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DEFAMILIARISATION IN THE ARTS OF WAR

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ABSTRACT

Defamiliarisation refers in general to an artistic technique that forces people to look with new eyes upon familiar subjects. Defamiliarisation emerged against the backdrop of World War I and the Russian Revolution. In each case, carefully constructed propaganda had desensitised the populace to the underlying atrocities of war. This thesis examines the technique of defamiliarisation in four works from the twentieth century: a photomontage, a sound-text poem, a play, and a graphic novel. In the examples presented herein, defamiliarisation leverages artistic expression to reawaken compassion, empathy and humanity.

Chapter 1 establishes an historical context of 20th Century wars, demonstrating the pervasive reach of war to affect all classes of society. Chapter 2 defines defamiliarisation as articulated by Viktor Shklovsky, helping people to look with new eyes upon familiar subjects. He advocated for the mind to stop, study and perceive, instead of superficially skimming over. Chapter 3 discusses into two works from the Dada movement employing Shklovsky's technique of defamiliarisation to awaken the public of Zurich and (and beyond) from complacency about the Great War and towards life. The first work is Hannah Höch's photomontage *Incision with the Dada Kitchen Knife through Germany's Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch* (1920). This work demonstrates her skepticism towards print journalism and openly challenges the German government. The second Dadaist work is Hugo Ball's sound-poem *Karawane* (1916), an attempt to substitute a universal, emotive language as an escape from a language that had been manipulated. Chapter 4 explores the play *Pic-Nic* by Fernando Arrabal, that employs surrealist humour both to question and laugh at the war. He upends conventional narrative by juxtaposing a parental picnic with combat in the trenches. Chapter 5 examines the mechanisms in which defamiliarisation occurs in *Maus*. It is a tragic story told in the format of a graphic novel; an

animal allegory in which a father recounts his experience of World War II and 'Mauschwitz' to his adult son, a graphic novelist. Chapter 6 concludes by determining that, for a culture diluted and desensitised by war, defamiliarisation reawakens sensitivity and empathy in the audience by reversing their emotional detachment from the atrocities of war.

*No permanence is ours; we are a wave
That flows to fit whatever form it finds:
Through day or night, cathedral or the cave
We pass forever, craving the form that binds.*

*Mold after mold we fill and never rest,
We find no home where joy or grief runs deep.
We move, we are the everlasting guest.
No field nor plow is ours; we do not reap.*

*What God would make of us remains unknown:
He plays; we are the clay to his desire.
Plastic and mute, we neither laugh nor groan;
He kneads, but never gives us to the fire.*

*To stiffen into stone, to persevere!
We long forever for the right to stay.
But all that ever stays with us is fear,
And we shall never rest upon our way.*

*Herman Hesse, 'Joseph Knecht's Lament'
The Glass Bead Game (1949)*

DEDICATION

This thesis on defamiliarisation and the arts of war would not have been possible without the support of my parents, Justine and Daniel Carr, who believed in my ideas enough to teach me how to express them. To my advisors, Michael Kane and Paul Hollywood, who introduced me to the ideas I am going to explore here and others I am forever grateful. I thank them and my other instructors at the School of Arts of Dublin Business for challenging and encouraging me along this highway of the theory of arts, on my road to happiness.

CHAPTER 1: WAR'S REALITY VS. PERCEPTION

The dominant events of the twentieth century were the two world wars. The intensity and manner of engagement around these wars were key drivers in the development of Shklovsky's defamiliarisation construct. The focus upon war was all-consuming on the home front just as on the front line. During World War I, Germans described the conflict as *Materialschlacht*, or 'battle of materials' (Hobsbawm, 1995).

Over ten million German soldiers needed equipment and clothing, and relied on domestic industry to supply them. German civilians were busy producing items needed at the front. From assembly lines to corner cafes, civilians' thoughts and conversations were on the war. Civilians on both sides were committed to working so that their own nation would triumph over the enemy. Propaganda nurtured the mentality of 'us versus them' in those directly in battle. Harold Lasswell's definition of propaganda is 'the war of ideas on ideas'. (Lasswell, 1971). Lynette Finch explicates the rise of propoganda in her article *Psychological Propaganda: The War of Ideas on Ideas During the First Half of the Twentieth Century*:

The reason that it has become so important is that winning the minds of civilians is now crucial to winning or losing a war. The traditional armies of the mercenaries were replaced by national armies [and] the individual citizen had as never before a personal interest in the outcome of war. With the nation at war, appeals to national pride and loyalty took on a new and deeper meaning. (Finch, 2000)

In addition, the advent of mass literacy and tabloids bolstered the war effort with rallying cries in the headlines. Those with trust in the printed word and only basic reading skills were vulnerable to manipulation by these cries. Bertrand Russell vociferously called for intellectuals to abstain from engaging in the verbal equivalent of mud-slinging. In fact, Emile Zola commented on this trend in an article that predates both Russell's call and World War I, simply entitled *War* (1900). Citing Syria, Egypt and Greece as examples, Zola wrote that only those civilizations that excelled not in war but in

the arts and sciences left a worthy legacy. Yet even the pacifist Zola, in spite of himself, found war entrancing:

I must confess that my whole being rebels against the idea of war. Its massacres exasperate me and appear to me a useless atrocity... Nevertheless, I am following up the war with great attention, and in it I behold... a revival of the warlike spirit, of the grand poetry of heroism and death... in vain do we endeavor to advance in civilization, since we must inevitably drift back to our primitive instinct: to the admiration of valor, to the hero worship of those who fight, who kill or are killed. (Zola, 1900)

If Zola, a self-proclaimed pacifist and one of the most critical thinkers of his time, could be pulled in by the undertow of war, what chance had the layman when the government deftly shaped his ideological support? T.S. Eliot, who was castigated for resisting propaganda, wrote:

‘Culture’ attracts the attention of men of politics: not that politicians are always ‘men of culture’ but that ‘culture’ is recognised both as an instrument of policy, and as something socially desirable which it is the business of the State to promote. (Eliot, 1948)

Mainstream culture was being simplified and streamlined into a supporting role in national war campaigns and their persistent aftermath. During World War I, a Mr Logan of the English Department of Hughes High School of Ohio, compiled a list of recommended readings about the war for students. Including up to the minute, war-related reading in the curriculum meant that class discussions were never dull.

