INNOVATING THE NARRATIVE: A STUDY INTO THE EMERGING GENRE OF GRAPHIC JOURNALISM

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Abstract: The rise of visual culture and subsequent demise of print culture has raised many questions with regard to both the future of journalism as well as political cartooning. However examples of award winning and critically acclaimed journalistic comic books like Joe Sacco's "Footnotes in Gaza", Art Spiegelman's " Maus" and illustrated storytelling formats adopted by leading newspapers like New York Times; points to the emergence of new format of storytelling in Journalism- Graphic/comic Journalism. According to Dan Archer comic journalism or graphic journalism is an umbrella term that covers any approach using both words and images together as opposed to the conventional form of text with separate illustrations.Although visual narrative storytelling has existed for thousands of years, the use of comic as a media to cover real life events for news organizations is at a all time peak; highlighting both innovation in the format of storytelling as well as a much needed step taken to survive in the global visual culture.

This study will aim to analyze this emerging genre of journalism and highlight the trend of using illustrative storytelling by leading news organization as a precursor to new and innovative format of journalism that is often referred to as future of journalism. The study will critically examine Joe Sacco's journalistic comic book, " Footnotes in Gaza" a book based on the conversations with Palestinians in Rafah and the neighboring town of Khan Younis, interweaving the events of 1956 with the events in Rafah at the time of the interviews(the bulldozing of homes, the death

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of Rachel Corrie and the reactions to the outbreak of the Iraq War), along with that award winning illustrative piece by Centre for Investigative Journalism; "In Jennifer's room", which details the sexual abuse at Californian mental facility and "Inside Death row", a five five-part graphics journalism series from The New York Times' Opinion section, which takes readers on a journey with editorial cartoonists Chappatte and hiswife, journalist Anne-Frédérique Widmann, telling the story of 4 prisoners on a death row. These journalistic graphical accounts will be taken as at the main sample to try to get a basic understanding of this new innovative genre. Advantages, disadvantages as well as the audience response to the stories will also be studied to get a more inclusive insight into the field of graphic journalism. The main focus of the study is to locate the advent of graphic journalism in context with the decline in both print culture as well as political cartooning and establish whether in the new age global visual culture, is graphic/comic journalism the way forward for journalism.

Key Words: Graphic Journalism, Visual Culture, Footnotes in Gaza, In Jennifer's Room

1. Introduction: There is no doubt that we presently live in a visual culture and even so if it could be said that the future is also going to be the visuals. Be it consumption of news, leisure activities, information, food and even relationships, visuals play a predominant role. From using visuals as an aid to the main text, we have shifted to using texts as an aid to understand visuals. What also needs to be understood is that usage of visual narrative isn't a new phenomenon, from cave paintings to Mesopotamian relief carvings in 2250 B.C, the actual history of storytelling may be accredited to visuals themselves. But with the rise of printing press and lack of technological intervention to facilitate printing of visuals, the text became predominant, giving rise to the print culture. The predominance of text is and in some scholarly circles still remains so much that print culture is often referred to as the high culture belonging to intellectuals of the society and visuals to be the low culture catering to the illiterate class of society that are intellectually incapable of understanding the text.

So what led to the rise of visual culture? Nicholas Mirzoeff defines visual culture to be concerned with visual elements and events in which information, meaning or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology. And what is meant by visual technology

is; any form of apparatus designed either to be looked at or to enhance natural vision from oil painting to television to internet (Mirzoeff, 1998).

The technological revolutions greatly enhanced the visual experience but for the greater part of it the visuals were still subordinate to text. But with the rise of globalization, commercialism and the need to reach more and more people without any communication barriers, visuals proved to the universal answer; for visuals didn't require any translation to be understood or believed. From the rise of visual culture came the need to understand the visual narrative. The laws and grammar governing the textual structures vary from visual structures; add to that the explosion of visuals in our daily life and our acceptance of bombardment of visual everyday has although wired our brains to visuals but understanding them is a very less explored field.

