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## An Art of Loss

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Tahneer Oksman

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### Abstract

This essay opens with a reading of a number of recent autobiographical exhibitions and books by illustrator, artist, and writer Maira Kalman. Oksman argues that a close reading of Kalman's trans-medial, repetitive, and elliptical modes of telling her family's history between and across various projects and texts, and using images and words, often in sequence, makes room for better understanding representations of loss in comics. Introducing two formal strategies apparent from Kalman's works, 'cumulatio' and 'combination,' Oksman reads two contemporary autobiographical comics of loss that utilize such techniques. In Ulli Lust's *Today is the Last Day of the Rest of Your Life* (2013) and Una's *Becoming Unbecoming* (2016), formal strategies of 'cumulation' and 'combination' help establish how individual losses are set in a dynamic, relational network.

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### Keywords

Una · *Becoming Unbecoming* · Ulli Lust · *Today is the Last Day of the Rest of Your Life* · Grief · Loss · Graphic medicine · Women and comics · Comics and sexual violence

I hope this is a good book, but perhaps not a worthy one. Neither was it therapeutic, but it has been freeing. I like to think of this as my tapestry: like Philomela, who wove her own story after her tongue was cut out, this is my communication, my contribution, as one among many (Una 2016, Afterword, p. 205)

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In 2014, illustrator, artist and writer Maira Kalman published *My Favorite Things*, a book based on a show put on by the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York City.<sup>1</sup> The exhibition displayed a collection of forty pieces curated by Kalman, who had chosen them from the museum's extensive archive of design-related objects, her personal collection and the National Museum of American History collection. The ensuing book consists of three main parts, beginning with an opening, "Part I: There Was a Simple and Grand Life," in which Kalman sketches out "a little bit of background on the person doing the choosing" (Kalman 2014, p. 9).<sup>2</sup> Contained therein is a series of reprinted gouache paintings which incorporate, or are accompanied by, hand-painted narrative tidbits recounting Kalman's early life, in Tel Aviv and then New York City, and her parents' earlier lives in Israel as well as what is now Belarus.

An arresting pair of pages displayed shortly into this autobiographical segment depicts, on the right, an illustration of a man, Kalman's father, wearing a gray suit and falling through the air, his eyes closed, one arm flung loosely overhead and a second folded limply downward (Fig. 13.1). The background is colored in a soft pink, a long, simply painted palm tree perched to one side, below two rectangular windows; the top half of a doorframe peeks out at the very bottom of the image. The facing left page consists of a clean white background with a brief narrative drawn out, as a poem, in Kalman's characteristic spidery black handwriting. It reads, in part:

The Gray Suit

One day, my father was locked out of our  
apartment in Tel Aviv. He tried to get in  
by climbing down from a neighbor's terrace  
on the third floor to our terrace on the  
second floor.  
But he slipped and fell to the ground.  
He fell,  
slowly,

<sup>1</sup>Titled *Maira Kalman Selects*, the show was on view from December 12, 2014 through June 7, 2015. See [www.cooperhewitt.org/events/current-exhibitions/maira-kalman-selects/](http://www.cooperhewitt.org/events/current-exhibitions/maira-kalman-selects/). In addition to *My Favorite Things*, Kalman also published a children's book in conjunction with the show, titled *Ah-Ha to Zig-Zag: 31 Objects from Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design* (2014).

<sup>2</sup>In the short film *MAIRA KALMAN: MY FAVORITE THINGS* (2015), which is also connected to the exhibition, directed by Gael Towey, Kalman describes the book as a "catalogue sandwiched between two parts: one is a memoir and one is a rumination about life and love and things" (Maira Kalman quoted in Towey 2015).



**Fig. 13.1** Kalman's father falling through the air. *Image credits* Maira Kalman (2014), *My Favorite Things*, p. 17. New York: Harper Design

in his gray suit  
and did not get hurt.  
This was before I was born.  
Before he took us to the United States.  
(Kalman 2014, p. 16).<sup>3</sup>

Kalman's depiction of her father's limp, resigned body, which could pass for dead or at least unconscious, contrasts with her seemingly light-hearted verbal depiction of his fall as a passing misadventure, an anomalous accident. We are unsure of the agent or agents at work: has he been 'locked out' in a passive sense, having forgotten his keys, or has someone else locked him out? What's the antecedent to this moment of frozen posture and what comes after?

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<sup>3</sup>Kalman often plays with capitalization, sometimes within a single word. For ease of reading, I have used standard capitalization practices here.