No difficulty about teaching these classes, no artificial stimulus needed in preparing the day's assignment, no need that pupils attempt camouflage by uttering words, words, words. For these were the topics under discussion at every dinner table, on every street corner. (Logan, 1919)

In Logan's list, *Thirteen Views of the War Author(s)*, categories include 'The View of the Public Man at Home' for books with titles such as *Alsace-Lorraine under German Rule*, by Charles Hazen. Logan's synopsis of Hazen's book read:

A most readable presentation of the history of the French provinces, in which the author, an eminent historian, sets forth the injustices they have suffered at the hands of Germany. (Logan, 1919)

The World War I Allies were masters of propaganda, Hitler studied them between the wars and applied

propaganda throughout Axis culture. G. Stanley Hall recognised propaganda's presence on both sides:

There is the great problem, too, of the proper lines of censorship. Music and song, games and recreations, slogans, mottoes, watchwords, example and imitation are never so potent for good or ill. (Hall, 1919)

Immediately after World War II, a twelve minute instructional movie made by the U.S. Army Services Forces' Information and Education Division in 1946 illustrates how the lingering Allied war effort permeated daily life in Germany. *Your Job in Germany*, directed by Frank Capra (famous for *It's a Wonderful Life*) and written by Theodor Geisel (better known as children's author 'Dr Seuss') cautioned U.S. Soldiers heading to Germany to be wary of all Germans. The voice-over says:

Only yesterday, every businessman, every professional, was a part of Hitler's system. The doctors, technicians, clockmakers, postmen, farmers, housekeepers, toymakers, barbers, cooks, dock workers... (Capra, 1946)

Appalled by the engagement of the populace around the war, the movement led by Shklovsky and the international following of Dada called for dismantling a world so war-torn and neglectful of the human spirit. They feared what the future might look like – perhaps not far off the dystopian world later described in *A Clockwork Orange*: '...I'm too drunk to feel the pain if you hit me, and if you kill me I'll be glad to be dead.' (Burgess, 1962)

CHAPTER 2: DEFAMILIARISATION

Amidst the growing disparity between the reality of the war and the propaganda-driven misperceptions about the war, Victor Shklovsky created the construct of defamiliarisation. Defamiliarisation, or estrangement, was the term coined by Shklovsky in 1916 and articulated as a method in his essay *Art as Technique* (1916). It was originally devised as means to differentiate between poetic and practical literary language. Lawrence Crawford explains that Shklovsky viewed poetic language as 'a 'real' set of values and perceptions; practical language was an efficient but heavily deflated language currency ruined by automatisisation.' (Crawford, 2002). Shklovsky was enthusiastic about restoring the purpose of art:

Art exists in order to recover a sensation of life, to feel things, in order to make the stone stony. The goal of art is to give the sensation of things as seen, not known, the device of art is to make things 'unfamiliar', to increase the difficulty and length of their perception. (Shklovsky, 1914)

The purpose of defamiliarisation was to shock people into awareness of the actual atrocities of war and protect the arts themselves from falling prey to propaganda. He wanted to reawaken the senses to artistic authenticity and undiluted perception.

Shklovsky valued perception almost as much as the artwork itself. The central role of perception in defamiliarisation was underscored in the essay *The Formal Method* by Boris Eichenbaum, a fellow Formalist.

It should be evident that *perception* figures here not as a simple psychological concept (the perception of individual human beings) but as an element of art in itself, since it is impossible for art to exist without being perceived. (Eichenbaum, 1998)

What is not perceived (i.e., what is taken for granted) is the familiar. For Shklovsky, the familiar is registered by the brain but not truly perceived. The familiar is at risk for automatisisation.

We do not experience the familiar, we do not see it, we recognise it. We do not see the walls of our rooms. We find it very difficult to catch mistakes when we are reading proof especially if it is in a language we are very used to), the reason being that we cannot force ourselves to see, to

read, and not just 'recognise' a familiar word. (Shklovsky, 1998)

Shklovsky offers an extreme example in his 1916 essay, *Art as Technique*, where he cites Alexander Pogodin transcribing what should be a sublime sight, 'The Swiss mountains are beautiful' into a shorthand *T, S, m, a, b*. The verbal condensing of one of the earth's gifts serves only for its beauty to be 'recognised' but overlooked, and not dwelt upon. Shklovsky deems prose speech conventional and poetic speech as '*formed speech*' (Shklovsky, 1998). He provides well-known passages from Tolstoy's *Kholstomer*, which is narrated by a horse and from the horse's perspective. The desired effect is that the reader would have to translate the horse's perspective into a human one to first comprehend the scenario, then translate it back into the horse's perspective to appreciate the horse's sensibility. This two-step process which occurs perhaps just below the conscious level departs from normal passive perception. Had Tolstoy written his tale from the perspective of a fictitious person who bore witness to the same events, the reader would not have been required to perform this intersubjective translation.

As a consequence of the widespread distortions of perception during the Great War, Shklovsky feared that objects' essences were being overlooked. The abovementioned 'stoniness of the stone' was going unperceived. This dulling of critical consciousness could have been a consequence of the militaristic structure of national defenses, or the roars of the revolutionary mobs. Shklovsky saw defamiliarisation as a means to get people to stop living like automatons, and instead to live in the moment, and 'stop and smell the roses'. The deliberate enhancement of mindfulness of their surroundings would restore humanity to persons who were becoming conformist cyber-men (my words, not Shklovsky's – with apologies to Dr. Who).

Defamiliarisation permeates 20th century literature. Three such examples are *Fahrenheit 451*, *Catch-22* and *A Clockwork Orange*. Ray Bradbury echoes Shklovsky's desire to reawaken the senses in

Fahrenheit 451 (2008). The character Clarisse, an unconventional pariah, explains to Montag, the book-burning fireman:

The psychiatrist wants to know why I go out and hike around in the forests and watch the birds and collect butterflies. I'll show you my collection some day...They want to know what I do with all my time. I tell them that sometimes I just sit and *think*. (Bradbury, 2008)

Montag cannot help but be intrigued by Clarisse who stops and ponders, rather than lets thoughts be imported into her brain like Montag's own wife. After Clarisse departs for an appointment, he attempts to perceive in the Shklovskian way. 'And then, very slowly, as he walked, he tilted his head back in the rain, for just a few moments, and opened his mouth...' (Bradbury, 2008) The novel's setting in the near future makes it plausible that media tools would be sufficiently sophisticated to achieve this level of control. The pervasive application of these tools lead to the acceptance of their society's war by a complacent public who prefer an entertaining 'snap-ending', as Fire Chief Beatty calls it, and an absence of debate. Beatty discusses modern living with Montag. 'If you don't want a man unhappy politically, don't give him two sides to a question to worry him; give him one. Better yet, give him none. Let him forget there is such a thing as war.' (Bradbury, 2008)

As the concept of defamiliarisation became more widely known, it was appropriated by artists working in different media. Shklovsky imagined it as a literary technique and he gave Tolstoy due credit. A contemporary example comes from *Catch-22* by Joseph Heller (1961). Adhering to the theme of warfare, Joseph Heller could also be credited with applying it in his 1961 satirical novel about World War II, *Catch-22*.

'They're trying to kill me,' Yossarian told [Clevinger] calmly.
 'No one's trying to kill you,' Clevinger cried.
 'Then why are they shooting at me?' Yossarian asked.
 'They're shooting at *everyone*,' Clevinger. 'They're trying to kill everyone.'
 'And what difference does that make?' (Heller, 1961)

Heller, through Yossarian, compared his situation as a soldier to that of a victim of attempted murder, an indictable offense, punishable by life imprisonment. Indeed, it is the intention of a soldier to mortally wound his enemy, be it by gas or gun. Heller did not differentiate death in war from death in daily life. Instead, in this dialogue, he equated the two. In so doing, he prevented the reader from glossing over death as a part of war, and forced the reader to perceive death, or the threat of it, to be as menacing in battle as it is in peace. Fighting in war for the first time, Yossarian refused to acquiesce in the concept that he would be killed. Instead, he took cover in the military hospital, like an innocent man ducking behind a door to escape an assassin; he did not want to be killed.

