CULTURES OF
COMICS WORK

Edited by Casey Brienza
and Paddy Johnston

Palgrave Studies in Comics and Graphic Novels

Series Editor

Roger Sabin
University of the Arts London
London, United Kingdom

Aim of this series

This series concerns Comics Studies—with a capital "c" and a capital "s." It feels good to write it that way. From emerging as a fringe interest within Literature and Media/Cultural Studies departments, to becoming a minor field, to maturing into the fastest growing field in the Humanities, to becoming a nascent *discipline*, the journey has been a hard but spectacular one. Those capital letters have been earned.

Palgrave Studies in Comics and Graphic Novels covers all aspects of the comic strip, comic book, and graphic novel, explored through clear and informative texts offering expansive coverage and theoretical sophistication. It is international in scope and provides a space in which scholars from all backgrounds can present new thinking about politics, history, aesthetics, production, distribution, and reception as well as the digital realm. Books appear in one of two forms: traditional monographs of 60,000 to 90,000 words and shorter works (Palgrave Pivots) of 20,000 to 50,000 words. All are rigorously peer-reviewed. Palgrave Pivots include new takes on theory, concise histories, and—not least—considered provocations. After all, Comics Studies may have come a long way, but it can't progress without a little prodding.

Series Editor Roger Sabin is Professor of Popular Culture at the University of the Arts London, UK. His books include *Adult Comics: An Introduction and Comics, Comix and Graphic Novels*, and his recent research into nineteenth-century comics is award-winning. He serves on the boards of the main academic journals in the field and reviews graphic novels for the international media.

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Cultures of Comics Work

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For all of comics' invisible workers—
Thank you for your invaluable contribution.

Acknowledgments

Edited collections invariably involve the collective strivings of a large number of people, and in line with this classic sociological insight, we owe a debt of gratitude to the many individuals and institutions that have supported this research on comics and cultural work.

First thanks must go to Roger Sabin, our series editor, whose enthusiasm and support for all things comics studies have been invaluable to junior scholars such as ourselves. You are an inspiration, and this book would not have been possible without you.

We also wish to express our profound gratitude to Ian Hague and *Comics Forum*. Approximately three years ago, Ian approached Casey to ask if she was interested in curating a special series of articles for the *Comics Forum* website. These discussions culminated in the "Comics & Cultural Work" Special Theme Month, which ran through the month of December 2013 and featured short contributions from Benjamin Woo, Tom Miller, and Paddy himself. Believing that there was much more to be written, we subsequently began to explore the idea of a proper edited book on the subject, and *Cultures of Comics Work* is ultimate proof of the collective enthusiasm in the field for cultural work in the context of comics production.

Shaun Vigil of Palgrave Macmillan has been a big supporter of studies in comics which cannot be distilled down to narrow literary perspectives and close textual readings. His confidence in the value of this area of research—even in the face of our various, albeit inevitable, inconstancies—cannot be overstated. Many thanks as well to Erica Buchman and Michelle Smith for editorial and logistical guidance. We also really appreciate the comments

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Jeremy Stoll is a folklorist and researcher of comics and graphic novels in India, with a focus on the Pao Collective and community in Delhi. He holds a PhD in Folklore from Indiana University, with a minor in Communication and Culture. Stoll is specifically concerned with incorporating creators' perspectives into research on comics and in crafting scholarship for both researchers and the creative communities with which he works. He continues to pursue these goals through ongoing ethnographic fieldwork with the comics community in Delhi and through teaching Anthropology at Metropolitan State University in Denver, Colorado.

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Introduction: Understanding Comics Work

Casey Brienza and Paddy Johnston

How are we to understand a work of comics art without any knowledge of the myriad varieties of cultural work that went into its creation, and how might each better inform our understandings of the other? This book is an exploration and interrogation of these two questions. In the comics art world—a world that is still being mapped out and defined with retroactive applications to the comics canon by comics scholars across various disciplines and departmental affiliations—there exists a tendency to canonize the writer and to advance a narrow, auteurist vision of production when analyzing and studying comics. Scholars, cartoonists, and comics fans alike will be familiar with Alan Moore, Osamu Tezuka, Neil Gaiman, Marjane Satrapi, Chris Ware, Alison Bechdel, Carl Barks, Charles Schulz, and Hergé—but a few of the names that loom large in the intellectual firmament of comics studies. But they are little to no knowledge of these creators' collaborating artists, pencillers, letterers, flatters, inkers, cover

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designers, editors, publicists, typesetters, translators, distributors, or retailers. These roles, an indicative but not exhaustive list of the duties that can be undertaken in the journey of a comic from its conception all the way the hands of a reader, are, no doubt, work. All of these are roles that can be done in exchange for money and/or goods in the capitalist labor market, and all are examples of what, in the title of this book, we term "comics work."

Why, then, when they are numerous, essential, and inescapable, are such roles routinely overlooked and forgotten in the study of comics, if not treated with outright suspicion? The idea of the auteur is a powerful romantic ideal, ubiquitous across fields of cultural production ranging from fine art to prose literature to cinema. After all, no hand but that of the author is credited with having created a Booker Prize-winning novel on its cover; no name but that of the painter accompanies their painting in neat type on an adjacent card when hung in a gallery. Scholars of comics, typically from literature, film studies, or art history disciplines, naturally draw upon their pre-existing theoretical and methodological training to apply established theories of authorship to comics for the purposes of formalist or textual-level analysis. This has created a solid basis for a field of inquiry and established vibrant and international comics studies. However, thus far, there has been very little engagement with the myriad labors that happen to create a comic, despite recent calls for a sociological approach to the study of comics (Brienza 2010, 2012, 2013; Lopes 2009; Murray 2013) and nascent attempts to begin understanding and analyzing comics at a much deeper and greater level than their textual and material surfaces, such as through methodological surveys of working conditions and patterns (e.g. Woo 2015b); analyses of comics retailing as cultural work (e.g. Miller 2013); and politically driven analyses of contemporary economies and their effects on the production of comics (e.g. Johnston 2015). These moves are, however, scattered and few and far between, and the criticism of comics scholarship as being text focused and driven by the methodologies of literary criticism is now a familiar one, which makes the intervention of a book such as this one particularly timely. This book, therefore, does not ask *why* such labors are largely overlooked and obscured. Instead, it focuses mainly on *how* such roles have had a significant and pivotal impact on the comics they have helped to create. This "comics work" unites the work of this book's 18 chapters and, we hope, will provide a foundation for future research.

What is Comics Work?

While each and every worker who performs any one of the tasks listed above, such as inking or distribution, is, in our view, a cultural worker and a comics worker, this fact in and of itself does not, however, provide a proper definition of comics work. We thus define comics work as *any labor within the field of the cultural production of comics that contributes to or informs a comic's production*. In Becker's terms, comics will show "signs of the cooperation" (1982, 1) between the numerous parties involved in its production, and these signs are the outward, visible manifestations of comics work. However, to reveal and interpret these signs, comics work must be understood not just as that which creates obvious visual and material signs but as that which operates—often invisibly—behind the scenes to enable these signs and to build a comic and its message and meaning from these signs.

Our definition of comics work is therefore a broad, expansive, and inclusive one, as is the nature of such a definition and what we seek to advance with it: that is, to reveal and expose the labors behind comics that are routinely and systematically overlooked, not just by scholars but also by fans, critics, and even by creators themselves. These labors are, without doubt, myriad. Comics work is, therefore, a somewhat loaded term, and it would not be possible to fully understand how the term has been applied here without some consideration of the research on cultural work in other media fields.

Comics as Cultural Work

The theme month on comics and cultural work hosted on Comics Forum in 2013 might be thought of as a short prequel to this book (Brienza 2013), so it is important to provide an account of its intellectual genesis before proceeding. This theme month refers to a polemical article calling for a sociological approach to the study of comics focused on production that had been hitherto nonexistent in critical approaches to comics (Brienza 2010). In this article, Brienza presents Pierre Bourdieu's idea of the field of cultural production (as defined in Bourdieu 1993) and Richard A. Peterson's production of culture perspective (1982) as the initial foundations for her sociological approach to the study of comics. Bourdieu's concepts are acknowledged as advantageous for researchers in comics who wish to assess them in terms of power, ideology, and institu-

tional transformations, as well as to broaden the remit of comics studies to encompass large-scale social contexts. Brienza uses Peterson's production of culture perspective to address Bourdieu's shortcomings, namely that large-scale theories are often difficult to apply to smaller-scale and more localized examples of practical and material effects on the production of comics, such as the introduction of offset printing. The production of culture perspective directly addresses these concerns, presenting five constraints on production: law, technology, the market, organizational structure, and occupational careers. By assessing each of these constraints in turn and using them to provide clarity, specificity, and details that underpin her approach to the study of comics and employing case studies based on manga publishing in America and Japan, the article illustrates the potential reach of this sociological approach as one that could apply to Japanese manga, Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée*, and Anglo-American comics in equal measure.

Following this article, the Comics Forum website hosted a discussion around the methodology of sociological approaches (Locke 2012; Brienza 2012). A year or so later, it hosted the aforementioned theme month on comics and cultural work. Those four articles are early examples of our comics work approach: the concept of the "day job" (Johnston 2013); divisions of types of labor and creativity under capitalism (Woo 2013); and the material and economic factors at work in comics retail and distribution (Miller 2013). Brienza's conclusion to the theme month is open-ended, calling for more contributions to comics scholarship of this type. She has asked rhetorically—and repeatedly (2010, 2012)—whether "a full appreciation of the sequential art medium itself demand[s] anything less than every conceivable way of knowing it?" This book's position on that question should be obvious.

Cultural Work, Convergence, and the Creative Industries

The work of the likes of Bourdieu, Becker, and Peterson are undoubtedly key to the focus of this book, and many of the authors make direct reference to them. However, comics work also draws upon more recent studies in the areas of cultural, or "creative," work. The creative industries have become an area of intense focus by sociologists and media scholars of late, as work in the creative industries has undergone numerous changes in response to socioeconomic and political factors that govern the lives of creative workers. Mark Deuze's *Media Work* (2008), Stephanie Taylor and

Karen Littleton's *Contemporary Identities of Creativity and Creative Work* (2012), Angela McRobbie's *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries* (2014), and David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker's *Creative Labour: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries* (2011) are four prominent examples of new and influential studies of the creative industries that have been published in recent years. They focus on industries such as fashion, television production, journalism, music, fine art, advertising, theater, and freelance writing, extrapolating assertions about the wider cultural economy from case studies in these areas that often involve extensive fieldwork, interviews, and firsthand accounts by practitioners and participants in the creative economy. Hesmondhalgh and Baker, in particular, provide useful templates for attempting to define and understand cultural work and its particular qualities. Their definition (2011, 9) of cultural work, driven by symbolic actions of those engaged in creative labor, bears repeating here. They define cultural work as

> those jobs, centred on the activity of symbol-making, which are to be found in large numbers in the cultural industries. [These jobs include, but are not limited to,] primary creative personnel such as writers, actors, directors, musicians; craft and technical workers such as camera operators, film editors and sound engineers; creative managers such as television producers, magazine editors and A&R personnel; administrators; executives; and unskilled labour.

Cultural work is thus understood as any work within the creative industries—any work which, to return to Becker's notion of an art object as the product of cooperation, makes some contribution, however small, to the eventual products and symbols of creativity. By extension, then, comics work is a subset of cultural work as well as a type of cultural work specific to the comics industry.

Also of importance in this context are the radical changes to the production and consumption of all global media by rapid technological change, globalization, and late capitalism. Workers in the creative industries have had to adapt their approaches and working patterns and have in many cases had their working conditions radically altered. As noted by Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) and others in their studies of such workers, precarious freelance work on insecure contracts is now rife. Similar working conditions or issues in the comics industry are beginning to be explored (Woo 2015a, b), and comics work seeks to understand these conditions and the

nexus of issues raised by them—including not just *how*, but *why*, people choose to undertake comics work.

Media convergence (Jenkins 2008) is responsible for a growing participatory culture (Jenkins et al. 2013) and a blurring of the line between fan and creator and between producer and consumer. Henry Jenkins is once again a key figure in the study of creative labor when approached in the context of digital change and the growth of participatory culture and has written extensively on fan culture, literature (specifically *Moby Dick*), and film franchises. Significantly for this book and for our concept of comics work, Jenkins has also worked with cartoonist and comics theorist Scott McCloud to bring the concepts of convergence and participation into comics criticism. In a recent talk at MIT (Jenkins 2014), McCloud and Jenkins reexamined McCloud's 2000 book *Reinventing Comics*, in which he made a number of predictions about the future of comics, such as that comics would move almost entirely online with an enhanced and diversified reading experience for consumers. *Reinventing Comics* had not, they concluded, accounted for cultural changes resulting in the converging labor of fans and the growth of participation of consumers, nor had it anticipated the proliferation of content becoming free at the point of delivery (examined closely in Lovell 2013). These changes are significant for all forms of cultural work, and comics work as a concept must also account for such convergences; for example, crowdfunding (whether project based through a site such as Kickstarter or on an ongoing basis through a subscription site such as Patreon) offers new opportunities for fans to contribute to the production of a comic. As the majority of the chapters of this book demonstrate in one way or another, convergence is increasingly relevant to comics work and future developments in the field.

Toward an Understanding of Comics Work

Comics work is a concept rooted in cultural studies and sociology and one that is agnostic toward many of the shibboleths of the study of comics while also having the ability to work around and within them. For example, the graphic novel, as a term, format, and literary form carries much weight within comics studies; numerous books have been written about the form and its absolute centrality to the growth of comics consumption and production and thus the growth in the scholarly study and legitimation of comics (Lopes 2009; Gabilliet 2010; Heer and Worcester 2007;

Hatfield 2005; Lyons and Williams 2010; Beaty 2012). Comics work, however, is not an idea that need trouble itself with formats or with literary prestige—it is as applicable to Art Spiegelman's Pulitzer Prize-winning epic *Maus* as it is to a 12-page, photocopied, hand-stapled zine given out for free at a small-town comics convention attended by ten people, never to be seen again. Both are comics work, and we consider both to be of equal value to scholarship.

Similarly, comics work rejects formalist analysis and is concerned with the primacy of collective creation rather than the formal properties of the comics art object. Comics work also rejects repeated and continued attempts to define the medium or to answer the question of what comics *are* or are not, inasmuch as this excludes certain actors. Instead, comics work is about the *people* within this field of cultural production, to use the language of Bourdieu (1993), and if we are biased, we lean toward maximizing *in*clusion rather than *ex*clusion. The chapters of this book provide examples of what may be included, but in no way do they prescribe what can or cannot be called a comic.

Key Concepts in the Study of Comics Work

This book's chapters are divided into three sections, grouped by theme and providing three core concepts necessary, in our view, for a rigorous comics work-based approach to the study of comics. We will discuss each in turn.

Locating Labor

The first section, Locating Labor, looks at the ways in which comics work is embedded in various local and national contexts. It begins with Amy Maynard's chapter on Australian comics, entitled "For the Love of the Craft." This revealing title sets the tone with a candid account of the Australian comics industry (or lack thereof), drawn from fieldwork and firsthand accounts of various Australian practitioners. Maynard's interviews find that the case of Australian comics and its fledgling industry is a uniquely troubled one, being, in the words of one creator, "…a part-time, money losing hobby for virtually everyone producing or publishing comics in Australia." Why, then, would any Australian create comics, and why does there nonetheless exist an Australian comics scene in which there is a distinct culture? Maynard's chapter understands this paradox by argu-

ing for both the cooperation between, and the subjective autonomy of, Australian comics workers.

Following this chapter, Jeremy Stoll presents a similar survey of underground comics in India, the character and culture of which is driven by the same concerns as that of Australian comics. Both Maynard and Stoll's interviewees assert the importance and centrality of communities to the cultures of their comics work, emphasizing the power and fulfillment of collective, collaborative work, again in opposition to the supposed isolated nature of work for corporate powers in comics, which is often carried out on a for-hire basis with rates per page, workers decentralized and detached from the production. Both chapters, by implication, argue against theories of auteurism, demonstrating the importance of communities, scenes, and collectives; Stoll's chapter, for example, discusses the Indian Pao Collective, whose anthologies have become a touchstone for independent comics in India.

Chapter 4 moves continents again, to Latin America, where the first of a number of collaborative papers continues the theme of exposing a nation's mainstream comics industry as nonexistent, or close to nonexistent, while revealing the comics scenes and collectives that fly under the radar. Fernando Suárez and Enrique Uribe-Jongbloed systematically break down the culture of Colombian comics work into events, publishers, artist collectives, and historical landmarks, analyzing each in turn. They argue that, while Colombian comics work moves toward industrial organization, it cannot become a proper industry due to its small scale. They conclude that "Colombia has no comic book industry to speak of, but an adamant group of creators." Also, they assert that Colombian comics production is largely artisanal, a word that is gaining prominence in comics studies as a new dichotomy, that is, between artisanal and industrial modes of production, as opposed to the mainstream and underground dichotomy (Rogers 2006; Woo 2015a, b).

Elena D. Hristova's chapter focuses on one specific comic, *Nuestro Futuro*, locating it in a specific geographic, temporal, and political context of US–Mexican relations. *Nuestro Futuro* was created for propagandist purposes during the Second World War, and through its political backers was granted significant distribution. As the comic was ultimately made to foster cooperation between the USA and Mexico, political activity becomes comics work carried out by an unlikely collective of politicians, economists, and diplomats. Hristova's chapter demonstrates that although we have provided an expressly broad and inclusive definition of comics

work, it may be further broadened by locating it within historical and political space and time.

Ivan Lima Gomes's chapter on the Brazilian political context presents a similar narrative, focusing more specifically on publishers and their attempts to lobby for legal changes and better working conditions in the early to mid-twentieth century. Engaging with local governments to protect the status, heritage, and conditions of Brazilian cartoonists in opposition to the more popular, imported, and translated American superhero comics, the Brazilian cartoonists' collective CETPA acted as a trade union, which here provides a prescient example of comics work being seen as, perhaps, not distinct from any other form of work—at least in terms of the material rewards expected by those who undertake it. Comics work may be a distinct form of work, but it is work nonetheless.

To write about comics work is to acknowledge that there is not necessarily just one comics art world. Instead, there can be many distinct comics art worlds, each characterized by its own norms, culture, and forms of cooperation. Moving from the Brazilian comics art world to the Anglo-American comics art world, Ryan Cadrette's chapter identifies a specific world within the Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts, from which came the huge and unprecedented success of the initially self-published *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* comics (and later, franchise). Also situated in time, the late 1980s, the Pioneer Valley that Cadrette presents becomes a place facilitating collective, autonomous, fulfilling comics work, buoyed by a deliberate opposition to the mainstream comics publishers and their treatment of American creators who worked for hire and signed away any creative rights to their work in a significant number of cases. It was this which led to the writing of the "Creators' Bill of Rights" by Scott McCloud for comics producers, who was a resident of the Pioneer Valley at the time. This manifesto called for full creative control over all comics. Cadrette's chapter also reads this location as a broader site of opposition, again presenting comics work as a distinct type of spatially and temporally specific labor, geographically separate and distinct from contemporary corporate and industrial players.

Illustrating Workers

The second part of this book, Illustrating Workers, looks closely at creators and collaborative workers, examining comics work through individual examples and presenting various studies of how creators' approaches

have framed their eventual products. Peter Wilkins and Brenna Clarke Gray's chapter begins the discussion on collaboration, which is a recurring theme throughout as we attempt to reconcile the ideology of auteurism with other modes of production. Gray and Wilkins provide an anatomy of various types of collaboration, providing contemporary examples and contrasting the assistant-led approach of Bryan Lee O'Malley's *Seconds* with a more explicitly and outwardly equal partnership of Jillian and Mariko Tamaki's *This One Summer*. Collaboration, they show, may take a variety of distinct forms.

Roei Davidson's chapter on Guy Delisle follows with a perhaps more controversial argument: that fatherhood constitutes comics work in the autobiographical comics of Guy Delisle, who presents true but exaggerated depictions of his ineptitude as a father for humorous effect in his travelogues and memoirs. Davidson draws explicitly on scholarship related to cultural work and the tensions between working time and leisure time and between work life and private life. Comics work, for Delisle, exists at the intersection of these tensions. Needless to say, it's complicated—he struggles to be an adequate parent while also earning a living as a Quebecois cartoonist laboring under military regimes as he follows his wife, a doctor working on foreign aid projects, around the globe.

These struggles for autonomy and the desire for autonomous practice are ubiquitous throughout broader study of cultural work and the creative industries. Paddy Johnston's chapter on American self-publishing stalwart John Porcellino closely examines autonomy, exposing it as the driving factor characterizing comics work in the context of American underground comics of the 1980s to the present day. However, Johnston's chapter also draws upon Bourdieu to interrogate autonomy as a bourgeois promise. Comics work, for Johnston and for Porcellino, thus becomes rooted in class, race, and gender and enabled by a wider social context of privilege. Such critical interrogation of creative autonomy is also key to the thorough understanding of comics work.

Bringing autobiographical accounts and practitioner input into the conversation, Annick Pellegrin's chapter presents a direct and critical assessment of her own comics work as an advisor to Fabien Vehlmann on South America for the *bande dessinée* series *Spirou et Fantasio*. Although Pellegrin downplays her input into the Spirou album *Dans les griffes de la vipère*, for which she provided many of the South American names and advice on cultural references, it could be argued that her chapter's account of conversations and dealings with Vehlmann reveals that her contribu-

tion fundamentally changed the narrative, and thus the reception and cultural impact, of *Dans les griffes de la vipère*. Pellegrin's contribution to the album, that of a cultural adviser and "source," does not necessarily conform to any of the traditional and established roles in the field of comics work, but it is comics work nonetheless—an important example of internationalized comics work and convergence.

Ahmed Jameel follows Pellegrin with a similar autobiographical account of his own practice and continues the discussion of collaboration in comics begun by Wilkins and Gray. Presenting art from his own comics and contextualizing them within a deconstruction of auteurism, Jameel discusses his collaboration as a writer with artist Ali Hasen Didi and portrays collaboration as a conversation, a dialogue in which two minds approach the comic with different ideas, both of which end up fundamentally changed in the end product. Comics work here is a site of both tension and of compromise, the collaboration itself called, poetically, a "third hand." For Jahmeel, it facilitates the creation of artistic identity and thus is central to the creation of a comics art world and, by extension, a full appreciation of the sequential art medium.

The second section concludes with Benjamin Woo's analysis of the documentary *Comic Book Artists: The Next Generation*, building upon Woo's already significant contribution to the development of comics work (2013, 2015b) and his survey of the conditions of those engaged in it (2015a). Woo's analysis of the artists portrayed in *Comic Book Artists: The Next Generation* draws upon the existing scholarship of cultural and media work (e.g. Deuze 2008; Banks 2007) to present the mainstream vision of comics workers as an occupational imaginary. He also discusses the problematic exclusion of those workers who aren't white (or Asian) middle-class men who have always wanted to draw superheroes.

Pushing the Boundaries

The third and final section of this book looks outward, to the future, and aims to push the theoretical and methodological boundaries of the study of comics work. Citing his own work on *bande dessinée* publishers Dupuis and Lombard in the 1980s, Pascal Lefèvre's chapter presents one of these methodological boundaries with his recommendation to comics scholars to give attention to the gatekeeping function of publishers. For example, in a somewhat unorthodox but undeniably boundary-pushing methodology, Lefèvre submitted a comic to publishers in the 1980s with the explicit

aim of studying their gatekeeping activities, including their submission procedures, editorial policies, and approaches to contracts and legal matters. Lefèvre's chapter is a reminder of the importance of publishers and institutions and proposes gatekeeping as one important category of comics work.

