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The Power of the Unsaid in Graphic Narratives: Decoding Joe Sacco

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the representation of Palestine-Israel conflict in Joe Sacco's graphic novel *Palestine* (2001) through the foregrounding of haptic visuality—a terminology in a visual text for conveying a sense of visceral touching evoked by the visual image—at the center of which lies the use of gesture. Drawing upon both techniques of reading a graphic text and Giorgio Agamben's notion of gesture, this paper intensely examines the graphic based gestural representation in the novel. It aims to unravel Sacco's attempt to redirect his readers' affect of sympathy towards the Palestinian refugees by exposing the prevailed discrepancies in the media reportage and the implicit reasons of the Middle East conflict. The paper concludes that the gesture-based visual narration of the clashes help Sacco expose his readers to both emotional and rational veracity of the conflict. This exposure finally redirects his readers towards a gesture-actuated visceral witnessing to the Palestinians' pain and evokes the ethos for the Palestinian refugees.

Keywords: Palestine-Israel conflict, haptic visuality, graphic, gestural representation

Introduction

Sacco's *Palestine* (2001), the graphic documentation of Palestine-Israel conflict, gives an expression to a corporeal politics of gesture, which makes a moment of action visible through a pure mediality. The mediality of gesture verging on the haptic happens to be the uniqueness of this graphic novel. It helps Sacco take on what he himself has alleged as the biased representation of the Middle East conflict with a persuading edge.

Sacco's novel addresses the underlying horror of the war with remarkable clarity. The powerful reportage becomes obvious in the ways he exposes the readers to a corporeal realm with palpable evidences of atrocities perpetrated on the body of the Palestinian victims. The public in the Western world are generally accustomed to Israeli side of the story, but the Palestinian version—the story of traumatic living in destitution—is often excluded in the Western and American media. The Palestinians are

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taken as infamous terrorists, as those who kill others for no reason interestingly, and why they are obliged to resort to violent means as such is never discussed. Disagreeing with such representations, in his graphic novel Sacco makes his readers be acquainted with the Palestinians' pain. One of the ways the novelist does so is through graphic narratives based on haptic visuality.

Haptic visuality brings attention to the physical organization of the sensory experiences of the characters, and stimulates the readers to have relationship between them and the comic images. At the center of the haptic visuality, it is argued, lies the use of gesture which allows Sacco to represent the Palestinians' plight poignantly. By thus appealing to the readers' rationality through haptic visual density punctuated with narrative paucity, the novel renders them, as it were, as first-hand moral witnesses who personally feel the somatic trauma with such a tactile understanding which causes empathic unsettlement. The gesture-based visual narration of the conflict and the visceral engagement of the readers with the Palestinians' miserable plight, therefore, evokes the readers' ethos.

Literature Review

Critical opinions have not paid sufficient attention to the affect evoked in the readers by the gesture-based haptic visuality in Sacco's graphic texts. The treatment of the theme has received much greater attention than the technique. For example, James Hodapp stresses on the texts' emphases on the political theme of the subaltern: "Sacco's work is a political project that seeks to tell the stories of those often underrepresented or misrepresented, such as refugees and other subaltern groups, and bring western readers into contact with geographies and people often elided in western media" (319). The critic, here, contextualizes Sacco's work in relation to the postcolonial literary studies, especially to the subaltern studies. Similarly, Rose Brister and Belinda Walzer, in their article "Kairos and Comics: Reading Human Rights Intercontextually in Joe Sacco's Graphic Narratives", affirm, "Sacco's work presents particularly important ramifications for ethical reading practices and human rights advocacy through the graphic narrative" (139). They examine human rights violation both verbally and graphically in the occupied territories. Likewise, Charlotta Salmi states, "The real focus of Sacco's work . . . is not the summary executions of men dragged out of their homes and shot in front of their families in Khan Younis, nor the beatings of unarmed civilians in the large screening operation in Rafah, but the discursive destruction of their humanity that slowly robbed refugees of access to their land and history" (417). Reading Sacco's comics as a relevant specimen which show the emergence of graphic human rights writing, he argues how comics can be used to enhance graphic human rights narratives. Rebecca Scherr in her article "Shaking hands with other People's Pain: Joe Sacco's *Palestine*" makes the point that Sacco's texts "display a hard-boiled perspective toward the cost of war" (20). She intensely shows the connection of history in the form of documentary and autobiographical method that embellishes the anxiety between personal exposure and political social discourse.