Another mode of defamiliarisation is to go directly to the source, the words themselves. The abovementioned *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess introduced a plethora of Russian words and invented vocabulary that depended upon his readers' active, effortful comprehension to enter the world of Alex.

And I made with a like deep bow, smiling like bezoomny but thinking all the time. But when we got into the street I viddied that thinking is for the gloopy onees and that the oomny ones use like inspiration and what Bog sends... But then I counted odin dva tree and went ak ak ak with the britva, though not at litso or glazzies but at Georgie's nozh-holding rooker, and my little brothers, he dropped. (Burgess, 1962)

Though the Formalists and the Futurists were in agreement about many theoretical topics, war was not one of them. Shklovsky's views on the Great War were not aligned with those of the Futurists. While the Futurists saw World War I as a showplace of technological advances, Shklovsky viewed World War I as a cultural catastrophe. Shklovsky felt that if art had been more a part of peoples' lives, connecting them to the actual rather than the war-hyped world around them, no battles would have been fought. (Tihanov, 2005) Indeed, many of the Russian Futurists who were theoretical warmongers, ceased singing marching tunes when war became a reality.

Defamiliarisation calls for culture and life to be pulled out from under the wraps of habituation. To bring thoughtful perception into public awareness may not silence the spin doctors of war, but perhaps will give members of society, thus culture, a 'fighting' chance, as Dadaists argue in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: DADA

We need not be let alone. We need to be really bothered once in a while. How long is it since you were really bothered? About something important, about something real?

Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury

The Dadaists abhorred war. These like-minded individuals fled their native countries for neutral Switzerland. Reaching a critical mass, and linked by their rejection of the rationality and logic that in their view had led to the horrors of World War I, they coalesced to form the Dada movement in 1916. Dadaists included writers, playwrights, musicians and other artists. Notable Dadaists in Switzerland included Romanian poet Tristan Tzara, German author and poet Hugo Ball, and French sculptor, painter, poet Hans Arp. Dadaist Richard Huelsenbeck frankly, if dramatically, described the group's disgust at war:

None of us had any understanding for the courage that is needed to allow oneself to be shot dead for the idea of the nation, which is at best an interest group of fur-dealers and leather-merchants, at worst an interest-group of psychopaths, who, from the German 'fatherland' set out with their volumes of Goethe in their kitbags to stick their bayonets into French and Russian bellies. (Elger, 2004)

Acting as a group, Dada's *modus operandi* was to reawaken people's senses and make them see through the propaganda they had been unwittingly absorbing. Dada is often mislabeled as nihilistic because it seeks to destroy all that has failed the world, a world now at war. However, the destruction is creative, a means for the world to start anew. While Zurich may have been the birthplace of Dada, the avant-garde artists' sentiments were shared internationally and contemporaneously by intellectuals and common people alike. There were Dada groups in Munich, Berlin, and Paris with newsletter subscribers as far away as Tokyo.

Two examples of Dada's application of defamiliarisation were photomontage and the sound-poem. Both methods were utilised to revolt against the propaganda of World War I. These artistic novelties employed defamiliarisation to stun and surprise the observer into paying closer attention to the meaning

of words and images around them.

PHOTOMONTAGE

Pablo Picasso and George Braques coined the technique collage (from the French 'coller' to glue), from which photomontage came, in their works starting in 1912 with Picasso's 'Still-life with Chair Caning'. They attached found objects, including pieces of wood, metal and other nontraditional materials to their canvases, making their hanging works three-dimensional and more than pictorial. Fine art had already been fractured by the rise of modernism. Such disquieting works asked the public to ask themselves what they expected from art; did they want to be challenged? Were they ready to search

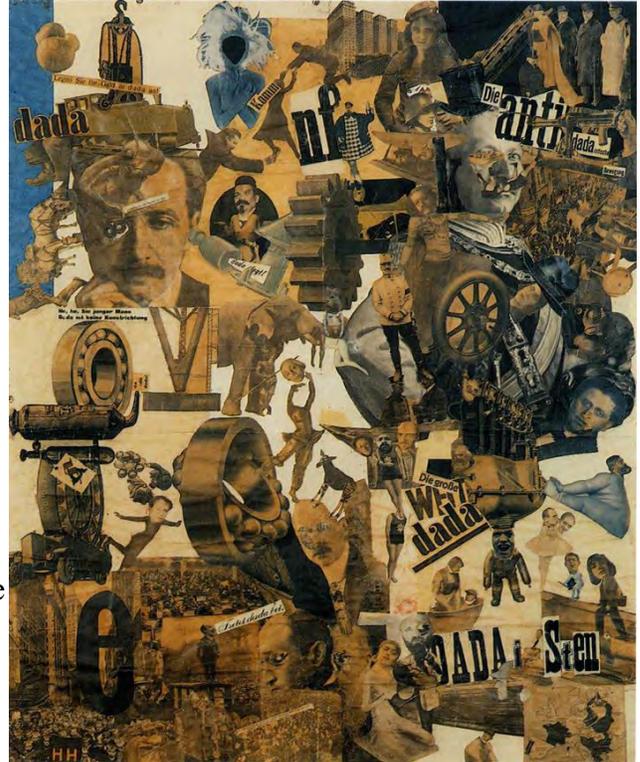


Illustration 1: Hannah Höch, Incision with the Dada Kitchen Knife through Germany's Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch, 1920

the pictures for meaning? Avant-gardists Picasso and Braque made the question 'What is art in the age of mechanical reproduction?' both a philosophical and public one.

The Dadaists leveraged photomontage as a platform for their anti-war politics. Photomontage, as used by the Dadaists, was a collage of words and images drawn from sources such as newspapers, periodicals, and advertisements. The images were denuded of their original context and jarringly juxtaposed with images and text that projected provocative messages, often contradicting the original intent of the image.

Dadaist Hannah Höch was widely recognised for her powerful photomontages. One of her most famous works was *'Incision with the Dada Kitchen Knife through Germany's Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch.'* (Collage, 114x90 cm, 1920; cited in Elger, 2004). Höch took newspaper photos and texts and literally and figuratively corrupted them to state an emotional truth, rather than a 'censor-approved' one. In this work Höch created a survey of the events of 1920, political and technological, drawing upon techniques to defamiliarise them. Although its appearance is superficially disorganised, it effectively conveys Dada's anti-war stance. The most striking images are those of circular steel, wheels on axles, and cogs turning; comments on the pervasiveness of science and technology on everyday life, while the images of people are almost secondary. Höch's images were influenced by *Walden* by the transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, in which he wrote, 'We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us.' (Thoreau, 1854) Höch effectively and honestly showed Germany its problems.