Locating the emergence of the visual in the postmodern society cannot be better understood than by tracing the decline of print culture in the way we comprehend information. From the dominance of newspapers to their decline and subsequent rise of visually centric journalism; the change didn't involve only the medium i.e. from text to visual but the ways of gathering and comprehending the information has also changed. This paper seeks to fill the much needed gap in understanding the structure, features and effects of visual culture vis-à-vis graphics on journalism. And also try to form an understanding as to how graphics in the form of illustrated stories or graphic novels have brought innovation into the field of journalism; not only in term of presentation and consumption but also in dealing with the golden principles of objectivity and neutrality.

1.1 From Print Journalism to Graphic/Comic Journalism:

Graphic journalism or also known as comic journalism is one such newer innovation that is once again reshaping the field of journalism. Graphic or Comic journalism is a broad umbrella term applied to that form of journalism which uses comics as means to cover non-fiction events. Graphic/Comic journalism builds upon the aspects of literary journalism which seeks to create lasting meaning from narrated events and not just simple transmission of facts. Literary journalism's emphasis on the story and on the ideas and emotions conveyed by it relates directly to what some comics have been doing in recent years. Rising out of the underground and

independent comics scene, "comics journalism" combines the structural conventions of the traditional comic book with those of literary journalism (Priego,2016). Keeping in trend with the visual culture, graphics in the form of sequential art, cartooning and info-graphics present a story without compromising the journalistic integrity. Using the combination of words and images and new digital innovations, graphic journalism is creating a platform for an entirely new immersive and interactive journalistic platform which allows users/ readers to navigate and choose the items from the reportage making it informative and not redundant.

What makes graphic/comic journalism powerful is the ability of the graphics to help readers digest vast amount information in a very short span of time, without actually taking anything from the information but rather making it more engaging. The reason manual book instructions are presented with the help of graphics; is the inherent simplistic nature of graphics that can be used to convey "n" number of ideas and instructions. Graphic/comic journalists bank on this aspect of graphic visuals which amplifies the meanings by oversimplification. From memoirs, travelogues to day to day reportage the genre can be employed easily into almost every situation; infact it has also be known to be employed in spreading information in areas where there is illiteracy or where language becomes a barrier. Hashit Shah a former BBC journalist is working on the same lines, receiving funding from Knight Foundation for his Smartphone app, the journalist is working on delivering graphic journalism stories to Indian communities (Nieman,2015).

On the other hand the genre is drastically different to the traditional form of journalism which emphasizes on principles of timeliness, objectivity and neutrality. Graphic/comic journalism is a slow form of journalism, it can't be produced in a hurry to reach the audiences first, while that can be a disadvantage in today's of 24X7 cycle of breaking news. But on the other hand it can also bring a fresh perspective which stands apart from the clutter of breaking news coverage. Similarly traditional aspects of journalism value the qualities of objectivity and neutrality in journalism, which are also referred to the foundation principles of journalism. Graphic/comic journalism on the other hand presents a rather subjective perspective on the matter they are reporting.

Comic journalists like Sacco and others have openly accepted the constraints of subjectivity in this form of journalism. However they also point to a new shift from the traditional journalism whereby stories and events worth reporting either find themselves being edited or diluted out on the count of being neutral or versions of both the parties are added to sound objective.The new form on the other hand openly accepts of not trying to balance out the stories. Rather it portrays the reality as the journalist sees it. This aspect of comic journalism thereby puts reporter in the center of the story, where the journalists aren't a mere voice or talking head but a person with a viewpoint, who is himself/herself participating in the narrative. In words of Sacco, the journalist becomes a part of the story. It is this involvement according to comic journalists that directly connects the story with the people and presents the information in way that makes readers critically examine it rather than simply consume it.

Contemporary nonfiction comics reflect the heritage of the underground "comix" of the late 1960s and 1970s. Born as an alternative to the commercially driven superhero tales addressed to a teenage audience, the works of Harvey Kurtzman , Robert Crumb and Harvey Pekar helped define the potential of comics to tell stories based on real events(Preigo,2016).