There are, however, some critics who have focused their attention on Sacco's technique, too. Jeffrey Mather, for example, elucidates the complex relationship between spatiality and narratives, where he examines how spatial and visual terms determine the notion of historicity, political identity and the architecture context. In "Perspectives on Palestine: Architecture and Narrative in Joe Sacco's Footnotes in Gaza," he avers: "Sacco's work provokes a particular mode of reading that is attuned to the way that stories respond to, and are affected by, differing spatial and structural organizations" (176).

Although the themes of the novel have been extensively researched, very little effort has been invested to study its techniques. Further study on how a particular graphic technique, such as gesture-based haptic visuality in graphics, seeks to provide a deep insight to communicate the unsaid part of the war. Taking a cue from Mather, this paper focuses on the graphic techniques, especially on Sacco's technique of graphic visuality which has been largely built through the use of gesture.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This paper draws on the graphic narratives, using Neil Cohn's techniques to read the visual language of comics broadly, and within it, as a framework, the notion of gesture by Italian Philosopher Giorgio Agamben, who offers a politics of gesture—a politics of means without ends. In his article "Notes on Gestures," he defines, "The gesture is the exhibition of a mediality: it is the process of making a means visible as such. It allows the emergence of the being-in-a-medium of human beings and thus it opens the ethical dimension for them" (Agamben 57). In the light of the Agambenian note of gesture, Sacco's graphic novel encompasses gestures, which are motioned through the still images of the comics, to unbolt the ethical dimension and to represent the political implication of the conflict through its endless mediality. With its cinematic effect, the readers visually perceive the haptic images of the Palestine and Israel battle and release ethos for real victims.

The static images in comic, with lively stretches, record the kinetic energy of a momentary action performed by the characters. Livio Dobrez affirms, an image with moving object performs an action, "When we see a moving object what we see is its form, that is, that we see things—which happen to be in motion" (387). The visual track of the moving objects, where graphic patterns prompt to apprehend the gestures, lures the readers to perceive the apparent movement. When there occurs movement on the surface of the objects, the readers can observe haptic visuality. In comics, such perceptibility concomitant with motion, vision, tactility and sound further creates association with visual narratives and the carnal knowledge of the reader's sensorium. These captured motions of physical and emotional activity, in addition, which can be termed as gestures, also have potentiality to convey the narratives through its medium. Ofer Fein and Asa Kasher in "How to do Things with Words and Gesture in Comics" affirm the gesture-utterance connection, "In figurative art a gesture that accompanies a speech act is related to the force" (796). They mean the captured gesture that seems like the replica of a real life gesture captures an essence of the images.

Moreover, the background, narrative captions, sound, contour, lighting, haptic impression and the graphic grammar make the gesture of the characters more vivid. Michael Hübner confirms the representation of visual object lies on the used textual context and the photography, it "can be communicated visually in a combination of techniques... The combination of multiple techniques and images thus yields an exceptional potential" (199). In addition to this, Alain Boillat finds a correlation between film and the comics, "Cinema has several similarities with comics... the same action is depicted over several successive panels, modelled more on the photographic decomposition of motion than on the synthesis of motion in a single image" (9-10). Emotions, furthermore, are simulated by the comic artist and the frame simulates how they are meant to be interpreted. Therefore, the readers feel the depicted motions of the comics, which lead them to a visual target.

On the basis of these views, Agamben's notes on gesture, a notion particularly addressed to cinematography (movement), can also be applied to study the gestures implied within the movement of human bodies in static images of the comics. Being a

means without ends, gesture in Sacco's graphic novel depicts the Palestinians' tangible life under Israeli occupation. Thus, each gesture that he exposes in his novel capturing his encounters, witnesses and the information collected from the interviews turns out to be the destiny of the Palestinians because such gesture was ever shadowed in the privileged journalistic practices and in the testimonies.

One of the communication means which makes a copious use of gesture is graphic literature. Graphic literature utilizes gesture for the purposes of synesthetic unity, at the core of which stands the intermediation function of haptics. Haptic, the literal touching that arises primary body sensation, makes the readers feel how the artist or the casting characters feel in a real situation even in the comics. Due to its emotive qualities, haptic constantly calls an attention with corporeality and intrigues the visceral engagement with the painful feelings of others, that finally engages the readers with emotional veracity. Laura Marks, who first coined the term 'haptic visuality,' writes:

Haptic images have the effect of overwhelming vision and spilling into other sense perceptions. This is in part because they do not provide enough visual information on their own to allow the viewer to apprehend the object, thus making the viewer more dependent on sound and other sense perceptions. This shift of sensory focus may be physical, or, as in film, through associating the available audiovisual information with other, remembered sense experiences.