Juliana Kreinik explicated Höch's *Incision* by depicting four quadrants. (Kreinik, 2011) Clockwise from upper left, they are Dada Propaganda, Anti-Dadaists, Dada World, and Dada Persuasion. The most prominent face in the Dada Propaganda quadrant is Albert Einstein's. Snippets of words near him read, 'invest your money in dada!' and 'he he, young man...dada is not an art trend'. Albert Einstein as a financial broker or as a comic is an example of defamiliarisation, capturing attention because this is not how people think of Albert Einstein. Projected from Einstein's head is Friedrich Ebert, the moderate German chancellor (1918-1919) who supported a defensive war, but not one for colonial gain. The Dadaists admired his humane actions and policies. During an industrial strike to improve labor conditions, Ebert encouraged workers to work while discussions about fair wages and conditions continued so both workers and employers might benefit. Dada Propaganda succeeds in shocking through its odd combinations of clippings while conveying its principles through the faces of a reasonable politician and a mathematician who speaks the unbiased, distilled truth. Dada saw itself as

an intelligent, far-sighted entity, not just another reactive fad.

The Anti-Dada quadrant contains its opponents. The focal point is the cut-out of Kaiser Wilhelm II, who led Germany in World War I. Höch replaced his well-recognised mustache with two wrestlers. Below him is the head of General Paul von Hindenberg (for whom the doomed zeppelin was named) atop a belly dancer's body. Hindenberg blamed Germany's loss of the Great War on 'Dolchstoß' (a stab in the back), referring to the disloyal socialist founders of the Weimar Republic. To Höch, Hindenberg's complaints were the whining of a warmonger whose only interest was continuing the bloodshed. Her depiction of Hindenberg's absurd, wrestlers' mustache revealed him for who he was: an enemy of Dada.

Dada World illustrates Höch's own war as a female in the male-dominated *avant-garde* art world. Dada was fighting a revolution for mankind but overlooked women. Höch confronts the hypocrisy of her Dada colleagues whose progressive artistic methods contrast with their backwards thinking about the role of women in society. She thinly veils her sentiments by depicting men as infantile or feminine. For example, she employs the image of a baby in several ways to convey her feelings about male colleagues who stereotyped her. The first is the seated body of a plump baby boy who is facing left, while the proportionately smaller head upon its shoulders is that of a middle-aged man with a beard who is facing right. The head belongs to a man said to be a famous art critic of the day. The second is a mother washing a diminutive man in a tin bath tub. The third is a two-headed male ballerina on toes in a tutu. The heads belong to Höch's two colleagues, George Grosz and Wieland Herzfelde. To make an indisputable point, she includes a map of Europe that highlights countries where women have the right to vote.

By 1920 when Höch unveiled *Incision*, Dada already had a worldwide following. Thus, the news

clippings of crowds of supporters in Dada Persuasion were accurate. This quadrant depicted the impoverished citizens and the politicians who had to solve the post-war problems. The right-wing government and the military had their turn in World War I and lost. People needed more than government propaganda to survive and that is why Dada called for people to 'Tretet Dada bei!' (Join Dada!). This quadrant was less about toppling the figureheads, so to speak, than to emphasise the power of the long underestimated public: a concept that many found equally defamiliarising.

Dadaists did not want people to lose their lives to the violence of war. Further, they did not want people to lose their sensibilities to deceptive propaganda, a goal that led Hugo Ball and other Dadaists to explore poems entirely comprised of sounds that, unlike language, that could not be manipulated.

SOUND-POEM

A sound-poem is a poem that diminishes representative language to focus on the expression of emotion. By decoupling word sounds from their collectively understood meanings, the message of the 'reciter' becomes unfamiliar, thereby forcing the listener to grasp at any other available clues to perceive the reciter's message.

There has been a longstanding fascination with alternative and unconventional language. Contemporary sound-poet, Steve McCaffery. (Erickson, 1985) stated 'language of signification' is also a language of metaphysical absence. The British theorist, Bertrand Russell, in the early 20th century, pursued logical positivism which stated that knowledge, thereby language, should be empirically based. Swiss linguist and semiotician Ferdinand De Saussure (1916) pointed out that language may be manipulated or misconstrued (as is readily seen today with emails and texts). The Dadaists searched for a language that would allow them to close the gap between cultures, the signifier and the signified, and the mind and

the body. Contemporaries joined in their quest. The Russian and Italian Futurists were also intrigued by a universal 'language of presence' with an emotive rather than logical base.

The Dadaists started navigating the territory of sound-poetry. Different from regular poetry that operates upon a linguistic system of signification, sound-poetry is a subgroup of sound-text poetry that 'refers to any experimentation with language that focuses on the sound substance of the words'.

Dadaist Tristan Tzara was also interested in language and pre-language. He observed the communication and rituals of indigenous tribes. He was particularly struck by emotive, physically connected rituals that clearly convey meaning. A well-known example, the Haka, famously performed by the Maori, effectively communicates intimidation through its ritual war dance.



Illustration 2: The Haka performed by Maori. Image from oapv.cz

In performing the Haka, the Maori chant and use their bodies to express meaning to their listeners.

There are lyrics but even if the listener does not know the words, it is safe to say the meaning is

conveyed. For Dada to achieve something like the Haka, whereby meaning is uttered in a language of presence and body where the language cannot be manipulated or misunderstood, they had to start with the sound-poem.

The sound-poem was the Dadaist attempt at *ursprache*, whereby speaker and auditor could communicate outside of the signifier system. Dada traced the origins of war back to language and explored ways to negate language in its current form to make way for a new, more human form, as the group tried to do with its art. The sound-poem was one of many ways Dadaists expressed their skepticism with journalism which had been increasingly manipulated through propaganda. 'With these sound-poems we wanted to dispense with a language which journalism had made desolate and impossible,' said Hugo Ball. (Elger, 2004) Arguably Dada's opening night was the debut of Ball's *Karawane*, in 1916 performed at the Cabaret Voltaire (named for the author of *Candide*). This first sound-poem was an attack on modern language of signification. To an outsider, a sound-poem such as *Karawane* would sound like Germanic word salad with a strong emphasis upon emotional shading and inflection.

Ball's audience was treated to a destruction of poetry and language as they knew it, symbolic of the destruction of society as Dada saw it. 'Sound-poetry [itself] operates through a denial of signification towards an ideal of unification of expression and indication.' (Erickson, 1985). The poem was deliberately made unfamiliar to his listeners' ears. In his notes, Ball wrote;

With these sound poems we should renounce language, devastated and made impossible by journalism. We should withdraw into the innermost alchemy of the word, and even surrender the word, thus conserving for poetry its most sacred domain. We should refuse to make poems second-hand; we should stop taking over words (not to mention sentences) which we did not invent entirely anew for our own use. We should no longer be content to achieve poetic effects which, in the final analysis, are but echoes of inspiration ... (Elderfield, 1974)

The meaning or translation of the poem is unknown but as mentioned above, the desired language would be emotive rather than logos-based so this could imply a concrete and not an abstract topic. If the world used a universal, emotive, concrete language that did not deal with abstract concepts such as national boundaries, would world war have occurred?