While successful nonfiction graphic/comic narratives made their place in the literary filed. Works of Joe Sacco like Palestine, Safe Area Gorazde, and the war in eastern Bosnia and footnotes in Gaza along with interactive storytelling through graphics and comics by journalist Dan Archer have in one way laid the foundation of reemergence of comic journalism.Though the use of political cartoons as a journalistic tool since 1700's points to the historicity of use of graphics in journalism. Used primarily as a means to reach the illiterate class, use of comics as a journalistic tool has moved beyond the satirical comments or caricature. While political cartooning at its own still manages to hold ground and is very much relevant, the current trend of decline in print culture has led to crisis like situation for political cartoonist. In the research by Herb Block foundation, there were approximately 2,000 editorial cartoonists employed by newspapers in the United States. Today there are fewer than 40 staff cartoonists, and that number continues to shrink (Herb Block Foundation,2011). However the report also suggests towards the growing trend of digital comic journalism by suggesting that digital age presents more potential outlet for editorial cartoons that at any time in the history of the news media.

While the decline in print culture seems persistent, the attempts at using of graphics as a journalistic tool as the main medium for telling stories are also coming forth. Top news organizations are starting the trend of publishing long illustrated news stories and receiving a positive response towards them also. This along with success of works of Joe Sacco along with likes of Dan Archer and many others points to the future of journalism to be in comics.

2. Sample Study

From Joe Sacco's footnotes in Gaza, to award winning illustrative piece by Centre for Investigative Journalism; "In Jennifer's room", to "Inside Death row", a five five-part graphics journalism series from The New York Times' Opinion section, along with Nisoor square shootings by Dan archer will be critically analyzed. The main purpose is to comprehend the nature comic journalism at the same time, seek to understand the nuances to this form journalism in light of its innovation with digital technologies .The analysis will also try to ascertain the meaning generation structures used in the comic journalism all the while comparing it to traditional form of journalism and try to come to a conclusion that comic journalism through its narrative power is suitable for telling stories and depicting events that traditional journalistic tool would have found hard to cover or unsuitable. The above mentioned sample will be critically analyzed through the prism of graphic narrative theory and rhetorical analysis.

2.1) Footnotes In Gaza: Written by Joe Sacco in 2009, the book is based on the conversations with Palestinians in Rafah and the neighboring town of Khan Younis, that interweaves the massacre of Khan Younis & Rafah in 1956 through interviews, direct testimonies and author's own observation. The genesis of the book however goes back to 2001 when Sacco with journalist Chris Hedges went on an assignment to the Gaza strip for Harpers' magazine. For the assignment the duo focused on the lives of the people in the town of Khan Younis and how they were coping in the early months of second intifada. The submission at the end of the assignment by Chris Hedger considered the massacre in Khan Younis in 1956 where 256 and 111 Palestinians at Rafah were killed and; a significant part of the story, however in the print edition the facts regarding the massacre were sidelined completely. These events further inspired Sacco to research about the event and eventually present a journalistic account in the form of comics.

The vividness and pace of Sacco's drawings, combined with a highly informed and intelligent verbal narrative, work extremely well in telling the story. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how any other form of journalism could make these events so interesting. Many newspaper or television reporters understand that the roots of today's crises lie in obscure, unpublicized events. But they also recognize that their news editors are most interested in what is new and are likely to dismiss diversions into history as journalistic self-indulgence liable to bore and confuse the audience (Cockburn, 2009). The book has won many accolades over the years for its in-depth war reportage along with unique still of presentation. In 2009 Los Angeles Times Book Prize Graphic Novel Finalist, in 2010 Ridenhour Book Prize along with Eisner Award for Best Writer/Artist–Nonfiction and in 2012 Oregon Book Award: Pacific Northwest College of Art Graphic Literature Award.