José Santiago's chapter examines manga publishing in Spain and its mature readership, termed *gafotaku*[1] by Spanish commentators. By examining what constitutes maturity and revisiting the growth of the graphic novel phenomenon, Santiago argues for the turn toward mature readership by manga publishers (and, by extension, all comics publishers) in Spain. The culture of comics work in Spanish manga publishing, in his view, is characterized by symbolic maturity and attempts to find legitimation through such maturity, mirroring the Anglo-American growth in the graphic novel format.

In the next chapter, David K. Palmer applies the methodologies of strategic management to an analysis of distribution in the American comics industry. Echoing Tom Miller's article on comic book retail as cultural work (2013), Palmer argues for the importance of distribution to understanding comics. He also invokes Peterson's constraints on the production of culture to provide a reminder that the more physical constraints (such as technology) can have significant effects on the content of comics. After all, distributors provide an essential link between the producer and the consumer which ought to be understood as comics work in and of itself.

Technology is likewise shown to push boundaries in André Pereira de Carvalho's chapter on crowdfunding and the use of social networks in contemporary Brazilian comics production. Pereira pushes boundaries himself by employing a data-driven network analysis of the various factors affecting an individual's choice to contribute to a crowdfunded comic and a project's success or failure. Comics work, in this case, is mediated through technologies of social media and crowdfunding, and these must be utilized to the full to ensure that a comic can be produced in the first place. The all-or-nothing nature of the project-based funding model presented exposes a new type of comics work: that of working to create a comic dependent on independent crowdfunding. Before a single line is drawn, the comic must be conceived, promoted, and pushed through social media; more work, in this instance, may well go into the crowdfunding campaign than the comic itself, but such work is undoubtedly comics work and must be understood as such. After all, if the crowdfunding campaign does not reach its target, the comic cannot exist.

Translation is another form of work that is absolutely central to comics scholarship in a globalized world. Grounded in the methodologies of linguistics and translation studies, Alex Valente's chapter pushes the boundaries by examining the translation of humor, a complex and occasionally insurmountable task that translators of comics sometimes face. By providing a systematic breakdown of types of humor in a number of Italian comics and translating them himself, Valente is both uncovering comics work that is ignored and unnoticed and carrying out important comics work himself.

The book concludes with Zoltan Kacsuk's chapter on localized manga production as a subculture in Hungary, neatly tying up the book with a return to methodologies based on the theories of Bourdieu and Becker. Hungarian manga production, in his view, is a distinct form of comics work and has become, in his own words, part of a "subcultural cluster." This cluster is, Kacsuk writes, a porous entity, defined almost as much by the entry of profit-seeking business concerns as by the labors of fans and consumers. As in many of this book's chapters and the wider context of cultural work and comics scholarship in which this book is situated, the tension between art and commerce is inescapable.

Future Directions

Each of the chapters of this book represents both a distinct portrayal and a revealing analysis of a given culture of comics work. It is our hope that many more will follow in the footsteps of these chapters, both within and outside the academy. The study of comics work is applicable to all comics irrespective of form, genre, geography, or time period. Our approach is not preoccupied with formalist definitions or pretensions of literary distinction. We ask not whether the object of study is a comic, an album, a manga, or a strip. Nor do we ask what systems of language or conventions of visual narrative it conforms to, unless such analyses can be revealing of cultural factors and work at play. Rather, we ask who made the comic in question, how they made it, why they made it, and in asking these questions we draw our own picture of the labor involved in the creation of a comic. Any scholar may ask these same questions of any given comic, and we do not doubt that they will do so.

The international reach and global perspective of this book also exemplifies the future diversification (and also unification) of approaches to comics globally. With scholarship on Anglo-American comics, *bande dessi-*

née, and manga having been relatively isolated into distinct national literary traditions, this book represents a move toward an approach to the study of comics that will assess all three on the same terms. Although diverse in their theories, methodologies, and substantive topics, taken together, the chapters in this book paint a global picture of what we understand "comics work" to be. It is significant that the title of this book is "cultures of comics work" in the plural and not "the culture of comics work" in the singular. Distinct cultures of comics and comics work exist around the globe, and they are likely to remain somewhat locally contingent even in the face of ever-moving, changing, and burgeoning neoliberal globalization. However, as cultures continue to converge and operate on a global level, the need for a global approach has never been more apparent. *Global Manga* (2015), edited by Casey Brienza, is a recent example of such an approach. But it barely scratches the surface, and understanding comics work through similarity, difference, and synergy can only be enriched further as the global reach of the study of comics work and its culture grows.

The input of practitioners and those with direct experience of comics work into this book has been significant. This should come as no surprise, considering the context both of comics studies and of the sociological approaches that characterizing our understanding of comics work. The field of comics studies has long been shaped by practitioners; after all, Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* (1993) and Will Eisner's *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985) are two texts that are absolutely central to the field, and although we reject the importance of the formalism these texts inspired and helped to become a dominant mode in comics scholarship, it is notable that both McCloud and Eisner were practitioners first, and neither text was created with the academy in mind. Rather, the academy has appropriated these books, and thus the field has been influenced, guided, and shaped by the input of comics practitioners from the outset. As such, the study of comics work is compatible with application and synthesis of practice-led concepts. A focus on work should bring the input and importance of creative practice in the field of comics studies even more to the fore. Chapters such as Jameel's and Pellegrin's center around the direct inclusion of practice, and we hope that these chapters will inspire other comics scholars to integrate practice into their own scholarship.

At this stage, a strongly worded note of caution is appropriate as well. The tensions between auteurist visions of the study of comics and sociological perspectives on cultural production as labor are durable ones, both

in the context of this anthology and elsewhere, and to take as one's starting point a particular creator or body of literature in the context of comics work is to invite analytical self-contradiction. Johnston's own contribution to this book, for example, flirts with precisely this problem but evades it deftly by underscoring how the autonomous comics creator is a collectively constituted, and socially contingent, ideological construct not available to every individual. Much work is still to be done in fully acknowledging and analyzing the myriad ways comics work simultaneously conceals the traces of its own existence while permitting the certain comics producers (and not others) their heroic status.

And last but certainly not least, we look forward to further methodological diversification within comics scholarship. If people and their labor, and not just texts, become valid objects of inquiry in comics studies, then any number of social scientists may find purchase in the field. Where once there were literary scholars, there are also sociologists; where once there were art historians, there may come economists, linguists, psychologists, and others. The future, in this light, is beyond exciting … and we have not even yet begun!

So, shall we begin? Turn the page.

Notes

1. According to Santiago, four Spanish bloggers coined the term gafotaku on Twitter, a portmanteau of *gafapasta* (pseudo-intellectual hipster) and *otaku*, to label experienced, mature, and critical manga fans.

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Locating Labor

For the Love of the Craft: Industry, Identity, and Australian Comics

Amy Louise Maynard

Over the past 40 years, Australian comic book production has been comprised of individuals who form social networks of production and consumption, with an emphasis on creating product as authentic artistic expression. Economically, Australian comics production could be considered a small creative industry, and culturally, it could be considered a scene. In order to understand more about the creative identity and the thought processes behind comics production, I interviewed creators from scenes across Australia. Using primary data from artists in order to understand their ethos is a method frequently utilized within creative identity studies (Hackley and Kover 2007; Wang and Cheng 2010; Taylor and Littleton 2008).

Although publishing comics is not an economically rewarding activity, it is seen as socially rewarding to belong to a community of like-minded individuals who share the same passion for the medium. Therefore, there is justification for this labor in that there is a strong identification as a comics creator, and creators accumulate social capital due to the "love of

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the craft." By adopting the identity of a comics creator and forming relationships with others, this can create a positive sense of self-worth based on shared values and behaviors (Williams 2011, 129–131). As consumer markets become increasingly fragmented, media convergence changes the media landscape and casualization occurs in the workplace, artists do not often achieve a steady or profitable income from their labor. Thus, there needs to be some alternate sense of agency and empowerment which comes from creative labor (Deuze and Elefante 2012, 17–19).

Within the discourse of Australian comics creators there is a resistance to labeling their activity an industry, as the term "industry" carries the subtext of mass production and corporate ideologies. There are two reasons for this: firstly, due to the belief that the domestic market is considered too small for product to have a consistent profit margin and secondly, there is a conscious level of distancing from corporate ideologies as they are seen as antithetical to those of a scene, which values authentic personal expression (Duncombe 1997, 60). The tension between creating for artistic *and* economic purposes is something common to most artists (Heazlewood 2014, 75–90; Taylor and Littleton 2008, 275–292). This chapter argues that a scene and a creative industry co-exist within modern Australian comics production. It is a creative industry due to the clusters of comics creation that occur in urban hubs in most capital cities, these social networks forming a system where product is circulated for economic capital within a knowledge economy (Hartley et al. 2013, 18–19). There is optimism that the scene is growing, and the creative industry has proven itself to be sustainable, due to collective action and creative identity.

Comics as Creative Labor

There are technically two periods of time in which Australia had functional comics industries. The first period was 1939–1959, in which a domestic creative industry was formed in order to fulfill audience demand, as American comics were banned (along with other imported material) in a pre-WWII austerity measure. There was an active recruitment of creators rather than the organic growth of an arts scene, and the economic bubble burst when the importation embargo was lifted, the domestic industry decimated by foreign product (Ryan 1979, 158–181, 210; Finnane 1998, 49–53). The second industry, which began in 1975 and has lasted until the present, was formed through a small social network in Melbourne

that had an interest in comics and wanted to create their own, inspired by European *bande desinée* and American underground comics (Bentley 2013, 19–25).

While in the first industry there was a captive market, and the incentive to create comics for economic capital, in the second industry the incentive to create comics was for artistic expression *first*. Philip Bentley, one of the first publishers, writes that there was the desire to change the cultural perception of comics. Comics were seen as either just in the superhero genre or juvenile entertainment, and so Bentley and others decided to create comics that had artistic and literary merit (Bentley 2013, 25). Social capital was strengthened through creative identity, and creative labor was in the form of volunteers offering to work on anthology comics.

Anthologies were not only useful in cutting down costs, as creators had to pay for production themselves, but group work also fostered a sense of camaraderie, with work done in "jam sessions" and at people's houses (Bentley 2013, 86). In the 1980s in Sydney, ritualized "meets" began with creators meeting in a public space, usually a pub or a café, to network professionally and assist each other on projects, and also to provide moral support (DeVries, pers. comm). These practices have lasted until the present, with comics meets occurring in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Canberra, Brisbane, and Hobart.

In addition to meets, studios and workshops also function as social and professional spaces (Blumenstein 2013). In a transcript from his speech at the Stanley Awards in 2013, artist/writer David Blumenstein spoke of the positive aspects of co-running Squishface Studio, which resides in Brunswick, Melbourne: it functions as a community hub, it's open to the public and new cartoonists were welcome, and it's recognized by other cultural institutions. Yet as of 2013, Squishface was running at a loss in the two years it had been open, and the co-founders were looking at alternative funding methods in the forms of classes, grants, fundraising, and selling products. When I interviewed Blumenstein as part of my research, he summed up modern comics production thusly: "Comics are a part-time, money losing hobby for virtually everyone producing or publishing comics in Australia."

Being involved in creative labor means one is subject to stress and tedium with regard to money (Woo 2013; Taylor and Littleton 2008, 280–290). Comickers, cartoonists, and illustrators are considered part of the Pay the Writers movement for fair wages, and like most artists they face

the constant threat of being exploited for work. "The attitude that people give you is that you should be grateful to be working in the arts," cartoonist Sarah Howell says in *Funemployed*, "because it's so competitive to even get a low-paying job." (Heazlewood 2014, 48). Applying for grants from arts bodies and the government is technically possible but difficult in Australia, and for comics creators it's worse than for most other types of artists, as there are no specific policies or funds designed to economically assist the medium. There are only two industry bodies that work with the comics industry, the Australian Cartoonists' Association and the Australian Society of Authors, and their main forms of advocacy are recommending rates. In Australia, therefore, an overwhelming majority of artists work on their craft part-time. It is estimated that on average an artist will work 20 hours at a "day job" and 20 hours on creative labor. This lifestyle can affect morale and productivity (Heazlewood 2014, 45–59).

To alleviate financial pressures, comics creators will often work pro bono on each other's comics. Says writer/artist Scarlette Baccini:

> In general, we are pretty autonomous (writing, drawing, lettering, editing and formatting our own work ourselves), and people swap favors. Everyone in the scene is hugely generous and dedicated to supporting local work, and people will offer their services cheap/free when they can, or else you need to learn to be totally self-sufficient (and often the product suffers—most of us are sh*tty letterers, editors, etc.). It's all lovely, but it would be ace to see people being paid properly to get the job done well, and I wonder how much this affects sales/industry growth.

So, although more economic capital would alleviate stress for creators, social capital is still strong within Australian comics production, and this provides creators with motivation.

Although Blumenstein is adamant that there will never be an Australian comics industry without significant external economic investment, he says, "I produce comics because I enjoy it, enjoy the local community, and hope to produce better work in the future." Similarly, Christian Read, a writer, believes that there is no comics industry in Australia due to a significant lack of funding; however, when asked about his creative labor, he replied:

> I enjoy writing comics and I trust and have faith in my publisher. My only reasons to publish in Australia are that I like the people I work with, feel that I am well positioned as an "indie" creator, and enjoy the freedom that comes [from] working outside mainstream American comics.

Indeed, throughout my interviews there was a tension between working on comics out of passion for the medium and working for economic capital (of which there was very little). I believe that this is due to Australian comics creators working in what they considered a scene, a social network that is made up of creatives who value what is known as "authentic" work in subcultural discourse.

Scene Culture and Creative Identity

Writing in *Search for Identity* (1978), Ayyappa Panicker writes that the creative artist is not only defined by his personal selfhood but has his values and beliefs "shaped, modified, or controlled by the shared mythos and ethos of his country, his people, and his time" (7).

For those who create comics, a scene is similar to a subculture, in that identity is performed through discourse, and much of this discourse is centered around motivations, beliefs, and behaviors. There is also a strong emphasis on authenticity (Williams 2011, 141). In *Notes from the Underground*, Stephen Duncombe studied American zine culture, and described an alternative scene as being "a loose confederation of self-consciously 'alternative' publications, bands, shows, radio stations, cafes, book stores, and people" (1997, 57). The Australian comics scene, specifically, is made up of small clusters of creators who reside in capital cities. In addition to creators, there are retailers, publishers, event organizers, consumers, and niche media in the form of podcasts, radio shows, and blogs. Zines are closely related to comics in the USA and in Australia, yet they are ultimately different artistic mediums. However, their creators share a similar ethos in that creative labor is a personal expression of the self. Says Duncombe:

> The oft-repeated statement that zines are produced for love, not money, is really a stand-in for another argument: about the type of work that is done for money vs. the type of work that is done for love. For at the heart of the zine ethic is a definition of creation of work that is truly fulfilling: work in which you have complete control over what you are creating, how you are doing it, and whom you are doing it for. That is authentic work. (Duncombe 1997, 95)

When the case was made in my interviews for Australian comics production being a scene instead of an industry, it was tied to creative identity. An industry was seen as being economically strong, with constant production

and corporate values. A scene, meanwhile, valued creative identity more; it was too economically weak to be an industry, and so there was more emphasis on authentic work. "It would be near impossible to pull a living wage out of full-time creating comics in Australia," says Greg Holfeld. "[That's] one of the reasons I [would] contend there's no 'industry' as such." Benzin Bullock, a writer, takes into account the cultural perceptions that Australians have about comics when considering whether Australia has a scene or an industry—namely that comics don't receive the same critical respect and public funding that other art forms do in this country:

> What Australia lacks, what I find that stops Australia from being an industry with our comics, is the fact that we have no specific funding bodies that work towards comics... The independent stuff is where you want to go to read your really cutting edge stuff that's really pushing for it. Unfortunately we don't get funding for that so that stops us from being a strong industry, and pushes us back to being a community.

Paul Abstruse, an illustrator who has worked on American publications, when asked about Australian production compared to American production, explained that Australia is at a disadvantage economically and culturally. America places more cultural value on comics, and their industry is bigger due to their ability to pay a fixed page rate to creators. Thus Australia has a scene: "I've had a saying for about 10 years now, making comics in Australia is like owning a racehorse," he says. "It's like pissing money down the drain, basically. People do it for love." When speaking with Frank Candiloro, a writer and artist, there was the distinction made between Americans working in an "industry" and Americans working in a "scene," the scene having a similar ethos to Australia's. But with regard to the American "industry," "it feels on some level like a machine churning out stuff, whereas we don't have that here in Australia." He continues, "I think what makes the Australian comic book scene great is people who are doing comics that they want to do, and people who have unique voices, and unique stories that they want to tell." Writer and artist Joshua Santospirito, when asked about why Australian comics production was a "scene," had this reply:

> I've never heard production being referred to as a "scene." I have heard the interaction of comics people, comics-makers and comics consumers referred to as a "scene." The community around comics has been a necessary birthing

place of new works. Without it many individuals would not have raised their confidence and skills to have gone out and made more ambitious works. The artists cannot always act solely off their own energy.

In their research for the government report Arts and Creative Industries: A Historical Overview; and an Australian Conversation, Justin O'Connor, Stuart Cunningham, and Luke Jaaniste interviewed artists from a range of disciplines on their views about art, culture, and the creative industries. These interviews revealed that artists have difficulty reconciling the term "creative industries," or generally just the term "industry," with art: the market was too small in Australia; there was art for clients and art for art's sake; any art that wasn't commercial would need to exist solely on subsidies; artists could only work part-time on their craft; and to be an industry is to imply being "industrious," which not all artists are (O'Connor, Cunningham, and Jaaniste 2011, 10–13).

When writing about subcultures, Williams notes that the views of the "insider" and the views of the "outsider" rarely match (2011, 130). As a researcher, I respect that there is a clear tension between creators considering their work to exist in an industry. It is true that Australia has culturally and economically maligned comics, and the art form is so marginalized in academia that it has been termed "The Invisible Medium" (Patrick, 2011). When I first started researching Australian comics, I wondered if comics creators were opposed to the word "industry" specifically due to their limited economic capital. However, the discursive opposition may be symptomatic of the broader creative identity. In creative identity studies by Hackley and Kover (2007) and Taylor and Littleton (2008), there were similar patterns, in that creative labor was artistic expression first and a form of employment second.

O'Connor, Cunningham, and Jaaniste write that there seemed to be a "different language" between researchers and artists, particularly with regard to money, industry, and art. There were artists who accepted that what they were doing was part of an industry, but it's still necessary to be understanding toward those who were cautious of the term, as a lack of respect toward artists can jeopardize not only further research, but also future funding and policy models (2011, 13–14). I believe that a scene and a creative industry can co-exist within modern Australian comics production, however, and that they work in conjunction with each other. A scene provides a social network of creators, and this social network in turn helps to build a knowledge economy and new markets.

Australian Comics Production as a Creative Industry?

In previous academic writing about classifying Australian comics as a scene or an industry, a central idea to the argument that Australia does not have an industry is the apparent instability of the current model. When writing about Australian digital comics, Mark Hobby notes:

> In many ways the comics exists as a perpetual hybrid. A halfway point between film and prose, entertainment and art, its mainstream success can largely be attributed to its adaptation into other mediums. The comic's status as a cultural product in its own right has been limited to parts of Northern Europe and Japan, while in the U.S. the sustainability of comics books as an industry is generally wedded to its status as a junior partner in larger media conglomerates. (Hobby 2011, 90)

This is a confusing statement, not least in part because comics have been considered a cultural art form in places other than "parts" of Northern Europe and Japan. Then there is an unclear demarcation between comics being an adaptable extension of other forms of mass entertainment and yet also cultural products in their own right. Hobby then goes on to write that Australian comics have no industry of a comparable size and therefore it is a scene—and an underdeveloped one at that. It is at once unable to be a self-sustaining industry, and yet a tiny fan base has remained "committed to the scene's growth" (2011, 95). In contrast, I would argue that there does not have to be such a dichotomy with regard to comics production. Comics are created for different markets and so can co-exist as both commercial products and literary works. The "commercial" and "literary" divide is not necessarily a result of economic capital and can result from genre categorization and/or market characteristics. This applies not only to Australian comics but to comics the world over.

Also, if there is continued commitment to growth by producers and consumers, then is the industry self-sustaining? The first industry is considered a "success" by Hobby, but I would consider the first industry a failed experiment. This is due to its reliance on economic capital within a market that was created artificially through an embargo, rather than one that was developed organically through artistic initiative and cultural change. The second industry has eclipsed the first by 20 years, not only due to creative identity but to the strong social capital that produces a knowledge economy.

Paul Mason, a writer, illustrator, and academic from the University of Queensland, has a more nuanced approach to the scene/industry debate, although there is still the association of industry solely with economic capital:

> Comics walk that fine line between "art" and "commodity," and debates like this blur the lines a little in relation to the fact that not only are the individual creators not defined on where they stand on the issue in relation to what and why they create, but also in relation to whether we have an industry or not (a "scene" is a common phrase), or if a lot of activity in recent years warrants a possible "industry" coming into being. I think like in any workplace, not all of us are going to get on, and have different goals/perceptions/mindsets/temperaments, which means a united front may not be the only solution. Hell, if you ask me, a large company with a world class PR and marketing team, and a CEO who loves making comics and doesn't mind pissing away millions of dollars in product, campaigns and distribution networks, is probably going to struggle to get any sort of self-sustaining industry started here. Comics are grassroots products.

There is an industry around Australian comics, though—a creative industry. A creative industry is defined as "those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property" (Creative Industries Mapping Document 2001, 4).

The link between a scene and a creative industry is a creative cluster. Creative clusters are artistic spaces which are formed organically in post-industrial spaces and develop slowly. They are considered to be "scenes," and they although are informal in nature, they contribute to the economy through cultural goods and are sustained through coordinated action. Creative clusters are not only defined by physical geography, as creatives are now increasingly connecting online (Hartley et al. 2013, 17–18). Internet forums devoted to discussing Australian comics culture and production were set up in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and now most creators will socialize with their peers, as well as consumers, via social media. Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr are the most popular sites. These social networking sites help to create a knowledge economy.

Within a knowledge economy information is shared, developed, and modified, and this contributes to the creation and distribution of goods embedded with certain cultural meanings to a specific consumer market. A knowledge economy is built on reciprocal social capital between

stakeholders, which creates a peer-to-peer network (Besley 2010, 16–17, Hartley et al. 2013, 128). In the Australian comics creative industry, the knowledge economy extends to the marketing, distribution, and retail of comics, in a process of media convergence. Many comics creators will look to crowdfunding in order to fund products and projects, with success often based on the scene sharing information throughout the social network (Mason 2013). But media convergence is a process rather than an endpoint, breaking down the roles between producers and consumers, creating a participatory culture that is formed around communities of interest around content (Jenkins and Deuze 2008, 9).

Media convergence is also used to create new markets and opportunities through digital publishing platforms. Alisha Jade, for example, not only prefers marketing in person as much as possible but also makes sure to advertise previews on her Tumblr and distribute through her Etsy store as well as at events. Jade has started keeping track of sales and believes that Etsy helps with this process, but the appeal of online publishing lies more in being able to reach a wide audience while saving on direct costs. "I think you'd have to be blind not to recognize that digital distribution and publishing has changed comics—including local ones," she says. "Suddenly instead of Xeroxing hundreds of zines, independent artists can put work online practically for free, and it can be shared globally in an instant. Meeting in person (while nice) is totally unnecessary to discovering amazing work and interacting with other creators." Publishers such as Gestalt are also releasing digital versions of their hard copy comics. Australians are also working with digital comics distribution sites such as Comixology and Cloud 9 (Hobby 2011, 93; Mason, 2013).