The novelty of the sound-poem's presentation (Ball's costume was designed by fellow Dadaist Marc Janco) and location in a pub may have only succeeded in further establishing Dada as outsiders. Assuming that his auditors were not going to understand him, then who benefited from the performance? Given the ongoing presence of one system of poetry and the somewhat sudden arrival of another system, was it possible for the sound-poet to convey his meaning to his audience without previously explaining it to them in the original system of German?

Dada's works were daunting and disarming to their audience and the public alike. Huelsenbeck said that the group did not have the courage to die in war but they were unafraid of the cultural apocalypse that awaited them if they did not act.

Yes, yes, now your bones are knocking together, - now you are whistling through your hollow teeth – *eilomen, eilomen* – the time has reached fulfilment – the storm has broken. (Huelsenbeck in Ades, 2006)

The Dadaists depended on chaotic, sometimes frightening methods to cajole the neurons of their audiences into action. Masking his defamiliarisation in humour, playwright Fernando Arrabal used absurd humour to unsettle his audience in *Pic-Nic*.



KARAWANE

jolifanto bambla ó falli bambla

grossiga m'pfa habla horem

égiga goramen

higo bloiko russula huju

hollaka hollala

anlogo bung

blago bung

blago bung

boooo fataka

■ ■ ■ ■

schampa wulla wussa ólobo

hej tatta gôrem

eschige zambada

wulubu ssabudu uluw ssabudu

tumba ba- umf

kusagauma

ba - umf

CHAPTER 4: PIC-NIC

If, then, I were asked for the most important advice I could give, that which I considered to be the most useful to the men of our century, I should simply say: in the name of God, stop a moment, cease your work, look around you.

Leo Tolstoy, 1903

Fernando Arrabal (born 1932) is a proudly controversial playwright steeped in the tradition of breaking with tradition. He was a comrade of Dadaist Tristan Tzara and a member of Andre Breton's Surrealist theatre group for three years. Arrabal was a diligent and prolific creator of literature, film, and theatre. His works were punctuated by defamiliarisation. In 1962 he formed a theatre group with Alejandro Jodorowsky and Roland Topor called 'Theatre of Panic', based on the teachings of Antonin Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty* and Luis Buñuel. By creating and acting in violent performances on stage, he hoped to dissipate the violent energy within, replacing it by a search for peace. This approach laid the groundwork for the catharsis theory of Feshbach and Singer in 1971.

Arrabal knew the violence of war from an early age. He was born in Melilla, a Spanish protectorate off the coast of Morocco, then in 1936 at the age of 4 he moved with his family to mainland Spain following his republican father's capture by the *Franquistas* at the start of the Spanish Civil War. Arrabal wrote the first draft of *Pic-Nic*, initially named *Soldiers (Los Soldados)*, at the age of twenty. By this time, he himself had already become involved in the Basque conflict. The play *Pic-Nic* was finally staged in 1959 in France with the final title *Pic-Nic en la Campagne*, suggestive of either the countryside or the battlefield.

SYNOPSIS

The play opens and closes to the sound of warfare. In between explosions occur the suspension of disbelief, family dynamics, idiosyncrasies, nostalgia, friendship and identification. Arrabal elevated these sentiments through absurd humour to laugh at war until the 'snap-ending' when the humanised

and likeable protagonists are mowed down by machine gun fire before the curtain falls, abruptly transforming the tears of laughter to tears of shock and sadness about the reality of war.

Pic-Nic commences with the soldier Zapo scrambling across the stage, dodging bullets and bombs.

When the attack stops, he sits down and continues knitting a sweater. His captain calls him on the company phone and Zapo answers;

At your service captain...excuse me captain, when will the battle start up again? And the bombs, when do I throw them? And do I throw them behind me, or in front of me?...Captain, I find myself alone, could you possibly send me a companion? (Arrabal, 2000)

When Zapo hangs up the phone, he is startled by the sudden appearance of his parents. 'But Mom, Dad, how could you even risk coming here, with all the danger there is? Leave immediately!' (*ibid*, 2000)

His father, the macho Mr Tepán, hears none of it. 'Oh, you want to give your father a lecture on war and danger? This is my idea of fun. I jump off trains while they're still moving!' (*ibid*, 2000). His parents

thought Zapo was bored, as war is boring according to Mrs Tepán, so they packed lunch and came to visit him and have a picnic. Their picnic is interrupted by the appearance of Zepo, an enemy soldier.

Both Zapo and Zepo raise their hands with fright but Zapo's parents talk him through the process of taking a prisoner, with the utmost courtesy. Mr Tepán tells Zapo as he ties the prisoner up, 'Son, don't be a brute, don't mistreat the prisoner...Now tie his feet so he can't escape.' (*ibid*, 2000) Up until this

point in the war, Zapo has not fired a weapon; he has no stories, no souvenirs other than the sweater he is knitting until he gets what he thinks is a bright idea. 'Dad, take a photo of me with the prisoner on the

ground and me with a foot on his stomach. Whaddya think?' (*ibid*, 2000) The prisoner Zepo concedes to this request as a personal favour to the Family Tepán. The family reciprocates the courtesy by

inviting Zepo to join their picnic. Two Red Cross porters pass the family and the prisoner in search of

casualties or 'even a scratch?' As there are no corpses to be collected, Mr Tepán tells Zapo he did not look hard enough and he should be ashamed of himself for not wanting to help the Red Cross porters,

frustrated by the absence of death and injury. The Tepáns and the prisoner return to polite conversation. They stumble upon a solution to stopping the war: stop the war! Mrs Tepán puts a beret on the gramophone, then realising her mistake, correctly puts a record on the gramophone to celebrate. The music, a *pasodoble* which is played before the death of a bull in a bull fight, drowns out the company phone ringing to warn Zapo of an incoming attack. A machine gun mows down the four of them and Red Cross porters arrive to complete their duties.

DEFAMILIARISATION THROUGH ABSURDITY

Arrabal's approach in *Pic-Nic* was decidedly softer than his Dada predecessors, but more strategic. Arrabal used laughter to deftly maneuvered his audience through an improbable afternoon in the trenches. Cognitive studies on masking effects of humour over the years have documented its ability to distract, persuade and unite. 'When the emotion of humor dominates the organism, all action except laughter is excluded.' (Grimes in Jones, 1979). Humour, if the audience member's sense of it permits, can distract, or block and delay judgment until the playwright decides.