(12)

Mark's concept highlights haptic as an effect through which one can have the sensual experiences. Such experiences occur primarily through tactility and kinesthetic. In the same way, comic images, where readers can observe the motion of objects, possess haptic illustration and thus they are able to create an experience of touch both physically and emotionally.

Rebecca Scherr further acknowledges the effects of haptic images and writes, "Sacco's form of truth-telling happens in the exchange between reader and text and is based on a kind of emotional and corporeal form of evidence that occurs through a haptic, visceral engagement with the pain of others" (20). Moreover, haptic as a sign of gesture signifies the connection between two entities and aids to process image-text relationship. The readers mostly experience bodily feeling with an emotional attachment due to the communicability of the gestures. The effect of this emotional attachment finally connects the text and the reader, and the textual tactility also enables the spectators to distinguish the things—what to touch and what to separate. Basically arousing physical sensation, its connection is with physical, psychological and rational aspects. The mental decoding of sensorial feelings arisen with haptic visuality, in short, can wash people's brain, can effortlessly evoke the human ethos and the lost humanity, and can change in the whole world with the power to provoke the public opinion.

Results and Discussion

Sacco illustrates his own observation of Palestinians' refugees including the underlying horror of war, witnesses of the people and the past experiences of the Fedayeen collaboratively while featuring the conflict between Palestine and Israel in his graphic novel. This collaboration in visual narration unveils the unsaid part of the historically neglected moments, particularly through the gestures of the restrained Palestinians. He features how British's declaration on the favour of Zionist in 1917 and Jews' attempt to occupy the Arabian claimed territory seem the visible causes of the conflict. Yet, he exposes many underlying causes of the war through gesture.

At the beginning, Sacco presents himself as an American journalist having stereotypical perceptions towards the Palestinians. The bitter expression of his face,

sweat floating onto his forehead, a thick saliva out of his wide parted lips, the tight fist striking on the palm and his words during conversation, “Bitch! Terrorist grouple! . . . Terrorism is the bread Palestinians get buttered on” (7) demonstrate the common perception of the then majority of the Westerners and Americans towards the Palestinians. Sacco himself initially had the same views as of Western media that have accredited Palestinians for the blood of pools within America, particularly “Munich and the blown up athletes in the bus and airport massacres” (7). With the gesture expressed by Sacco, and the speech balloons on the left top and the triangular shaped mid panel simultaneously, the readers discern why the Americans do not care about the problems of the Palestinians. Despite Palestinians’ traumatic life, the more he passes moments with them during his visits and interviews, the more he witnesses their humanistic feelings. The depiction of these incongruent gestures, in addition, intrigue readers to see the differences on how the Palestinians were characterized in media, who they actually are, and why they did so.

Exposing the Either Side of Media Reportage

Sacco’s representational technique of illustrating gesture via haptic images “is the being-in-language of human beings as pure mediality” (Agamben 58). The long endurance of Israeli raid along with the atrocious corporeal retribution and the psychological stiffness has resulted lack of communicability amid the Palestinian refugees. Through the non-verbal language—a mediality of gesture, however, they discharge their stifled feelings or intension. Moreover, as a journalist, Sacco seems more determined to bring forth the pain in the form of the comic book, “I will alert the world to your suffering. Watch your local comic book store...” (10). The only way that he uses to demonstrate these sufferings is through gesture leaning on haptic visuality. The gesture of a raged Palestinian, for instance, expresses the deep hatred towards Israeli as shown in figure 1 below.

The enlarged mid macro panel contains multiple actions in its peak with a primary focus on zoomed face and the pounded fist. A foregrounded Palestinian’s agonized face, wide parted aggressive eyes with central pointed retina, powerful bang on the desk, and the rancorous expression from his mouth “I would smash Israel!” (2) uncover the subterranean detestation lies on his heart. The anger is expressed with a reason—an aftermath of a lengthy tyrannical dominance and noticeable discrimination of government between Jews and Palestinians, which it is revealed later on the text.



Fig. 1: Rage against Israeli, *Palestine*, p. 2.