An identical image of her falling father, printed in a slightly smaller size and placed on the left facing page beside an altered accompanying narrative poem on the right (a reversed page order), can be found in *Sara Berman's Closet*.<sup>4</sup> This book was published in 2018 in relation to Kalman's more plainly autobiographical, co-curated 2017 exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>5</sup> Kalman and her son Alex put together the exhibition to celebrate and memorialize their recently departed mother and grandmother Sara Berman's life, particularly from 1982 to her death in 2004; in those years, she resided alone in an apartment in Greenwich Village. As the book tracks it, Berman broke from her husband and their life in Tel Aviv and moved into her own apartment in New York City, where she lived out her final 22 years. It was there she set up a space in which, as the Kalmans describe it, as though in contrast to her earlier life, "There was a place for everything" (Kalman and Kalman 2018, n. p.).

The centerpiece to the exhibition, documented as a full-page photograph placed roughly in the middle of the book, is an excerpt from this space: an actual recreated closet set preternaturally in a museum (see Kalman and Kalman 2018, n. p.). The closet is doorless, a chain with a red dangling pompom the only spot of color against a background of whites, ivories, tans and grays. On display are white shelves covered in neatly folded piles of, among other items, pressed white shirts, pressed white underthings and pressed white towels. Some additional objects—an iron, several watches, a perfume bottle—can be spotted on shelves peeking out on the frame's right side. In an interview published concurrently with the exhibition, Kalman marks 1982 as the year her mother left her father (see Frank and Kalman 2017). Both in *Sara Berman's Closet* and *My Favorite Things*, Kalman visually and narratively bridges a variety of losses and breaks, of her mother growing up Jewish in Belarus and escaping, with the rest of her family, a life of brutal anti-Semitism; of her father, captured in mid-air, his predicament plainly suggestive of domestic disquiet. The closet, with its careful, utilitarian and aesthetically pleasing arrangement, comes to represent a new way of seeing, and subsequently of being, afforded her mother in this afterlife to earlier losses. As Kalman explained, "[w]hen you come from somewhere that has been erased, or

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<sup>4</sup>The pages in *Sara Berman's Closet* are sized at six-by-eight-and-three-quarters inches; the pages in *My Favorite Things* are sized at eight-by-nine inches.

<sup>5</sup>The exhibit, *Sara Berman's Closet*, was first installed at Mmuseumm in 2015 and later shown at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, from March 6 to November 26, 2017. See [www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2017/sara-berman-closet](http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2017/sara-berman-closet) (accessed: 02.05.2019). The book also lists the mother-son pair.

when you make a violent break later on in life, as my mother did when she left my father and came to New York, maybe it concentrates you on where you are, teaches you to look so intently, listen so intently” (Frank and Kalman 2017).

Reading these various narratives of rupture alongside each other—Kalman’s illustrated falling father and the attendant poem; the photograph of her dead mother’s recreated closet—weaving a tapestry of sorts, this visual sequence evokes some striking possibilities for thinking about the poetics and aesthetics of loss. Kalman’s trans-medial, repetitive and elliptical modes of telling her family history between and across various projects and texts, using images and words, often in sequence, makes room for considerations of what comics can teach us about loss. And what loss—or what we know of loss—can teach us about comics.<sup>6</sup> Specifically, Kalman’s overarching autobiographical project could be described as hinging on curatorial acts of what I call ‘cumulation’ and ‘combination’: what objects and memories the narrator decides to collect and include; what they say (the memories, thoughts, affects and ideas they trigger for our narrator); and how the various correlated images, sensations and stories come together. Recalling what Sara Ahmed, in *Living a Feminist Life* (2017), has termed the “memory work” that is part of “feminist work”, Kalman’s art reveals how, as Ahmed explains of this process, “you can gather memories like things, so they become more than half glimpsed, so that we can see a fuller picture; so you can make sense of how different experiences connect” (Ahmed 2017, p. 22). In the case of *Sara Berman’s Closet*, Kalman’s text relates the glory of her mother’s beautifully arranged, meticulously organized space, her mother’s own carefully curated assortment of the things she uses and loves, to a series of dark histories otherwise generally kept secret. Each beautiful item, carefully refolded by daughter and grandson, signals an untold story or untold bits of a told story, now brought together in little heaps. A similar interpretation could be applied to *My Favorite Things*, a work in which Kalman collects, turns over and connects what is remembered and what must be imagined; what has been passed on and what has been found. Her texts highlight and suspend individual fragments to reveal, in a more complete way, a functioning whole.

