding villages and overlooking important cities or crossroads (*Op. Cit.*, 262). This is somethingthat underscores the non-negligible role and contributions of the civilian architects and planners who participate in the unlawful design of the occupation of Palestine. The condition of possibility for this transformation is in fact an improvement in techniques and technologies of architecture and planning, whereby the temporariness of an exceptional measure is contingent on the ‘elastic’ property of the spatial devices such as the separation barrier: “What the temporary 'state of emergency' is to time, this elasticity became to space.” (*Ibid.*, 173)

More concretely for instance, in the chapter entitled *Jerusalem: Petrifying the Holy City*, Weizman focuses on the urban planning, architecture and aesthetic planning of the city of Jerusalem. The chapter highlights the centrality of those very architectural as well as archeological practices in the colonization of the West Bank. The urban planning of Jerusalem was, before all, designed in order make the partition of the city impossible. That is, by razing a whole neighborhood to the ground and replacing it with building staging a new architecture, sometimes by changing the façade of buildings, what has been a historically extremely heterogeneous space is transformed into a smooth and homogenous ‘Jewish’ space. This urban design is complemented with an architectural one inspired from the British Mandate era, even heeding a 1918 bylaw requiring that every building’s exterior façade be using ‘Jerusalem Stone’.

The effect of this architectural design is manifold. First, it is used to transform the newly annexed parts of the city into an aesthetically familiar face to the Israeli Jews. Second, it blends and naturalizes the new with the old, making the former appear as organic with the ancient city sacred identity while hallowing the latter to expend into the Occupied Territories neighborhood of the city, in East Jerusalem (Weizman 2007, 30–33), and by the same token – and this is the third effect – it blurs and sanitizes the facts and violence of the occupation.

More generally, the aesthetic politics of such architectural design and spatial planning has the desired effect of sustaining the Zionist narration of the nation, policing and domesticating what was ‘Other’ and transforming it into the ‘same’, making co-extensive the homogenous national time with the inhabited space (Cf. Bhabha 2004). In such context, archeological works add to the process of legitimation of the colonization by exposing a stratum that would legitimate Jewish ownership of the land while destroying the strata inbetween this very stratum and present day ground level. What is then found underground is projected onto the ground level into an architectural design and building style called ‘archeologism’ (Weizman 2007, 42).

Archeology, urban planning and architecture thus becomes intertwined instruments that literally produce content for the Zionist archive from which the palimpsest of the narration of the nation is produced while erasing from this archive any proof and presence of a past that could have been, and that was in fact, otherwise. In other words, the newly developed space narrates the Zionist official history of *the* Jewish people, which in turn legitimates aggressive spatial practices. Space and time become co-extensive, legitimating each other.

Amongst other spaces of colonization, where Israeli-Palestinians and Palestinians are confined, is the Eastern part of Jerusalem. Public and social service available to most Israelis – such as public transportation and garbage collection – are there totally absent. For this reason, almost only Israeli-Palestinians and the poorest of the ultra-Orthodox live in this space where clashes between both groups are frequent. Ultra-Orthodox families coming from richer classes also increasingly populate other neighbourhoods of Jerusalem, and in those neighborhoods, the clashes are between the rapidly decreasing secular Israeli and the rapidly increasing orthodox populations. Each of those spaces articulates orders of violence that have been mostly ignored in contemporary understanding of the conflict.

For instance, an article recently published in the *Time* magazine allow us the grasp the general dynamic; events and processes that are often described is “guerrilla warfare” or simply “war”. Here it is worth quoting at length:

‘This is *war* over territory,’ says Pinchasi [a secular Jew from Jerusalem], speaking *without metaphor*. On Friday nights, he leads *commando reads* with like minded compatriots on *enemy positions*, dodging police and groups of angry ‘blacks’ – as the ultra-Orthodox are sometimes called – to *sow discomfort and mischief*. He’s been arrested; he’s been roughed up. But each weak he’s back out, an *urban guerrilla* in a hoodie, slapping posters of classic nude paintings on synagogue doors. […] ‘Here *it is going to be war*.’ (Vick 2012, 22 my emphasis)

Here, the language of war is not even metaphoric anymore. And this war, as most of the new tactics and strategies against Palestinians, is about “sowing discomfort”. In other words, we can talk of various orders of violence, where the same neoliberal tactics and strategies are used across different spaces; the only difference in between the latter is the intensities. We are thus forced, as I already mentioned previously, to think in terms distribution and variable intensities of violence rather than accept the simple debates about the absence or presence of war, for the latter is always there.