The vertically curved deictic lines around the fist draw a primary focus to the smash, which are even larger than other icons in the picture. It seems that the hatred has resulted in vengeful feelings for ill-treatment and for what Israeli mercilessly grabbed from them, "For the Jews to be treated the way they've been treated and then to treat the Palestinians in that way...they want to grab and grab" (2). The speech balloons and the graphic techniques, particularly the motion lines, contour and lighting in the background, together expose the physical movement of the characters. In addition, the eye movement, the facial and bodily expression, and the captured fury emotion further exhibit the gesture of the panel. This initial exhibition of gesture, in contrast, ends with the words "Oops! Pardon me!" (2) at its release in the subsequent panel at the end due to the fear of his sudden expression against the Israelis. Although he fears to speak more, in Agamben's view, what he reveals through kinetic motion in the graphic narration is a pure mediality, a gesture, uninterrupted with an end.

When Sacco dissolves himself with the people's suffering, his involvement made the readers feel their pain as well. The readers, therefore, get emotionally attached with the haptic images seeing through touch immerses them in the real world, the world of the Palestinians. Because of it, they finally visualize themselves in the position of the Palestinian victims inwardly.

Because of an extreme Israeli political oppression, the grief-stricken victims who are bearing both physical and psychological torture hardly articulate their rancorous experiences with any journalists' queries using language. For the reason is, the Israelis either disguise themselves as journalists or use a foreigner to crosscheck whether Palestinians reveal the fact or not. While counting beads, a resident there babbles this hostile relation between two in the group conversation with Sacco, "Excuse us, if we don't talk freely. But sometimes the Israelis send in people posing as foreigners or journalists, and later there are arrests" (131). In case, if this comes true, they are given with such a horrendous payback that they never dare to repeat the same mistake again. Sameh's friend, as an illustration, with his embarrassed face acquiescently denies to share his life experience, "I don't want to talk about it... the last time I showed a journalist around, I spent two years in prison" (210). This sort of power of optics to misrepresent the Palestinians is presented vividly through the economical iconic style of drawing. Therefore, they gesticulate all the mishaps of their life. In reference with Agamben, gesture here captures the intended political action to the realm of ethics. Once media portrays the Palestinians as terrorists, it obstructs the Palestinians to make others trust in their words. The false depiction established them more taciturn and initiated the full credit for every wrong happening.

The real stories are scarcely reported in the public sphere on the other. The same situation Sacco witnessed on his visit where he found editors with no ethical concern. In polymorphic representation of the image, the woman from Chicago with her five children freely articulates her opinion to Sacco, "If you're one-in-a-hundred journalists who wants to tell the truth about Palestine, it won't get printed because the Jews own the newspapers, they own everything in America" (126). Moreover, the images that captured violence are not the news photographs for the experienced journalists, so they do not capture the moments of same actions with same people repeatedly. A Palestinian photographer for an international wire service named Saleh, who finds no good pictures to assemble, blurts with Sacco while walking on the way, "The intifada is over, especially when I don't get the picture" (57). When Sacco and Saburo are in journalistic mode ferreting out a talker for a lead paragraph of news, meanwhile more troubles are created from the Israeli side with beating as shown in the figure 2.

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The grid dissolves into the full page spread with the soldiers' domination and the victims' refute. These macro panels demonstrate multiple actions happened in the different locations near about Nablus Road, where the soldiers' jollity contradicts with the Palestinians' stranded growls on the troublesome street. These panels in its release stage depict multitudinous expressions of the victims in full motion. These strangled activities, such as beating, arresting and protesting, are neither depicted on media, nor addressed by any supporting hands. Nevertheless, through its tactile sensation in graphic narration, the readers read the gesture of the characters and concede their perception towards the real victims. Sacco also evidently discloses the fact about media's practices—the media merely accepts the photographs with the photo of the reporter.

The photographs that Sacco and Saburo had collected are ignored as they contain mere activities, neglecting the face of the reporter. Through a politics of gesture, in Agamben's words, a politics of means without ends, Sacco, however, has brandished all the actions and events that were precluded on media coverage in his graphic novel. The readers can feel, sense or taste how the victims do as Sacco has framed the narrative with haptic images.



Fig. 2: Soldiers' interference over Palestinians, *Palestine*, pp. 55-56.

Agamben believes that gesture reveals the contradiction between exhibition and narration and thus enhances meta-communication. Illuminating the hidden motifs explicitly, it blurs the boundary between words and action. The intimidated political pressure and unending traumatic condition further suppress the free articulation of the victims. At the point, their gesture, one of the visible non-verbal means of communication, replaces the verbal communication. The Palestinians' similar condition enables them to communicate their real life happenings through their gestures. Sacco's view of the wounded Palestinians throughout his visit in hospital reveals the unsaid gesture through meta-communication.



Fig. 3: Contradiction between exposition and real happening, *Palestine*, p. 33.