Digital technologies have also made it easier not only to distribute material to a global audience, but also to work globally with regard to production. Purcell's *Winter City* publishing team includes staff from South America. Australians writers and artists such as Doug Holgate, Tristan Jones, and Nicola Scott have made inroads into the US comics industry due to globalized media convergence and social media. Although creators working in America are usually contracted with a corporate publisher such as DC and Marvel (Mason 2013; DeVries, pers. comm, Abstruse, pers. comm), a breakout success from Australia has been Simon Hanselmann. Hanselmann grew a cult following around his comics on Tumblr, now has a publishing deal with Fantagraphics, and tours internationally. "Australian comics is generally a very insular little thing," says Hanselmann. "If we didn't put our stuff online, nobody outside of Australia would see it.

Nobody outside of Australia is clamoring for Australian comics. I'm making a living out of this. If it weren't for the internet I would still be selling scrappy zines at bad local comic shops. The internet made us visible."

As well as new markets appearing online, new markets are also being created offline, due to Australian comics and their creators being present at a number of events. These events include popular culture conventions, literary festivals, and small press/independent comics fairs. Each event comes with its own market, whether commercial or literary or a mixture of both, and contributes to comics' visibility in the Australian culture, and thus the knowledge economy.

Popular culture conventions came to Australia in the 1980s, and have traditionally had a commercial focus. Producers and consumers interact at panels and at the Artist's Alley. Currently the two biggest conventions are Oz Comic-Con and Supanova. Small press comics and comix have been present at numerous zine fairs, including the Zine and Indie Comics Symposium, Museum of Contemporary Art Zine Fair, and Other Worlds Zine Fair. There has been a rise in independent comics festivals and launches, such as the Homecooked Festival, Comic Gong, Her Majesty's Favourite Really Great Graphical Festival, and Comics at Dusk. In the mid-2000s, graphic novels began entering the Australian market, and with this medium came increased mainstream coverage and cultural capital (Patrick 2012, 51–52; Hobby 2011, 90). Many graphic novelists started out in small press comics in the 1990s, and literary magazines such as *Voiceworks*, *The Lifted Brow*, and *Spook Magazine* continue to support small presses. Certain Australian comics are considered literature and have been part of the Emerging Writers Festival, National Young Writers Festival, Melbourne Writers Festival, and Adelaide Writers Week, among other writing festivals.

Whether it is running a Kickstarter campaign or running a stall, Australian comics creators are consistently finding new ways to distribute and market their product. Comics are now a part of the Australian artistic landscape, and the creative industry looks to be growing consistently. When asked about the future of Australian comics, many participants expressed optimism. Candiloro says,

> I honestly think it can only get bigger from here. It's kind of interesting with comics in general, because even though there seems to be more attention on them than ever before, and people seem to be doing more and more interesting work, and it seems to be moving ahead as a medium, sales of

comics are still pretty low, which has always been intriguing. So what does that say about us, well, I think we'll continue to grow bigger, I think there will be more people doing great work. I think at the end of the day we'll still be here making comics, and I think the international audience for it will be growing. I think at the end of the day we're all helping each other.

Conclusion

Although there may never be a highly profitable Australian comics industry, being profitable is not the same as being sustainable. While there could be more earmarked investment into comics production by government-funding bodies, it already functions as a creative industry due to expanding markets and a knowledge economy within a social network. These markets are created online through media convergence and offline by comics' increased visibility within commercial and cultural events. What Australian comics production lacks in economic capital it makes up for in social capital, with creative identity and a respect for authentic work creating a scene that has endured for 40 years. I have found Australian comics creators to be as tenacious as they are generous, and I do not doubt the scene could survive for 40 more.

Author's Note To all my interview participants: a sincere thank you from the author for answering my questions with infinite wisdom, patience, and kindness.

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Between Art and the Underground: From Corporate to Collaborative Comics in India

Jeremy Stoll

Historically, in Indian comics culture, a corporate model of production has predominated that is predicated upon a division of labor. As Mark Rogers (2011) notes, such a mode of production requires writers, pencillers, inkers, and others to perform their step in the creative process with limited interaction with other steps or the people behind them.[1] While such an approach has helped certain companies flourish, the obvious cost has been the inability of creators to make a living from their work. Furthermore, there is little space for an active and critical community in corporate production. Accordingly, contemporary comics creators, editors, publishers, and many of their readers have recently begun to take a different approach toward creativity.

In my interviews with comics creators from 2010 onwards,[2] I have encountered many creators who point out that the roots of comics culture lie in the broader visual culture of India, whose traditional visual storytelling primes readers for critical engagement with visual narratives. This

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understanding allows them to push for a greater awareness of the comics medium as an international form with the potential for great variation beyond corporate production. Several authors and artists explicitly work to establish an alternative or independent comics culture that is focused on creators, their craft, and the communities that form around them. In particular, Orijit Sen of the Pao Collective in Delhi, Vidyun Sabhaney of Captain Bijli Comics in Delhi, and Pratheek Thomas of Studio Kokaachi in Cochin are working to develop more independent and community-focused platforms for their own and others' work. This chapter explores how each of these creators approaches the work of establishing an alternative or indie comics culture by placing craft and community over industry.

In particular, drawing on the precedent of Sen's work in Delhi's comics scene, both Sabhaney and Thomas are dedicated to cultivating a comics culture in India where creators can make a living through visual storytelling. Yet, while Sen approaches this work as a member of a comics collective or individually, Sabhaney and Thomas work as small publishers, with Sabhaney's independent comics initiative Captain Bijli focused on "collaboration, ideas, and inspiration" (Captain Bijli 2014) and Thomas's Kokaachi on collaboration through "…comics, picture books, pop-up stories, illustrated tales, animation, film and all kinds of visual storytelling" (Studio Kokaachi 2014). Their emphasis on stories and collaboration provides a vivid example for the shift away from corporate models of creativity. Much like the small, self-published comics that arose from the American underground comix of the 1960s and 1970s, the focus is on more diverse, emotionally realistic, and expressionistic storytelling (Hatfield 2005). Creators in India differ from American alternative comics creators, though, in that the mainstream against which they must often define their work is grounded in book publishing and mythological comics rather than superheroes. Furthermore, creators like Sabhaney and Thomas draw on a unique context of comics in India and their individual experiences with the medium.

Overall, Sen, Sabhaney, and Thomas share an emphasis on short publication runs and an adaptive distribution system that recognizes where readers are most likely to encounter their work—whether in book shops and art galleries or more public spaces like cafes and food stalls. In detailing each of their repertoires, I will analyze how changing forms of public events demonstrate changing understandings of comics culture and community in India. Bringing these creators into the conversation reveals that each of their creative practices is grounded in their passionate com-

mitment to visual storytelling that both celebrates the creative process and is accessible to a relatively broad audience. Indeed, it is what pushes them to push the medium and comics culture further in events and other opportunities for recognition, interaction, and connection.

Comics Events for a Public Culture

Dealing with the relationships within comics communities, though, means recognizing certain issues and influences that are unique to the medium. In *Comics Culture: From Fanboys to True Believers* (1999), Matthew Pustz explores American communities of comics readers and creators, whose identities often overlap, and the spaces in which they form connections with each other. Pustz grounds his work in Henry Jenkins's model (2006) of fandom as a community of consumers defined through common relationships with shared texts. Community members, as fans, interact based upon common knowledge of narratives that allow for communication and the creation of relationships around those same narratives. For Pustz, what comics fans share "…is a culture, a body of knowledge and information, an appreciation of a medium that most Americans have diagnosed as hopelessly juvenile and essentially worthless" (1999, 22). Accordingly, a particular community is created by this interaction between the ideals of creation and the realities of publication and between network and the social imaginary.

A quintessential dimension of any social unit is the interaction between its members, especially in negotiating community and identity. Yet, as Bart Beaty recognizes in *Comics versus Art* (2012), critical engagement, especially for scholars, has been hindered by focusing on the formal elements of comics rather than how those elements act as conventions within a distinct comics art world. Instead, he argues for understanding comics as "the product of a particular social world" in order to highlight both creators' conventions and the power relations in which creative practices are always embedded (Beaty 2012, 43). Attending to the ever-changing communities of that art world, though, requires a community-centered perspective. In his study of everyday storytelling in Northern Ireland, Ray Cashman (2008) teases out the nature of social groups as combining the ideal community of the social imaginary and the practical work of individuals interacting in everyday life. Cashman brings these two potentially opposing threads together in order to reveal how they are mutually constituted, and thus he conceptualizes community as "a network of people brought

into engagement by an idea" (Cashman 2008, 12). Within India's growing comics communities, the various members are thus brought together by the comics medium as a mode of cultural production.

These ideals for the imagined community of Delhi's comics culture come together with the actual network of relationships at events. In the process, creators, readers, editors, fans, and other members of the comics community are able to negotiate and even to transform the medium and its community into something more. In particular, comics creators are able to engage with Victor Turner's concept of liminoid spaces (1982), which are singular and large-scale moments related to popular culture where participants experience a heightened experience of community and its ideals. For instance, regular comics-related workshops and annual conventions each allow for different visions of what local comics communities should be. Unlike more directly spiritual liminal spaces, liminoid events allow for the questioning of dominant structures, like mainstream comics publishing or politics, because they are not fully integrated into the larger social order. However, such spaces still allow for the experience of Turner's concept of *communitas*, which is a heightened experience of community or "spontaneous sociability" (Turner 1982). Even as creators experience that vibrant sense that they belong to a larger network of individuals who identify with the comics medium in some sense, they are also negotiating that social group. In particular, as Dorothy Noyes demonstrates in her account of the social unit (2003), events often provide a window into the constant reworking of the relationship between the ideals and the realities of comics communities. Just as festival attendees decide who should or should not participate in events and what their participation means, members of India's comics community work to find a place for themselves in such liminoid spaces while adapting to their experience of, and transforming, these alternative social structures (Noyes 2003).

Within Delhi's comics culture, creators meet up with one another in numerous ways and in various places. Arts-related events like gallery openings, book releases, and comics workshops provide a context where they are able to meet and discuss their craft, while meetings with collectives occur less often. In my four months working with the authors and artists involved with the Pao Collective in 2010, in particular, all five members met up only once, while those members in charge of the editorial work for the then-in-development Pao Collection met more regularly. In addition, just before my arrival in August 2010, the members of Pao (Singh, Ghosh, Sen, Banerjee, and Kumar) collaborated on a gallery exhibition,

Fig. 3.1: Shohei Emura and Vidyun Sabhaney at the UnBox Festival in February 2013, as they worked on the packets that they were handing out to increase awareness of their then-upcoming workshop, Image and Word

culminating with a group-authored work. Such gallery events may happen somewhat regularly, but collaboration happens much less often, especially on a face-to-face basis (Fig. 3.1).

Still, more informal events are quite regular, from seasonal *baithaks*, where friends and colleagues come together to share food and talent, to smaller shared meals, meetings between friends, and even random encounters in the same social spaces. The Yodakin bookstore in Hauz Khas Village, in particular, was a common meeting place for many creators because of its welcoming atmosphere, placement within the former artist's enclave, wide array of independent books and music, and because of the many hard-to-find graphic novels and comics available there.[3] For comics creators, as for most people living in large cities, staying in touch can often be a struggle, and meeting regularly may be quite difficult given the hectic-ness of constantly changing deadlines and schedules.

These difficulties are complicated by the mainstream comics culture in India. In particular, many creators have pointed out to me how, in contrast to the USA, mainstream comics in India is still developing. The result has been that mainstream book publishers like Penguin were generally the first to do non-mainstream work. Meanwhile, several companies have worked

on establishing a mainstream, albeit mainly through mythological, super-hero, and most recently genre comics created through corporate models of creativity. Companies like Liquid Comics (formerly Virgin Comics) and Vimanika Comics share a focus on reinterpreting epic narratives and developing profitable film, television, video game, and other projects. Both also associate the publisher/editor's name with many products, with Deepak Chopra's or Karan Vir Arora's names, respectively, often being placed above any title or author credits on a book cover. The resultant emphasis on business over creativity or community leads to the alienation of creators who would otherwise rely on comics for practical and ideal communities, creative fulfillment, and potentially their livelihood. Such difficulties led creators like Sen, Sabhaney, and Thomas to establish more communal spaces and events, in order to cultivate a vibrant comics community that they can call home.

ORIJIT SEN AND CREATIVE COMMUNITY

As the author and artist of *River of Stories*, labeled by many as the first graphic novel in India, Orijit Sen provides an important creative precedent. From mentoring younger authors to encouraging sustained interest in the medium, Sen plays a central role as a master of long-form comics narratives in India. Having trained at the National Institute of Design in 1987, Sen has exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and at other venues in Russia and France, and has worked on multiple exhibitions and other projects. Along the way, he has worked as a graphic designer, illustrator, and visual artist—most prominently in co-founding the inimitable and socially conscious design house, studio, and shop People Tree with his equally talented and design-oriented wife Gurpreet Sidhu. Sen also has a long tenure in comics, from *River of Stories* through his illustration work for *Trash!: On Ragpicker Children and Recycling* and his work on *IMUNG: Manipur Home Care Handbook,* a guide for HIV and AIDS healthcare in that area, as well as single-page comics in *India Magazine* and a set of short comics for the National Council for Education Research and Training. He has done work outside the normal expectations for comics creators, including a walk-through mural experience modeled on the reading of comics and other public arts work.[4] Sen also provides clarity in visual style and feedback—cutting to the point while framing that point within the soft blow of story, often in the same breath that he brings a sense of levity and friendly support.

Sen has a long history of taking part in comics-related events, having led one of several workshops and presentations that resulted in the development of the Pao Collective. As I have detailed in "Bread & Comics" (2013), Sen helped create a space to talk about comics with The Comix Workshop in January of 2008. As he described to me, "It was a process of discovering that there are other people around who are doing this, who know about comics. Until then, I was under the impression that I was probably the only one in the whole country who even thought about comics." For Sen and other comics creators, including his fellow Pao Collective members Sarnath Banerjee and Vishwajyoti Ghosh, having a chance to talk to other creators and fans was something new, valuable, and inspiring. Yet, Sen's importance lies in his influence on so many creators who have flourished in the medium through meetings, interviews, and friendship with him. As he told me, for example, "With Sarnath [Banerjee], I met him when he was making films. He used to be a film-maker. And I was in the backroom of People Tree, working on *River of Stories* when Sarnath [got interested and] decided to make his own … Amruta [Patil] was a student of art, and I did a workshop at her school, and she came to me with her work." In mentoring creators like Banerjee and Patil, Sen helped to cultivate the diversity of voices in the comics scene even as he established certain creative standards that continue to structure the community.

This passion that Sen encouraged at these early events developed into the push for the medium to move forward in India, beginning with the first meetings of the Pao Collective, including additional members Parismita Singh and Amitabh Kumar, in 2007 through to 2009. Through these events, they were able to read and present their work to one another for feedback and a sense of community. As Sen remembered these first few meetings in conversation with me, he reflected on the positive energy that was immediately apparent when sharing his work:

> So all the four other Paos were sitting with rapt attention, and they were very kind. They responded very well. That was when I first got the sense of how interesting and productive a collective like this would be. And I was quite encouraged by that. At the same time, listening to their responses and comments and then listening to their own stories and ideas and discussing it was encouraging, too. That whole set of meetings was very energizing.

This sense of synergy, much like the intense communal sentiment of *communitas*, energized the Pao Collective and, through them, the larger comics scene in Delhi and beyond.

Unlike Turner's conceptualization of intense sociability (1982), though, a strong sense of community in this case stems from an appreciation for each artist's unique approach to the comics medium and to collaboration within it. Thus, in large part, it was their differences that fueled this synergy, as Sen points out:

> We were all coming from different backgrounds, experiences, and had different concerns. So we also realized through the initial meetings, discussions, and presentations, that that's the strength of it. The idea is not to come together to form some united approach or some school of thought or of style, nor to define or put down what exactly defines or communalizes us. Instead, we agree to disagree. We enjoy the differences and diversity as strengths. I'm happy that throughout, that has remained the cornerstone of our association.

He thus describes how the members of Pao value each other's differences, arguing that their success and perseverance are the result of that acceptance. The other members of Pao pointed out a similar appreciation for what each of them brought to comics and to their collective as key to its value. This reveals the process of negotiating community within its creation, where Sen and the other members of Pao worked to build social structure while maintaining an appreciation for the parts, or individuals, that make it up.

Sen, for his part, is equally concerned with maintaining the network for creative energy that Pao has become. He reflects thus on what is unique about comics culture in India today:

> There are no norms or limitations. And that is a great position to be in, because then we define the form easily. Nobody is expecting you to make panel by panel compositions or use this style or that style. So in that sense, I think the situation in India is very good and very exciting. I already feel it becoming very distinct in an Indian sense. It's just like what happened with manga in Japan—it acquired this definitive look, feel, style and storytelling method. I see in India that it might be much more diverse even than what happened in Japan.

There is thus a freedom in a lack of public awareness, in that it also means a lack of expectations; as noted earlier, Sen specifically sees a space for challenging even the basics of comics creation and working to redefine the practice as one involving traditional visual media and socially engaged

storytelling. Events act as one point of interaction where those creative energies can come together and create a community more than the sum of their individual parts.

Pratheek Thomas and Collaborative Storytelling

For Pratheek Thomas, the comics medium is one grounded in storytelling. Providing a platform for comics creators first through Manta Ray and now through Studio Kokaachi allows Thomas to reframe the comics medium as a serious one. In particular, Pratheek Thomas's work demonstrates the medium's strength through its potential for engaging and moving stories that engender community. At the same time, the emphasis on collaboration in creativity and rootedness in community clearly shift Indian comics away from a corporate model of production.

This appreciation for strong storytelling relies in part on the scale and larger context for both of Thomas's publishing pursuits. The main issue in India's comics culture, as noted by other creators and publishers alike, is the lack of a truly established mainstream. Although the *Amar Chitra Katha* series (1967-present) and mythology comics are widely recognized as more established, they remain a relatively niche market and community. For creators like Thomas, it is difficult to see any Indian publishers as distinctly indie or alternative in nature. However, such an approach allows for greater value to be placed on the quality of stories through the quality of the storytelling or collaboration that happens in the creative process. As he noted in a conversation with me, "I think [indie comics] are much smaller in terms of size, market share, and also in terms of storytelling. It's not these characters who keep coming back for multiple storylines… The approach or format is also very different." An indie approach to comics thus puts the emphasis on experimentation and the craft of making comics in order to appeal to readers and other creators who value innovation and community.

This stems from the value that he places on creative practice and the social bonds that form in collaboration. As he noted to me, collaboration is an essential part of comics culture: "For me, the collaboration in comics is everything. It's what makes this medium such a joy for me, the joining of forces between a writer and artist … and the simple act of seeing words become images and both of these come together to tell a story." As the many fliers, blog posts, and events demonstrate, Manta Ray comics was consistently appreciative of the various artists and authors whose

stories were central to their work. Even in its early stages, Kokaachi shows a similar value for the people involved in comics culture. This parallels the values of indie and alternative comics culture, which emphasizes the craft and individual innovation of comics work. Although this approach can lead to the valuing of certain creators over others, the reframing of comics as craft allows publishers like Kokaachi and Thomas to gain cultural capital through collaboration and the friendships that result.[5]

Thomas's approach to both Manta Ray and Studio Kokaachi demonstrates an appreciation for creative process and the community surrounding comics production and reception. Not only did Manta Ray's debut graphic novella, *Hush* (2011), rely a great deal on word of mouth at Comic Con India when originally published, but Thomas himself also emphasizes the importance of engaging readers in comics culture. As he explained to me, "Community is a very important part of comics everywhere, and especially in India, where the audience is really niche. It's something we were aware of at Manta Ray and now at Kokaachi … and we're always looking for ways to reach out to our existing community and beyond it, to interact and engage with them, and to make them a part of what we do as storytellers." This participative focus led to their reliance upon events like Comic Con, but with a greater emphasis on local events, from gallery nights where original artwork was on display to book launches and café nights. These allowed Thomas and his collaborators to meet with and engage readers, creators, and others interested in the medium.

More than anything, Thomas's work with Manta Ray and Kokaachi demonstrates that much of India's comics culture is indie by definition due to the lack of an established mainstream. Like alternative comics in the USA, their particular focus is slice of life stories and various forms for comics, from the graphic novella format of *Hush* to digital platforms and encountering comics in galleries, cafés, and other public spaces. This aligns with an overall commitment to engaging readers and creators in an appreciation of comics, the creative process, creators, and shared experiences of everyday life in contemporary Indian society. Thomas and Kokaachi thus build upon the premises of an alternative or indie comics approach to rework comics as a medium for storytelling that forms and solidifies the social networks of everyday life.[6] In large part, they do this work in public spaces—through events that engender participation and encourage the collaborative community. Thomas and his many collaborators thus construct indie comics in India as inspired by international and especially American comics culture but uniquely dedicated to collaborative, everyday storytelling.

Vidyun Sabhaney and Alternative Acceptance

Vidyun Sabhaney's first exposure to comics was through the *Amar Chitra Katha* series, *Calvin & Hobbes*, and Belgian imports *Tintin* and *Asterix*. Alongside her oft-collaborator, artist Pia Alize Hazarika, Sabhaney first made comics in her youth, but would later read Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (2003) and research Joe Sacco's work in college.[7] Through that research, Vidyun would meet Orijit Sen and the prolific Sarnath Banerjee, whose graphic novel *Corridor* (2004) helped establish the comics shelf in Indian book shops. Encouraged by them, she attended a Sarai Center for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) workshop in 2008 where she met her other regular collaborator in comics, Japanese artist Shohei Emura, and created her first comics story as an adult. Sabhaney has published comics in a wide array of publications, including *Comix.India* (2010-present), the *Pao Anthology* (2012), Blaft's *Obliterary Journal* (2013), and Captain Bijli publications *Mice Will Be Mice* (2012) and *Dogs! An Anthology* (2014), which she co-edited. Furthermore, she has presented in workshops on traditional and contemporary visual storytelling practice, including the Image and Word workshop that she organized with Emura in 2005 based on their fieldwork through India Foundation for the Arts in 2011. As co-founder of Captain Bijli, she hopes to provide a platform for collaboration and experimentation as an alternative to the mainstream, corporate industry.

Like Sen and Thomas, Sabhaney approaches the medium as grounded in collaborative storytelling. However, alternative comics for her represents a means to rework India's comics culture to focus more on sustaining innovation and participation. As Sabhaney noted in conversation with me, the future is dependent on "…more comics, more regularly—every month, every two months. We need the serialization of comics in India, with fresh content. It's why I'm so keen on self-publishing. I feel like only way forward is to form a community, a still more formal one." She identifies the solidification of a community organized around this medium as the best way to cultivate its future.

Sabhaney differs in placing a great deal more weight upon an alternative comics community when imagining how to create a more vibrant comics culture. One of the largest obstacles is the corporate model of production that predominates, which Vidyun sees as "a problem of intent." By dividing the creative process into separate art and editing departments, corporate publishers confuse the point of the medium as visual storytell-

ing. In the process, they limit the collaboration that is key to skillfully fusing image and word in comics creation, as well as the sustenance of community through interaction. As Sabhaney points out, "I can't imagine making a comic without working with the artist. You know, without collaborating, how do you make comics otherwise?" In asking this question, she highlights the difficulties of telling a story in comics without engaging a larger community. Without that interaction, the social group can easily suffer, resulting in the loss of those networks that so often determine one's ability to make a living and to find meaning through creative practice.