[T]he pun, the anecdote, and the witticism must, if they are to evoke humor, (1) develop tension, (2) contain a change of direction so sudden as to constitute a 'shock,' and (3) result in release of tension. It is this shock that causes an interruption, or distraction, that prevents an audience from forming judgments. (Grimes in Jones, 1979)

Written sixty years ago, *Pic-Nic* remains popular on the festival circuit with audiences and critics alike. Its universality and cogent questioning of war give it broad appeal. It does not invert the dominant narrative technique, but figuratively sneaks up behind the traditional audience, tapping them on the shoulder and pretending to look the other way. The audience is then distracted, not knowing what will come next. Such is the basis of the surreal humor and which *Pic-Nic* relies. The defamiliarising juxtaposition of the cruelty of war and the whimsy of a family picnic sharpens the viewers' perception of the harsh reality of war.

Arrabal's highly political *Pic-Nic* challenged the minds of the general populace with an absurd meshing of two somewhat recognisable situations; a war trench and a family picnic. Arrabal doesn't permit the situation to get tense until the end of the play. Arrabal never disgusts his audience, merely keeps them off-guard with their own laughter as they try to perceive what exactly about the war they are laughing at. *Pic-Nic*, riddled with surrealist humour, temporarily disconnected its audience from the trenches and drew them with laughter into a camaraderie – then figuratively wounded them with the reality of war when the Tepán family and Zepo are killed with machine gun fire at the end. Arrabal channeled the damage and the ruins of war into an absurd tragicomedy. The awkward laughter results from the clashes of the once familiar, now defamiliarised. By packaging his anti-war message in comedic delivery, he disguises the important questions about war being asked. Coupled with the jarring effects of the hilarious dialogue are logical questions.

MRS TEPÁN. It's so nice to get out on Sundays. You always meet nice people.

Turning to Zepo the prisoner.

And you, why are you an enemy?

ZEPO. – I don't know about these things. I have very little culture.

MRS TEPÁN. – But is it from birth or did you become an enemy later?

ZEPO. – I don't know. I already told you I don't know. (*ibid*, 2000)

Arrabal utilises his characters like clowns to distract the audience's attention away from the battle field setting and draw them into the quirks of the Tepán family. The parents discuss nothing of the brutality of the war, only speaking of their fond memories.

MR TEPÁN. – And the horses never tripped, lots of horses and very stocky...and the green uniforms.

MRS TEPÁN. – No, they weren't green, the enemy's uniforms, they were blue. I remember very well, they were blue.

MR TEPÁN. – I'm telling you they were green. (*ibid*, 2000)

There is no mention of fear at the sight of the enemy, or the frustration of invasion, just a tiff that reveals no connection to the bodies in the uniforms of the experience of war. Bluntly, it's silly.

Zapo is the bridge back to reality from the Tepán's land of surreal gags. However, Arrabal maneuvers Zapo down the totem pole by restoring family hierarchy, where Mr Tepán was the head of the family and Mrs Tepán is second in command and Zapo is treated like a ten year old. This allows for a running gag unto itself; the famous 'inmates running the asylum' running joke. The family draws the audience into more intimate family rituals of manners and hygiene.

MRS TEPÁN. – No guns allowed. It's bad manners to bring your gun to the dinner table...But how dirty you are, my boy! How did you get like this? Show me your hands....And your ears? And your teeth? Very nice. Whose going to give their little boy a kiss for brushing their teeth? (*To her husband*) Give your son a kiss for brushing his teeth well. Just because there's a war on, doesn't mean you have permission to stop washing. (*ibid*, 2000)

His parents' constant hushing of him increases the absurdity of their antics. When Mr Tepán asks Zapo if he has killed anyone, he could be asking if his hapless son has scored any goals in a recent football match.

MR TEPÁN. – So, my son, have you killed much?

ZAPO. – When?

MR TEPÁN. – Well, lately?

ZAPO. – Where?

MR TEPÁN. – Well, here in the war?

ZAPO. – Not much. I haven't really killed. Practically nothing.

MR TEPÁN. – What have you killed more, enemy horses or soldiers?

ZAPO. – No horses. There aren't any horses.

MR TEPÁN. – And soldiers?

ZAPO. – Probably.

MR TEPÁN. – Probably? You're not sure?

ZAPO. – No, I shoot without looking. Anyway, I don't shoot very much. And every time I shoot, I recite an 'Our Father' for the guy I killed.

MR TEPÁN. – You need to be more brave. Like your old dad. (*ibid*, 2000)

Mr Tepán is disappointed at his son's lack of valour, meaning that he has killed few if any people. Mr Tepán looks back with nostalgia on the courageous days of horses, swords and uniforms. The history books show that World War I changed as battles evolved into long-distance mechanical and chemical affairs. Is Zapo's father recalling a war he never fought rather than the reality of the one his son is fighting? While Mr Tepán may be a lost cause, defamiliarisation in *Pic-Nic* may serve to corrupt false

memories and reconcile the dissonance between the rosy past and gray present.

The Red Cross porters are reminiscent of Monty Python and the Holy Grail's 'Dead Collectors' ('I'm not dead yet!'). They are frustrated because they have no work to do, and clearly emotionally detached from the casualties of war they collect as part of their job description.

PORTER NO 1. – Any dead people?

ZAPO. – No, not here.

PORTER NO 1. – Are you sure you looked hard?

ZAPO. – Sure.

PORTER NO 1. – And there's not one single dead person?

ZAPO. – I already told you no.

PORTER NO 1. – Not even a wound?

ZAPO. – I already told you no.

...

PORTER NO 1. – Simply put, the other porters already have broken wrists from transporting corpses and wounded and we still haven't found anything. And it's not because we haven't looked... (*ibid*, 2000)

The desensitised attitude of the porters is laughable to watch because of its callousness. However, it is Arrabal's desired effect for the audience to laugh at war, using humour as a distraction from death, even though the action of laughing at war is an unfamiliar act in itself. It is the insensitivity of the porters that mirrors the real world whose occupants Arrabal addressed – to reawaken indignation and empathy within people about the travesty of war, rather than let war be treated like a civil service occupation.

When the Family Tepán and Zepo break bread together, Zapo and Zepo, the two most fear-filled characters with the fewest nostalgic memories of war, compare stories.

ZEPO. – One day I was in my house repairing my mother's electric iron when a man came in and asked, 'Are you Zepo?' –Yes. Well, they told me you have to go to the war.' And I asked him, 'But, what war?' And he told me 'What a pleb you are! Don't you read the papers?' And I told him yes, but not about the wars.

ZAPO. – Yes! The same thing happened to me. (*ibid*, 2000)

The two soldiers have the legitimate reasons to be afraid. They are made out to be cowardly and unpatriotic for not wanting to harm each other or get themselves harmed. Zapo is smart enough to

know that a trench is too dangerous for casual visitors. Still trying to get his father back to safety, he says, 'The captain always told us, "In war there's discipline and bombs," but he didn't say anything about visitors'. (*ibid*, 2000) Arrabal did not design him to be the poster boy of unflagging patriotism. He was lonely and occupied himself by knitting himself a sweater – neither of which uphold the masculine stereotype of a soldier, like Mr Tepán. Zapo asks his captain when the fighting will start again, and which way to throw the bombs. When his parents arrive he is rewarded with a kiss for brushing his teeth well.