The sufferers here are made readily smile at the flashes hiding the pain they endure. The low-spirited girl with multiple fractures who laughs at the flash as shown in the second panel of figure 3 is a typical case of it. However, the first panel, where her fractured leg is at the spotlight, contradicts with the second. The plastered left leg is covered when the reporters took her photo. Along with a keffiyeh over her head, the girl while showing through media on her smiling position never gets depicted with pain, nor does the commoner know about it. In contrast, the captured gesture without ends vividly gesticulate the common practices that the injured does in hospital. Actually, the contradiction between the performance and the reality in the hospital beds in the presence of reporters and photographers is an authentic specimen of how gesture discloses meta-communication.



Fig. 4: Soldiers' monopoly even in ongoing treatment at hospital, *Palestine*, p. 35.

The soldiers, in addition, have interrupted the treatment of the casualties after retorting stone throw with firing. The narrative captions in these panels cover the soldier's inference in the patients' treatment. In the given sequential panel, while interrogating the wounded after the clashes, the soldiers act out brutally. Two soldiers are shown with

ferocious debriefing to others. The stick struck on the hand of the victim and a woman's resistance is evincive to expose the soldiers' reign over the stranded victim. The panels below in the first figure also uncover the fact that even hospital employees work under their supervision. Moreover, the distressed nurse's gesture at the left corner panel of the first figure and the words inside the speech balloon over her head, "it's ordinary case to work under tension" (35) specify how the hospital staff cannot efficaciously rebut the soldiers' interference. Similarly, the iconic and indexical reference of the panels in the next figure depict soldiers as active entities who mobilize both male and female as per their instruction. Other journalistic modes have basically covered the surficial pretended reality. In contrast, gesture has revealed the contradictory facts, the authentic reality, through meta-communication.

Sacco's images correspondingly encompass psychological as well as physical sufferings of the dwellers under Israeli occupation. The denotative expression of gesture speaks the real suffering of the victims that linguistic narratives scarcely communicate. Having supremacy over the text, the gesture of one of the Sacco's informant's mother demonstrates the traumatic life. The given overlapped panels in grid composition paraphrase the settlers and soldiers' hostile behavior, which finally make the dwellers lose their bodily sensation. An elderly dispirited mother, the physical and psychological victim of the clashes, for example, in figure 5 can handle coals with her bare hand.

An overextended left hand grasping burning coal in the last panel indicates the numbness of the fingers. It further highlights the level of the victims' tolerance, and also symbolizes the domination of Palestinians under Israeli occupation. Instantaneously, the palm of right hand contains hole in the middle, and thereby lies stiff. Readers, at this moment, can see her unconscious frightened face in the third panel, feel her pain and acknowledge how she is serving lunch to the guest despite of her old age and poor health.



Fig. 5: Physical and psychological suffering of the victims, *Palestine*, p. 66.

In addition, an illustration of the raid in the second panel, the stone thrown from outside results both physical and psychological disorder among the sufferers. These emotive moments directly appeal to one's rational aspects, evoke human ethos and enable them to perceive the life threatening sufferings that the victims are abided with.

Victims under Moderate Pressure

Sacco has depicted the soldiers' moderate pressure on the suspects to make them confess the unspecified guilt in a downhearted situation. He has revealed this incongruity between doing and saying through graphic visuality and its haptic images provoke the readers' attention to observe how the Palestinians are compelled to act out reluctantly under the soldier's pressure. Such a brutal act from the Israeli side is guided by politics with end. The settlers deliberately oblige the Palestinians, who are trapped, to enact as per the existing circumstances. All activities that the Palestinians perform against the Israelis indirectly are correlated with their livelihood, particularly with the essential facilities associated with space, water resources, employment, electricity and quality as well as higher education. Apart from this, unsolicited intolerable physical and psychological tortures are the main causes why most of the time the Palestinians confess their undone activities. The mediality of the Palestinians' gesture, in particular, markedly exposes what compelled them to halt protest against their misrepresentation.

The overlapped panels in figure 6 demonstrate the ways innocent kids confess under torture. In this image, the artist drags the reader's attention to the blistering iron plate, onto which the young kid's head is pressed vehemently. The loud utterances of denial from his mouth and the resistance to the potent push to approach the hot plate are visible through his facial expression. The speech balloons on the left, furthermore, quote the harsh situation in which the victims confess the unspecified crime.



Fig. 6: Moderate pressure to make confess uninvolved crime, *Palestine*, p. 161.