Sabhaney's response to a corporate model of production is to emphasize events and outreach to the wider community. In part, this is because a corporate model of production limits accessibility for those outside of that company and newcomers to the comics medium alike. Thus, like Sen and Thomas, Sabhaney has worked on events that both engage the existing community and encourage newcomers while increasing broader comics awareness. As Vidyun stated to me, "The reason that I felt like there should be more workshops, is because—even among my friends—I can see qualities that would make them good comic book artists. And … if we had these workshops, maybe they'd start enjoying it." Sabhaney herself donates her time to workshops and events throughout the year in order to educate the broader public, especially young people, about the traditions of visual storytelling in India. This includes both her and Emura's fieldwork-based research on visual storytelling traditions and their comics work. Even as their own stories draw on this research, they have incorporated it into many events, most prominently the Image and Word workshop in 2013, which brought together artists from various backgrounds to learn from and share with traditional practitioners.

That dedication to increasing awareness grows out of a concern for the often isolating culture of comics practice, too, where interaction is not always an easy matter. In particular, Sabhaney points to the problems that result from working independently, as is often required of writer–artists or even creators who collaborate across large distances, as she worked on "Chilka", a short story in the *Pao Collective Anthology* (2012), with Emura while he resided in Japan. She specifically points to the need for more spaces where comics creators can be accessed by the public and their fellow creators. "What I do feel is that there definitely do need to be more spaces where comics artists can be accessed … [b]ecause there's these small pockets of people, and they create particular kinds of work." Without events or workshops within which to collaborate, creativity is

easily stifled, and the community becomes fractured. Yet, she goes on to note that this is the result of an alternative comics approach: "It's like the comics scene in India is developing as an alternate scene. Like what would be alternate or alternative in the US, that's what most comic artists are doing, at least in Delhi. It's not like its alternative to anything [in particular]." Without an established mainstream, the alternative comics community becomes focused on individual creative practice more than unifying against a common frustration with the perceived mainstream. Thus, an alternative approach must provide the potential means to cross community and form a network of creators without focusing too much on the work of any one creator or small group of people.

Conclusion: Building Collaborative Communities

Alternative or indie comics represents a particular push for a comics culture that fulfills the fundamental need for livelihood, and for an engaged and engaging community. In building platforms for collaborative, communal, and innovative comics, Orijit Sen, Vidyun Sabhaney, and Pratheek Thomas reframe and rebuild comics practice as a communal one that is defined by the interactions that make life meaningful—in story and event, and as creators and readers themselves. In particular, the move to an alternative or indie approach to comics in India is a reorientation of the culture around the craft of comics practice in order to expand and redefine its community, much like the shift to alternative comics in the USA and elsewhere (Hatfield 2005).

In part, this grows out of the international influences of India's comics scene, as evidenced by the importance of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, publishers like Fantagraphics and Top Shelf, and the creators like Chris Ware and Craig Thompson, all of which played an important role in the rise of alternative comics in the USA. Another aspect is the broader concern in today's comics culture for negotiating creative community and its support structures. Orijit Sen is an important figure in this push for community, as he regularly heads efforts and events focused on both increasing awareness of comics and getting people to make their own. His work in workshops in the late 2000s is how Sabhaney and Emura came to their collaboration, and Sen's friendship has been an important part of their work and community. Furthermore, he continues this work today with comics workshops and events alongside international creators like Seth Tobocman, as well as other fieldwork and projects like the Mapping Mapusa Market Project. Each of the creators dis-

cussed here pushes for greater engagement with readers and creators alike through communal interactions and public events.

They share a participatory understanding of their creative practice—especially smaller publishers like Captain Bijli and Kokaachi who often rely upon their readers' creative abilities. For instance, the 30 Days of Kokaachi campaign on Facebook (2014) encouraged fans to send in their own version of the company's namesake, a legendary monster from Kerala. Similarly, Sabhaney calls for more events like Image and Word that engage all members of comics culture, even those with a fledgling interest. These smaller-scale forms of outreach respond to the alienation that can result from large-scale, profit-oriented events like Comic Con India, whose often high rental charges are likely to exceed creators' budgets. Those high costs have tended to limit creator presence and favor merchandise for young people with expendable incomes. While more recent iterations have been a bit friendlier to creators, the costs remain relatively high—such that small publishers are more likely to take a nation-wide book tour and engage readers directly than to navigate the costs and crowds of Comic Con.

Fundamentally, an alternative approach to comics in India acts as a way to emphasize the collaboration and innovation that is at the center of everyday life for creators. As Sabhaney puts it, "I feel like if there is to be a future, then there needs to be a push towards working with people. Because the only way you can build a community is if you start it together." It is only in the interaction and renegotiation of what it means to be a comics creator that the comics community can form and be ever reformed by its members. Pao and Orijit Sen, Kokaachi and Pratheek Thomas, and Captain Bijli and Sabhaney all illustrate that the main push for such events and for an alternative or indie approach to comics fills a desire to put the collaboration and interaction of community first.

Notes

1. Corporate models of production have predominated in Indian comics culture, especially through the dominance of Campfire Comics, Raj Comics, the *Amar Chitra Katha* series, as well as recent attempts to establish a strong industry. Such an approach has unique implications and complications.
2. This paper is grounded in interviews and fieldwork performed alongside creators in 2010 and 2013, along with conversations by email and Skype from 2010 onwards.

3. Yoda Press Publisher and Yodakin Book Store proprietor, Arpita Das, is the person responsible for this charming venue and the community surrounding it. From regular events where authors speak to presentations on issues related to books and reading, including a presentation by Bharath Murthy in September 2010, Das ensures a lively community for comics and other cultural works.

4. For Sen's account and some images of the mural, see Sen (2012).

5. For a basic description of the auteur approach to comics, see Matthew J. Smith's "Auteur Criticism" in *Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories & Methods*, eds. M. Smith & R. Duncan (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 178–188. For a more in-depth analysis of the pitfalls of such an approach, especially in relation to fannish practices, see "Surveying the World of Contemporary Comics Scholarship," *Cinema Journal,* Vol. 50, No. 3 (Spring 2011), pp. 135–47.

6. In so doing, comics can be understood as renegotiating the relationship between the practical network of everyday life and the social ideal that Noyes details in her explanation of the tensions at work in small groups.

7. In her dissertation (2008) for a B.A. in Journalism from Lady Shri Ram College at Delhi University, Sabhaney analyzed the evolution of Sacco's narrative style and how his work held to the tenants of journalism.

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Making Comics as Artisans: Comic Book Production in Colombia

Fernando Suárez and Enrique Uribe-Jongbloed

INTRODUCTION

There is a common saying that goes, "Colombia is well known for all products that start with the letter C." Sadly, comics are not among the products that come to mind directly after that statement. This chapter presents Colombia's (non-existent) comics industry, and the works of those who, on the fringes of the economy, have striven to continue with their trade. We want to start by stressing the perspective from which we draw this incomplete picture of the Colombian comics world: we have been at both the academic and creative ends of comics. We grew up in a country filled with comics in the shape of small magazines, mainly American in origin and mostly translated into Spanish. We grew up reading *Donald Duck* and *Mickey Mouse*, some Marvel and DC Superhero comics, the occasional *Tintin* and *Astérix*, but very few Latin American comics, with *Condorito* and *Kalimán* the most notable.

The only truly Colombian comics we were exposed to came in the form of one-page featurettes within the Sunday supplement *Los Monos* [The Monkeys]

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during the 1980s, although at least one made it into comic form. In the 1990s, we experienced the slow disappearance of comics from all shelves. By the end of the 1990s, when the magazine *ACME* went out of circulation, almost all comics had vanished from newspaper stands, kiosks, and supermarkets. Book and hobby stores were the only places to acquire comics and graphic novels, but at high prices and seldom translated into Spanish.

The history of Colombian comics and comic strips from the early 1940s until the 1990s has been aptly summarized by Rabanal (2001) and Rincón (2014), but more recent work has been only briefly discussed by the latter. In 2014, at the conference/convention Los Monos de Oro [The Golden Monkeys] in Bogotá, Rincón summarized the Colombian history of sequential art as stopping shortly after *ACME* disappeared in the late nineties.

Yet our own experience and research tells a different story. It is, thanks to more recent and cheaper printing technology, the case that more comics have started to appear. They may no longer bear the positive cultural recognition other comics seemed to have enjoyed, but in terms of number and genres, comics have moved from a highly stylized and considerably larger market to a niche, artisanal product with a more concentrated market. In fact, we will argue that it is only in the last several years that comics have actually been developed, because, with the exception of *Tukano* in the late eighties, there have been many comic strips and other sequential art, but no comics to speak of until recently.

SOME HISTORICAL LANDMARKS, 1970–1997

We should not start thinking about today's comic book industry—or lack thereof—in Colombia without looking back to when it was enjoying wider popularity. Reynaldo Pareja (1982) wrote a book about comics at the time when they were omnipresent in kiosks, newspaper stands, and even in small convenience shops in Colombia. His book addresses two issues: a critique of the advent of commercial advertisement in comic books following TV commercial models, and a concern about the topics present in comics, which he considered to be threatening to our social values.

Pareja (1982) emphasizes that the comic book industry in Colombia followed the structures and developments in the USA, much in the same way that Colombia had structured all other domestic media. He asserts that some of the changes experienced in comic book industry in the USA took longer to take hold in Latin America but argues that by 1979 almost all comics in Colombia included commercial advertisement within their pages.

Although Pareja's (1982) criticism is not as profound as Dorfman and Mattelart's (1998) regarding cultural imperialism, it evidences concerns about the effect of commercial interests in a medium he considers predominantly targeted at children. He warns us that excessive commercial interest and a promotion of negative cultural values might have detrimental effects upon our children.

Despite the moral fears he seems to substantiate, akin to those experienced in the UK with *Action Comics* (Barker 1989), what is interesting is that all of Pareja's (1982) examples are drawn from comics made in the USA which were available in Spanish translation. He writes about Latin American comics, but he actually refers to comics from the USA distributed in Spanish in Latin America.

A second interesting aspect is that Pareja (1982) mentions two companies, namely Ediciones y Publicaciones Colombianas [Colombian Editions and Publications] and Editorial Novaro [Novaro Publishers], as holding a duopoly on publishing, with the latter a branch of National Periodical Publications Inc., Walter Brothers Inc., and Edgar Rice Burroughs Inc. It needs to be noted here that in the late 1970s and all throughout the 1980s there were many publishing companies in Colombia: EPUCOL, publishing large format comics under an agreement with the Mexican Editorial Novaro since 1973; EDICOL, reprinting those comics distributed by the Chilean Zig-Zag; GRECO/CINCO; and Editorial América. These were the main players (Kingdom Comics 2011), with some minor publishers (e.g. Editorial La Foca [Seal Publishers], PRIMAC, and Ediciones Tritón [Triton Publishers]) on the sidelines.

Most comics were translations of American comics, including *Archie*, *The Lone Ranger*, *Batman*, *Superman* and a whole array of Disney comics. But there were also comics developed in Mexico and published in Colombia by either GRECO/CINCO or Editorial América, including *Kalimán*—at one point as popular and commercially successful as *Superman* in Latin America—*Orión el Atlante* [Orion, The Atlantean], *Kéndor el hombre del Tíbet* [Kendor, The Man from Tibet], *Balam*, *El fugitivo Temerario* [The Reckless Fugitive], *Rarotonga*, *Fuego*, *Lágrimas y Risas* [Fire, Tears, and Laughs], *Memín Pinguín*, and *Águila Solitaria* [The Lone Eagle]. Despite the prominence of American comics translated into Spanish, there were many created in Mexico.

One of the few Colombian titles published in the 1980s was *Tukano*, by Jorge Peña, who was also renowned at the time for his art and scripts in the Colombian comic book version of the *Six Million Dollar Man*, *El*

Hombre Nuclear, a work he did under supervision and explicit permission of the owners of the rights in the USA (Rabanal 2001). Peña was the only Colombian comic book creator during the halcyon days of comics distribution.

Pareja (1982) quotes the massive appeal and distribution of comics by referring to the number of issues of one of the main newspapers at the time, *El Espectador*. The Sunday funnies, *Los Monos* [The Monkeys], published and distributed with the newspaper, reached a circulation of up to 200,000 copies in the early 1980s. This Sunday magazine included, alongside one-page comic strips mainly from the USA, some nationally produced ones, such as *Marcianitos* [Little Martians], *Tukano*, and *Cuidapalos* [Woodland Protectors].

At around the same time as the creation of *Los Monos* in the early 1980s, there was another interesting development. In Cali, the second largest city in Colombia at the time, a magazine called *CLICK!* was published by some comic strip artists. Though short-lived, reaching only eight issues by 1984, *CLICK!* was the first magazine that presented a collection of works, proving there was a group of people willing to create and study sequential art in Colombia. Like many other occasional titles after it, *CLICK!* was more of a fanzine, or compilation of comic strips, than an actual comic book (Rabanal 2001; Garzón 2007). In fact, whereas Pareja (1982) clearly talks about comic books—the large or small format magazines usually containing one or a few stories by the same characters—Rabanal (2001) and Garzón (2007) talk about comic strips and comics interchangeably, using the Spanish term *historieta* (comic strip) to refer to both forms of sequential art. This leads Rabanal (2001) and Garzón (2007) to consider the late 1980s and 1990s as the boom of *historietas*, which is not the same as a boom in comics.

Two of the issues mentioned by Pareja (1982) are fundamental to understanding why a national comic book industry was never developed. On the one hand, the moral fear and the condemnation of commercial advertisement led to comics being excluded from tax exemptions established for other published materials. Law 98, passed in 1993, was enacted to promote cultural and scientific publications, especially books, by allowing certain tax exemptions for those publications. However, comic books and comic strips were explicitly excluded from this benefit under Article 2. This meant that publishing comic books was considerably more expensive than other, similar magazines. It took 20 years for that definition to be modified, and thanks to sentence 197/13 of the Constitutional

Court, Article 2 of Law 98 of 1993 had to remove the words comics, comic strips, and photo-novels (i.e. *historietas, tirascómicas y fotonovelas*) from the list of items not covered by the law. As of 2015, comics now enjoy the same tax exemption as other scientific and cultural publications. This has led to a decrease in production and distribution costs, making comics more widely available in bookstores all over the country.

On the other hand, the Colombian magazine publishing and distribution market remained consistently dominated by a very few companies, always eager to distribute material already available in mass distribution from other countries (mainly the USA, but also Mexico and Argentina). They based their choices upon ideas similar to those of other media industries, including cross-cultural predictability—a product's success in one cultural market taken as predictor for success in a culturally similar one (see Fu & Govindaraju 2010; Lee 2006)—and bundling deals, packing successful titles with less successful ones under one single price (Bielby and Harrington 2008; Hoskins et al. 1994). Translating and publishing existing material was, thus, less risky and more profitable.

There was one magazine that was published precisely through the waning of comics distribution. *ACME* was a collection of short comic strips, visual art, and some other creative artworks by people who were interested in sequential art storytelling, to borrow Eisner's terminology (2008). The magazine was published between 1992 and 1997 having received twice a grant by the Colombian Cultural Agency, Colcultura.[1] Similar to *ACME* in format as collections of comics and comic strips were *TNT* (1994–1996) and *Zape Pelele* (1993–2001), which was loosely based on *MAD* magazine and *Agente Naranja* [Agent Orange] (1992–1997). *Zape Pelele* reached a circulation of around 7000 copies at one point and managed to reach 20 published issues by 2001, making it the longest-standing publication of its kind, but unlike *ACME* it was not a product of a variety of artists trying to create a concept of Colombian comics art but a parody of cultural products, rendered in sequential art form.

ACME might have become particularly relevant because it included the conceptual as well as the production at its core. The editorial to *ACME* #4 (1993) illustrates this interest by making a call to what can be deemed the national argument for sequential art creations (Guerra 2011), and that particular issue can be considered to be one of the most inspirational manifestos of its kind. Most Colombian reports on comics, and even academic works on the subject, still place *ACME* as the main conceptual effort and cult item in the Colombian comics scene (Garzón 2007; Rabanal 2001).

Undoubtedly, *ACME* was fundamental in raising awareness and focusing interest in sequential art storytelling in Colombia. But in terms of fostering the industry, it was long way away. *ACME*, like many other projects before and after it in Colombian comics, was a commercial failure.

Curiously, *ACME* was subsidized by grants created after Law 98 of 1993, the irony of which is evident. *ACME* was considered to be a publication of cultural worth in the visual arts, and thus an acceptable recipient of the grant, yet it was full of comic strips and other sequential art, previously deemed unfit by the same legislation. When *ACME* failed to secure funding after 1997, it disappeared. Sales had never been good enough to ensure continuing publication. At around the same time, all other comics started fading away from kiosks, supermarkets, and newspaper stands. Editorial CINCO [CINCO Publishers], the last remnant of the comics heyday was acquired by Editorial Televisa [Televisa Publishers]. It was the end of an era.

The New Era, 1997–Present

After *ACME* it was only *Zape Pelele* that continued publishing strips and sequential art, mainly in the form of parodies of American films. It was in the mid-nineties, and particularly relevant from 1998–2000, that a follow-up to *Tukano* finally made it to the public. It was a series of comics that made it to 11 issues: *Hombres de Acero* [Men of Steel], created by Medellín artist Carlos Osorio. Fernández L'Hoeste (2007) presents the most detailed account of this comics series, although he also admits that some of his information is vague and is disputed between his sources. He claims that this was a comic book series sponsored by the Colombian Army, used as a propaganda tool to promote and improve the image of the armed forces. Although L'Hoeste mainly concerns himself with the propaganda value of the comics series, he argues that only a few thousand copies of each issue seem to have been sold, despite more than 12,000 printed and distributed (2007, 142–143). We have seen estimates put the number of issues at 20 and an excess of 30,000 copies printed per issue. However, we as authors concur with L'Hoeste's estimates, because for such a considerable production and distribution, copies of *Hombres de Acero* are difficult to find in the Colombian used books market today, in our experience.

If this is true for a government-sponsored comic, the absence of all other comic books is much more evident. A few bookshops were selling foreign comic book imports, including American and European

works, at very high prices and to a small audience. Except for the Chilean *Condorito* and *Barrabaces*, and a few scattered Disney comics, the late 1990s saw the demise of the large comics distributors. However, at the same time as the disappearance of widely distributed foreign comics, cheaper technologies for printing, scanning, and copying allowed for the coming of small-market artisanal comics. Another element that may have helped the increase of artisan comics was the development of Bachelor Degrees in Graphic Design, which started in the late 1960s but became more focused on comics in the 1990s, thanks to people like Bernardo Rincón at Universidad Nacional in Bogotá and Ricardo Potes at Instituto Departamental Universitario de Bellas Artes [University Departmental Institute of Arts] in Cali.

The post-1997 era saw the increase of national comics, although at a much smaller scale. The private collection of Fernando Suárez, which was started in 1980, only reaches 150 volumes, and we estimate that number to be about half of all published material by Colombian comics creators in Colombia. We stress this, because some Colombian artists have enjoyed recognition abroad, creating freelance products for foreign publishers. The lion's share of those 150 volumes was published and collected in the last 15 years. The development of computers and the internet have opened up the possibility of web comics, whose distribution and publishing systems may be completely different from printed comics. It is difficult to keep track of these new developments in that "infinite canvas" (McCloud 2000), although we will try to mention something about them as well.

Due to the nature of these groups publishing comics in Colombia, it is hard to have a concrete picture of the industry. Few of the groups actually take out ISBN or ISSN registration for their works, and they usually sell their comics at book fairs or small conventions, particularly anime and manga gatherings. There are no major publishing companies behind their artisanal production process and they pay no taxes or print any receipts, making them hard to trace. It is an informal business for the most part, which makes their work seldom recognized, economically unstable, and not a proper source of income. Most of the Colombian comics creators and artists make a living in some other way, usually in graphic or web design, and their comics are more a work of dedication than a secondary source of income. In fact, one of the most successful Colombian comics publications of the last 20 years, *Zambo Dende*, has made the headlines because of a deal that includes videogames and animation projects sponsored by Disney Latin America (Portafolio.co 2013).

That is the main reason why it is hard to argue that there are any industrialized process, division of work, or clear channels of production for comics in Colombia. Even in the USA, one could argue that the industry is small. On the subject, Rhoades (2008) notes that no matter how huge the impact is, "all in all, it's a very small industry, directly employing less than a thousand people—with perhaps an equal number of freelancers" (2008, 4), and that is one of the major industries in the world.

The Curse of # 1

Because of the lack of an outlet for their work, most comics artists have funneled their own personal resources into the production of one issue, hoping that after the initial impact of their work, they might find a niche audience. Although this seems to go along the lines proposed by McCloud (2000), it lands somewhat short of the ideal he presents.

There are two major factors that affect small-scale economics: how to reach to your target audience, and how to ensure they pay a fair price for your work. Distribution moguls have known for a long while the importance of placing your work in the hands of your audience. Because of Colombian geography and the permissive capitalist legislation that enables it, distribution is controlled by a small oligopoly. As creators of comics ourselves, we have had our dreams of nationwide distribution drowned when we were explicitly told by the main distributors that their ongoing price is 50 % of the cover price of all sales, with a minimum cost of 1.5 million pesos (roughly US $650) if sales were below that. Taking into account another 10–15 % commission claimed by the retailer for each sale and provisions for the 16 % national value-added tax which must be included in the cover price—remembering that this was only waived in 2013—the percentage to cover printing, artwork, and script falls to 15–20 % of the actual price paid by the consumer. The only way it would make sense for artists to engage in such a business would be if the massive number of sales offsets the losses in the process of making the comic available.

Low readership numbers (Arango Forero et al. 2009) and high distribution costs make mass production unlikely. Initial costs for such an enterprise are very high, and only since 2013, with the modification of the Law 98 of 1993, have there been improvements in the commercial possibilities of comics in Colombia. It is not surprising, therefore, that international classics have become readily available in bookstores recently with an affordable price—about half of what their import prices were.

Because of the problem with economies of scale and the relatively small potential readership, most comic book artists, in their artisanal workshops, end up creating one single issue. They do not manage to make it to issue #2, and those who do seldom make it further down the line. Few of the groups in the following section have actually managed to continue their comics series, with no small difficulty, past issue #5.

In fact, some of the more memorable comics produced recently fit better under the graphic novel category. Although the definition of the graphic novel may remain contested, it is still associated with the positive characteristic of being artistic, rather than industrial, and more profound, in contrast with the superficial character assigned to comic books (García 2010). That is part of the reason why it is not surprising that *Watchmen* (Moore and Gibbons 2013) has been analyzed as a work of literature, despite challenges to the category as suitable for such an endeavor (Hoberek 2014). The identity of the graphic novelist confers upon the creators, writers, and artists a prestige that the comic book does not. It also enables artists and writers to regard their work as a single masterpiece, a work of art that, when disapproved of or left unsold on shelves, is taken as proof that their work is beyond the average reader's understanding or as evidence of its avant-garde aesthetics. The disdain of many Colombian artisans for the serialized, commercial comic book also grew out of making sequential art appreciated as the work of an *auteur*. This is not dissimilar to what happened in film after the French New Wave, where aesthetics became the main concern, as well as drawing attention to self-reflexivity and a cult of the director as *auteur* (Parkinson 2012, 186).

It is also common to find personal bickering between comics creators, and disdain, secrecy, and suspicion are rife in the incipient world of comics in Colombia. Criticism is usually taken as offense, and every new effort to unite, or bring artists together, is met with fierce opposition and open distrust. Even *ACME* suffered from this malaise. In 1994, *ACME* founders Bernardo Rincón and Gilles Fauveau grew apart, leading the latter to publish his own magazine under the title *TNT* (Rabanal 2001) alongside the two other founding members of *ACME*, Pepe Peña and Leonardo Espinosa, who also disagreed with Rincón's management.

Taking into consideration the disappearance of the traditional comic book publishers, the high costs of distribution, small market of readers, and the internal debates between comics creators in Colombia, we should value particularly the work of those artists who refuse to let their creative ideas disappear. In our current situation, their resilience is already a superhuman feat.