We could thus say that the city of Jerusalem, amongst other spaces, is formed by a multitude of spaces where governmentality is involved differently, creating various racial-spatial orders of violence which remain unseen when one takes a macropolitical angle of inquiry. That is, as Ariella Azoulay points out, in the definition of the urban space that is Jerusalem, “the national space is made sacred and is privileged over all other space of the city, in which there actually exist, or could have existed, complex interrelations irreducible to linkages between two parties external to one another.” (Ariella Azoulay, “Save as Jerusalem” in Copjec and Sorkin 1999, 133)

**Sacco and Delisle contra institutionalized space (change this)**

Là où la carte découpe, le récit *traverse*.[[4]](#footnote-4) (Certeau, 1990, 189)

It is in such context that I turn to comic (or graphic novel) medium, for the latter becomes, as Ann Miller (2008, 109) points out, an asset thanks to their subjective spatial representations that are particular aposit to highlight the “perceptions of the increasing fragmentation of city space, and its uprooting from connections with history, memory and identity.” In that sense, comics have the potential to resituated at the center of the analysis of the conflict spaces that tend to be depoliticized and ignored while pointing to the modes of resistance and poesis of the subjects confined to the marginal spaces.

Here, the question becomes how are the authors/cartoonists representing the violence of the Israeli policies on the city, as well as how are they actually showing, through their art, the fundamental heteroegenous character of the places they visit, their various rythms, the polyrhythmia of the city, in order to articulate a *critique* and also enable us to *think* (Deleuze sense) other of being and living together?[[5]](#footnote-5) Hence, in this section I explore the works of Joe Sacco and Guy Delisle; works that represent their experiences in Israel/Palestine. Particularly, the genre of the autographic is important, for as Michel De Certeau pointed out, every autobiographic narrative is before all, a narrative involving a ‘crossing to the other’ (“*passer à l’autre*”). Of the line of flight that takes one out of a place (*lieu*) characterized by its *statis* towards a space (*espace*) characterized by its open-ness, possibilities, movement (Certeau 1990, 163–164). And the medium, as we shall see, thanks to its spatial modalities allow this.

Both, Sacco and Delisle, have produced graphic novels that place their own experiences of everyday life during their stay in Israel/Palestine at the center of the drawings and the story they tell. Guy Delisle’s *Jerusalem Chronicles* can be read as a series of vignettes that may or may not be related to each other that present his everyday experience as a Québécois husband, father of two, and cartoonist, following his wife, Nadège, working for *Médecins Sans Frontière* (doctors without borders). Delisle ends up in Israel/Palestine by default. That is, nowhere it is stated that this particular was something desired. Joe Sacco’s *Palestine* is also a series of vignettes that can be read – just like Delisle – chronologically, but not having any particular role in the narrative of the graphic novel. In contrast with Guy Delisle, Joe Sacco, as a young graduate in journalism, had been motivated to go to Israel/Palestine in order report on events (especially clashes) and had been strongly influenced by the works of the American-Palestinian author Edward Said – *Orientalism* especially. The style of Sacco contrasts highly detailed cityscapes with sometimes-cartoonish human figures (himself being the most cartoonish of all) and sometimes figures and panels that get closer to the portrait. Delisle’s style contrast significantly with Sacco’s, as it rarely present as much details, and characters are much more cartoonish and iconographic. Sacco’s work is all in black & white, while a light coloring that can be related to the monochromatic shades marks Delisle’s.

*The Graphic Novel Genre, the Subject, and the City*

At a minimum, what Sacco’s and Delisle’s pieces on Israel/Palestine share is a *genre*. They could be considered as part of the “graphic memoirs”, an autobiography in the form of a graphic novel, or what Gilian Whitlock, following Leigh Gilmore, has called “autographics”; a concept meant “to draw attention to the specific conjunctions of visual and verbal text in this genre of autobiography, and also to the subject positions that narrators negotiate in and through comics” (Whitlock 2006, 966). For in fact, this particular genre possesses the characteristic – as most autobiographies – of an ambiguous “I” subject who occupies at least three different positions/roles, or, we could say alternatively, an “I” who is the result of an encounter between those three different protagonists: 1- the character on the page, 2- the author, and 3- the narrator (Chaney 2011, 3). To this triad, we could also add the reader who interprets the results of this encounter. As Ariella Azoulay (2012, 219–220) says of photography, we could say that the autographics “can be seen to result from the encounter between the four protagonists, each of whom might take on a different form”. The “I” of the author is thus a split one. If the author is partly behind the pen and partly in the character drawn on the page, the autographic or autobiographic graphic novel must always be about a self as another, or as Deleuze put it, I is another (Haverty Rugg 2011, 74; Cf. Deleuze 1989, 148).