Arrabal makes his character-puppets dance. Just before the Tepáns and Zepo are killed, they literally dance to a *pasodoble* - music played at bullfights just before the bull is killed. They also dance figuratively, around the topic of war with humour as the melody.

Arrabal develops his message by injecting humour into a very serious subject. Its heart is not lost on Martin Esslin; '...like children, they suffer the cruelty of the world as a meaningless affliction.' (Esslin, 1968) In Chapter 4, Spiegelman leverages the graphic novel (a genre with roots in the comic book) to tell a very serious story about World War II and the Holocaust.

CHAPTER 5: MAUS

Children's books like Alice in Wonderland or Struwwelpeter, of which it would be absurd to ask whether they are progressive or reactionary, contain incomparably more eloquent ciphers of history than the high drama of Hebbel.

Theodore Adorno, 1978

The final example of defamiliarisation is *The Complete Maus* by Art Spiegelman (1996), a retelling of his father's experience of World War II and Auschwitz. Spiegelman disrupts conventional thinking about the war and the concentration camps by applying several techniques. These include: 1) Providing narratives both of the war's primary impact of the war on his father, the concentration camp victim, and its second-generation impact including guilt on the part of the victim's son; 2) Conveying the story not just in words, but also through the emergent medium of the graphic novel. 3) Framing the story as an animal allegory in which Nazis are cats, Jews are mice and ethnic Poles are pigs. In contrast to the earlier examples, in the years leading up to this work ever-expanding television and media coverage, while visually conveying the human atrocities of war and genocide, did so to the point of visual saturation and loss of sensitivity in the beholder.

GRAPHIC NOVELS

The edge that graphic novels have over traditional, text-only novels is that the images and words are not competitors but allies, requiring the reader to be active and his senses to be engaged.

Elizabeth Friese, an educational researcher wrote of graphic novels:

With graphic narrative to read both the words and the pictures, I had to consciously slow down, over and over again. I had to relearn to read, approaching each page differently and developing an appreciation for the way words and pictures worked together. Instead of an inferior type of reading, I realised that graphic narratives represented more a sophisticated, multimodal form of reading than alphabet-only texts. (Friese, 2013)

Spiegelman's *Maus* is the first graphic novel to garner scholarly acclaim, with over a hundred academic articles written about it within sixteen years of publication. This recognition – including the Pulitzer

Prize – was a watershed for a medium that was marginalised until recently. (Frey and Noys, 2002)

The Complete Maus comprises two volumes; *Maus: A Survivor's Tale – My Father Bleeds History* and *Here My Troubles Began*, more conveniently known as *Maus Volume I* and *Maus Volume II*. The former was first copyrighted in 1973 and published by Pantheon in 1986. Spiegelman managed to publish *Maus Volume I* just ahead Don Bluth's animated feature film, *An American Tail*, about a family of Jewish mice who flee pogroms by emigrating to the United States. (Bluth, 1986) *Maus Volume II* was first copyright in 1986 and published by Pantheon in 1992. The volumes became available together in 1996.

SYNOPSIS

Within Art Spiegelman's autobiography is his father Vladek Spiegelman's biography, as recounted to the son (about the war) and witnessed by the son (observing his elderly father). Art Spiegelman recorded his father Vladek's experience as a Polish Jew in World War II including Auschwitz (called Mauschwitz to reflect the theme). The younger Spiegelman's narrative starts well after World War II, in the then-current time (1973) when he, (as a mouse) approaches his father (also a mouse) about documenting his survival of the Holocaust. In presenting his father's story, during the war and as a Holocaust survivor, and his own story as a writer and a son, Art Spiegelman never loses his self-awareness or fails to push to their limits the possibilities of the medium.

VICTIMS – FIRST AND SECOND GENERATIONS

One of the most famous first-person accounts of World War II was *Anne Frank: The Diary of Young Girl*. (Frank, 2001) Anne Frank narrates the story of herself and her family hiding from the Nazis in World War II. *Maus* differs from Anne Frank's traditional narrative because *Maus* tells not only the

story of the original victim, Vladek, but it also the second generation victim, Art, his son. The narrative of *Maus* jumps between Vladek's first-person account of World War I, as told to Art, and Art's own first-person account which deals with his guilt of being the son of an elderly parent and a Holocaust survivor. Vladek's non-idiomatic diction and emphatic style are presented in bold font, constantly taking readers out of the moment and reminding them of his lingering past. On learning of the existence of someone's ninety year old father, Vladek thought to himself, 'Ninety! This was 1943! It wasn't left any other Jews what had ninety years!' (Spiegelman, 1996) Inserting the dialogue within black-and-white comic book-style illustrations eases the linguistic challenge created by prepositional hiccups, echoing how one might try to grasp Vladek's meaning when conversing with him. The illustrations add power and subtlety, and work in harmony with the text. If the vernacular were presented without any images, the dialogue would be difficult reading.

In *Maus* Art Spiegelman as illustrator varies the size and shape of words – something not done in ordinary books. When Art the character attends his therapy appointment he is depicted as a young, vulnerable mouse whose paws do not reach the floor when he sits in his armchair. The therapist and Art both wear mouse masks and speak in calm, lower case sentences. They discuss Art's relationship with his father as a parent and as a Holocaust survivor in graphic novel format – uncharted territory in the realm of media about the Holocaust.



Illustration 3: *The Complete Maus* by Art Spiegelman, p205, 1996

MICE AND OTHER ANIMAL STEREOTYPES

Spiegelman took his illustrations by utilising animal characters instead of humans. This allegorical route is well-trod, from numerous folk tales to ancient Greek Aesop's fables to the more contemporary *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, first published in 1945. It was the first tract in which Orwell could 'fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole' (Orwell, 2005). This cautionary tale about communism utilised animals to describe a political situation in a thinly veiled manner to those in the know, and to explain the situation to future generations. Similarly, Spiegelman reclaimed stereotypical animals to serve as a Holocaust primer. Stereotypes themselves were recognised as a part of human thinking in studies to create effective propaganda. Crowd behaviourist Walter Lippmann wrote that reality was too complicated for interpretation. 'We are not equipped to deal with so much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations. And although we have to act in that environment, we have to reconstruct it on a simpler model (stereotype) before we can manage with it.' (Lippman in Finch, 2000).

Despite using animal characters, Spiegelman is not entirely bound by the stereotypes he chose. He gave credit where his father, Vladek, deemed it worthy. If an ethnic Polish person were helpful, despite being a 'pig', the act of helpfulness was depicted.