Contemporary Colombian Comics Artists, Groups, and Events

Colombian comics have increased in number by the concerted effort of groups and individuals who make up the industry. In comparison to the incredibly large numbers presented by American comics production behemoths Marvel and DC, which may reach numbers in the millions of issues, and earnings for the entire industry almost reaching a billion dollars (Rhoades 2008; Comichron.com 2015), the Colombian comics world is minimal, even desperate. Although this overview of contemporary Colombian comics artists, groups, and events is far from complete, we nonetheless hope to provide some of Colombian comic book creators with the exposure and acknowledgment they deserve.

Artists

There are some independent artists of renown in Colombia and abroad, among them Carlos Granda, Fernando Suárez, and Champe Ramírez. Granda, working freelance for various US companies, is undoubtedly the most famous Colombian comic book artist. He is currently drawing the *Pirouette* series, for which Champe Ramírez does the coloring. Fernando Suárez has worked doing caricatures in newspapers in Colombia and has published two full length comics, *Comando Verde* (Green Comando) and *Arqueonautas* (Archaeonauts). They are often seen as organizers and guests at most Colombian comic book events.

Events

The major comics events in Colombia dedicated to comics include Calicomix, with a long tradition in Cali; the ten installments of the Comics and Manga Hall in Medellín; and Entreviñetas (Between Frames), an event mainly held in Bogotá led by Daniel Jiménez Quiroz since 2010 and which includes the participation of Pablo Guerra from Club del Cómic (The Comics Club). Finally, Los Monos de Oro (The Golden Monkeys), an event that included conferences by academics, publishers, and artists including the late Herb Trimpe and Renato Guedes, was held for the first time in Bogotá in 2014 and was one of the activities of the not-for-profit *El cómic en línea* (The Comic Online), a foundation that endeavors to support and promote comic book creators and artists in Colombia.

Groups

Groups of artists include Ave Negra Cómics (Black Eagle Comics) with brothers Johann and David Garcia and their hero Saic; Black Mosaic from Barranquilla, a group of ten people devoted to making fanzines in a manga style; DragonFly, with Eric Pavach and Sergio Corradine; Editorial Robot, who publish artists such as Truchafrita, Ivanquio, Jim Pluk, joni b, Mariana Gil, Powerpaola, and Mónica Naranjo; Go UP Comics, from Bogotá, where Juan Pablo Silva, Jairo Ampudia, Said Atala, Andrés Santamaría, and Roberto Medina have published *Bogotá Masacre Zombie* (Bogota Zombie Massacre), *Baktún*, *María Colora,* and recently Daniel Greiff's *Ana Crónica*; Grafstudio, where Fernando Díaz presents his character Euri in *Revelation*; L.A. Kenji Ishkawa, Leonardo Acosta's pseudonym in his *Rhinoslayer* comics; La Editorial de Historietas (The Comics Publisher), where Champe Ramírez issued the *Exogen* series, Enrique "Keto" Uribe issued *Doppler,* and Hache and Feno their black and white *Pumaki*; SharpBall, made up of Andrés Cruz Barrera and brothers José Luis and Miguel Jiménez, from Tunja, who created *Los Once* (The Eleven); Skilldraw, which produces *Garabateando* (Doodling) in Cartagena; Phycomotion S.A.S. with *Maldita* (Cursed), *Bendita* (Blessed), and *Neura*; and, last but not least, 7Glabs, creators of *Zambo Dende*, probably the most successful Colombian comic to date, with five issues distributed free of charge with the newspaper *ADN*, reaching a circulation of 40,000 copies per issue.

Overview

There are many reasons to highlight all these groups. First, it attests to the diversity in terms of style, geographical location, and interests of the Colombian comic book world. Secondly, they include artists such as Carlos Granda, whose work is renowned in the USA, providing evidence of the quality of their work and in the case of SharpBall's *Los Once* (the Eleven), an interest in dealing with important historical events through comics. Thirdly, it shows that comic book artists and groups are mainly men who, with few exceptions, try to emulate the superhero and conceptual comics of the 1980s and 1990s.

Finally, and most importantly, it demonstrates the commitment of Colombian comics artists despite economic odds. What we can summarize from this list is that most groups are informal, in the sense that they are

not legally established companies. They sell their comics without receipts at local or national book fairs and comics conventions. Few of them have created any lasting legacy of products, usually publishing only a single volume. Those that have published more than four issues (*Ave Negra* and *GO UP Comics*, for instance) do so at no regular interval, relying on the support from their fan base to complete each volume. However, their creative expertise has improved consistently.

Formal publishers include La Editorial de Historietas, who ensured all their work included ISBN numbers and that one of their comics, *Doppler*, was made available through Amazon. But their attempt at becoming a formal enterprise was fraught with distribution problems, and they have only managed to publish three comics, albeit with great visual and paper quality. *Larva* is a magazine published in the midsize city of Armenia since 2006. It has sequential art within its pages and presents interesting articles and interviews with comic book artists and creators. Although it is published irregularly, it may become the longest-standing publication of its kind, surpassing *Zape Pelele*. Editorial Robot has enough traction as a publisher, although it has more sequential art books and magazines than comics. Worth particular note are *El cuy Jacobo y el tesoro Quillacinga* (Jacob, the Chinchilla and the Quillasinga Treasure Vault) by Ivanquio, a big format comic similar in style to Hérgè's *Tintin* and Barks' *Donald Duck*, *Virus Tropical* (Tropical Virus) by Powerpaola, and the e-book compilation *Antología del cómic colombiano* (Colombian Comics Anthology) developed in 2013 for the Ministry of Culture, which includes contributions by all of them. Finally, 7GLabs stands out as the only legally formed and financially viable group. It managed to achieve this by making their company a multimedia business with a transmedia strategy, where comics are only one of the products they intend to develop for their successful *Zambo Dende* franchise. The question remains as to whether the other groups and their artisan ways of production will survive, since it is evident that this is in no way a profitable business for those involved.

The Ink Is Finally Drying

As this chapter has shown, Colombia has no comic book industry to speak of, but it does have an adamant group of creators. Most people working the medium are male, although important contributions by women are starting to increase in prominence. Contrary to popular belief, it is the last 20 years in Colombia that has seen the most growth in production of comics, along with a slowly developing readership to support it. As the

examples given in this chapter highlight, resilience has been the common ground that has enabled the development of a sequential art movement in Colombia.

Colombian comics are still far away from becoming a developed industry, and it is very unlikely there will be many people, aside from those at 7GLab, making a living from comic books. Yet the artisans are still in their workshops, and every book fair and convention becomes a new pool of ingenious creativity. We, as authors, certainly hope comics continue to evolve in this manner.

Note

1. *Colcultura* was created in 1968 and in 1997 the newly created Ministry of Culture took over its remit.

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CHAPTER 5

Nuestro Futuro ¿Hombres Libres, O Esclavos?: Imagining US–Mexican Cooperation against the Axis Powers in a World War II Propaganda Comic

Elena D. Hristova

INTRODUCTION

During World War II, a little known partnership between the Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA) and the American Jewish Committee (AJC) produced the propaganda comic book **Nuestro Futuro – ¿Hombres Libres, O Esclavos?** [Our Future: Free Men or Slaves?]. The OIAA funded and published the comic book, and members of the AJC's Public Information and Education Department employed techniques developed in their domestic educational campaigns to create the comic book. This chapter traces the political economy of the production and distribution of **Nuestro Futuro** in its historical context and, employing visual rhetorical analysis, shows how the comic book operated as a potent cultural and political artifact. The first section of the chapter outlines the nexus of the OIAA, the AJC, and the mass culture of comics during the war; the second part provides an analysis of the theme of work and labor relations

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in the USA, Mexico, and Nazi Germany that the comic book presented to its readers. **Nuestro Futuro** and numerous documents pertaining to its production and distribution, available in the AJC archives, allow for a rich discussion of the ways in which the comic book was encoded with meaning and expected to persuade its readers. An analysis of all the comic book's storylines is beyond the scope of this chapter, and there is little reliable data about the comic book's reception. Nevertheless, the archival documents available enable an investigation into its production and distribution, and the historicization of the creators' motivations shows how the nexus of the OIAA, the AJC, and comics operated in the framing and propagating of US foreign policy to Latin America during the war.

The Office of Inter-American Affairs

The creation of the OIAA in 1940 (at the time named the Office for Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations between the American Republics) was a new step in the development of the economic and political relationship between the USA and Latin America dating back to the nineteenth century. In 1823, the Monroe Doctrine defined the efforts of European powers to colonize Latin America as acts of aggression that would require US intervention. Although largely disregarded in Europe, in Latin America, the Monroe Doctrine operated as a unifying belief in the special link between the new Western Hemispheric republics (Sexton 2011). In 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine claimed that the USA had become "an international police force" and therefore had the right and the power to intervene into the internal affairs of Western Hemispheric countries (Roosevelt 1927, 114–115). The Clark Memorandum of 1928 claimed that the USA held a self-evident right to defend itself and its political and economic interests. Unsurprisingly, this foreign policy of intervention, used whenever the USA felt its economic and political interests threatened, placed the country in an unfavorable position with many Latin American republics. To combat this Pan-American hostility, in his 1933 Inaugural Address, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt launched the Good Neighbor policy, which re-imagined Pan-American unity through respect for national sovereignty (Pike 1992, 272–296; Pike 1995; Green 1971; Gellman 1979). The operations of the OIAA emerged from the larger Good Neighbor policy, both in cultural and in economic terms (Cramer and Prutsch 2012; Rankin 2009; Cramer and Prutsch 2006; Pike 1995, 251–254; Green

1971, 88–89, 133–134; Gellman 1979, 149–167). Since its inception in 1940, the OIAA aimed "to assist in the preparation and coordination of policies to stabilize the Latin American economies, to secure and deepen U.S. influence in the region, and to combat axis inroads into the hemisphere, particularly in the commercial and cultural spheres" (Cramer and Prutsch 2006, 786). Mass culture was called upon to help attain these political and economic goals.

At the height of its operational activities, the OIAA staff numbered 1100 employees in the USA, 300 technicians and field experts stationed in Latin America, and by early 1944, 59 coordinating committees employing some 690 aides and assistants in all major population centers in Latin America (Cramer and Prutsch 2006, 787). Within the USA, the OIAA advanced the Good Neighbor policies by inspiring a "sympathetic understanding" of Latin America, endorsing a positive interest in the region as an object of study and travel, and promoting the strategic and economic importance of the area (Cramer and Prutsch 2006, 795). South of the Rio Grande, the OIAA employed public information, education, and propaganda to present US military might and its capacity to defend itself and the Americas (Cramer and Prutsch 2006, 795). Throughout the war, OIAA propaganda employed Pan-American heroes, symbols and rituals, as well as shared historical experiences, to invoke a unifying spirit and identity of the Americas (Cramer and Prutsch 2006, 796; Preito 2013). The OIAA understood economic cooperation as key for sustainable relations between the USA and Latin America. The US Treasury Department even provided tax subsidies to US businesses that advertised their products in Latin America despite being unable to sell them during the war (Rankin 2009, 183). The OIAA employed mass culture to promote US interests in Latin America, producing motion pictures, cartoons, radio programs, *En Guardia* magazine, and propaganda posters and comic books.

The American Jewish Committee

Another part of the nexus is the AJC. Prominent American Jews, mostly German immigrants, set up the Committee in response to the brutality of the 1906 Kishinev pogroms in the Russian Empire. On November 12, 1906, the *New York Daily Tribune* reported that through links with other minority organizations, the AJC aimed "to prevent the infringement of the civil and religious rights of Jews and to alleviate the consequences of persecution," thus working toward the protection of Jews around the

world (Sanua 2007; Cohen 1972; Schachner 1948). In 1938, Richard C. Rothschild, a specialist in advertising and public relations, joined the AJC. His directives on the uses of mass media to combat anti-Semitism shaped the Committee's public activity: in a 1940 pamphlet entitled "Are American Jews Falling into the Nazi Trap?" Rothschild argued that exposing anti-Semitic propaganda as false and picketing anti-Semitic gatherings was counterproductive because it gave anti-Semites publicity (Richard C. Rothschild Papers). Instead, Rothschild reasoned, American Jewish organizations should promote a positive image of Jews and expose the brutality of anti-Semites and Nazis, thereby making anti-Semitism and prejudice abhorrent to the public (Richard C. Rothschild Papers; Sanua 2007, 13–14). In 1941, Rothschild became head of the AJC's new Public Information and Education Department. Making use of radio and print media, the AJC set out to instruct Americans on the dangers of racial and religious prejudice (Sanua 2007, 13; Svonkin 1997, 15; Schachner 1948, 164). Through careful alliances with existing political, religious, fraternal, and service organizations, which self-identified as part of the larger Intergroup Relations Movement, the AJC packaged its philosophy and penetrated all of the USA with messages of political liberalism, civil rights, and anti-prejudice (Svonkin 1997, 17–18; Sanua 2007, 48). The strength of the educational campaigns lay in the "multiplier" effect: the Committee made their materials and research widely available, often free of charge, to numerous organizations that cooperated in the defense of civil liberties. Through these affiliations and techniques, the AJC comics in particular reached millions of American workers, teachers, students, and churchgoers.

Producing *Nuestro Futuro*

The AJC's nationwide operations suggest that Rothschild's strategies were probably well known in government and philanthropic circles. In 1942, Nelson A. Rockefeller met with Rothschild and recruited him to the OIAA. In an excerpt from his undated autobiography, *My First Fifty Years*, Rothschild recalls committing to spending a few days a week in Washington, D.C., "to act as Propaganda Adviser on radio broadcasts and printed material addressed to the nineteen countries south of the Rio Grande," and to plan new projects that would "'sell' U.S. aims in the war more thoroughly to the people to the south of us" (Latin American Comic Books Collection [LACB Collection]). His first job was to prepare

posters for distribution in Latin America based on President Roosevelt's Four Freedoms, defined in the 1941 State of the Union Address as freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. The assignment required little work, Rothschild recalled, and was swiftly completed with the assistance of the Museum of Modern Art, where Rockefeller sat on the board (LACB Collection). According to *My First Fifty Years*, later in 1942, Rothschild, Rockefeller, Mrs. Mary Todhunter Clark Rockefeller, and Wallace Harrison gathered at the Rockefellers' Washington, D.C. home for a dinner meeting to discuss the most appropriate approach to reach quickly and efficiently the vast numbers of what they considered to be the illiterate masses of Latin American (LACB Collection). In a February 7, 1971 letter to Nelson Rockefeller, Rothschild remembered that the group decided that "the whole story of the war—its origins, its participants, and its meaning—should be prepared in pictorial form, the so-called 'comic book' form … though of course the story was far from comic," (LACB Collection). The mass culture of comics was thus called upon to participate in the propaganda efforts of the OIAA.

Soon after this discussion, Rothschild wrote the "outline of material for [a] 'comic' book"—a basic seven-page framework that indicated themes to be covered, as well as slogans and quotes from Hitler, Hirohito, Goebbels, Churchill, and Roosevelt to be used. The main themes included: "what an axis victory would mean to the men, women and children of Latin America;" "what the united nations are fighting for;" "the new axis method of conquest;" "nothing can prevent a victory of the united nations over the axis;" and "good neighbor policy" (LACB Collection). In the outline, Rothschild combined the call for Pan-American cooperation with information about the Good Neighbor policy and an explanation of working conditions in Nazi Germany. Rothschild then asked fellow AJC member Nathan (Nat) Schachner to write the copy. Schachner had been copywriting for the AJC for a few years. His science fiction stories were published in comics magazines and his commitment to the home front resulted in numerous stories and comic strips about the patriotism of American Jews, as well as a hundred *Joe Worker* comic strips published in numerous labor union newspapers (Hristova 2013, 2014). Schachner produced an undated "English Draft"—a 30-page script indicating and detailing the action, the caption, and the balloon content of each panel for each of the 48 pages of the comic book (LACB Collection). There is no indication as to who the men and women were who were responsible for

the images that followed Rothschild and Schachner's instructions. Only once, in a July 11, 1942 letter to Mr. Harrison and Miss Dalrymple, does Rothschild describe them as "professional comic book artists" (LACB Collection). This multifaceted authorial labor system of production positions the comic book as a complex and potentially contradictory artifact of material culture that calls for historically informed visual analysis.

With the rise of semiotic studies and academic interest in the relationship between verbal and visual languages, artists, historians, and theorists have developed an analytical methodology sensitive to the processes of production, distribution, and reception of comics (Witek 1989; Fingeroth 2007; Eisner 2000; Benson et al. 2009; Brienza 2010). For Joseph Witek, comics have developed a "complex narrative grammar and vocabulary based on an inextricable combination of verbal and visual elements" (Witek 1989, 3). For sequential art theorist Thierry Groensteen, comics are "an original ensemble of productive mechanisms of meaning," where the combination of image and text creates an altogether different language and connotation (Groensteen 2007, 2, 6). For Will Eisner, image takes priority to modify and define the intended meaning of the words, and the language of comics relies on a visual experience common to both creator and audience (Eisner 2000, 106, 1). In the case of *Nuestro Futuro*, the political, economic, and cultural contexts of production, as well as the contradictions of the language of comics, form a productive reading strategy. Contextualizing the construction, repetition, standardization, and normalization of a common visual vocabulary in comics can reveal the interplay between image, text, and intended interpretation. The context of production consists of the culturally and historically informed labor of writers, artists, inkers, colorists, and printers, as well as the political economy and the ideological beliefs of the men, women, corporations, government organizations, and philanthropists that benefit in monetary, political, or cultural terms. The production of *Nuestro Futuro* was a process of ideological encoding that sought to develop certain practices to be integrated into social and economic relations (Hall 1980, 164). Therefore, the unstable interplay between image and text, the relations between producers, writers, artists, and audiences, as well as historical, ideological, and cultural contexts of production, shaped the production of meaning in the comic book (Smith 2000, 8) and shape the analysis in this chapter.

The historical nexus of the OIAA, the AJC, and comics is intertwined with the understanding that the language of comics and the political

economy of production construct meaning. Consider the materiality of the comic book: according to Rothschild's autobiography, the first run of *Nuestro Futuro* numbered two million copies distributed to Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America (LACB Collection). Reports to the OIAA recorded that between July 1, 1943, and July 1, 1944, half a million copies of the comic book were distributed in Latin America (Rankin 2009, 200). At the time, comic book consumption in Mexico was very high: *Pepín*, one of the most popular titles from the 1930s, was selling 200,000 copies each week day and double that on Sundays (Niblo 1999, 58). In 1943, estimates place comic book consumption in Mexico at half a million daily (Rubinstein 1998, 18). In this context, the two million run of *Nuestro Futuro* appears inconsequential; however, it indicates the appropriation of an already popular mass culture product across the Western Hemisphere and a reliance on an existing audience. The OIAA intended *Nuestro Futuro* to be passed around, reaching a wide audience while also lasting as a paper product. In the 1940s, US comics were ephemeral, printed on cheap acidic paper with hundreds of titles in circulation and readership close to 100 million (Marston 1944, 1). Comics magazines would have a title story, several secondary stories, and at least two pages of plain text to pay cheaper postage service fees. *Nuestro Futuro* was different: the single continuous story is dominated by large colorful panels with limited use of balloons and captions, and in order to make the comic book last, the OIAA produced it in hardcover. The binding signifies the importance the OIAA placed on achieving as large a circulation as possible while protecting the comic book's contents. According to a July 11, 1942 letter from Rothschild to Mr. Harrison and Miss Dalrymple, the first run of two million hardcover copies cost the OIAA $35,000, or close to half a million dollars in today's money, while standard softcover could have saved the OIAA a quarter of the price (LACB Collection). Expecting the comic book to travel, be passed around, read, re-read, and flicked through, the OIAA and Rothschild adapted the ephemeral nature of the US mass culture product into a lasting piece of propaganda memorabilia. The materiality of the hardcover binding also proposed to readers that the comic book and the messages it bore were important enough to be protected. *Nuestro Futuro* functioned as a physical manifestation of an imagined Pan-American future because, in the hands of Latin Americans, its hardcover binding demanded the protection of the images and messages inside.

Distribution

By 1943, the comic book was distributed free of charge through US embassies, US companies, and pro-democratic organizations operating in Latin American countries (LACB Collection). In his autobiography, Rothschild reported that some consulates were "literally mobbed in the rush for copies," with those unable to read gathering around those who could to view the comic book and listen to the story (LACB Collection). An undated report based on feedback from an OIAA coordinating committee in Ecuador claimed that *Nuestro Futuro* was "[t]remendously appealing to South Americans, who are born unruly, and have a deeply ingrained feeling for freedom and race-consciousness" (Sadlier 2012, 138). While these scant reports appear promising in establishing a welcoming reception, they should be understood in the context of the OIAA as an organization that had to consistently justify its existence and operations to the US government. For example, historian Monica A. Rankin notes that in 1943 the OIAA Mexico Radio Division attempted to measure reactions to its radio propaganda only to discover that interviewees who could not recall the previous night's program fabricated their answers (Rankin 2009, 180–181). These fabrications speak to the interviewees' desire to please the interviewers and to simultaneously resist US propaganda in ways that left their standing vis-à-vis the powerful war ally uncompromised. Moreover, several interviewers also provided fictitious answers. The manufacturing of audience reactions exposes the necessity interviewers felt in justifying their place within the OIAA, the existence of the OIAA to the US government, and therefore US foreign policy in Latin America. Rothschild's and the Ecuador coordinating committee's reports do not indicate that the majority of Latin Americans welcomed OIAA propaganda. Instead, these reports rationalize the operations of the OIAA and prove their effectiveness to the OIAA itself. Therefore, the unreliability of audience analysis and the documentation of the effects of propaganda push analysis away from the audience and toward a consideration of the context of encoding ideologically persuasive messages into mass culture products.

Work and Labor Relations

The ideas about work and labor relations visualized in *Nuestro Futuro* show how the historical, economic, and political context of the Good Neighbor Policy demanded a particular interpretation from the audience. For example,

the comic book constructs the danger of Nazism to Latin America through a visualization of its effects on religious expression, natural resources, the family, the economy, labor relations, and workers. Out of the 48 pages, nine, as well as three other panels, are related to work and deal directly with labor issues. These panels articulate a particular relationship between workers, employers, and the state to juxtapose idealized US-based labor practices with what the comic book presents as slave labor conditions in Nazi Germany. This framing demands that readers participate in the Good Neighbor Policy and wartime solidarity through the exchange of natural resources, including the exchange of labor. Simultaneously, this framing exposes how the OIAA and the AJC imagined labor relations were in the USA.

The storyline, in which German workers and employers suffered under Nazi rule, develops from Rothschild's outline, through Schachner's English script, and into the comic book. In the "Outline of material for [the] 'comic' book" (LACB Collection), Rothschild defined the messages that needed to reach workers:

> If these barbarians should conquer the Western Hemisphere,
> Men would have to work under conditions of virtual slavery.
> They would be under the lash of German and Japanese whips.
> They would have to work for smaller wages.
> They would have to work where they were told.

He continued the outline with information about the threat Nazism posed to employers:

> Employers too would be enslaved.
> Leaders of industry in Germany at first cooperated with the Nazis.
> Then they learned that they too were controlled and regimented.
> They had aided in setting up a force they could not control.
> Private ownership and management no longer exist in Germany and Japan.

Rothschild does not appear to have considered how these ideas would be implemented on the page; he simply articulated the most persuasive strategy to appeal to Latin Americans' imagined sense of freedom by juxtaposing it with conditions under Nazism. It is important to emphasize that Rothschild appealed to both the workers and the employers. Since the comic book was created for the illiterate masses, the construction of the Nazi threat to business owners served to establish that US and Latin American business owners and US corporations operating in Latin

America were fair employers that allowed workers to work where they pleased and paid them fair wages.