This conceptualization of the author as a pluralized and fractured subject almost impossible to localize – emanating from the works of Michel (Foucault 1969) and Rolland Barthes (1993, 63–69) especially – has been helpful to challenge the “autobiographical pact” as conceptualized by Lejeune. The latter described autobiography as a “retrospective narration” about the “history of one’s own personality” which posits *a priori* a whole-hearted identity, an ipseity of the subject, or ‘selfhood’. That is, contra Lejeune, to problematize the relationship between the autobiographic genre and the question of the *origin* (time). For, according to Lejeune, the relationship of the author to the self remains the same all along, no matter the events and the subjects encountered. Autobiography, in this case, becomes the narration of a historical truth of the self (Regard 2001, 37), of the path of an origin in time.

It is precisely this notion of the timeless and constant ipseitic self that I want to challenge by dwelling on the autographics of Sacco and Delisle, for the former reproduce the dynamics of identity/difference (Self/Other) that are the condition of possibility for the conflict to be interpreted as it is today (formulation of knowledge) and reproduced (enmity). Does the writing and the drawing of the self posit the author doing so within these assemblages and discourses as the passive product of the spatial and architectural *dispositifs*, or, does it not, in fact, happens that these pieces of writing and drawing can be considered heterotopic? That is, could they constitute dissenting and contesting spaces, breaking with the geographic *doxa*, the map of the state? Doesn’t the – literally – graphic construction of the self (the autobio-*graphein,* the effect of the drawing of the author), presupposes a certain geographical craft, a specific relationship with the territory and cityscape? Does the autobiographic comic or graphic novel – the autographic – reproduces an absolute space, the space of the map and the state where everyone occupies its designated space or, does it not, in fact, produces *other spaces* (*espaces autres*) (Foucault 1994), an heterotopia where would be *outlined* (*se* *déssiner*, we say in French which literally means “to draw”) another relationship to oneself and to the institutional *dispositif*, new social and political relationships, where one can actually *make* *its own space*? (the question of what art *does*). (Regard 2001, 37) Couldn’t we think of the graphic narratives or comics as an other system of inscription that would literally draw other geographies or topographies of the author, putting into dismay the system of assignation of residence – the policing – of subjects, and redistributing the subject positions? In short, it is the question of a certain utopic ‘indisciplinarity’ or delinquency of the autographic as a spatial operation by which the author redefine himself, and by the same token, the topography she/he inhabits or visits. (*Ibid.*, 44)

Moreover, drawing from this problematization, I wonder if we could add another subject to this crowded “I”; could we think of the city itself, with its architecture, urban spaces, rhythms and etc. as a subject itself? Could the urban geography, its *agencement* or assemblages, its topography, also constitute an ‘aesthetic subject’ part of the encounter constituting the author writing and drawing herself in the autographic? Could space, not only time (events), also complicate the relationship of the author to the self, and its works? Could the author and its work be the effect of a multiplicity of geographic schemas, *milieus*? (Regard 2001, 33)

To grasp how autographic involves space, how authors have given themselves the space (*donné lieux)* to speak and possibly affect the archive, it is necessary to turn to a fundamental characteristic of the graphic novel genre (Regard 2001, 34): its spatial modalities. It is worth mentioning that scholars writing about comics and graphic novels have underscored the genre’s similitudes with cinema (Coughlan 2006, 835; Ahrens and Meteling 2010, 3; Parker Royal 2012, 67). For instance, the succession of panels that are ordered in space (left to right, top to bottom in the case of most euro-american productions) as well as the gutter – the space between panels – present a frame-to-frame temporal (and spatial) unfolding of a narrative. Has pointed out by another scholar, “comics are a unique hybrid media that combines words and pictures in a spatial sequence.” (Ahrens and Meteling 2010, 3) This succession of panels and the placement of words in the latter is sometimes associated with cinematic montage (Cioffi 1993, 107–108; Goggin and Hassler-Forest 2010, 1; Wolk 2007, 13–14).

Yet, we could argue that there is also a fundamental difference between the two aesthetic genres. That is how the reader/viewer’s experience is mediated. In cinema, frames follow each other in time. Cinema thus remains before all a temporal medium, while the graphic novel presents multiple frames on the same space of the page, making it essentially a spatial one (Miller 2008, 105). Of course, with the democratization of cinema and especially with the new technologies such as the DVD and etc., viewers can now fast forward or “rewind” to watch previous frames just as a graphic novel reader could flip a page back or read backward. It remains that the space of the page with its layout of multiple elements such as the panel (a single drawing; also called box or frame), the gutter, the tier (single row of panels), the splash (full page illustration), and the spread (two-pages illustration) as well as the elements occupying those spaces such as balloons, caption and onomatopoeia; all those give an inherently topo-*graphic* feature to comics/graphic novels that cinema doesn’t have.

It this these features, I would argue, that give autobiographic graphic novels or autobiographic its aesthetic power, its “the force of art” (Ziarek 2004) which also implies an ethical posture and, forcing the reader to challenge her understanding of politics based on “institutionalized relations and enabling alternative ‘configurations’” (Shapiro 2012a, 492) It is through an organization of time (events) in space, a particular form of ‘coordination of heterogenous spaces-times’ that allow for critical thought that the medium take *does* politics.