Footnotes in Gaza is a perfect sample to understand the growth and acceptance of comic journalism. Sacco in his book is not only challenging the journalistic traditions by using comics as the journalistic tool but he also innovates with narrative, whereby he chronicles the entire process of reportage and investigations. The book not only strives to present an event that lay under a pile of obscurity in an honest and simplistic way but also humanizes the entire event in the process.

2.2) Nisoor Square Shootings: created by Dan Archer, Nisoor Square Shooting is a piece of graphic journalism which reconstructs the 2007 killings in the Nisoor Square Iraq by the American security firm Blackwater; which killed 17 civilians and wounded 24. The piece recreates the story of the incident through an interactive web-comic which allows readers to access the story from various perspectives. Dan Archer in his piece has created a multi-perspective story from the perspectives of civilians labeled with yellow icons, the blackwater troops labeled with red icon and green for Iraqi soldiers. The viewer can experience the story from all the perspectives, giving a wholesome view of the entire event. The perspectives have been created by the first person testimonials, along with that Archer has also provided the optionsof knowing the source or additional information regarding the event, which could be accessed by clicking on the various icons. Archer thus employs digital tools of webcomics

journalism to offer a complex, multi-layered view of the incident, based on existing news reports and eyewitness testimonies.

Studying Nisoor Square shootings by Dan Archer will further help us understand how comic journalists with the help of digital tools are innovating the field of journalism and creating a entirely new breed of journalism which intersects comics with the new genre of on-line news gathering identified by Alex Bruns as "gate-watching" which usually consists of an introductory front page with further links to detailed information of existing news sources and contrasting views on the issue.

2.3) "In Jennifer's Room": An award winning investigative illustrative piece by Centre for Investigative Journalism; "In Jennifer's room", chronicles the sexual abuse at Californian mental facility. what makes "In Jennifer's room" stand apart from the rest of graphic journalism pieces is the way the piece handles the sensitive issue of rape , disability and abuse without divulging any information with regards to the identity of the victim or her family.

Investigated by Ryan Gabrielson for a year and a half, the story exposed how California's developmental centers for the disabled have failed to protect their patients from abuse and neglect. Garielson documented 36 rape cases that have occurred in the state facilities in recent years in his project titled "Broken Shield". "In Jennifer's Room", is one of the stories from project Broken shield which deals with story of a mentally disabled girl who was raped and subsequently became pregnant while being admitted at one the developmental centers in California.

In traumatic and sensitive cases of abuse and rape, journalists have to extra careful as to not to reveal the identity of the victim. In addition to that, most of the time the victim and their families are too scared to come in front of the camera to say anything. Dealing with such issues, the Centre for Investigative Reporting and California Watch decided to do an illustrative story, which keeps the essence of the story and at the same takes care of the privacy. The story is based on hard facts and pieced together by the court documents. All of the visual elements of the more than 11:45 minute story are told using Luz's drawings, Gabrielson's voice and the voice of a

female actress portraying what Jennifer's mother told Gabrielson in interviews, who didn't wished for her voice to be used.

3. Research Method

Before going to in-depth analysis of the above mentioned graphic/comic journalism pieces, the next section of the paper will focus on graphic narrative theory and rhetorical analysis as prism through which these pieces will be critically analyzed through.

3.1) Graphic Narrative& Rhetorical Analysis: A rhetorical analysis requires you to apply your critical reading skills in order to "breakdown" a text. In essence, you break off the "parts" from the "whole" of the piece you're analyzing. The goal of a rhetorical analysis is to articulate how the author writes, rather than what they actually wrote. To do this, the various strategies that the author uses to achieve his/her goal have to be critically analyses(Short,2007). Visual rhetoric falls under a theoretical framework describing how visual images communicate, as opposed to aural, verbal, or other messages. Visual rhetoric generally falls under a group of terms, which all encompass visual literacy. Purdue OWL defines visual literacy as one's ability to "read" an image. In other words, it is one's ability to understand what an image is attempting to communicate. This includes understanding creative choices made with the image such as coloring, shading, and object placement. This type of awareness comes from an understanding how images communicate meaning.(Prude Owl,2016) The study of visual rhetoric is different from that of visual or graphic design, in that it emphasizes images as sensory expressions of cultural meaning, as opposed to purely aesthetic consideration(Gunter & Leeuwen,1996).