Sacco additionally unravels how Israeli wants to handle different cases in a military court for the Palestinians, who can hardly deny the common punishment though the lawyers work for reducing the sentence in their cases. The common pay back includes a lengthened custody in a filthy prison with no chance of comfort sit or stand, and with no enough place to have sound sleep. To exemplify this, the story of a middle class man from East Jerusalem named Ghassan, who was arrested as a suspect four week ago then, is featured through the graphic narratives.

Being suspected as a member of an illegal organization, Ghassan was blindfolded by the ruthless soldiers offensively in front of his terrified family members—his wife and the children. The leftward panels sequenced in grid format from page 105 to 112 demonstrate how Ghassan is pressurized to confess his uninvolved guilty task. The incidents like face being wrapped with a urinated sack, the hands being tied to an iron

bar at the back for about seven hours, and the fifteen days' captivity under a cold zinc roof make a depressed Ghassan hallucinate the death of his all family members when he is asked if he is ready to confess. It epitomizes how innocent people confess in their hopeless situations in series like that of filmy shot, thus gives the impression of heart-rending haptic. Despite hungry stomach, sleepless night, innumerable punches and shakes, tough physical torture the opponents did not find any evidences in Ghassan's case. Afterwards, on the day when he had to be taken at court, he was permitted to have sound sleep, eat with his full stomach, bathe and shave to make a good fit for court appearance. To put it pointedly, media only showed the images with fine appearance; however, the sufferings radiated through the gestures are always concealed to the spectators. Besides, the process of seizing ID card and preparing clinical reports without medical tests are some other stories never get depicted in audio-visual media; instead, media only disseminate the superficial visible actions that Israeli wanted to show.

Going through Agamben, these motion-filled panels reveal the differences on what was exhibited and how the victims were treated with. Gesture's demonstrative capacity disrupts the fabricated situation between means and ends, and also reawakens the readers' paralyzed morality. To escape further somatic and psychological torment throughout lingering and lengthening time, these people confess the guilt which they never involved in. As a pure mediality, making the means visible to the readers, gesture here communicates the underlying paradoxes between the said and unsaid things with haptic visuality.

Like Ghassan, Iyyad, a prisoner among six thousand inmates in Ansar III (Israelis call it Ketziot), shares how civilians are taken to imprisonment for six months, as administrative detention, without being accused of any particular crimes. Sharing his personal experience, he posits, "You fall into the trap of trying to figure out what you did wrong" (82). His words reflect the usual practices—how most of the jailbirds are imprisoned without any noticeable crimes. Whatever the situation is, once the refugees are suspected of crime, they are compelled to live in a congested hellish room with poor ventilation. Bodily chastisement, hungry stomach, fatigue mind and exhausted body, which are common bearings of the captives, supplement more pain in such suffocation. The Israelis "at first have stereotypes about the prisoners (91) that they "don't see Palestinians as humans...they see people, first of all, dressed like animals, who until recently, didn't have spoon to eat with...people who are dirty, who have no access to proper hygiene, with hundreds of different flies and mosquitoes around their faces" (92). This painful dehumanizing conduct for docile Palestinians, in return, build them more rebellious.

Within right angled straightforward visual frames, Sacco minutes how assumed criminals are dehumanized at the beginning phase. The narrative caption on the right corner of the first panel unfurls soldiers' gratification in persecuting the captivated prisoners, who are compelled to produce distinct sounds so that they could hide the scream emerging out of the pain. Here Iyyad speaks, "They ordered us to make animal noises and noises like a train. They beat us until we agreed to do this. Soldiers were having a barbecue nearby including women soldiers" (83).

The indexical lines linked to the zoomed palm and the movement on a raised stick at the initial panel of figure 7 indicate the event of beating to the handcuffed prisoners. Moreover, the confined recidivists are shown in the terrified faces with closed eyes and crouched bodies to avoid such merciless corporal punishment. The sufferers sharply rebuff to the soldiers' whip with stick, foot and palm in these depicted panels and thus their lively gestures unveil the opponents' brutality and hegemony over the convicts.

Subjugated prisoners, on the other hand, are grudgingly compelled to obey the soldiers' orders.



Fig. 7 : Punishment to the prisoners, *Palestine*, pp. 83-84.

Yusef, the next prisoner, affirms the same view, “We felt like animals...the desert temperature extremes; the insects; a water supply so insufficient it had to be utilized almost exclusively for drinking; a bland, inadequate diet, no change of clothes; little medical care...” (85). Under these intolerable pressures, when the prisoners knew about the murder of Abu Jihad, who formed Palestinian revolutionary group Fateh with his close friend Yasser Arafat on 16 April, 1988, they initiated revolts against the soldiers by throwing stones. Though their stones could do nothing against the soldiers' powerful bullets, these things reveal the amputated history of Palestine-Israel clash through the mediality of gesture.