Obviously, the representations of various urban spaces, with their cityscapes and the rythms of inhabitants with their respective mobilities and *im*mobilitiesare always mediated through the memory of the “I” author and the eye of the “I” character who experienced the action depicted. What the autographic convey is thus a representation of space that is mediated by the affect of moment as well as a reflexivity of the author. In this context, the urban and the city emerge as an aesthetic subject. There is inevitably – at least in the work of Sacco and Delisle, but arguably so in most autographics – a fundamental encounter between the city or urban space as aesthetic subject and the “I” subject of the narrative as ‘conceptual persona’ (a nomad, stranger, migrant, *flâneur* and its vagrancies in the city).

*Travelogue - Flâneur*

I want to suggest that one of the main characteristic that give the art works here explore their aesthetic power is directly link with its *chronotope* – a space-time enunciation inherited from archetypal narratives –, the travelogue, and a specific conceptual persona it enacts, the *flâneur*. When speaking of latter, it is almost necessary to turn to Beaudelaire inspired version of Walter Benjamin. Informed by the latter, Jenks and Neves (2000, 1–2) argue that concept of the *flâneur* and its performance, *flânerie*, can be thought as an epistemic practice:

Flânerie, the flâneur’s activity, involves the observation of people and social types and contexts; a way of reading the city, its population, its spatial configurations whilst also a way of reading and producing texts. The flaneur introduces a phenomenology of the urban built around the issues of the fragmentation of experience and commodification, opening the way for a micro-sociology [and a micro-politics] of the urban daily life; the observation of the trivial, the ephemeral and fleeting should lead to a critical analysis of the structural features of urbanity and modernity.

While Joe Sacco’s character is one that is actively moving from one space to the other in search of testimonies and news stories and events to write about, Delisle’s movements reflect a less purposive or teleological characteristic. Nevertheless, with a purpose in mind or not, both end up “unhurriedly” walking – “botanizing the asphalt” – like Benjamin’s *flâneur,* a subject who encounters the city itself as aesthetic subject; the subject of an encounter, and the subject of their drawing/reporting. As Edward Said wrote of Joe Sacco’s *Palestine*, “The unhurried pace and the absence of a goal in his wanderings emphasizes that he is neither a journalist in search of a story nor an expert trying to nail down the facts in order to produce a policy” (in Sacco 2007, vi) (Figure 1 and 2).

FIGURES REMOVED

Figure 1 and 2: Delisle and his *flânerie*.

It is precisely this “disinterested” character, to play on the Kantian definition of aesthetics, that stimulates Sacco’s and Delisle’s ethico-aesthetic sensibility. That is, it is because they are not there to formulate a policy or any other text that could be framed and decodable through an institutionalized loci of enunciation (the state, IOs, etc.), neither as journalists trying to produce an article pleasing the mainstream U.S. or Western media. In that sense, both characters appear as something akin to W. J. T. Mitchell’s *gastarbeiter* tourist, the “innocent abroad”, “the migrant worker who brings nothing but some [drawing] skills developed elsewhere […] as a guest-worker […] being invited (with the clear implication that the stay is temporary).” As Mitchell explains, this conceptual persona “may have a certain potential for witnessing and testifying to a surface experience of landscape, a comparative experience that has to be understood in autobiographical terms…” (Mitchell 2000, 197) Moreover, as others have pointed out previously, the medium that is the graphic novel, the city, and the *flâneur* share close relationship:

The competence of comics in capturing urban space and city life can be found within the cityscape itself.” […] This structuring gaze of comics implements a topographical reading of the cityscape, which is led by the point of view in frames, panels, and sequences. […] Comics do not demand the contemplative as well as fixed gaze of the classic central perspective. Instead, the demands the loose and moving gaze of the urban *flâneur*. (Ahrens and Meteling 2010, 6)

Both graphic novels present a character who appears as “an active or mobile subject who *reads* the world at hand” through their ‘walking gestures’ (*gestes cheminatoires* (Certeau 1990, 148–152)) and then producing – as they encounter places, their names, and their very materiality – an alternative mapping of the urban space and the city (Shapiro 2012b, 28). It is here that one the main characteristics of the comic genre come into play. That is how Sacco and others are illustrating cities, and especially how they introduce relatively little (if we are to compare with the images of the photographic genre). How they draw the city, what they choose to include or exclude from the drawings is of central importance for it reveals what marked them at particular space-time as well as the process of perception and recollection. In that sense, the comic is particularly apposite to convey the process of perception as conceptualized by Henri Bergson, who thought of it mostly a process about subtraction.[[6]](#footnote-6) In fact, Scott McCloud insists "cartooning isn't just a way of drawing, it is a way of seeing" (McCloud 1994, 31). This conceptualization is particularly in tune with the Kantian problematic of *how* do things appear as such in the first place. Hence, comics, when drawn with skills and style (as in any other aesthetic medium and genre) become an excellent and apposite medium to convey the politics of sensation; that is, how the partititon of the sensible is organized, policed, managed, and naturalized so as to reproduce understandings of the conflict that erase various forms and intensities of violence such as the racial-spatial order of urban space in Israel/Palestine.