As I will demonstrate using two recent examples of graphic memoir, through such formal strategies of ‘cumulation’ (or, its more familiar related term, accumulation; growth), and ‘combination’ (or amalgamation, the arranging of elements),

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<sup>6</sup>While I regularly think about, and discuss, Kalman’s works in relation to comics, and while I see much of her printed oeuvre as situated, if not within then at least at the boundaries of, a genealogy of non-fictional comics texts, it should be noted that Kalman does not self-identify as a cartoonist and her work is rarely described by others in that context.

individual representations of loss are set in relation to another, or others, to reveal the importance not only of individual instances of loss, but to portray what we might better think of as an entire network of loss. Rather than dispatch losses as individual, isolated events, grieved over in bookmarked and bounded times and spaces, with the help of such strategies each instance of loss can be understood as it is more closely experienced in life: as part of a larger scheme, as related to and always potentially in conversation with other losses—of different varieties and scales; of losses experienced by a person over an individual lifetime and of losses experienced with close and distant others.

There is, of course, overlap between the two terms I have proposed: for instance, ‘cumulation’ can be thought of as a type of ‘combination.’ Nonetheless, we might simplify and think of a key distinction between the two formal strategies as a difference in quantity versus quality. In ‘combination,’ there is an emphasis on putting two or more elements together that are distinct from one another and that jointly create something constitutionally changed. The exile from a country of birth combines with the loss of a marriage, and later, too, with a loss of life. The experiences inform one another, each new experience of loss shaped out of what came before. In ‘cumulation,’ the emphasis is not so much on the qualities of the disparate elements being put together or even the quality of what emerges but instead on the shifted sense of quantity. A repeated image of a falling father evokes a cumulated sense of emergency, of danger; a wearing down. Often executed in tandem, a number of contemporary autobiographical cartoonists have taken on these strategies of tracing and conveying loss and its impact.<sup>7</sup> They more

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<sup>7</sup>These formal storytelling strategies, as I map them here in relation to representations of loss, readily correlate with the ways comics scholars describe central defining aspects of the medium, particularly how individual panels or images relate to a larger whole. For example, Thierry Groensteen uses the phrase “iconic solidarity” to point out how each image in comics possesses its own individual impact even as it inevitably functions as part of a larger operational whole. His notion of braiding is relevant too, particularly “diachronic braiding,” through which images “echo” one another over the course of a text to create meaning (see Groensteen 2007, pp. 147–149). Similarly, we might consider what Hillary Chute in *The Space of Graphic Narrative* (2015) describes as the “internally [...] dialogic” nature of comics—how, for example, “words and images work in relation to each other but necessarily never blend” (Chute 2015, p. 199, emphasis in original). There is always already a mutual dependence in this system. Chute also points to the equally fundamental, and related, “externally dialogic” nature of comics—how we, as readers, are “draw[n] in to construct meaning” (Chute 2015, p. 199, emphasis in original). In an analogous vein, consider how experiences of loss are made up of what might be termed internally and externally dialogic components: an individual’s experiences of loss are ultimately shaped by a life-long roster of different kinds of experiences of loss; additionally, each individual’s experiences are inevitably tied to other people’s, in a historical or concurrent collective sense.

closely represent the ways that loss and grief unfold in real life, as a number of contemporary professionals and researchers have shown, as a process without a set beginning and ending point, as “multidimensional” (Attig 2001, p. 33) as well as interpersonal and relational.<sup>8</sup>

Turning briefly to two examples of autobiographical graphic narratives of loss will highlight ‘cumulation’ and ‘combination’ in action. These graphic memoirs are centrally focused on experiences of sexual assault, sexual harassment and rape; in other words, they recount losses related to a sense of safety, security and trust. In 2009, Ulli Lust’s comics memoir was published in Germany; it was translated into English 4 years later and published as *Today is the Last Day of the Rest of Your Life*.<sup>9</sup> The 463-page tome, made up largely of pages including uniformly presented panels, often in three rows of three, is best categorized as a travel memoir. Lust tells the story of leaving Vienna as a 17-year-old in 1984, in order, in the words of her young alter ego, “to learn something, just not in a school” (Lust 2013, p. 13). She hitchhikes to Italy with a friend, nothing but a borrowed sleeping bag in hand, and has a few short-lived adventures (like attending *Carmen* in the Arena in Verona). But mainly, the book recounts how her ‘adventures’ are centrally characterized by the continual harassment she endures from nearly every man she encounters along the way.