When the eyes perceive animals wearing clothing, the brain says 'Something's different about this picture!' Where the brain is expecting to see a human head at the top of an overcoat, there is a pointy rodent nose with whiskers and discus ears. Why did

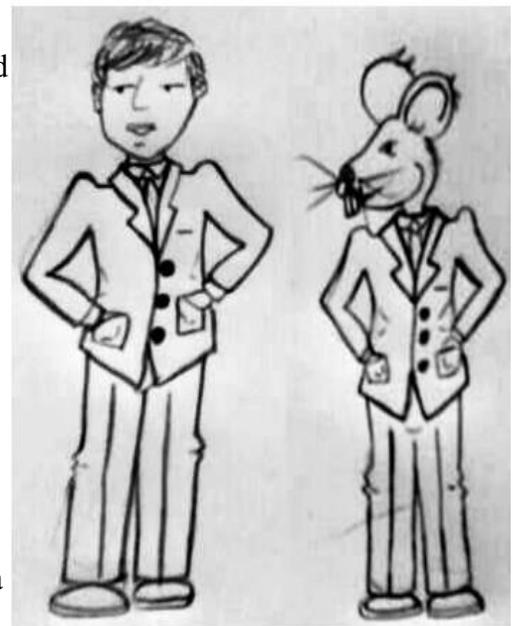


Illustration 4: Visual contrast between a human head and a mouse head.

Spiegelman represent 'God's chosen people' as mice? Where do mice live? What do mice eat? They gnaw at skirting boards and burrow into holes in pantries, trying to stay out of sight. They survive on crumbs carelessly dropped by those bigger than them, constantly in fear of their lives. Exterminators are called in to exterminate mice or smoke them out, thinking it will stop the spread of disease. Given these obvious parallels, Spiegelman seized the opportunity to tell the diminutive rodents' side of the story.

Artistic explorations of human identity have often relied upon animal characters. Michael Chaney, author of the article, 'Animal Subjects of the Graphic Novel', asks, 'Why is it that our ideas of the animal—perhaps more than any other set of ideas—are the ones which enable us to frame and express ideas about human identity?' (Chaney, 2011). Chaney concurs that giving a character whiskers instead of stubble grants the human an otherness otherwise inaccessible. He continues,

'an examination of representative texts in one of the most acclaimed sub-genres of the medium—the autobiographical graphic novel—confirms that theorising the animal has become (and indeed has always been) essential to sequential pictorial narratives of identity and otherness.' (Chaney, 2011).

Such is the luxury afforded by animal illustrations. The question remains: if we are represented as animals carrying out the behaviour of humans, then what makes us humans superior to animals?

OTHER GRAPHIC NOVELS ABOUT WAR

While Spiegelman's *Maus* is the most ubiquitous graphic novel, but it is not the only one about war.

Juneau and Sucharov wrote of the merits of the narrative approach in graphic novels in their article, *Narratives in Pencil* (2010). Focusing on narratives assists to:

'...set aside questions of right and wrong...and instead focus on the explanatory questions essential to understanding how world politics unfold. Working with the assumption that each collective actor under analysis has a certain “version” of events—stories that that group tells about itself and about the Other.' (Juneau and Sucharov, 2010)

Desert Peach, written and drawn by Donna Barr, tells the unconventional story of a gay German colonel in World War II. The title character is the fictitious younger brother of Erwin Rommel, nicknamed the Desert Fox, commander of the Afrika Korps. Barr puts the medium through its paces when she introduces the eccentric character 'Dobermann', a convalescing soldier who is requisitioned to serve as a guard at a concentration camp. Dobermann tells his unit of the existence of death camps. As summarised by Eaglestone:

Dobermann turns out to be too mad to be an effective guard – unable to understand who the inmates are or why he should harm them – and is punished and beaten. He is saved by a ‘good’ SS man who only joined the SS because of his ‘patriotism’...The soldiers report Dobermann’s story to their Colonel and so to General Rommel, but without reporting its provenance. The General – the archetypal good German – immediately plans to set off for Germany. However, it is revealed that these stories come from Dobermann, and – as he is notoriously mad – everyone relaxes: the stories cannot be true... (Eaglestone, 2002)

Barr's style is detailed, with lots of movement, but clean with fine lines. She indicates Dobermann's narrative with unsteady, thick lines. Eaglestone suggested, 'This reflect[s] both Dobermann’s mad and childlike simplicity and the ‘crudeness’ of the camps.' (Eaglestone, 2002)

Not all graphic novels incorporate defamiliarisation at the level of *Maus*. *Waltz with Bashir* appeared first as an animated feature film in 2008 and then as a graphic novel in 2009. It has a conventional effect of desensitisation towards war and favours one side of the conflict. Ultimately, its writer and director Ari Folman offered dispensation to those who regretted following orders and being automatised (the opposite of perceptive). Folman attempts to humanise and provide insight into the feelings of Israeli soldiers (including himself) involved in the Sabra and Shatila massacres in Lebanon. The title of the film connotes that the soldiers are waltzing with their memories; they are aggrieved and haunted by their actions. At the end the animation dissolves into actual footage of the Palestinian refugee camps, post-massacre. Whether intentional or not, (though Freud would point out that our

actions are always intentional) Folman objectifies the Palestinians into an Ella Shohat case study. The real footage is introduced by journalist, Ron Ben-Yishai, describing a dead little girl who reminds him of his own daughter. His voice is emotional, indicating that what he saw made him a victim. In contrast to the Israelis who are interviewed, the words of Palestinian women are not subtitled. With less than two minutes left in the movie, Folman switches from animation to footage, Israelis to Palestinians. The film provides inadequate time for viewers to develop an emotional connection to the Palestinians or their plight, leaving the viewers unmoved by the testimonies of their dead.

Juneau and Sucharov (2010) suggest that the medium of graphic novels offers a special opportunity to present events along with nuanced dialogue. Stories are meant to be told and we should listen to each other. It is arguable that the Holocaust is too sacrosanct a subject to be presented as a graphic novel. However, stained glass windows and illuminated bibles have taught many believers the 'words' of the Lord. Keeping in mind the numerous artistic depictions of the Holocaust, once one medium has become familiar it is necessary to explore or experiment with other media to defamiliarise the message, recapturing the audience's attention so as to deliver the message to them. The message should be more important than the medium.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Thought is supreme; it breaks swords and stops the cannon's roar.

Émile Zola, 1900

The twentieth century ushered in many advances, the most psychologically and physically damaging of them being in warfare. Deadly military advances evoked an artistic response; a distrust of or loss of belief in the violent reality surrounding the Great War and the wars that followed. Governments relied upon various media to persuade the populace to accept and support war. Fearing that the populace would passively absorb propaganda, Victor Shklovsky created the device of *defamiliarisation* to stimulate an audience's critical perception and scepticism. Regardless of the specific method employed, the purpose of defamiliarisation is to deprive the viewer of recognition or recall, forcing him or her to a fresh perception in which he or she 'sees' the object or the act before him with uninitiated, unacquainted eyes. The Dadaists had to be more disruptive than the Great War to reach the public. Arrabal, though a friend of the Dadaists, used laughter to have the last word and make his audiences see what they were missing. Art Spiegelman created *Maus* to remind us that the we have not seen all there is to see about the Holocaust, and though the first generation of survivors are passing away, their children may still be trying to make sense of it. As surveyed in this thesis, the three artistic works applied the concept of defamiliarisation to force their audience to emerge from or reverse their propaganda-induced desensitisation and indifference to war. War does not have the 'snap-ending' Fire Chief Beatty spoke of and neither should its art.

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