Essentially, a beginning definition of visual rhetoric and its applications are as follows:

1.   Use of images as argument

2.   Arrangement of elements on a page

3.   Use of typography (fonts, etc.)

4.   Analysis of existing images and visuals

Visual images and material objects have become more relevant in light of recent technological developments for understanding general communicative means. The proliferation of present day visual culture and the impact of visual have thus created a need to understand the structures of meaning generation employed via visual rhetoric. Visual rhetoric is a conscious, communicative

decision; the colors form, medium, and size is chosen on purpose. However, a person may come in contact with a sign, but if they have no relation to the sign, its message is arbitrary. Therefore, in order for artifacts or products to be conceptualized as visual rhetoric, they must have three characteristics: they must be symbolic, involve human intervention, and be presented to an audience for the purpose of communicating(Foss,2004)

According to Pimenta and Pooviah, 2010 visual story-telling is a phenomenon that every society is acquainted with. The term extensively used to refer to visual story-telling in recent times is 'Visual Narrative'.The label 'Visual Narrative' is applied in a generic sense todenote anything from an illustrated story-book to motionpictures. Far from being a trivial term, 'Visual Narrative' isin reality an all encompassing idiom, it is a sub genre ofVisual Studies itself. According to many scholars, graphic narrative is umbrella term for Sequential art also visual narrative, pictorial narrative, sequential narrative, sequential pictorial narrative, sequential storytelling, graphic literature, or narrative illustration[1].

The American term 'sequential art', first coined by Will Eisner, is a common abbreviation for the definition, and sometimes even proposed as a new name for comics. Focusing on the sequential nature of comics can result in a broad inclusion of examples from history, such as the Bayeux Tapestry and Egyptian painting, as in Scott McCloud (1994, 13-14). However Scott Mcloud himself defines comics as juxtaposed pictorial and other images in a deliberate sequence intended to convey information and/or to produce aesthetic response in the viewer (Mcloud.1993)

The game changer for the graphic/ comic narrative is its multimodality. Using image, text and sequence to narrate a story; graphic narratives thus expands our perceptions in a way mono-modal or single channel print texts can never aspire to. However "For many critics the 'transgressive' mix of image and text in comic books undermined the supposedly superior quality of print culture as well as the unique qualities of visual culture" (Lopes 404).

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[1]In the paper when we will be discussing visual/ graphic narrative, we will be mostly focusing on comics, illustrated stories and graphic novels.

By applying the literary toolkit to the reading of graphic/ comic narratives, new perspectives arise on narration, intertextuality, and the relationship between text and image, which (among many possibilities) prompt consideration of how narrative voice works in graphic literature, how to interpret image alongside text, and what the dynamics of the unified text/image panel reveal about discourse and social criticism.(Mollegaard,2014)

Will Eisner in his book, The Theory of comics further elaborates by explaining that format of comic books presents a montage of both word and image and the reader is thus required to use both verbal and visual interpretive skills. The regimens of art (eg. Symmetry, perspective, brush stroke) and regimens of literature (eg. Grammar,plot,syntax) become superimposed upon each other. The reading of comic book is an act of both aesthetic perception and intellectual pursuit (Eisner. 1985). This ability of graphic narratives is what makes them express meaning in ways that cannot be expressed in any other format.

But graphic/comic narratives are more than just a combination of image and word sequences, juxtaposed to each other. In order to understand the processes playing underneath to make sense of the graphic/ comic narratives, we need to familiarise ourselves with the comic vocabulary. At the heart of comic narratives lies the interplay of panels, closure, visual iconography, gutter space and complex relationship between the use of time and space using all these elements.