When the book opens, Ulli has been hanging out in Vienna with tattoo-wielding punks and she sports her own impressively angular, spiky hair-do. From the beginning, Ulli’s gender, marked by her hair, sets her apart. She seems to be one of the only women involved with groups composed largely of punk men. The catalyst for her journey story is Edi, a young runway that her roommate brings home one evening. Almost immediately, Edi proposes that the two hitchhike to Italy. Throughout, Edi serves as a kind of foil for Ulli, generally inviting new sexual experiences where Ulli is most often, though not always, seen trying to escape from unwanted advances. In the end, we can understand each woman as tactically responding, in her own way, to the same problem: that of not being in control of

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<sup>8</sup>See Niemeyer’s edited volume *Meaning Reconstruction and the Experience of Loss* (2001) for more on the limitations of conventional models of grief and loss and new directions for thinking about such experiences; see Amy-Katerini Prodromou’s *Navigating Loss in Women’s Contemporary Memoir* (2015) for more on manifestations of new models of grief in some contemporary (prose) memoirs.

<sup>9</sup>The original German title of the memoir is *Heute ist der letzte Tag vom Rest deines Lebens*. Lust recently published a follow-up memoir, in English, titled, *How I Tried to Be a Good Person* (2019).

her own trajectory—of where she can go, of what she can experience, of what she will, or won't, do with her body.

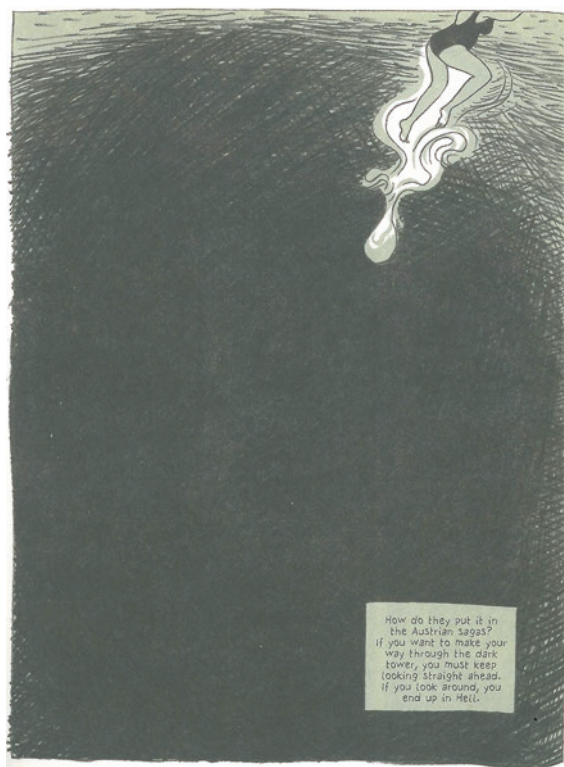
When Susan Brownmiller published her influential 1975 feminist work, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, she drove the point home that *any* woman can be the target of rape and that the threat of rape is a constant, pervasive influence for women.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, in *Aftermath* (2002), a book that in part recalls the author's own traumatic experience, philosopher Susan Brison argues, "Sexual violence victimizes not only those women who are directly attacked, but *all* women" (Brison 2002, pp. 17–18). The threat of attack is expansive; it can't be boiled down to a single moment, or incident. In Lust's *Today Is the Last Day of the Rest of Your Life*, an atmosphere of threat is developed through the repetition of a roster of images—groups of men leering and laughing, individual men lurching, grabbing, coaxing and scolding, the protagonist wincing and watching, exclaiming and retreating. These repeated images wind their way through the course of the book: a steady, beating accumulation.<sup>11</sup> As Brison argues, "Sexual violence is a problem of catastrophic proportions—a fact obscured by its mundanity, by its relentless occurrence, by the fact that so many of us have been victims of it" (Brison 2002, p. 19). Here, Lust generates that often invisible, and unfathomable, sense of disproportion through cumulation: the repeated images reveal a steadily mounting fear, a constant, building threat of violence, which threads (or—à la Thierry Groensteen—"braids") throughout the book.

Halfway through *Today is the Last Day of the Rest of Your Life*, this mounting threat becomes a reality when Ulli is raped. This section of the narrative includes moments from before, during and after the traumatic event itself. Zeroing in on one of the images from this section, we witness an anomalous full-page panel: Ulli is depicted, swimming in dark waters (Fig. 13.2). The point of view captured here—not a breakdown, but instead a tall, sweeping view—is an impossible one: we are looking up at Ulli, presumably propelling herself to stay afloat, but we are somehow able to see through the dark waters. Her body, or the section of it that is visible, looks buoyant, even as waves fashioned from her body's movement seem

<sup>10</sup>In her introduction, Brownmiller writes of an important "moment of revelation," after hearing numerous women share their testimonies of rape, in which she "learned that in ways I preferred to deny the threat of rape had profoundly affected my life" (Brownmiller 1975, p. 8).