In Schachner's "English Draft," Rothschild's original reference to German and Japanese whips develops into a description of the image: "The world, in chains, working under the Nazi whip." The text content is described as: "Man: He wants to enslave the world. (This is a balloon although it will be printed as a caption)" (LACB Collection). Rothschild's directive and Schachner's copy are visualized on page 4, panel 3, where the world is shown in chains, and a Nazi soldier with a long whip drives the workers to pull the Nazi economy forward. The speech bubble, related to the Latin American narrator in the above panel, explains: "Quiere esclavizar al universo" ("[Hitler] wants to enslave the universe" or "He wants to enslave the world") (*Nuestro Futuro* 1942, 4). The coloring of the panel employs a bright palette to construct a surreal landscape. The predominant color of the earth is blue-green, which could suggest both water and grass. In the background of the panel, the workers are an indistinguishable dark mass and later a blue line that snakes into the distance. In the middle of the left-hand side there are red ink markings that indicate a fire. The visual emphasis on fire is foregrounded in the red and orange color of the sky. The workers appear to be moving toward their fate and into the fire of the Nazi war machine. The figure in the foreground, dominating close to a third of the panel is a Nazi soldier who whips workers to pull the Nazi war machine forward. The image suggests to viewers not only that individual workers and citizens dissolve into a mass under the Nazis, that the Nazis disrespect individual humanity and citizenship, but also that employment under capitalism in the US and Latin America values individual workers.

The following page explains that Hitler promised better conditions for workers and was elected with their help. A Nazi labor party leader explains to the workers: "¡Trabajadores! Nuestro gran partido obrero nazi término el reinado de vuestros patronos nunca mas series triturados bajo sus botas [Workers! Our great Nazi labor party has come to reign and will no longer allow employers to crush you under their boots]" (*Nuestro Futuro* 1942, 5). In a panel on the same page, workers hope: "Ahora todo andará mejor … horas, jornales … […] Y también las condiciones de trabajo [Now everything will be better … hours, wages … […] And working conditions too]" (*Nuestro Futuro* 1942, 5). Yet the Nazi promises come with an expectation of long working hours and contributions of wages to the state. The final two panels of the page show the effect of Nazism on the workers: an overseer accuses a worker of slowing down; the worker responds

that he has been working 12-hour shifts for days, and for this insubordination, the overseer physically assaults the worker. The same night, the Gestapo takes away the worker and his wife; their children are put into the care of the Nazi Youth. The storyline explains that German workers believed that the Nazi party would improve wages, working hours, and conditions, but once in power, workers are enslaved and unable to protect themselves or their families from the violence of the state. The Nazi war machine even destroys the landscape: in the last panel of page 6, graves, hanged bodies, and corpses cover the landscape, and the land has become barren. Juxtaposed with the previous images of the green, expansive Americas, Germany has become red and yellow under the Nazi heel, and it can no longer sustain life. The image visualizes the future of workers under Nazism and suggests that failure to ally with the USA would lead to their land becoming barren and the enslavement of their families. In these images, the creators of *Nuestro Futuro* constructed work under Nazism as comparable to slavery, while simultaneously suggesting that cooperation with the USA and the current labor practices in Latin America were free and democratic, and therefore in need of protection.

The construction of meaning in the comic book operated both on a Latin American level and on a US level, revealing the assumptions the US producers held about working conditions at home. When the USA entered World War II in 1941, US newspapers reported that after Germany invaded Poland in 1939, millions of Jews, Slavs, and other "undesirable" peoples were exploited in forced labor camps. Forced labor in Nazi Germany, although less productive than paid labor, was essential for economic production (Herbert 2000; Tooze 2006, 528–538). These labor practices in Nazi Germany stood in opposition to the idealized conditions in the USA. In reality, despite the anti-strike pledge the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations took on behalf of their members, continuous and often violent rank-and-file labor unrest marked the war period (Zieger 1995, 141–190; Preis 1964, 320–338; Lipsitz 1994; Zieger 2007, 106–175). For the producers of the comic book, however, it was important to stress that an American victory would protect Pan-American democratic labor relations and that the war would be won through such relations, rather than through Nazi slave labor. Latin American workers were therefore shown the positive impact economic relations with the USA would have on their own economy. Conveniently, propagating this narrative to harness popular support for economic cooperation across the Americas would enable the USA to

normalize the transfer and exchange of natural resources as part of wartime Pan-American patriotic cooperation and to use these resources for future economic production. The comic book's emphasis on the threat of Nazism to Latin American labor, economy, and resources also embodied the AJC's wartime liberalism, namely that American democracy, capitalism, and labor make each other stronger and ensure each other's preservation.

For Latin Americans who lived in poverty and toiled under exploitative working conditions, *Nuestro Futuro* spoke of the democratic promise and economic prosperity achieved through cooperation with the USA. On page 40, a splash page, the promise of freedom and future prosperity is based on the Four Freedoms, and yet, the image itself articulates a freedom rooted in agricultural production and manufacturing. Workers are expected to pick up the shovel and work their way to prosperity and economic betterment, quite possibly in the fields and factories of US corporations. Another panel, on page 42, promises the end of racial discrimination without considering the various already-existing racial relations in Latin American countries. Once again, the visual argument against racial discrimination develops from the land: agricultural production in the lower part of the panel progresses into the modernity of economic development and prosperity in the middle part and finally into racial equality in the upper part of the panel. In both panels on pages 40 and 42, the land and its resources, as well as the workers' abilities to tame and use them, are essential for securing Latin American freedom, democracy, fair working conditions, and equality. The land and its resources, including the workers themselves, are envisioned as the building blocks for future economic development, modernity, and prosperity, especially when used in cooperation with the USA.

Conclusion

Despite the lack of reliable audience responses to *Nuestro Futuro*, as part of the larger propaganda efforts of the OIAA, some Latin Americans may have taken the promise of fair wages and working conditions to heart. The comic book called for "cooperation in solving the problems of unemployment" and so encouraged the migration of labor (*Nuestro Futuro* 1942, 44). While Mexico struggled with significant unemployment, the USA, according to the big agricultural planters in the southwest, was experiencing a shortage of agricultural labor. Over the course of the war, hundreds of thousands of Latin American men participated in the Bracero program, toiling in the fields of the southwest USA, often in dangerous and

exploitative conditions. Between 1942 and 1964, an estimated 4.6 million Braceros worked in the USA (Galarza 1964; Driscoll 1999; Cohen 2010; Snodgrass 2011, 256–260). *Nuestro Futuro* imagined these men's desire to financially support their families at home as the embodiment of Pan-American patriotism. Some Latin Americans may have easily dismissed the comic book's propaganda because of its awkward framing of class and race. Despite the comic book's rhetorical emphasis on fair labor practices and the promise of racial equality, a Caucasian upper class man narrated the story of the war and the arguments for cooperation from the comfort of his urban apartment. Apart from the working class dark-skinned Latin American family on the front cover, non-Caucasian faces rarely appear in the comic book, and they are never the focus of the storyline. This failure to visually represent ideological rhetoric was nothing new to the writers and artists who produced *Nuestro Futuro*. In the USA, the AJC's racial and religious brotherhood comics existed in a context of racial segregation and often propagated racial equality without visualizing black characters. It is precisely these gaps in representation that enrich the historical recovery and analysis of the political economy of wartime propaganda.

Material culture, in this case the comic book *Nuestro Futuro*, enables a mapping of the political economy of production and distribution of wartime propaganda that operated through the nexus of the OIAA, the AJC, and the mass culture of comics. Moreover, *Nuestro Futuro* also shows how producers of wartime propaganda to Latin America thought of themselves, their role in the war, and their own country. The OIAA's advocacy of the Good Neighbor Policy, including messages of Pan-American economic cooperation, echoed the AJC's own wartime understanding that racial and religious tolerance as well as global peace could be achieved through capitalist economic security and democratic political stability (Hristova 2014, 147–148). To this day, the AJC works globally for Jewish advocacy; on the other hand, by 1946, most of the functions of the OIAA were either discontinued or integrated into other federal agencies, particularly the Department of State (Cramer and Prutsch 2006, 787). Preserved archival documents show the ways in which the wartime cooperation between the OIAA and the AJC utilized the mass culture of comics for the propaganda efforts of the Good Neighbor Policy. These archival documents remain a window into a complex cultural production effort that the US government, together with various civil liberties and philanthropic organizations, undertook during the war, an effort in which comics played an important role.

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Recognizing Comics as Brazilian National Popular Culture: CETPA and the Debates over Comics Professional Identities (1961–1964)

Ivan Lima Gomes

Comics have been well established as a social practice in Brazil since the 1930s, as Brazilian newspaper supplements regularly published North American syndicated comics during the decade. The following years saw the first activities of major publishers like Editora Brasil América Limitada [Brazil America Limited Publisher], EBAL, and the beginning of a comic book culture in Brazil. During the 1940s and 1950s, discussions about the multiple significances of comics and their limitations for the education of young readers caught the attention of many educators, politicians, journalists, and intellectuals. During the 1950s, comic books starring characters such as Superman, Batman, and Zorro led EBAL's sales, reaching 150,000 copies; during that same period, the press published more than 30 different comic book titles (Júnior 2004, 284–291). Many important names in Brazilian press, politics, and culture, such as Samuel Wainer, Edmar Morel, Gilberto Freyre, Roberto Marinho, and Carlos Lacerda, were involved in the debates about comics. Despite the political interests of each of these men (Júnior 2004), their engagement with comics controversies demon-

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strates that comics art was not well-regarded in Brazil. Not only it was considered a kind of pernicious and lowbrow literature that should be controlled, as the US comics industry had been with the Comics Code (Hajdu 2009), it was also considered a foreign contribution to the acculturation of Brazilian readers.

Wanting to be included in local comics publishing activities, rising names in the production of Brazilian comic books started to argue in favor of a market reserve for local artists and against the immoral and imperialist North American comics. At first, it was just a curious strategy assumed by comics artists who had read those same comics as children and were culturally and aesthetically shaped by them. However, this soon evolved into more concrete action. Supported by newspapers like the reformist Última Hora [Last Hour], unions of comics artists soon emerged in the states of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Guanabara,[1] and Rio Grande do Sul. In the latter, governor Leonel Brizola's popularity (after he gained his leadership in a constitutional defense movement against a military coup that tried to avoid the succession of João Goulart as president of Brazil) led to the creation of a cooperative of comics artists that would effectively expound the propositions which had been building up since the movement started.

The Rio Grande do Sul government heavily supported the beginning of the activities of CETPA. Its name an acronym for Cooperativa Editora e de Trabalho de Porto Alegre [Porto Alegre Publishing and Work Cooperative], CETPA worked as a Brazilian comics union, dealing with the production and distribution of comics at local and national levels. Although it published several formats like comic strips, comic books, and educational comics, CETPA did not foresee the series of adversities that it would have to face in order to maintain itself in the Brazilian comics world. Political pressures from Brizola's opposition were a serious part in CETPA's market failure, but internal quarrels also played an important role in it, notably the tensions around the definitions and orientations of comics.

CETPA's Creation

Between the second halves of the 1940s and the 1950s, Brazilian comics artists promoted ephemeral activities in defense of local production. Discussions about the multiple significances of comics in the country started to stimulate local artists to take the first steps in their career in

the Brazilian comics art world. At the time, big domestic publishers, such as EBAL and RGE, produced Brazilian versions of international collections and titles. Probably the most remarkable was EBAL's *Edições Maravilhosas* [Wonderful Editions], a version of Albert Kanter's *Classics Illustrated* series (Jones Jr. 2011). Published as part of editorial policies in defense of comics, *Edições Maravilhosas* not only adapted titles, but also published new ones based on Brazilian literary classics. The earliest were *O Guarani* [The Guarani] (June 1950), *Iracema* [Iracema] (January 1951), *O Tronco do Ipê* [The Ipê Trunk] (March 1952), and *Ubirajara* [Ubirajara] (October 1952). They were all originally written by José de Alencar, a writer associated with nineteenth-century Romanticism and the valorization of national values and native people as heroes.

In turn, smaller publishers, such as La Selva [The Jungle] and Continental/Outubro [Continental/October], usually recruited Brazilian artists to produce comic books inspired by TV heroes like *Capitão Sete* [Captain Number Seven]. These small presses also produced horror titles based on Brazilian traditional folklore, in place of North American comic books based that had ceased to be imported at the end of the 1950s, due to the sales decrease in the USA after a wave of domestic social criticism against comics (Hajdu 2009; Júnior 2004). Comics artists considered Continental/Outubro, led by Jayme Cortez and Miguel Penteado, a more autonomous and creative space when compared to the bigger presses. Moreover, smaller publishers were seen as practical training, where editors and more experienced artists would recruit and teach new ones, establishing references and graphic styles.

After acquiring some work experience in the comic book industry at both big and small publishers, comics artists began collective organizations to effectively argue in defense of the nationalization of comics. The political moment in Brazil helped to support the agenda. Elected in 1959, Jânio Quadros served as Brazilian president for seven months. Between moralism and economic austerity, Quadros, eccentric and independent, tried to regulate social activities like cockfighting, bikinis, and soccer games (Benevides 1981, 16–19), as part of what would be called, not without problems, "populism" (Queler 2008). Besides that, he tried to promote himself as a political character beyond traditional "left" and "right" wing stereotypes, which were strong in Latin America during the Cold War. Externally, however, his government was seen as leftist, since he dialogued with countries like Cuba and the Socialist world.

Usually seen as an example of populism in Brazil, Quadros used comics as part of a deliberate personal propaganda campaign to help him get closer to the masses, proving the impact of this media in Brazilian society since the previous decade. After three months as president, Quadros started to manifest his concerns about the situation of comics in Brazil. According to José Geraldo Barreto Dias, a comics artist who assumed the leadership of the Guanabara and Rio de Janeiro artists' unions informed Quadros about the situation of Brazilian comics artists, most of whom were having to change careers or move out of the country because of local publishers' exclusive preference for international material. As attested to in *Última Hora*'s 1961 news report, the president was even more impressed after he noticed that:

> The North-American productions that monopolize Brazilian markets are financed by the [U.S.] State Department, exporting comics to Brazil with a five dollars cost each. These publications always follow the "cowboy" or the "Superman" style; heroes that always perform in the purest macarthist [sic] way. (*Última Hora* 1961a)

Inspired by previous bills proposed during the 1950s and related US comics regulation, Quadros spoke in favor of institutional regulation of the comics industry. According to presidential head official J. Pereira, "Brazilian motifs" should inspire Brazilian comics, while "foreign subjects," "completely divorced from our customs," "contribute to deform the mindset of our young people" and should be disregarded (*Última Hora* 1961a). To this end, it was assumed that the government should begin to study how to stimulate local production through financing comics enterprises and creating publishing facilities and awards.

Following this announcement by Jânio Quadros and J. Pereira, the congressman Barbosa Lima Sobrinho defended the initiative to establish limits to foreign comics publication. Elected by the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB) and linked to the Nationalist Parliamentary Front (FPN), Barbosa Sobrinho was known for his nationalist agenda. He also supported the nationalization of comics. To explain his point of view, he stated that, even if comics are "an excellent educational vehicle," "if properly employed,"

> What one can no longer afford is those stories of banditry, killings, and cruelties that keep entering Brazilian homes, stories in which Indians, Mexicans, and Cubans are presented as villains. The excuse that the "good guy always wins" is unfounded, since they are mostly endowed with super-

natural powers or a very great skill in handling weapons. I see comics being used as international policy instrument, and to curb this I appeal to the Censorship, through its director, Mr. Ascendino Leite, who has been very active in recent days. (*Última Hora* 1961c)

Sobrinho also suggested some elements that should be taken into account when drafting a new bill related to the theme: creation of job opportunities for authors and artists; defense of comics as an educational tool; and limitation of the publication of foreign comics save for those which qualify as "wholesome humor," and in quantities not equivalent to that of Brazilian authors (*Última Hora* 1961c).

In parallel to the legal actions in defense of Brazilian comics, artists turned to associations whose activities started in the previous decade. In 1961, Associação de Desenhistas do Estado de São Paulo [Illustrators from the State of São Paulo Association], ADESP, was created. Although lasting less than a year, it put several actions in support of the nationalization of comics in motion. ADESP's activities included regular meetings, with payment of fees by those who wanted to be associated members.[2] The Association headquarters was located in the city of São Paulo, where ADESP actions in support of comics nationalization were organized, such as press releases to newspapers and TV shows, along with air travel stipends for those who would disseminate ADESP's program throughout the country.

ADESP's activities were publicized by Mauricio de Sousa's performance as its president and were supported by students, public officials, press, radio, and television. Nowadays, de Sousa is better known internationally for *Monica's Gang* and the universe of comics characters he created during his career, but in 1961 Sousa was a *Folha de São Paulo* [São Paulo Journal] police reporter. He had published his first comics through the publisher Continental in 1959, a comic book titled *Bidu* (Gusman 2006). A renowned figure among both artists and the press, Sousa led São Paulo comics artists' interventions, signaling the importance of "concatenate[ing] a joint offensive—São Paulo-Guanabara—against the ideological influence and the deformation of child mentality" (*Última Hora* 1961b).

An example of his activities mentioned in the press was the presentation of a petition to a member of the Republic Civil House asking for a "study of the dollar based comics stories imports," since such research would encourage the Congress to seek to hinder material selection by

international agencies and stimulate domestic production (*Última Hora* 1961b). The document also suggested "the settlement of a 30 % quota to foreign material for each comics magazine edited in the country, such as in Argentina, where there are laws to protect local artists' work" (*Última Hora* 1961b). All of this rested on the grounds that "the current comics magazines—the overwhelming majority coming from the USA—deform and alienate Brazilian children's mentality, promoting North American 'cowboys' or 'gangsters' as heroes, instead of worshiping the *gaucho* [southern Brazilian cowboy] or the Brazilian countryman" (*Última Hora* 1961b). The same piece reports Mauricio de Sousa, in dialogue with José Geraldo Barreto and the inauguration of what was called the "Comics Operation," with the purpose of intensifying social pressure for the fulfillment of Quadros's promise to establish a 60 % rate for Brazilian production in domestic comic book publication (*Última Hora* 1961b).

The official announcement of the Guanabara and Rio de Janeiro comics association came the following week. Associação de Desenhistas e Argumentistas da Guanabara e do Estado do Rio [Illustrators and Writers of the States of Guanabara and Rio de Janeiro Association] (ADAGER) was founded in July 29, 1961, and was set up to be the institution to speak on behalf of all comics artists from Guanabara and Rio de Janeiro. ADAGER reinforced anti-imperialist discourse as a political strategy for the construction of editorial policies in defense of Brazilian comics authors, and argued that:

> The bitter struggle that keeps [sic] Brazilian illustrators defending the national interests in the comics industry – which is a permanent struggle, not only for economic reasons, more comics imports than exports but also because the imports expose our childhood to a (foreign) ideological education – now is coordinated by a trade association. (*Última Hora* 1961b)

About 30 illustrators met at ADAGER headquarters, located at José Geraldo's apartment on Nossa Senhora de Copacabana Avenue. Among them are some important names from Brazilian press and graphic humor. Days later, ADAGER reorganized its staff "among comics community representatives" and announced the following list of names and positions:

> José Geraldo, president; Luiz Fernando, vice-president; Fortunato de Oliveira, treasurer; Rogério Gammara, deputy treasurer; Flavio Colin, secretary; and Eduardo Barbosa, deputy secretary and public relations. Members

of the Supervisory Board: Ziraldo Pinto, Edmundo Rodrigues and Paulo Egberto. Substitute members of the board: Gutenberg Monteiro, Pericles and Eucy. (*Última Hora* 1961d, 3)

Cognizant of the organization of comics artists' unions, southern Brazilian artists from the state of Rio Grande do Sul began to deliberate about the importance of a southern organization similar to ADAGER. In the second half of August 1961, the first meetings started to happen in Porto Alegre. The press referred to them as part of a "Nationalization Movement of Comics in the south, similar to what is happening in Rio and São Paulo" (*Última Hora* 1961e, 2). *Última Hora* also indicated that the group would soon prepare a draft of the statute of what was then called Associação de Desenhistas e Argumentistas Gaúchos [Illustrators and Writers from Rio Grande do Sul Association] (ADAG) (*Última Hora* 1961e, 2).

However, there was a gap of about a month and a half between the aforementioned inaugural meeting and the resumption of activities related to ADAG. This can be credited to the unstable political situation spread across the country and Rio Grande do Sul in particular, resulting in the sudden resignation of President Jânio Quadros. Leonel Brizola, governor of the state of Rio Grande do Sul at that time, managed to defeat political conservative forces and took the lead in defense of legal developments to be pursued after the president's abdication. It was then that the Legality Movement started in favor of Vice President João Goulart's right to become the next president. Goulart was in a diplomatic campaign in communist China when it all happened and had been seen as a "communist" by some military ministries because of his sympathy toward workers' rights (Cánepa 2005, 278–280). The movement resulted in a parliamentary regime, and Leonel Brizola was elevated to national politics. In the end, Quadros proved to be an enthusiastic defender of the Brazilian comics artists, and, when the time came, Brizola, through José Geraldo, also engaged in the debate about the nationalization of comics.

The first encounter between Brizola and José Geraldo happened during the Legality Movement. Though concrete evidence of this is difficult to find, ADAGER's president said in an oral testimony that he sympathized with the cause and willingly traveled to Porto Alegre during the government's palace occupation. There he had his first contact with Brizola, who, days later, would arrive in Rio de Janeiro looking for José Geraldo in order to invite him to work for a public publisher, the creation of which was one of the demands of organized comics artists. José Geraldo withdrew from

his activities in Rio de Janeiro, moved to Rio Grande do Sul, and started to recruit artists from ADAGER, ADESP, and ADAG to join this new publisher, CETPA (Dias 2001).

TENSIONS AND CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE COMICS ART WORLD AND CETPA'S EDITORIAL POLITICS

It is possible to say that all of those involved with CETPA's comics production had been culturally impacted by the massive penetration of North American comics, which started during the 1930s and consolidated throughout the following decades. Following Jean-François Sirinelli's proposition, comics can be understood as a "generational phenomenon," a "founding event" that helps to forge an intellectual group (Sirinelli 1996, 255). In this case, the group forged was one of comics artists that proposed a specific interpretation of the status of the comics art world in Brazil. The most important names are: José Geraldo Barreto Dias (1925–2014) and Flávio Colin (1930–2002), both born in the state of Guanabara; Renato Canini (1936–2013), from Paraí, a small city in the state of Rio Grande do Sul; Getúlio Delphim (1938), also born in Guanabara; Júlio Shimamoto (1939), from a small town called Borborema in the state São Paulo; and Luiz Saidenberg (1942), from the small town of Piracicaba in the state of São Paulo.

During interviews with these artists, collected by myself or by others, the importance of North American comics is celebrated several times. José Geraldo,[3] loyal to the defense of Brazilian national culture through comics, ironically reinforces the importance of Adolpho Aizen's *Suplemento Juvenil* [Young Magazine], even if it was the "first one to screw up" with Brazilian culture in "importing bad stuff." Without explaining what this "bad stuff" really was, in defense of *Suplemento Juvenil* [Young Magazine], José Geraldo suggests it also published "some good stuff in the middle [of the bad ones]"—namely *Tarzan*, *The Spirit*, *Terry and the Pirates*, *Prince Valiant*, and *Dick Tracy*. A few years after the success of Aizen's newspaper supplements of comics, comic book collections like *O Gibi* [The Comic] and *O Guri* [The Kid] solidified the comic book as a cultural practice in the 1940s. Luiz Saidenberg read them during his childhood and became a big Alex Raymond fan, as well as a *Rip Kirby* (translated as *Nick Holmes* in Brazil) enthusiast.