The fundamental function of comic art is to communicate or narrate stories, ideas, events etc through sequential placement of images made up of words and pictures, along with their movement in space. To deal with the capture or encapsulation of these events in the flow of narrative, they must be broken up into sequenced segments. These segments are called panels and frames. Comic panels fracture both time and space offering a jagged staccato rhythm of unconnected moments. But closure allows connecting these moments and mentally constructing a continuous, unified reality (McCloud, 1985).

Another important aspect of graphic narrative is the reader's conscious attempt of being involved in the narrative, be it in the form of meaning generation that graphic narrative plays on or the full control of reader as to how to read the panels; whether going back and forth or up and down. The

reader's direct involvement in the process of meaning generation in graphic/ comic narrative is what makes the genre to relate to audiences in ways normal ways of communication can't and side by side makes it worthy of serious attention.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Analyzing Footnotes in Gaza, "In Jennifer's room" and "Nisoor Square Shooting" as comic journalistic reportage pieces, we find that the use of the comics/graphics as a medium for nonfiction storytelling proves to be very effective. Coupled with digital tools and online platform, like in case of Nisoor Square Shootings, Symbolia or Hashit Shah's endeavor; the medium becomes a highly innovative platform that is not only changing the way we consume news but makes it a more interactive experience for the reader, who selects how he/she will navigate through the story themselves. The impressions received from reading all these comic/graphic journalistic pieces point to an immersive experience that is created by using the comic/graphic format. The use of comics/graphics makes the reader more involved in the story, rather than keeping them at bay as happens with the traditionalistic reportage. The genre also has the advantage of telling the same story from various perspectives like in Nisoor Square shootings, which can hardly be achieved using the traditional journalistic practices. Nisoor Square shootings by Dan Archer, presents the prime example of high with comic journalists. At a time when print journalism is struggling to find its feet amidst all the technology and economic constraints; comic journalism proves to be an innovative way to tell stories. The genre uses its advantage of engaging the people into reading the story, who would otherwise flip the pages.

In terms of innovating with the narrative, we find that these comic journalistic pieces not only innovate with the genre but also with the medium. Dan Archer's Nisoor Square Shootings, serves the prime evidence for that. In Nisoor Square shootings, Archer's actually restages the entire sequence of events that happened on the day, using multimedia devices and integrating them with comics/ graphic. It is a webcomic which embeds the Google map of the Nisoor Square, which serves as the background for the entire story. The story is supported by an interactive timeline that chronicles minute by minute account of what happened during the 15min of shootings that day. The user is further given the freedom to explore the story from various perspectives of the people involved in the event. From the Iraqi soldiers involved to the eye

witnesses and the Blackwater troops, the story gives an account from all the perspectives, giving the reader complete freedom to explore the story on his/her own pace and understanding. Unlike traditional stories, where readers get a watertight view of the whole event, Archer tries to break the rigid story structure by offering multiple perspectives, which the reader can access according to their own understanding. Further Archer has substantiated each perspective with hyperlinks that take the readers to related stories and other documented evidence found related the case. Archer also felt that people were desensitized by the bombardment of media coverage during the Iraq war. He wanted to offer an alternative providing the public with options to judge the events for themselves, and feel reconnected to the tragedy and its victims (Multiple Journalis,n.d)

The entire story has a feel of graphic video game that further gets enhancedwith the immersive use of comics and interactive multimedia tools that Archer combines in the story. Nisoor Square Shootings is one of many interactive comic journalistic pieces that Archer has done. His aim is to allow readers a wholesome experience, that doesn't predefines the narrative for them but rather by offering multiple perspectives, allow them to find their own interpretation of the events.