<sup>11</sup>See Lust (2013, pp. 74, 96, 216 and 283) for some examples of groups of men leering and laughing; see Lust (2013, pp. 189, 219, 223, 369 and 371) for some examples of Lust's persona pictured individually reacting to such encounters.





**Fig. 13.2** Ulli swimming in dark waters. *Image credits* Ulli Lust (2013), *Today is the Last Day of the Rest of Your Life*, p. 255. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books

to be pushing downward. The bottom of the text reads: “How do they put it in the Austrian sagas? If you want to make your way through the dark tower, you must keep looking straight ahead. If you look around, you end up in hell” (Lust 2013, p. 255).

This image returns us to Kalman’s illustration of her father falling through the sky: it is also an imaginative intervention. Not in hell, but not exactly free. In the immediate aftermath to her rape, Ulli is suspended. In her landmark work, *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), Judith Herman writes: “[A]t the moment of trauma, almost by definition, the individual’s point of view counts for nothing” (Herman 1992, p. 53). In similar fashion, Susan Brison describes, of the aftermath to her rape, “The line between life and death, once so clear and sustaining,

now seemed carelessly drawn and easily erased [...] I felt as though I'd somehow outlived myself" (Brison 2002, p. 9). Contained as Lust's suspended image is in a book that establishes, through cumulation, an atmosphere of continuously building potential violence, the traumatic event, which maintains its own indescribable force, is wedged between repeated sights that nonetheless inform that scene of trauma and its immediate aftermath. The impact of that staggering loss ripples, following but also even preceding that break.

Early in the book, the young protagonist announces the intention of her adventures in a postcard, which is, notably, never mailed to a friend. She proclaims that her "goal" is to "accumulate as much experience as possible, to meet as many people as possible—from the bum to the millionaire, normal people and crazy ones ..." (Lust 2013, p. 34). In Lust's book this narrative of hopeful 'accumulation' paradoxically yields a story of cumulated loss—throughout, the text indexes the experiences that the narrator had hoped for but never known, the possible that became impossible.

Lust uses 'cumulation' and 'combination' to particularize her persona's experiences—to ground one set of losses in relation to another; to generate not only the moment of trauma, but also its impact on what was and what never could be. Using these same techniques, UK-based cartoonist Una's 2016 graphic memoir, *Becoming Unbecoming*, more explicitly engages not only with an individual story but also with known and unknown others to unequivocally express how each individual story of loss is ultimately tied to others. Known only by her pseudonym ("Una, meaning one. One life, one of many ..." Una 2016, p. 10) she states in her opening), our narrator tells her story as a rape survivor, but it is a story in which she repeatedly de-centers her own narrative so that she cannot "speak *for* other survivors of trauma in order to speak *with* them" (Brison 2002, p. 30, emphasis hers). Una draws some particular details: of growing up in the mid-to-late 1970s in West Yorkshire, North England, of experiencing a variety of sexual assaults in various settings, of suffering the added pain of not knowing how to talk or think about them and not being listened to or believed when she tries. She conveys these personal experiences alongside the story she culls, using journalistic sources, of a series of rapes and murders committed by the Yorkshire Ripper around the same time; this serial killer was not caught until he had killed thirteen women. As Una explains, the reasons that he was not caught sooner had to do with assumptions made by the police, media outlets and the public, about so-called typical victims of such violence.

The central, repeating visual symbol in *Becoming Unbecoming* is an empty word bubble which the narrator sometimes carries on her back, a heavy sack weighing her down, and sometimes holds above her like a balloon, like she is

being lifted by it (see, e.g., Una 2016, pp. 23, 46 and 57). The bubble comes to stand for the potential of testimony to be both freeing and burdensome: not only do survivors of sexual trauma have to deal with finding ways of thinking about and telling of their indescribable loss, but they must also often deal with finding what Leigh Gilmore terms “adequate witness” (Gilmore 2017, p. 5)—listeners who know how, and are willing, to listen.<sup>12</sup> Una weaves and wanders with this bubble throughout the text, whether she is telling her own story or giving a sense of that ‘fuller picture’ (see Ahmed 2017, p. 22)—from the story of the Yorkshire Ripper to broader statistics and trends around sexual violence in the UK. In Una’s work this word-bubble symbol—with its potential to lead to some form of freedom and also to prompt renewed catastrophe—comes to represent the struggles of countless survivors. This highly individualized mark (word bubbles, after all, generally ‘belong’ to particular subjects), paradoxically transforms into a connective symbol belonging to an anonymous, joint collective (see, e.g., Una 2016, p. 121).