Hence, by depicting the characters, the conceptual persona of the *flâneur*, the *gastarbeiter* tourist, the ‘innocent abroad’, who strolls from one of those space to the other without specific aim, simply reading the world at hand, what this medium does is to *make visible* the rhythms and inter-/intra-coding that is precisely policed, repressed, hidden, controlled by the state, and the ethnonational racial-spacial order. There is a sort of *transcoding*, a rhythmic or melodic plan (*plan rythmique ou mélodique*) inherent to the art depicted here (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, 386). The drawings of Sacco and Delisle embody the expressive-becoming of repressed rhythms (*devenir-expressif du rythme*), deterritorialisation of institutionalized rhythms and reterritorialisation with transcoded rhythm in the form of the autographic: two styles and a medium that offer territorial counter-points (*contre-points territoriaux*) and territorial patterns (*motifs territoriaux*) (*Ibid.,* 390). The comic medium and the autographic genre create the conditions of possibility for escaping certain territories and forming new ones. Thus, Sacco and Delisle’s drawings put forth a particular conception of space, linked to their status as tourist or flaneurs. It is one that relates to the ways in which the imaginary national space as a whole is constructed. If the latter is obviously bounded by administrative borders, it gets its sense of identity not so much by reinforcing these borders but by reinforcing the qualitative character of ‘transnational’ relationships (enmity, etc.) (Miller 2008, 106).

In the work of Sacco, this very subjective process is express with an interplay of highly detailed urban spaces, the cityscape and its rhythms, often presented through a two-pages splash or spread (Figure 5), and the character’s subjective experience, infused with emotions – fear, stupefaction, awe, etc. – which produced a highly filtered rendering of the urban space (Figure 3 and 4).

FIGURES REMOVED

Figure 3 and 4: Highly emotional action with almost no cityscape in the background.

FIGURE REMOVED

Figure 5: Two full pages spread depicting urban life and the rhythms of Gaza.

Hence, one of the features of Sacco and Delisle’s art is the use of the single panel covering a full page or even the two pages spread to introduce a break in the rhythm of the previous panels. In the case of Sacco, these full-page panels are often very detailed in comparison with the rest of the work and appear sometime as closer to the non-narrative genre of the *portrait* rather than the typical graphic novel story. Yet, this portrait is still part of the sequence of the book, it is still part of a sequence with other panels, and hence, it takes part in the constitution of the meta-rhythm of the autographic. As Becker (2010, 273–274) underscores, “The emphasizing of a single panel in a stream of picture is a genuine urban perception” and here, the complex assemblage that is the city, with its various languages, rhythms, and its racial-spatial order, with its polyphonic and heteroglossic character “has always favored the perception of great tension between a single picture and the devaluating stream of images”. This is not to say that these ‘portrait’ panels reflect more of a highbrow versus a lowbrow artistic register. Rather, this rhythmic feature of Sacco’s and Delisle’s autographics produces “an urban gaze/habitus with both a distracted and examining perception [… and has the] potential of a two-way signification of a panel corresponds therefore to the paradoxical habitus of a ‘distracted examiner’ as Walter Benjamin described the mode of cognition of the modern urban public.”

FIGURE REMOVED

Figure 8: Three different vignette introduction panels in Delisle’s work.

Moreover, those full page often act as splash – the panel that introduce the section of the novel – and as such, they play the role of ‘catch-picture’, with its function of producing a visual information analogous to the title of the vignette. In the work of Delisle, being more iconographic, this is often expressed at the beginning of every vignette with a panel introducing a single item of the urbanscape. It can be a plane, a cement block which serves as a roadblock, a swing for kids, etc (Figure 8).