The use traditional journalistic strategies to gather information but using comics/graphics for telling the story instead of the words is where comic/graphic journalists have successfully innovated with the genre. By mixing written words and images, comics have the inherent ability to juxtapose a literal retelling and artistic symbolism, or conversely, symbolic language and representational imagery. The independence of the words and the pictures allows for an overlay of subjective and objective storytelling. Tensions between the written word and the image can be used to highlight uncertainties, ambiguities, and ironies that other media might inadvertently play down or deliberately ignore. All of this suggests, simply, that comics open possibilities for journalists that are less available in other media. And perhaps more importantly, they add to the options available to readers, who have lately demonstrated a hunger for voice and meaning in news coverage. Witness the proliferation of blogs and the continued popularity of zines. Like zines and blogs, comics drop the pretense of detachment and emphasize perspective (Williams, 2005)

In Footnotes in Gaza, Joe Sacco uses the similar technique to chronicle the massacre at Khan Younis and Rafah, which was sidelined by the mainstream media. Through his realistic drawings, Sacco uses the testimonies and interviews, documents and opinions as he travels across the Palestine to weave the narrative of the events that took place in Khan Younis & Rafeh in 1956, at the same time placing the narrative in the present day conflict torn Palestine and how people are coping with it. The use of his cartoony self as a character, which takes the narrative forward in the book, further allows a point of commonality for the readers, which makes the narrative more immersive and humanizes the whole situation.Use graphic narrative, with authentic observation and factual reportage makes footnotes in Gaza one of the important journalistic pieces which capture the conflict in Palestine.

Sacco creatively uses the panels and gutter space to emphasize certain points. The gutter space which mostly white, is blackened in some of the panels across the book to emphasize the point. For example while talking about the bias of western media in covering the Palestinian conflict, Sacco, makes the point standout with use of black gutter space. Similarly narrating the torture of one of the characters in the book, Sacco employs similar strategy. In "Footnotes in Gaza" as Sacco is trying to chronicle the events that happened in Khan Younis and Rafah, while also trying to understand how Palestinians are living through the entire conflict; Sacco brings the intersections of memories, past and present through dynamic use of panels. He lets the panels bleed and sometimes juxtapose two panels in the foreground and keep the third panel without frames in the background to add context to the narrative. This technique allows Sacco to easily move across the past and present and weave the narrative around them, without overburdening the reader. The advantage which graphic narrative also provides is the collaboration of the reader in reading the narrative. This conscious collaboration occurs through closure in comic which as Scott Mcloud explains is the "phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole" (McCloud, pg. 63). In other words, **closure** is the act of mentally filling in the gaps of what we observe, thus allowing readers to comprehend the action and meaning between two seemingly unrelated panels. Graphic narrative thus doesn't work entirely on its own, its needs the reader to make sense out of it, this act further engages the reader in to the narrative. And allows him/her to move freely across the page and make sense of their own time and motion.

Another aspect where proliferation of graphic/comic journalism can be seen is in dealing with very tragic and disturbing events. The process of both reporting and broadcasting a disturbing event like rape or war atrocities poses many challenges to the reporter as well the news agencies. Many victims feel more threatened and vulnerable in the presence of the camera; moreover the journalist needs to cautious enough to report in a way that doesn't reveal the identity of the victim. The advantage graphic/comic journalists' face in these situations is that without the camera and other gadgets approaching sensitive issues becomes a little easy for them; also hiding the identity of the victim also comes easy without distorting the picture in any way. Bors, Sacco, and other comics journalists insist that drawing is an ideal medium for serious nonfiction, even if editors are still reluctant. "Photos have great power, but photos of horrible things can be almost unbearable. Drawings have a built in filter," said Sacco. "When I was in Afghanistan and Haiti I would ask people if I could interview and draw them, and once someone grasped what I was doing, they were very at ease with being in a comic. If you put a camera in someone's face they are going to behave in a different way than if you simply sit there and talk to them while sketching," said Bors. "A prose piece about Iraqi refugees would be too depressing for my friends to read, but something drawn will make them take a look," said Sarah Glidden, a Symbolia contributor. "It's like a good trick." (Rice,2012)