The oft-repeated symbol of the empty word bubble is also, interestingly, at times replaced and at other times accompanied by the image of a cloud, shaped much like a thought bubble. Here is a visual representation of a cumulus, of cumulation: the archetypal shape for an amassing formation. The two central symbols repeat, and thread, over the course of the narrative, with the first seeming to index what can, or cannot, be spoken, or conveyed to others, and the second seeming to index (like a thought bubble) internal thoughts, what the self can or cannot know of its own experience (see, e.g., Una 2016, pp. 146–147). They become referents, standing in for internally and externally dialogic systems of reconstruction, set in continual motion over the course of the text. The individual Una seems always to be in conversation with herself, mulling over her transformed sense of being in the world, mining her memories, even as she is also always potentially—sometimes just hopefully—in conversation with others. By telling her story of loss in this way, using means of cumulation and combination to point to so many other losses, of women alike but also always notably different from her, Una tries to account for this problem of expressing proportion, of revealing a bigger picture without erasing individual experience. So, for example, at several points throughout the book, she visualizes a number of statistics. She

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<sup>12</sup>Gilmore writes, “An adequate witness is one who will receive testimony without deforming it by doubt, and without substituting different terms of value for the ones offered by the witness herself.” (Gilmore 2017, p. 5).

does this not only to help her readers begin to comprehend the reality behind the numbers, but also to bring questions of identity and difference into this collective story she is telling. On one page, she breaks down the statistics for various subgroups of survivors of sexual assault, showing how elements like race and class factor (see Una 2016, p. 124).<sup>13</sup>

The central questions posed in *Becoming Unbecoming*, are, then, first, how to convey this larger story without erasing difference; and second, how to unite these stories of survival with something other than absence, something other than silence. Una ends her narrative with a slideshow of illustrations of the thirteen women killed at the hands of the Yorkshire Ripper (see Una 2016, pp. 173–197). With these imaginative interventions, she pictures them not as they were in life, but as they might be were they still alive today. In this way, she attempts to account for the specificity of loss with made-up images of women meant to ‘stand in’ for countless other lost lives, countless other lost experiences. Here is one missed moment from one lost life, from thirteen lost lives; imagine the cumulative missed possibilities, all of the absent experiences from all of the absent lives.

In the *Afterword* to her book, Una describes the act of telling her story as follows: “neither was it therapeutic, but it has been freeing” (Una 2016, p. 205). What these comics memoirs recounting loss and picturing grief show is how one’s way of seeing is transformed by loss, in ways that can be potentially connective but are not necessarily reparative. Loss can be blindsiding and eye opening, all at once. To return, briefly, to Kalman’s falling father, the second accompanying poem of the identical image, in *Sara Berman’s Closet*, presents the story in a variety of new ways. Kalman’s parents are named (Sara and Pesach); in this case, the two of them are depicted as locked out of their apartment, instead of just her father; and the gray suit is not mentioned until the very end of the poem, rather than as part of the title. When Kalman describes the fall in this second version, she also adds descriptive phrases, opening up the scene. As the second to last stanza reads,

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<sup>13</sup>As scholar Charlotte Pierce Baker argues in *Surviving the Silence* (1998), Black women’s experiences as survivors of sexual violence, and particularly as survivors who want, need, or are pressed to tell their stories, are inevitably affected by stereotypes about Black women—compounding that problem of finding ‘adequate witness’—and they also connect, as academic and activist Angela Davis, for instance, has shown, with broader, traumatic histories of racism as it relates to sexual violence.

*Without warning*, Pesach  
 slipped and fell *all the*  
*way* to the ground, but  
 did not get hurt.  
 (Kalman and Kalman 2018, n. p., emphasis T.O.)

With this revision, Kalman seems to acknowledge her father's point of view, welcoming it, finally, into her rotation of active and dynamic images, memories and stories of loss. Accounting for one's own losses, the poem seems to be saying, means acknowledging the self as 'one among many' (see Una 2016, p. 205) or recognizing that what we all share is the fragility of living in a world in which anything can happen 'without warning.'

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