I would argue that these portraits-like spreads serve a very important function – especially so in the case of Sacco’s work. That is, while “sketchiness renders the works *lisible*”, forcing the readers into an active role of interpretation and suturing (Cioffi 1993, 117), the portraits mark a pause in this rapid rhythmic pace. It demands that one takes his time to contemplate the details represented through the skills of the artist. Moreover, this emphasizing of a detailed single panel against a sequence of more sketchy panels that convey a narrative and its affects makes a story reversible, as Roland Barthes would put it (Becker, *Op. Cit.*). Here, the “biocularity” – the “distinctive verbal-visual conjunctions that occur in comics” (Whitlock 2006, 966), the interplay of words and images in the same panel – which demands to read back and forth between images and words is suspended for an instant. The reader is thus forced to reflect about the effects of this interplay, thus revealing “the visuality and thus the materiality of words and the discursivity and narrativity of images" (Hirsch 2004, 1213). Another effect of this specific technique is of taking the reader to question the narrative and memories told through the interviews, maps, etc., to acknowledge their subjectivity and thus reflect about the *experience* of those individuals living in Israel/Palestine. It allows the reader to question how the autobiographical experience mediates identity and performs memory through a combination visual and verbal elements (Chaney 2011, 6). It is thus by playing with these two forms of panels – the traditional grid sequence and the *portrait* – that Sacco create a sense of *rhythm* (i.e. the dynamic relationship of time and space) that is fundamentally necessary.

This rhythm is also conveyed through the size and number of panels on a single page. For instance, in one particular vignette of Sacco’s *Paletine,* entitled “Moderate Pressure, part 2” (pp. 102-113) one of Sacco’s interviewees is narrating is experience of being arrested, blindfolded, taken away, and tortured in an Israeli prison. As his story unfolds and emotions such as anxiety build up and as we, readers, flip through the pages of this short story, we literally feel the emotions. This is achieved through the increase in rhythm of panels. The story starts with three panels per page, moving to six, then nine, the 12, then 16, then 20, and then a single panel covering the second half of the last page of the vignette (Figure 6). There is thus a notion of organization of panels in space that relates to the conveying of an experience and affect.

FIGURE REMOVED

Figure 6: panel rhythm conveying emotions, affects.

As this last panel reveals an heterogeneity of categories of people (ultra-orthodox, secular, etc.), we could say that this dynamic relationship between space and time proper to the graphic novel makes it particularly apposite to think critically about the ethnoreligious discourses that frame the dispossession of the Palestinian from their land and the confinement of the latter to space of deferred death. That is,

Because time is spatialized in graphic narrative, where readers see the process of character development across panels, comics can underscore the fluidity and sheer variability of ethnic identity. The breakdown of space into continuous images – that is, the paneled framing of the comics narrative – suggests the changeability of the subject, that an individual can be represented from multiple perspectives and that ‘the self’ is less stable that we normally imagine. In this way, the formal system of comics can help reveal the dynamics of ethnoracial discourse. (Parker Royal 2012, 70)

In Delisle, the ethnoracial discourse of Zionism is contested through his representations of a wide range of subjectivities: religious, ethnic, linguistic, etc. within a relatively very small space. His drawings testify to a very wide range of different practices of everyday life, how jews and Christians from various backgrounds, ethnicities, and branches live their “Jewishness” and “Israeliness”, that is, their difference in unity. In some of his drawing, this heterogeneity is contrasted with the common fear or hatred of the ‘Arab’ character which – as the short vignette in the introduction of this paper pointed out – seams to be the homogenizing “foreign” element that holds the Israeli-Jewish society together (see Figure 7). He also points out how these various subjects have made their place within this space. In that sense, his autographic questions the notion of ethnic identity as a function of geographic space (Parker Royal 2012, 77).

FIGURE REMOVED

Figure 7: Differences within Jewish-Israeliness, followed by the ‘Arab’ Other.

*Comics, Space, and the City*

Amongst the possible functions regarding the space and the politics of the city, the autographics analyzed in this paper operate a sort of bridging, or suturing that reestablishes links between various urban spaces or *milieux* that are increasingly disconnected, isolated from each other by the policing of various bodies, rhythms, etc. That is, by reuniting those bounded and separated *milieux* on the plane space of the page. In one frame, one can find a milieu, and in the next, another that is normally totally separated from the former. In between the two, the gutter allows the reader/interpreter to perform a suturing reestablishing the complex interplay between the two. Also, the structure of Delisle and Sacco autographic, based on short vignettes no longer than five or six pages, becomes central here, for the reader can easily draw a link and suture without having to go far back.

FIGURE REMOVED

Figure 8: Beit Hanina neighbourhood, enforced ‘demodernization’

For instance, in the works discussed here the Israeli urban space appears not only as Jewish occidental places fitting the narration of the nation, but also as mazes of alleys, Palestinian de-developed neighborhoods, slums with dense population and trash piles (Figure 8). The high class and developed parts of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv (Figure 9) clash with the images of East Jerusalem neighborhood which appear de-develop or ‘forcibly demodernized’ (Graham 2008b) when contrasted with the former. It is in this context that the city appears as an enemy (city as target), for these spaces reinforce the Otherness and the indecipherable-ness of the racial Other. In a manner reminiscent of Dickens’ *Our Mutual Friend*, a novel in which the famous writer is one of the first to connect the East and West Ends of London through a network of space, characters, and relationships, we could say that Delisle and Sacco’s cityscape is an all-embracing heterogeneous one which works in the same way as Dickens, connecting spaces that are usually conceived as homogenously separated (Shapiro 2010, 1–24). In this way, the artwork of Delisle and Sacco expose the spatial-racial order and the violent practices attached to the policing and production of these spaces. The heterogeneity of these spaces is ignored or policed by the institutionalized epistemic modes.