Another prisoner Abu Akram from Nablus Prison gesticulates the usual practices of the soldiers in figure 8. It strikingly exposes the prisoners' appalling situation inside the locked door, who are kept in chairs leaning on their back with the tied hands behind. They are beaten hard on their genitals in such an awkward seating position. Media have no access to such news; the speech balloon at the end of this second panel associated with the first reveals it, “The door he closes, and the world cannot see” (94). His fist there is targeted at the Sacco genital and hit hard with force from his head high. Sacco's unendurable pain is visible through the flying sweat from his forehead, closed eyes, wide-opened yelling mouth, free moving derelict fingers and his disheartened situation. Because of its emotive effect with haptic, the readers can feel the same pain as shown in the panel.



Fig. 8: Exhibition of how the prisoners get corporal punishment, *Palestine*, p. 94.

One-Sided Presentation of Palestine-Israel Conflict

Although the politics is the sphere of pure means, its power governs the media, particularly when things are exposed with linguistic narratives with an indented result. Most often media coverage merely circulates the aftermaths, but not the situations that ensued such consequences. So far, the genuine reasons are usually abhorred when they are betokened with the politics with an end. In such a case, things are visible only with gestures.

The caption-accompanied images in Sacco's *Palestine* gesticulates why the Palestinians bear the hardest situation, who neither report the mistreatment to the media reporters, nor dare to complain against the settlers. When the family members who are hit with stone and axe in previous day reports the events to Sacco, a member reveals that the political function they are channelized through is its underlying cause. Since the settlers (Israelis) provide services to the refugees, they hardly dare to take action against the service providers, "The settlers are the one who attacked us, and we have to go to the settlement to report it! that's where Id cards, licenses and all permits are issued" (67). His exasperated and destitute gesture articulates how the settlers control the Palestinians' both livelihood and liberty. A good illustration of this is without Israeli ID, no one can visit in other countries, even if they have to unite with other family members. If they take any action against the settlers, the rivals seize all these permits essentials. Such a reason, as they claim, why the Palestinians stand speechless and reluctantly consent the unilateral reportage of media.

After all, this has resulted no hope on them; they expect no results. The world cannot see unless it is shown. That is why the overshadowed gesture of how they are trapped and how they will not feel secure even in their own home, finally communicated their everyday bearing. Not only that, the punishment for the settlers and the Palestinian is different despite of the equivalent guilt. The former only gets maximum three years' imprisonment as the stiffest sentence while the latter receives even life-imprisonment.

These all activities, which are channelized through political power, arouse fear and insecurity among them; only their frenzied gestures without ends have communicated the facts.

Analogous to the case, the Palestinian people share their queries about media reportage to Sacco in figure 9. In the given panels, the facial gestures of inquisitive residents gaudily inquire the surficial unilateral reportage of the American and Western media. These media only broadcasted the events in the choice of Israelis. Refuting this, the elderly people in the panels are rather blaming to Americans for their dumbfounded standing and not depicting the harsh events from the Israeli sides. They divulge that their stories have been written for years; nonetheless, none of the reportage cover the real happenings. Sacco's inability to answer the asked questions, demonstrated in the second panel, also shows the media's biasness.



Fig. 9: Informants' queries about the American media, *Palestine*, p. 162.

Another signal of media's Israeli favoritism in representing the Palestine-Israel conflict can be seen in the reportage of their war. As the Palestinians share, after intifada Palestine is full of journalists, but none of them brought a visual change for refugees, nor are the real causes of conflict disseminated to the public. They express a lot of queries to Sacco whether the Americans are aware of the reality and think of the international law. One of the disconsolate inhabitants in the third panel speaks on how America disregarded their human right violation, "Americans care more about the right of animals than about what happened to us" (162).

Going through the next incident, the readers perceive the victims' unawareness of their involvement in the conflict in figure 10. There around twenty houses were attacked inhospitably, yet the engrossment of both sides for attack and counter attack seems mysterious. The occupants guessed, "The attacker must have cut himself on the glass and dropped the axe" (64). The driver, named Sami, lets Sacco know about the event while driving and the things come true when they visited the house off the main street.



Fig. 10: Settlers' attack on dwellers: the hidden truth uncovered by media, *Palestine*, p. 64.