As a boy, Getúlio Delphim[4] had drawn what he considered the most successful characters of his childhood. His preferences were for western genre comics and "the superheroes of that time: *Phantom*, *Mandrake*,

Prince Valiant." Also, for him, comics artists like Raymond and Foster were important aesthetic references during the first stage of his career. The ability to distinguish comics styles can be seen as part of the maturation of the comics art world in Brazil:

> For example, I liked Alex Raymond a lot. For me he was a comics genius, you know? Alex Raymond and Hal Foster. But Hal Foster was way too photographic – he used live models. And, to comics, I preferred Raymond's style. And I started to try until I would reach something, right? I don't know. [In order to] to reach Alex Raymond, wow [laughs], one has to be too good, you know? I don't know if I had all of that talent, but I have reached something.

These interviews suggest that the Brazilian comics art world was progressively being established as an important part of the youth culture of the country between the 1930s and the 1960s. A variety of titles, formats, and genres were published in the international market and then imported and culturally processed. Several other comics artists were mentioned as important references at that time, like John Cullen Murphy (1919–2004) and his work in *Prince Valiant*; Dan Barry (1923–1997), one of the artists on *Flash Gordon* in the beginning of 1950s; Stan Drake (1921–1997), responsible for *The Heart of Juliet Jones* and remembered for his naturalistic style; Frank Robbins (1917–1994) and his *Johnny Hazzard* comics; Milton Caniff (1907–1988) and *Terry and the Pirates*; Jack Kirby (1917–1994) with *Captain America*; and Syd Shores (1913–1973), for his work with *Captain America* and far west comics series like *Black Ranger*. All CETPA artists interviewed[5] only mentioned North American comics and creators, without clear distinctions between formats like comic strips and comic books.

Despite the variety of comics remembered by the group involved with CETPA, they were unanimous in their recognition of the importance of Raymond and Foster. Both produced comics that were published for the first time in newspaper supplements and soon were recognized as examples of good quality comics artists. Even if later they were also found in comic books, their cultural status was not diminished by it. It did not take long until assemblages of Raymond and Foster's works were published in collector's editions. Together, Raymond and Foster's art seems to synthetize CETPA's comics artists' expectations for the Brazilian comics art world. Raymond, with a well-defined and modern style for adventure comic strips, dialogued with publicity and press drawings; Foster repre-

sented formal rigor and the academic research applied in the composition of characters and scenes (Gaumer and Moliterni 1996, 136, 262).

While some artists and comics characters were remembered, others seemed to be almost completely forgotten. Almost none of the Brazilian artists involved with CETPA mentioned particular interest as a child in reading superhero comics, an essential genre of the modern comic book. In this sense, the silence of the Brazilian artists interviewed must not be seen as innocent; readings of comics must be seen through the lens of a present remembrance of the past. Júlio Shimamoto[6] is a notable exception. Superhero comics were not only entertainment, but also a place where ideologies were spread, and they helped him to see the power of comics as a political weapon. As a son of Japanese migrants, young Shimamoto's comics reading experience is an example of the circulation of varied interpretations and meanings of comics in Brazilian debate:

> Since they came from the U.S. and it was war time, the covers were, like, against Germans and against Japanese, with *Human Torch* against the Nazis, *Namor* punching the Japanese and stuffs like that. And [they were] always [fighting] against countries in conflict with the United States. And the characters that were considered the bad ones were the ones associated with the Axis. A few times later, I started to scribble with sticks on the floor; paper was something rare in my house […]. It was common to see a member of an ethnic group turned into a criminal in comic books, and this kind of provocation I saw [in U.S. comics] began to generate in me an urge to an answer. What was the answer? I took some newspapers my dad accumulated in General Salgado County—he signed *O Estado de São Paulo* [The State of São Paulo]—and started to scribble some drawings in the blank parts. What have I started to do? Yes, yes, I have started to invert the plot. I created rough stories where the heroes were the Japanese and the Americans were the villains. I inverted the context; maybe there originated in me this fetish of a form of expression where one could express his disagreement with things. Maybe my illustration compulsion was born then, right? An answer to what I saw in comic books. But it was fascinating: I did not know how to read, but I could understand the stories. Only through figures, wasn't it? In images and illustrations everything is explicit. It has a beginning and an end, not a philosophical digression at all, right? [There was] just [the fight of] the good against the bad. But I didn't accept the bad ones were by our side.

Although he later went on to create his own western genre comics—his other preference as a child—Shimamoto did not create any superhero

comics during his career as a comics artist, and the same can be said about everyone else involved with CETPA. Some reasons for this can be traced. First, it is important to take into account that superhero comics were not very successful during the 1950s. The popularity of the genre decreased after World War II, in contrast to the rise of detective, romance, and horror comic books, all with large consumer audiences (Gabilliet 2010, 34). After the institutionalization of the Comics Code Authority, the fall of superheroes comic book accelerated. The association of Superman with fascism, Batman and Robin with homosexuality ("the dream of two homosexuals," to quote Wertham [1954, 33–39]), and of Wonder Woman's posture with an inadvisable "phallic" figure were hard blows even to superheroes (Hajdu 2009; Lepore 2014, 195–202).

Such controversies in the North American comic book industry partially resonated in Brazil, given the success of La Selva's comic book titles like *Terror Negro* [Black Terror], *Contos de Terror* [Tales of Terror], *Sobrenatural* [Supernatural], *Histórias Macabras* [Macabre Stories], and *Seleções de Terror* [Terror Selections] (Silva 2012, 25–28). There were also discussions in Brazil at the time about the possibility of an intrinsic moral content being presented in comic books. An "ethics code" came to be adopted by major Brazilian publishers in 1961, similar to what had been conceived years before in the USA. However, it is important to note this development with caution, since this supposedly transnational synchronicity did not extend to editorial dynamics (Saunier 2006, 127–128). In fact, superhero comics had been circulating in Brazil since the mid-1940s; according to a rough estimate, comic book titles like *Batman* or *Superman* reached above 150,000 copies in Brazil during the 1950s (Júnior 2004, 288).

To understand the disappearance of superhero references in my respondents' remembrances, some editorial and political considerations may be useful. What one may find when analyzing Brazilian publishers is that, in general, maintaining the production of superhero comics was not included in their editorial policies. Obtained at low prices through unions, the genre was possibly considered a very specific North American product and valued as such; this could also explain the absence of other established superheroes in different contexts such as French, Argentinean, Spanish, and Mexican, for example. Even if Japan came to produce *Battoman*, named after the enthusiasm shown for the character during the 1960s, the fact, however, remained that manga is not associated with superhero canons (Rosenbaum 2013, 44–45, 55).

The apparent difficulty of successfully adapting superhero aesthetics to the specific circumstances of each local context derives from the strong

relation they have with North American culture. This may explain the almost complete absence of this comics genre in the memory of CETPA's artists. As an autonomous grouping with established codes (Simmel 1983, 165–170), CETPA's artists were defined by very specific comics sociability networks, forged by a political commitment in defense of a larger domestic production and a strong opposition to the foreign "invasion." This situation almost excluded superheroes from Brazilian comics memory entirely, locating them in "gray areas" of remembrance, according to Pollak's image, which fits well in comics analysis (1989, 8). Through that amnesia, the ties linking national and international comics production are reinforced once Brazilian comics artists insert themselves into the tradition of authors recognized as important names in comics art, such as Raymond and Foster.

Conclusion

It is noteworthy that a definition of comics as a cultural practice implies discussing the historicity of their daily production of meaning, which is a source of disagreement between several social groups involved in the "comics art world" (Becker 2008; Beaty 2012). Instead of the formalism that has driven analysis of comics throughout the years, a focus on case studies reinforces creative openness and the possibility for comics artists to recreate themselves and for the medium itself to diversify. In the Brazilian comics art world, CETPA proposed continuities and ruptures in favor of the creation of new paradigms for Brazilian comics canon. Instead of superheroes, heroes from Brazilian historical past or local folklore; instead of *Little Lulu* or *Dennis The Menace*, comics with gaucho [from the state of Rio Grande do Sul] or carioca [from the city of Rio de Janeiro] children.

It is also important to take into account the peculiarities of the Brazilian comics art world. If in North America a distinction between comic strips and comic books is quite clear among artists and even scholars, in Brazil the boundaries seem quite blurred. This might explain some of the apparent contradictions of CETPA's publishing policies, which paradoxically argued against all North American comics but used them as reference to create new material. Such confusion should not be merely chalked up to the ignorance of some of CETPA's members, but rather to the ways comics art was introduced and appropriated by Brazilian culture. While initially mixed with a French tradition of illustrated magazines, the massive

spread of comics through newspaper supplements effectively started during the 1930s; in the next decade, the first comic book publisher gathered heroes, adventure titles, and superhero characters in a magazine named *Superman*, with the original Siegel and Shuster character translated into Portuguese as *Super-Homem*.

Of course, the history of a publishing company is determined by several factors—not only cultural, but also political and economic ones (Mollier 1996, 329–348; Gabilliet 2010). This also applies to CETPA. As a publisher associated with left-wing government, it suffered from severe political opposition and economic sabotage, according to José Geraldo (Dias 2001, 128). João Mottini, who also worked in the Argentinean comics industry during the 1950s, alleges the lack of administrative competency on the part of CETPA's directorship as a reason for its failure (Rosa n.d., 20–21). Luiz Saidenberg[7] argues against the demagogy presented in the publisher's daily activities, with politicians coming in and out of the CETPA's office looking for personal profit.

Above all, the memories of these Brazilian comics artists are revealed as a challenge for comics scholarship. Since comics are socially and culturally defined, the multiple significances of comics also depend on which experiences and practices are selectively remembered by those actors involved in the creation of the comics art world.

Author's Note This chapter is based upon research conducted between 2011 and 2015 at PPGH-UFF for a PhD in History. The dissertation's title is *Os sentidos dos quadrinhos em contexto nacional-popular (Brasil e Chile, anos 1960 e 1970)* [The different meanings of comics in the national popular context: Brazil and Chile; 1960s and 1970s].

Notes

1. For the sake of argument, it is important to differentiate between Rio de Janeiro and Guanabara states, since it helps to demonstrate the trajectory of the circulation of comics in Brazil. Guanabara no longer exists. It lasted between 1960 and 1974, when the city of Rio de Janeiro lost the status of capital of the country and Federal District due to the creation of Brasília in 1959, Brazil's new capital since then (Motta 2004, 40–62).
2. Primary sources, like assignment lists and contribution fees, were provided by Júlio Shimamoto, ADESP's treasurer.
3. José Geraldo Barreto Dias was interviewed by Ivan Lima Gomes in 2012.
4. Getúlio Delphim was interviewed by Ivan Lima Gomes in 2014.

5. Luiz Saidenberg, Júlio Shimamoto, and José Geraldo Barreto were interviewed by Ivan Lima Gomes between 2011 and 2013.
6. Júlio Shimamoto was interviewed by Ivan Lima Gomes in 2013.
7. Luiz Saidenberg was interviewed by Ivan Lima Gomes in 2012.

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From Turtles to Topatoco: A Brief History of Comic Book Production in the Pioneer Valley

Ryan Cadrette

INTRODUCTION: A PLACE OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

On January 22, 2012, *The Comics Journal* published a short web article titled "Northampton, MA Scene Report." The piece was written by Colin Panetta, a resident of the area as well as the author self-published mini-comics like *Dead Man Holiday*. In painting a picture of the Northampton comics scene, Panetta offered the following account:

> Most comics people probably know Northampton for its historical significance. Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird moved here and started Mirage Studios shortly after Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #1 was released. In the ensuing years, the tidal wave of activity that followed their unprecedented levels of success in the comics world and beyond caused a number of historic events to occur here… There aren't many public facing remnants of that time left in town … but the shadow of the Turtles still looms large in the area's consciousness. (Panetta 2012)

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Panetta goes on to outline an impressive constellation of activity related to comics, ranging from traditional comics presses, to a surprising concentration of retail outlets, to a growing network of web cartoonists. For him and many others who grew up reading comics in the 1990s, much of this story is old news. "I was 10 in 1993, so the Ninja Turtles were huge. I think if you're anywhere within a 200 mile radius of here, especially back then, you were aware that this stuff was happening" (Panetta 2014).

The sort of language used by Panetta signals a certain tacit disconnect between comics fans and academic historians. For many of the former, the historical significance of the "Northampton scene" can be taken as a given, assumed without being spoken. For those in the latter population, however, such a history has yet to be narrated. The people, institutions, and events mentioned by Panetta provide a rich archive of cultural activity waiting to be sifted through. This is a preliminary gesture toward such historiographic work, outlining a number of significant moments in the culture of comics production in and around Western Massachusetts.

Field and Capital

Much of the history outlined here revolves around only a small portion of Western Massachusetts: the town of Northampton and the neighboring Easthampton. But comics production has a precedent writ large in Western Massachusetts that precedes the Turtles-fueled alt-comics boom, including institutions like Holyoke Publishing, a producer of "golden age" superhero titles best known for characters like the Blue Beetle. Colloquially, this broader area is sometimes referred to as the Pioneer Valley, a swath of territory occupying a nebulous portion of the Massachusetts side of the Connecticut River Valley. For the purposes of my argument here, however, the exact geographic boundaries of this space are inconsequential. The area emerges as the focal point of a certain type of cultural practice, but that practice does not result from some quality inherent to the space itself.

Instead, it becomes useful to think of the Pioneer Valley's comics scene as a particular space operating within a larger field, in the sense of the term offered by the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1993). Although the word "field" is evocative of spatial imagery, Bourdieu's usage of the term does not necessarily refer to a literal geographic area. Instead, it implies a symbolic social milieu, wherein actors work to define and control both material and symbolic capital. At stake are not only actual physical resources like money, space, and market

share, but also the less tangible configurations of language, style, and taste. A field is thus not shaped solely by the artists making a certain type of cultural text, but by the entire network of practices through which those texts are produced, distributed, consumed, and evaluated.

For Bourdieu, the struggle over capital in different forms is fundamentally tied to the question of autonomy. As new movements in art and literature seek to articulate new evaluative criteria—and thereby develop new and distinct systems of cultural practice—they must reckon with larger fields of economic power. The problem is one of connectivity; cultural production never occurs in a vacuum. Even as symbolic capital begins to change, producers and consumers alike are bound by shared discursive and economic networks, resulting in a process of constant renegotiation:

> The specificity of the literary and artistic field is defined by the fact that the more autonomous it is, i.e. the more completely it fulfills its own logic as a field, the more it tends to suspend or reverse the dominant principle of hierarchization; but also that, whatever its degree of independence, it continues to be affected by the laws of the field which encompasses it, those of economic and political profit. (Bourdieu 1993, 38)

Autonomy emerges as a major theme in the story of the comics scene in and around Northampton. The culture of comics production that materializes after the success of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* represents a clear attempt to move away from the practices of the mainstream comics industry. However, these efforts are always inscribed within a larger cultural field that has been powerfully shaped by the very mainstream interests they attempt to eschew.

This becomes especially evident when situating this scene within a broader history of the comics industry. During the first half of the twentieth century, comics were produced almost entirely under one roof, "a group of skilled artisans working in a bullpen," collaborating under the close supervision of the publisher's editorial teams (Norcliffe and Rendace 2003, 243). Following the introduction of improved communication services such as email and courier delivery, keeping such labor in-house became increasingly unnecessary. Publishers no longer needed to pay for their artists' studio space or equipment, and creative labor became dispersed through a system of independently contracted artists, many of whom worked from home.

The Northampton comics scene began to develop against this reconfiguration of the spaces of comic book production, collecting a significant network of creative workers around a centralized location at a time when most major publishers were doing the very opposite. This geographic clustering was but one of many consequences of a growing anxiety toward mainstream comics publishing practices. The local culture of comics production would come to be defined by creative responses to such sources of frustration, including the specific treatment of comics artists by the publishers they worked for. This was the driving impulse toward autonomy, the motivation to build a viable alternative to the status quo. It is perhaps fitting, therefore, that so much of the history of comics activity in the Pioneer Valley can be traced back to two independent artists working out of their own home.

A Brief Chronology of the Northampton Scene

Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird independently published the first issue of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* in 1984. The comic was independent in every sense of the word—Eastman and Laird wrote, drew, inked, lettered, financed, and distributed the book themselves:

> I was getting an income tax return back for five hundred dollars. Pete had two hundred dollars that he cleaned out of his bank account, and my uncle, who used to sell us art supplies during that period, loaned us a thousand dollars to print 3,000 copies on newsprint… We didn't know anything then. We said, "OK, we've got 3,000 comic books in our living room." Some were used as a coffee table, some were used to put a lamp on in the corner, and we had enough money left over to put an ad in the Comics Buyer's Guide, to sell them at $1.50 plus postage. We sold a few, but from that ad distributors started calling and said that they'd like to carry our book… Within a couple weeks we had sold out of the first 3,000 copies, and before paying my Uncle Quentin back, we still had orders coming in, so we printed another 6,000, and those sold. (Kevin Eastman, quoted in Groth 1998)

As these sales figures continued to climb, Mirage expanded into a studio proper, moving from Laird's apartment to new offices in downtown Northampton. This expansion saw an influx of new talent as artists such as Jim Lawson, Dan Berger, and Michael Dooney moved to the area to work on Mirage projects. But what is perhaps most notable about

the success of the Turtles is that the creators maintained their rights to the intellectual property for over 25 years as it expanded from a comic to a vast multimedia franchise. Eastman and Laird retained a certain degree of creative control over their characters as they were adapted first into an animated television series (1987) and then to feature film (1990). But more importantly, they retained both copyright and trademark and thus received royalties from the slew of licensed merchandise that followed.

This victory for artists' rights proved to be of far greater historical significance than the initial financial success of the comics themselves. Although other comic book characters such as Batman and Superman had already proven highly lucrative as the basis for licensing and merchandise sales, their creators saw very little of the profits. Instead, it was the publishing companies that tended to enjoy the fruits of such success, often providing only scant remuneration to the actual creators. The comic book industry had become rather notorious for its treatment of both artists and their creations. As Paul Lopes explains in *Demanding Respect*, his cultural history of American comics, "virtually all writers and artists were treated like 'work-for-hire' freelancers; paid per page with no company benefits [sic]," while "publishers continued to claim all rights to the work of writers and artists" (Lopes 2009, 101).

Comic book history is riddled with similar stories of exploitation. The prominence of such narratives of artistic abuse nurtured a growing culture of distrust within significant portions of the creative field. These sentiments, coupled with the success of Mirage's creator-owned properties, eventually resulted in the drafting of the Comic Creator's Bill of Rights. Authored by Scott McCloud, then a resident of nearby Amherst, the Bill of Rights was signed at the "Northampton Summit" in 1988 by a number of cartoonists, including Eastman, Laird, and many of the other Mirage Studio artists. The text of the Creator's Bill of Rights is as follows:

> For the survival and health of comics, we recognize that no single system of commerce and no single type of agreement between creator and publisher can or should be instituted. However, the rights and dignity of creators everywhere are equally vital. Our rights, as we perceive them to be and intend to preserve them, are:
>
> 1. The right to full ownership of what we fully create.
> 2. The right to full control over the creative execution of that which we fully own.

3. The right of approval over the reproduction and format of our creative property.
4. The right of approval over the methods by which our creative property is distributed.
5. The right to free movement of ourselves and our creative property to and from publishers.
6. The right to employ legal counsel in any and all business transactions.
7. The right to offer a proposal to more than one publisher at a time.
8. The right to prompt payment of a fair and equitable share of profits derived from all of our creative work.
9. The right to full and accurate accounting of any and all income and disbursements relative to our work.
10. The right to prompt and complete return of our artwork in its original condition.
11. The right to full control over the licensing of our creative property.
12. The right to promote and the right of approval over any and all promotion of ourselves and our creative property. (McCloud n.d.)

The Bill of Rights clearly emphasizes several key points. Ownership and creative control of intellectual property are perhaps the most evident prerogatives, a clear expression of artists' anxieties regarding the industry's history of insensitivity toward creative labor. However, the preamble states that the Bill is intended to protect the "survival and health of comics," effectively framing the document as not only a creative manifesto, but also as an earnest means of improving the sustainability of the industry. The artists present at the Northampton Summit thought of the Creator's Bill of Rights as a tool for improving their own working conditions and as an important step in revitalizing the form more generally. There is no impulse toward secession, toward forming an entirely separate field of production; instead, the Bill voices a desire to revise the rules of the game that was already being played. Autonomy was still very much at stake, implicit in the fervent call for creative control, but not by creating a restricted field of production. Rather than symbolically discrediting the mainstream industry, these artists sought to alter and enhance its cultural capital. The Pioneer Valley became a unique space within the larger field of comics production, an experiment in autonomy within the constraints of mainstream distribution.

This impulse extended far beyond this initial drafting of the Creator's Bill of Rights. In the years that followed, Eastman and Laird began to nurture a number of additional projects devoted to elevating the status of graphic narrative. In 1990, Eastman started Tundra Publishing, a comics press founded on the principles of the Bill of Rights. Tundra

gave its artists an unprecedented degree of control over the treatment of their works. Creators were able to weigh in on virtually every aspect of the production process:

> I had resources to put in place a first-class facility with the ability to bring in qualified key people that could run it, instill a "philosophy," to give the creators a home, a place to go to, where they could get the financing to explore this great creative novel that was inside of them, and see it through to completion in a well-done, potentially well-publicized sort of venue! They would have approval over very nearly every aspect, and they would be totally involved… I wanted them to feel in control. They would sign off on everything, every step of the way. (Kevin Eastman, quoted in Groth 1998)

This new level of autonomy attracted a wide range of creative talent, resulting in the publication of a number of works that would have been unlikely projects for mainstream houses, including Scott McCloud's now seminal comics studies treatise *Understanding Comics* (1993).

That same year, Eastman founded the Words and Pictures Museum. Originally located in Northampton's historic Roundhouse building as a means of displaying Eastman's growing private collection of comics art, the museum opened to the public in 1992. In 1995, it moved into a new state-of-the-art facility, located at 138–140 Main Street. The new location was designed to emulate the gravity and grandeur of traditional art museums while retaining all the brightly colored playfulness associated with comic books. The *Hampshire Gazette* (1995) emphasized both of these themes in its coverage of the museum's opening night on January 2:

> On the fourth floor, not unlike the Louvre in Paris because of the elegant wood floors, Greek columns and gold frames on the art, some of 10,000 pieces in the museum's permanent collection are on display…
> The idea behind the Louvre-like design is to help people realize that comic art really is art and deserves respect just like the thousands of paintings and drawing that hang in famous museums around the world, said Michael Eastman, cousin of museum founder and Ninja Turtle creator Kevin Eastman.

The museum was thus very explicitly concerned with increasing the cultural capital credited to comic books. The very name of the institution—The Words and Pictures Museum of Fine Sequential Art—conveys

this preoccupation in no uncertain terms. It was a struggle for autonomy at the level of evaluation, an insistence that the field of graphic narrative be read primarily in artistic rather than commercial terms.

In 1992, Peter Laird founded the Xeric Foundation, a charitable organization which provided grants to aspiring comic book artists and local non-profits. As of 2013, Xeric had awarded over $2.5 million in grants to charities and self-publishing comics artists. The foundation was committed to facilitating independent comic book publishing, giving artists the resources needed to complete their work. Furthermore, the highly competitive nature of the Xeric grants bestowed its winners with a sense of quality and legitimacy, increasing the symbolic value of their work. The foundation was thus very much involved in the redefinition and reallocation of both economic and cultural capital.