FIGURE REMOVED

Figure 9: West Jerusalem, stark contrast with Beit Hanina.

Moreover, both artists often depict in their drawings the various techniques implemented to separated those space. As in the case of the Figure 2 above, residents of Arab neighbourhoods do not have access to the bus lines to go into West Jerusalem and the rest of Israel, and they are not accepted on Israeli buses. At other times, it is the long lines of cars or people waiting at the various checkpoints that separate the various areas that are inserted, with the effect of breaking the rhythm of the narrative, thus conveying to the reader the same affective *arhythmia* caused by those securization practices (see Figure 10).

FIGURE REMOVED

Figure 10: Delisle’s Checkpoint experience.

Moreover, Delisle plays on the affect that this “architecture of occupation” and the apparatus of security have on his art production process. He draws himself drawing and being affected (Figure 11), something that brings the reader to reflect on the condition of production of the autographic she/he is reading, and also pointing out that no one being there – on the field – can objectively represent the situation without her/himself being affected.

FUGURE REMOVED

Figure 11: The artist affected by the “architecture of occupation” and the security apparatus

Here, the autographic becomes a genre and a medium that allows the artist to draw himself (the plural ‘I’) and presents its work as the result of an encounter with the urban space, its rhythms, and architecture. As noted afore, we have to reflect on what is kept and what is excluded from the drawing (highly subjective process) for instance which becomes the questioning of the process of perception, but there are also techniques, such as Guy Delisle *mise en abyme* (himself, drawings himself, drawing himself…), and also the focusing on specific components of the urban environment, his drawing of cement blocks for instance, as something that left a mark. Delisle’s *mise en abime* – a representation within a representation – serves multiple functions, amongst others, it acts a detachment technique that leads the reader “to question the ontological existence of diegetic reality, as if the phenomenological ‘pour soi’ [for itself] of the representation negated the ‘en soi’ [in itself] of any referent.” (Leroy 2008, 124) As Paul Ricoeur pointed out, seen from a geographic angle, discourse always prevents the subject of maintaining itself, to access its ipseity, to immediately coincides with itself, even so, to coincide with its ​​own body (Regard 2001, 35; Ricoeur 1990, 1995)

Another way that these autographics intervene political is by inserting subjects in spaces that are no longer accessible to them through memory, recollection, etc. That is, through the recollections given by the encountered subjects being drawn on the page. Moreover, reinscribing those subject or drawing those subject in those inaccessible spaces does not only fulfill a function of past remembrance and archive inscription, but also a future function, of reimagining a living together within those very spaces, with Israelis, the ones inhabiting the space. In that sense, the genre, and especially the medium, achieves a distancing effect that allows the reader to re-envision or re-think traumatic events and move beyond. As Whitlock (2006, 978) points out, “The notion that comics free us ‘to think and imagine and see differently’ drives these engagements with the pain and suffering of others, but the essence is the medium not the message.”

When it comes to this technique, Sacco and Delisle differ. That is, Sacco draws the stories he is being told in black and white, and as such, does not visually differentiate them from the ‘present’, past and present appears conjointly without difference. Hence, we could say that in Sacco’s drawings, there is a structural lack of distinction between the scene Sacco (the character) is presently living in the story and the memories/testimonies narrated. By doing so, he is able to “work with dissonant material, fragmented by trauma, and organizes them into a form of knowledge” or archive (Leigh Gilmore as cited in Tabachnick 2011, 108). Differently, Delisle uses the meta-feature that constitutes the color to mark a difference between episodes, and times. In this case, the use of colors has a metaphorical purpose pointing to “the refusal of a simple linear story” (Becker 2010, 274).

Those patterns can be explored through multiple angles, sometimes on the very same space of the page. In that context, one of the often-used graphic novel strategies is to simultaneously employ and subvert single-point perspectival representation by turning to the multiperspectival narrative, allowing the reader to experience the first-person point of view and third person point of view alternatively, and “these multiple perspectives reveal the multiperspectival experience of the city.” (Kavaloski 2012) For instance, one of the techniques Sacco and Delisle use is to draw maps on the same page as panels presenting the life of the city. Doing so, they superpose the official discourse of the state that ignores the complexity of urban politics with the cityscape and its polyrhythmia. In these cases, the map depicted in Sacco and Delisle paradoxically capture the political flux and the dubious political claims of Israel, and thus, represents nothing, they reveal that the state’s frontier “is an ever-changing palimpsest, a text whose imprinted signifiers are subject to being relabeled according to military conquest, and betray the doubt as to their very permanence.” (Leroy 2008, 130)