Fear sometimes operates directly and so do these startled people who assembled joining the shoulders at night in the fifth panel. The reflection of the windows hole in the second panel and the lying axe with the pieces of window glass and blood droplets in the third and sixth panel facilitate the readers for easy apprehension of such unwanted, yet unfamiliar assault. Afterwards, the settlers again reach to the victims yelling with the harsh words, such as "Get out of your houses dogs," "words about prostitutes and sex words" (65) to charge against the refugees' assumed involvement in raid. In response, the victims are enforced to throw the stones to save their life. This sort of invasion ends with the victims taking to the prison. Moreover, being habituated they are not afraid of going to the prison, "This is a prison for us" (195). The suffocated life inside the fixed territory gesticulate the life in prison. As a jailbird, they have lost almost all freedom. These people who lose control over their gesture under this invisible power act more frantically, as Agamben states, therefore unknowingly they outlet the reality.

The congested refugee camps, the Palestinian's obligation to get job from the Israelis and Israelis' control to the Palestinian's day to day activities are other some issues hidden from the direct media reportage. Similarly, the ruthless soldiers in Ramallah, a place with fifteen minutes' walk from Jerusalem, carry out the politics with ends. Their politics of chasing people from the market to the Israeli settlement side is guided by certain presupposed intension. The number of explosions, which cause roadblock, curfew and insecurity, mostly distract the people in market away to the Israeli shops. As soon as the curfew begins, there runs no business. People, in fact, feel better to shop from Israelis with no troubles. Sacco's first encounter with such a brutal act make him alarmed, "Six explosions! I saw 'em explode! Six! Puffs of smoke!" (118). His trembled hand and frightened face shows how the Palestinians have to bear such things every day. Besides, the partaking of teenagers in demonstrations with banners and youths in megaphone, tires burning, weaving flags and automatic fire gesticulate the supremacy of soldiers. At the same time, Sacco exhibits the kids throwing stones to the soldiers and over the bus, while in return the soldiers fire and control the road. When

such event occurs, the visitors, customers, kids, pedestrians and passersby scurry away in terror as shown in the figure.

By the end, Sacco illustrates the contradictory perception among the visitors to Gaza. Two young Tel Aviv Ladies take Jaffa Gate as a dangerous gate. Despite Sacco's witness to kind-hearted agonized Palestinians, the girls still have the same perception—the Palestinians are terrorists—like of the American and Westerners' views towards the Palestinians. They trust on the fact broadcasted by the media, "People are knifed by the Arabs...It's not the stories" (253). Deciding not to cross the green line into Arab, one of the girls says, "Maybe if I were a Palestinian, I'd be terrorist, too, to get back my land..." (254). The unilateral reportage of audio-visual media in the west have washed out their mind and shaped their perception with the desired intension.

After all, Sacco in his graphic novel, especially through gesture verging on the haptic, enforces the readers to distinguish the things occurred in real and the things shared to the audiences. The same American journalist, at the end, finds the Israeli faultier. He admits, "Standing there with two girls from Tel Aviv it occurs to me that I have seen the Israelis, but through Palestinian eyes—that Israelis were mainly soldiers and settlers to me now, too". And finally, he confesses for not getting the true picture of Palestine-Israel conflict earlier, "I've heard nothing but the Israeli side most all my life" (256). Tel Aviv too resembles more like the Western ears and eyes.

Conclusion

Sacco makes his readers familiar with the Palestinian trauma through the graphic narratives based on haptic visuality. Gesture plays an important role in this witnessing. The most complicated situations, as such, which are difficult to express through language, are pinpointed within the nonverbal density of gesture. Moreover, the combination of interdependent visual drawings with the narrative captions require the readers to read with a greater application of the mind. This strategy makes Sacco's readers see into the Palestinians' victimhood—their trauma and injustice—with pertinent forcefulness.

Finally, a close collaboration of Sacco's concrete visual narratives and Agamben's notion of gesture make the readers be affective witness of the conflict—wherein lies their empathetic identification of both Palestinian mis-representation in media and the Israeli atrocity. The readers, in addition, can feel the disheartened Palestinians' intolerable experiences through the emotive effects of haptic, where gestures directly trigger their somatic senses and the affective dimension. Moreover, these gestures—which replaces the politics of language—demonstrate the lacuna between what is said and unsaid, giving more emphasis on the unsaid part. The gesture-actuated witnessing of the trauma, therefore, re-awakens the dormant humanism of Sacco's readers, who come to sympathize with the Palestinian victimhood.

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