In Jennifer's Room, tackles the very same issue of dealing with a sensitive story. It tells the story of a mentally challenged girl who was physically abused in a developmental centre for disabled, which is meant for care-giving and support. Presented in a video format, the story uses graphic illustrations and voice over to narrate the story. The artists have based their illustrations on actual evidence and photographs, whereas the voice over is based on the transcripts of the interview with the victim's mother. Many news stories like Jennifer have been already reported by media, but what makes "In Jennifer's Room", stand out from the rest is its innovation with the story telling. Using the graphic narrative, the creators not only protect the privacy of the victim but at the same time, contextualize the whole situation that allows readers to understand and empathize with the whole issue. In Jennifer's Room is the perfect example of using creative narratives to tell a difficult story, while maintaining the journalistic integrity and morals as well as the victim's identity. Besides the graphic narrative, the creators have also used a background music that plays throughout the story, which further enhances the power of the narrative and also sets

the mood of the entire story. What also works for the story is its ability to humanize the entire story, making it more impactful. The use of graphic narrative allows the readers to identify with the story, which a regular print story would have struggled to achieve."In Jennifer's Room" won a national Emmy award for New Approaches to News & Documentary! It also won a Gracie — a contest for the best programming by, for, and about women — for Outstanding Online Investigative Feature (Ching, 2012).

 All the three comic/ graphic journalistic pieces that we analyzed have won many accolades and accepted by critics; pointing to the increasing acceptance of the genre in the field of journalism. However the genre is still emerging and faces severe criticism on bypassing traditional journalistic principles like objectivity and neutrality. However comic journalists openly accept their use of subjectivity in reporting and argue that it's time for newer narratives to be involved in the field of journalism and experimented with. Comic journalists believe that there is a need to tell each story with a perspective, with which the journalist perceives the events. For there can never be absolute objectivity.For many graphic journalists the famous neutrality of the conventional reporter, his objectivity, is not something to strive for at all. In 1947 JeanPaul Sartre published his book *Qu'estceque laliterature*? in which he proclaims that passivity is equivalent to activity and that a socially responsible writer must address the major events of the era. That is precisely what graphic journalists' do; Sara Glidden in Syria, Susie Cagle in the United States and Victoria Lomasko in Russia are activists, as well as artists. They want to share with us what they saw, but also what they felt, their *engagement* must convince and inspire us to take action or, at least, to shed our indifference (pollmann, 2016).

5. Conclusion: Throughout the whole paper, we have tried to understand and analyze how comic/graphic journalism is innovating the field of journalism through specific comic/graphic journalistic pieces. From innovating with the digital platform with webcomics in case of Nisoor Square Shootings, to trying to creatively tell a traumatic and sensitive story in, "In Jennifer's Room", and finally chronicling the events in pasts and weaving them in the present with their consequence in Footnotes in Gaza; all the comic/graphic journalistic pieces tell us the different ways with which comics/graphics can bring a fresh perspective to the field of journalism by innovating with the graphic narrative.

The genre not only marks the need for the change keeping in consideration the decline in print culture and emphasis on visual culture but also marks a shift in understanding how graphic narrative can be employed in giving a better storytelling experience. In today's digital world where users rule the content, graphic narrative presents another added advantage of engaging the readers at the level where traditional journalistic reportage can hardly reach. Comic/graphic journalism gives the readers the space to develop their own narrative from the story, rather than just presenting the pre-fabricated narrative. This gives the genre more credibility amongst the users and is one of the reasons, why the genre is becoming so popular.

Works of Dan Archer, Joe Sacco, Susie Cagle and many more, the future of comic/ graphic journalism have proved how comic/graphics can be used in telling serious non-fiction stories in a more meaningful and engaging way. However, the genre is still nascent and is fighting to prove its credibility. With the predominance of print culture, our understanding of visuals and visual structures employed in meaning generation are based on textual narrative theories. The need there is to develop a graphic narrative theory which further enables academicians and scholars to further research the genre and expand its scope.

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