In sum, if the Israeli architecture of occupation has been mostly directed to the uses of policing and war-making, the comics of Sacco and Delisle – as spatial medium – are well suited to well suited to the rendering of a political project that depends on a particular conception of […] citizenship, one that seeks to make connections across borders and to reclaim city space as a public sphere” (Miller 2008, 115). The heteroglossic and plurivocality characters of the medium *and* the autographic genre (conflict between the speech of characters, the speech of narrators, etc.) and the insertion of this plurality of narrational interventions in space are thus closely related to their effectivity, their aesthetic power. In that sense, the graphic novel and autographic contribute to critically questioning what citizenship means at the local, national, and international levels in the context of a conflict crisscrossed by the effects of globalization. As Anne Miller 2008, 104) points out, “it is this particular inflection of citizenship means as both gendered and local that the strip puts forward, against the background of a certain dissolution of national identity.”

**Conclusion**

In an oft-cited short piece, Roland Barthes pointed out that a map and its epistemic conditions of possibility (“scientific geography” and “modern cartography”) offer an “obliteration [… of] signification” (Barthes in Leach 1997, 166), an idolization of the state as a bounded territorial and cultural entity (Cf. Mitchell 2000, 207). For this reason, the map is no less an ethical statement, but it is one that defends a state morality and state-centric ontology (HARLEY 1990, 6). The map produces an image of the nation-state that “mirrors and justifies – Roland Barthes would say ‘naturalizes,’ or ‘mythologizes’, as it aims to present ideologically constructed culture as nature” (Leroy 2008, 120) We could add that it also offers an institutionalized a-cultural and apolitical mapping of space. What the autographics of Sacco and Delisle offer us is an alternative subjective reading and representation of the city, urban space and its rhythms that gives back the dense and deep cultural layers, heterogeneity and polyrhythmia to that space. As I have argued above, thanks to its spatial modalities, the autographic and the graphic novel genre is particularly apposite to do so. It repoliticizes spaces that the dominant institutionalized readings of the conflict have ignored or too easily glossed over all along, and allow us to critically address the marginalisation of the other voices and their spaces from the our understanding of geopolitical events (Dowler and Sharp 2001, 168). As one scholar wrote of Joe Sacco’s work before me, “Sacco’s shifting temporalities and stark images of violence, […] supplement content that ‘fights against the social production of distance and moral indifference’ and challenges the black-and-white scripts of popular media or conventional geopolitics.” (Holland 2012, 114). Is sum, it shows how the micropolitics of the racial-spatial order of the city are co-constitutive with the macropolitics of what our discipline has termed “the Israeli-Palestinian conflict”.

The two graphic novels express a much higher level of complexity to the antagonisms (violent) than what the maps suggest – simply Arab vs. Jews, Israelis vs. Palestinians, etc. The urban vagrancies of Sacco and Delisle, foregrounding a certain ‘indisciplinarity’, crossing boundaries, also helps cut across institutionalized frontiers and borders and provide us to think in a productive way about the complex relations of forces and different orders of violence. They convey a much more complex cartography of enmities and antagonisms than the one presented by most of contemporary institutional understanding of the conflict in Political Science and IR.

The works of Sacco and Delisle self-reflexively engage with the ethics of representation and formulates a critique of the ‘metaphysics of presence’. It articulates a critique of the epistemic imperative of the ethnographic dogmatism, the ‘having to be there’, and it asks us to reflect on the power of art forms such as sequential art. That is, they point to the difficulty of tending to the Palestinians, to the difficulties to *feel* the “experience” of the Palestinian, their plight. No matter the number of interviews conducted and the number of days, weeks, or months spent, these artworks testify that “being there” does not suffice to develop ethical attitude toward those who we must attend for, and drawing might very well be their way of adopting this ethical posture.

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1. Translation: “One could perhaps say that certain ideological conflicts animating present-day polemics oppose the pious descendents of time and the determined inhabitants of space.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Edward Said writes: "... the more I read compulsively in Sacco’s *Palestine* comic books, [...], the more convinced I was that here was a political and aesthetic work of extraordinary originality, quite unlike any other in the long, often turgid and hopelessly twisted debates that had occupied Palestinians, Israelis, and their respective supporters." (in Sacco 2007, vi) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Tim Cresswell (2006, 2) differentiates between *movement* and *mobility*. The latter is conceptualized as inherently criss crossed by power relations that involves a representational aspect as well as a bodily/material aspect while the former is thought as “abstracted mobility (mobility abstracted from contexts of power)”. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Translation : “what the map cuts up, the story cuts across” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Gilles Deleuze writes: “Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental *encounter*.” (Deleuze 1995, 139) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. I would like to thank Jairus Grove for pointing this out. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)