A PRECEDENT FOR AUTONOMY: THE UNDERGROUND COMIX MOVEMENT

Although these institutions are clearly of historic significance, it is important to note that this sort of multifaceted struggle for autonomy within the field of comic book production was not without precedent. Many of these same concerns were at the forefront of the underground comix movement that emerged in the end of the 1960s. The artists associated with this movement were some of the first to collectively rebel against what they perceived as the "straight" or mainstream approach to comic book publishing. In so doing, they sought to develop comix as a uniquely expressive form of artistic practice, rather than just a means of generating profits:

> Underground artists were the first to articulate a complete rejection of the rules of art in the comic book field. They were the first to claim principles of autonomy that rejected the conventions of the field and the pure commercial ethos that remained its raison d'etre. They also established the possibility of criteria of judgement that viewed comic books as a serious art form open to expressions comparable to any other art form. (Lopes 2009, 75)

These were artists of the 1960s counterculture, and their comics were frequently filled with sex, drugs, and rock and roll. This sort of material was not only strictly censored by the Comics Code Authority, but also unappealing to the mass audience buying comics at newsstands. It was of

necessity, then, that the comix movement prefigured the development of the direct market system now used by comics specialty shops. Because the content of this work was such a departure from conventional fare, these artists had to find new spaces to sell their books. Following the rise of alternative newspaper presses in countercultural hubs like New York and San Francisco, comix publishers like Denis Kitchen built an alternative distribution network of record stores and head shops. Put simply, most of the content of these comics was just too risqué or violent or just too weird to be sold on newsstands.

Because this new network of artists and publishers did not rely on existing structures of distribution, they were able to redefine standard practices at every level of production, often with an increased sensitivity toward creators' rights. Denis Kitchen's Kitchen Sink Press, for example, not only offered higher royalties for its artists, but also granted them full rights over their work:

> In an effort to be fair, too fair, I was paying artists 16% of the cover price, which was unheard of… The other thing that was important to us besides the actual percentage an artist got was owning the material. And again, publishers were notorious for owning everything. From the beginning, the artist retained their copyright and their trademark to any characters they created. The final component was the original art, which traditionally publishers kept and often just destroyed. In the early days of the industry, nobody placed any particular value on it. It was just part of the means of production. Once something was printed, it was cavalierly discarded… On all those levels, we made a very specific effort to separate ourselves from what had been done before. (Kitchen 2014)

Importantly, the underground comix movement differed from that of the Pioneer Valley in several respects. The former demonstrated a strong trend toward separation, toward creating entirely new spaces of production and consumption. There was no real impulse toward trying to fix what was broken, no attempt to revise mainstream practice. Instead, they left both the spaces and practices of the mainstream behind altogether, relying instead on sites of countercultural resistance. Autonomy from the mainstream of comics publishing afforded certain opportunities, but also presented certain new risks. When such sites came under increased legal scrutiny, owners were quick to dispense with these graphic depictions of sex, drugs, and violence.[1] The comix bubble burst, and by 1975 the underground had become largely defunct.

A Period of Decline

Read in terms of field and autonomy, the comix movement provides a very telling parallel to the history of comic book production in the Pioneer Valley. Artists like Eastman and Laird invested a great deal into reworking and redistributing the capital of the comics form but continued to rely on extant systems of distribution, selling their comics in the same shops that carried superhero titles by Marvel and DC. As a result, when the health of the mainstream industry began to falter, the Pioneer Valley comics scene felt the effects in very noticeable ways.

Tundra closed in 1993 after three short years. Given Tundra's commitment to the Creator's Bill of Rights, it is perhaps not surprising that Eastman turned to renowned underground comix publisher Denis Kitchen when the company began to falter, allowing Tundra to be folded into Kitchen Sink Press. This brought still more comics activity to the area, including the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, an organization dedicated to protecting comic creators' first amendment rights against charges of indecency. But a larger trend of decline was already in motion, and by 1999, following several unsuccessful rounds of outside investment, Kitchen Sink Press also ceased operation.

The Words and Pictures Museum closed its doors on July 16 of that same year. In their coverage of the closing, the *Hampshire Gazette* (1999) described the institution's health in terms of the comics industry more generally:

> The museum has been largely dependent on industry donations rather than admissions or membership, according to [museum director Fiona] Russell. The museum opened in 1992, when cartoon artists were riding a crest of booming interest in sequential artwork; the year before the museum opened, the creators of the teen-age turtles each pulled in $10 million from the turtle's merchandising empire.
>
> But the business that boomed in the 1980s and early 1990s - spawning several local businesses in the process - contracted sharply beginning in the mid 1990s, squeezing off the philanthropic dollars that had been keeping the museum alive, according to Russell.
>
> "The industry is in a slump. It's been in decline for quite a while," said Russell. "Consequently, philanthropic dollars aren't there. Sales are down, and so are the dollars available for donating."

The museum moved its operations online for a short period of time, promising to regularly update its site with new digital exhibitions of its

collection, but no new content has been posted since 2002—the same year that the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund relocated its headquarters from Northampton to New York City.

After maintaining at least some portion of control over their characters for over 20 years, Eastman and Laird sold their remaining rights to the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* to Nickelodeon/Viacom in 2009. Mirage still maintains its Northampton offices but no longer produces any new material. Several of the original artists use the offices for studio space, but Mirage as such exists only to sell back issues of old comics online.

The history of the culture of comic book production in the Pioneer Valley can be read as a struggle for autonomy at virtually every level of the field. The tremendous financial success of the Turtles, first as an independent comic and then as a licensed franchise, marked a shift in the control of the means of production (both symbolic and material) from publishers to artists. This shift was accompanied most immediately by a dramatic influx of capital to creative rather than corporate hands. Economic autonomy meant new systems of cultural capital among comics producers, evidenced most readily in the drafting of the Creator's Bill of Rights. But the autonomy of a field is not determined solely by the values of its artists, as the viability of their practice remains contingent upon the valuation of the art produced. In Bourdieu's terms, "the work of art is an object which exists as such only by virtue of the (collective) belief which knows and acknowledges it as a work of art" (Bourdieu 1993, 36). Northampton thus witnessed a host of activity dedicated to preaching the virtues of such a belief, seeking to improve the status of comics as a viable and vibrant art form. The Words and Pictures Museum was perhaps the most visible articulation of these efforts, seeking, as it did, to promote the evaluation of comics as art through familiar logics of curation and education. Despite these many efforts, however, the sale of the products produced by Northampton comics creators continued to rely largely on extant systems of distribution. For this reason, the timelines for institutions like Tundra, Mirage, Kitchen Sink Press, and the Words and Pictures Museum map neatly on to the boom and bust cycles of the comics industry more generally.

Thus, while most accounts of comic book culture in and around the Pioneer Valley seem to start with some description of Eastman and Laird's immense success, they also tend to end with the same conclusion about the current state of the local comics industry: things aren't what they once were. "Those comics happened during a time when there were a lot more resources in indie comics," Panetta explains. "A lot of the people who

were doing them back then are doing different things now. In terms of indie comics that are being produced in this area that have any sort of stature, I can't even really think of any" (Panetta 2014).

Historically, the grants awarded by the Xeric Foundation had been one of the most substantial and highly sought-after of these resources for independent comics publishers. However, even though Xeric is still a functioning organization, the foundation stopped awarding money to aspiring comics artists in May of 2012. All grants are now being awarded to charities and non-profits, most of which are located within the Pioneer Valley. Peter Laird explained the decision in a letter posted on Xeric's website:

> When I began the Xeric Foundation back in 1992, things were very different. The Internet—and web-based publishing—was in its infancy. This has changed, radically, and the Xeric Foundation needs to change accordingly. The advent of essentially free web publishing has forever altered the way aspiring comic book creators can get their work out into the public eye. With this in mind, I have decided that it makes sense that the Xeric Foundation will no longer provide grants to self-publishing comic book creators, and instead devote all of its available grants funds to charitable organizations. (Laird 2011)

Although Xeric did not simply fold as a result of the declining health of the mainstream comics industry, Laird's language still signals a historic shift in the practice of comics publishing more generally, and in indie comics publishing in particular. There is a sense that the sort of support provided by the foundation's grants has been rendered unnecessary by the mythic level of autonomy afforded by the internet.

However, it would be a mistake to suggest that this shift is simply a continuation of a steady process of decline. Comics are still alive and well in this pocket of Western Massachusetts. Northampton boasts three different comics shops, an impressive number for a town with a population of under 30,000 people. Neighboring Easthampton is likewise home to a dense collection of comics-related work, with the Eastworks building alone housing a number of different active sites of sequential art production. Kevin Eastman still maintains studio space there, and Gary Dolgoff operates an immense warehouse of back issues, holding over 800,000 comics ranging from the 1930s to current series, which are sold online over eBay.

It may be tempting to read these sites of traditional comics publishing as mere vestiges of a once thriving cultural scene. But it is perhaps more appropriate to view them as indicators of an ongoing reconfiguration of cultural production practices, as a continuation of many of the same impulses once nurtured by institutions like Xeric and Tundra. These new practices are readily evidenced by the immense amount of new comics work being produced in the area by a new wave of web comics artists. R. Stevens of *Diesel Sweeties* is one of these, Jeph Jacques of *Questionable Content* is another, KC Green of *Gunshow* and *Back* another still. Topatoco, a company that organizes the sale and distribution of merchandise for a cooperative network of independent web cartoonists, is also located there, run by Jeff Rowland, himself the artist behind the online strip *Overcompensating*. Even though these artists have not published their own formal Bill of Rights, their practice still demonstrates a strong commitment to autonomy. They maintain full control over their work and any related merchandise and often choose to self-publish their work rather than going through traditional print houses. These values are clearly articulated on the website for Topatoco, the centralized distribution hub that these cartoonists use to sell their merchandise:

> Some of your favorite internet artists have been approached by publishers who said, "Your work is so amazing that we would like to publish it for you, and pay you pennies on the dollar for the privilege of selling to your existing audience." The artists, being clever, said "No thanks I'd rather make a living." TopatoCo Books are just as nice as any book you can find anywhere, except the person who made it—not Amazon, not Barnes & Noble, not Diamond Distributors, not anyone else who did not make the book—actually earns money from the sale. We know! What a concept.
>
> When you buy from TopatoCo, you're patronizing independent creators who are using the internet to build sustainable careers from their creative work! (Topato Corporation 2014)

Much of this language is very familiar. There is an obvious anxiety toward traditional publishers and a clear sense that many distributors do not provide adequate compensation to creators. Independence and sustainability are similarly emphasized, tying the viability of the medium to a system of production practices that privileges creators' rights. There are echoes of the Bill of Rights here, a reverberating call for autonomy as a necessary step toward the "survival and health" of comics.

Of course, Easthampton is by no means the only site where this kind of production occurs. The internet has indeed provided (at least to some extent) what Peter Laird (2011) referred to as "essentially free web publishing," which has allowed webcomics production to become even less centralized than its print predecessors. Topatoco alone represents artists from all over the USA, as well as a handful from Canada and the UK. But why, then, do so many still choose to call the Pioneer Valley their home? Why would a place like Easthampton be chosen as the site of the Webcomics Weekend, a convention held in 2009 and 2010 dedicated to the fans and creators of this sort of online work?

CONCLUSION: TOWARD POSSIBILITY

With these questions in mind, it perhaps becomes most appropriate to think of the history of comics production in the Pioneer Valley not in terms of material failure and institutional demise, but rather in terms of possibility. The area witnessed an incredible amount of creative work dedicated to improving the cultural capital of comics and enhancing the treatment of comics artists. Something unprecedented happened here. The immense financial success of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, a creator-owned property, was part of this, but so was the fervent and collective pursuit of autonomy that followed. It was this intense commitment to creating new and improved spaces for both making and reading comics that has left such a lasting impression on the pages of comic history. Mirage, Xeric, Tundra, Words and Pictures Museum, Kitchen Sink Press: the work of these institutions showed that comics could be done differently, that artists could be treated better, and that the books themselves could become more than just pulpy images of men in capes.

Bourdieu saw the introduction of possibility as an important consequence of the struggle for autonomy:

Change in the space of literary or artistic possibilities is the result of change in the power relation which constitutes the space of positions. When a new literary or artistic group makes its presence felt in the field of literary or artistic production, the whole problem is transformed, since its coming into being, i.e. into difference, modifies and displaces the universe of possible options. (Bourdieu 1993, 32)

Read in these terms, the underground comix movement introduced comics production to a world of possibilities, including the direct market system of distribution that now dominates the industry. It was precisely

these new cultural practices that enabled two guys to successfully publish a black and white comic about crime-fighting, Ninjutsu-practicing Turtles from the living room of their apartment in Western Massachusetts. Perhaps, then, it was the considerable efforts of these artists, from the Creator's Bill of Rights to the Words and Pictures Museum, that has made possible the autonomy enjoyed by the web cartoonists of contemporary Easthampton.

The history of comics in the Pioneer Valley is thus a history of possibility. It is the story of a space that has enabled the constant reconfiguration of an artistic field, supporting the creation of new types of work. By this reckoning, the chronology outlined here cannot be read as comprehensive; it is only suggestive. As new possibilities continue to emerge from this dense collection of creative work, as these artists continue to produce new and varied cultural texts, this history will only continue to evolve, making these spaces rich sites for future research.

Note

1. For more on the collapse of the comix movement, see Kitchen (2000).

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Illustrating Workers

The Case of the Missing Author: Toward an Anatomy of Collaboration in Comics

Brenna Clarke Gray and Peter Wilkins

Introduction: The Anxiety of Responsibility

In a January 2012 interview for BBC4, Matthew Cain questions the painter David Hockney on his use of assistants. Cain is trying to get at whether Hockney's three assistants produce any of his art. But Hockney doesn't bite. He says that he made "all the marks" and that an assistant would never pick up a paintbrush. The role of the assistant is purely that of the logistical helper; he or she does physical work, but not the work most associated with the production of capital "A" art: the relationship of the hand, the eye, and the heart. David Hockney is an art star, significant as both commercial brand and artist. His name confers value to his artwork. An anonymous painting that looked like a David Hockney piece, but wasn't, would be dismissed as either a valueless imitation or a forgery. Even people who cannot afford a David Hockney work have some stake in its authenticity; otherwise interviewers like Matthew Cain would not ask questions about it. It is a relief that Hockney "made all the marks."

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If David Hockney worked in comics, he would lose no status by having his assistants make the marks while he gave direction. The world of comics, in spite of protestations to the contrary, celebrates the genius of the writer over the craft of the penciller, colorist, and letterer, particularly in the history of the big two comics publishers Marvel and DC, where artists have consistently occupied a lesser position. While images may be the *sine qua non* of comics according to theorists like Thierry Groensteen (Bredehoft 2011, 98), the writer is still king, a figure of authority and power; the audience is comfortable with the authorial genius of the writer and does not really know what to do with the artist but give him or her subaltern status. Nevertheless, as Christy Mag Uidhir notes in "Comics and Collective Authorship," "we shouldn't just assume, as many do implicitly if not explicitly, that writers have the greatest claim to comic authorship; rather, we should see if these intuitions could be supported in terms of the nature of the relation (symmetric or asymmetric) between authors in cases of collective authorship" (2012, 16). Exploring this relationship and identifying how different models of authorship work both on the page and in media responses and reception are the work of this chapter.

Anxieties over comics authorship play themselves out in sometimes painfully public ways. In 2008, the Governor General Literary Awards—one of the highest honors available to Canadian writers—nominated *Skim* by Mariko and Jillian Tamaki in the Children's Literature category. But only Mariko Tamaki was named in the nomination. Perceiving both a slight against Jillian Tamaki and a misunderstanding of how comics function, Chester Brown and Seth, prominent Canadian comics artists, published an open letter to the awards body on the Drawn & Quarterly website that quickly circulated to other comics sites and newspapers. The letter, whose supporting signatories included comics luminaries Art Spiegelman, Chris Ware, and Lynda Barry, argues that *Skim* had been read by the awards committee not as a graphic novel, but as an *illustrated* novel:

> In illustrated novels, the words carry the burden of telling the story, and the illustrations serve as a form of visual reinforcement. But in graphic novels, the words and pictures BOTH tell the story, and there are often sequences (sometimes whole graphic novels) where the images alone convey the narrative. The text of a graphic novel cannot be separated from its illustrations because the words and the pictures together ARE the text. Try to imagine evaluating SKIM if you couldn't see the drawings. Jillian's contribution to the book goes beyond mere illustration: she was as responsible for telling the story as Mariko was. (Brown and Seth 2008)

Brown and Seth articulate what comics scholars work so hard to claim: the writing and art are inseparable in a comic, and this inability to distinguish which aspects of the final product "belong" to the writer and which to the artist is what make comics function. The structure, dialogue, and art work together in producing the comic's aesthetic effects. When Mariko Tamaki is honored and Jillian Tamaki is not, the implication is that the writer governs these effects and that the penciller is a mere minion. (Incidentally, in 2014, both women were nominated, but in their respective categories of writer and illustrator; seemingly, the committee recognized the contributions of both but not the failure of their own matrix.)

And yet, readers and scholars alike work hard to unbundle the work of comics creators operating in a collaborative mode, and whether they are foregrounding the writer, penciller, or the colorist, they are doing what Brown and Seth assert they must not do. But the comics community is still so under the sway of the Romantic drive to identify the genius of the work, and perhaps it is too much to ask that awards committees recognize the futility of this desire when readers and scholars are unable to. Audiences get nervous about works of art created by a group because they drift toward a model of assembly line production associated with manufacturing are seemingly antithetical to art; because collaboration is such a feature of comics, adequate models are necessary for examining what it means to "make the marks" in a post-Romantic art form.

This chapter examines how collaborative comics artists attempt to destabilize the authorial status of the writer in their discussions of their work. This destabilization celebrates the equality of roles in collaborative comics that put the concepts of "writing" and "authorship" under pressure. When novelists write, they write words, sentences, and paragraphs. The word is the irreducible unit of the writer's creation. In comics, however, the visible words are a residue of a larger stock, the bulk of which disappears into the images that the penciller produces. The images take over from this disappeared language and generate a visual semantics of expression, juxtaposition, line, and so forth. All the language that remains is dialogue and narrative boxes. In the famous Marvel method, the writer provides a brief sketch, perhaps worked out in concert with the penciller. The penciller then draws the story with a free hand in developing the story's action and characters. Then the penciller returns the work to the writer who fills in the dialogue. Who is really the "writer" in this instance? The demystification of the writer's role in the process risks equating it with that of screenwriter for the movies: a necessary but not exactly esteemed position.

Perhaps a better distinction than writer and artist would be conceptualist and enactor. Anyone can have a concept for a novel, but the working out of that concept through producing marks on the page makes that concept meaningful beyond being a scrap of an idea. Furthermore, what is a concept if it is not inscribed, marked, or worked through? Such a question shows why the comics conversation so emphasizes the writer. Collaborative comics threaten the disappearance of the "writer" as singular creative genius and distribute the concept across all the people whose contributions affect the way the final product appears. Each contributor to the comic erases and replaces some part of what the prior contributor has produced, so that instead of the work of a singular genius, a palimpsest of contributions takes over, a work built on the ruination and supplanting of the contributors' roles. And yet, in spite of these clear acts of erasure and collective responsibility, fans and scholars fail to recognize this subtlety and nuance in favor of a comforting Romantic model of creativity that has more in common with eighteenth-century poetry than comics.

The Auteur: The Apprenticeship Model

In his analysis of the authorship role of the artists of *American Splendor*, Thomas A. Bredehoft notes "that the visual style of comics artists manifests itself to readers as an author function in ways analogous to the functioning of an authorial or narratorial 'voice'" (2011, 106).[1] Bryan Lee O'Malley's distinctive visual style marries the indie cartoonist ethos with manga, superhero, and video game visual styles to create a readily identifiable "voice." O'Malley's comics are marketed as single-author comics, and a property like the phenomenally successful *Scott Pilgrim* series is read as the creation and intellectual property of O'Malley alone.

But O'Malley's works are collaborative nonetheless; like many artist-creators, O'Malley employs a team of largely unheralded art assistants, colorists, and letterers, including (depending on the project) Nathan Fairbairn, Jason Fischer, and Dustin Harbin. In Bryan Lee O'Malley's *Seconds*, for example, colorist Nathan Fairbairn's contribution is more evident than that of assistant Jason Fischer, whose work fuses so seamlessly with O'Malley's that it effectively disappears. While avid comics readers might know these names, they get no space on the cover or billing as creators. However, O'Malley does discuss the collaborative process to a certain extent in interviews:

So it was mostly all me for about two years, and then after that - for maybe six or eight months - everyone else came on. Jason ended up staying with me for a while. We were cramming, doing 16-hour days. We did two weeks with no breaks at the very end. It was nuts. But it was actually very fruitful as a collaboration because I think he was able to bring more to the table when we were in the same room. It was a lot easier for us to bounce things, and I'd say, "Wouldn't it be cool if we drew it this way?" Even though I had the framework of the story and the panels were there, he just put more into the panels than I would have imagined beforehand. (Phegley 2014)

When asked if it is possible to tell who worked on what parts of *Seconds*, O'Malley notes "it can be hard to disentangle." Still, O'Malley is careful to assert his authorial primacy—"it was mostly all me for about two years"—and to foreground his contribution to the drawing before engaging in a discussion of the collaborative process.

In *Seconds*, O'Malley is both *a creator* and *the creator*, depending upon the definition of the term. The characters and story are his brainchild, and he is the god of this small thing: *the* creator. No one would deny that O'Malley is the "author" of *Scott Pilgrim*, but as part of a creative process, he is also *a* creator, one of a team working toward the common creation. Fischer's role is less obvious, subsumed under the O'Malley name, yet his contributions do not taint O'Malley's originality and authenticity because they are unidentifiable.

What O'Malley describes is artistic apprenticeship, where the older master trains his younger colleague(s) in a particular style. O'Malley himself trained in this tradition, working as an illustrator on *Hopeless Savages* and as a letterer for several Oni titles before headlining *Lost at Sea*. Working one's way up to authorship is common in comics, especially Big-2 comics where artists traditionally have had to master a "house style." The apprenticeship model makes it unnecessary for assistants to receive "full credit" as co-creators because they will, in time, become artist-creators in their own right; Leonardo da Vinci doesn't need credit for every Verrocchio he sketched, because he is better known for his own Mona Lisa.

But this model still places the author at the pinnacle; one's greatest achievement, under the apprenticeship model, is becoming an author oneself. Even when O'Malley foregrounds the collaborative, it is in the context of his conception and authorship. Indeed, O'Malley talks more openly about the collaborative process with comics critics than literary critics: O'Malley recently shifted from working with small comics press

Oni to the massive literary publisher Random House, which has changed the expectations of how his work is read. He is now achieving mainstream literary success as a sole creator of his work, and his readership is therefore less intimately aware of the uncredited collaboration behind the single name on the cover of the book.

Partnership Models: A Marriage of Equals?

The most celebrated collaborative mode in comics is the partnership, in which a penciller and writer become known for working with each other. The best analogy for this relationship is the idealistic notion of complementarity in a marriage, where one person completes the other. While this idea of marriage is a fantasy, it reveals people's desire for imaginary unity, which explains why this model of comics collaboration is so powerful. In traditional conceptions of marriage, the complementarity is uneven: the husband is the partner who receives the complement of the wife. In the conventional comics collaboration model, the complementarity is similarly stacked in favor of the writer who is "completed" by the artist.

However, the collaborative comics partnership is more vexed than the model of complementarity allows. In the relationship between Stan Lee and Jack Kirby at Marvel in the 1960s, comics scholars are confused to this day about who was responsible for what, with Kirby suggesting that Lee contributed little or nothing to the comics they worked on and Lee claiming the "Marvel method" as a revolutionary way of producing comics. The fact that there are so many disputes about these partnerships suggests that this kind of collaboration is more like a real marriage than a fantasy one: a site of constant negotiation over the division of labor. In fact, this negotiation, aside from any individual contribution, deserves to be the "author" of collaboratively produced comics, disrupting the typically perceived roles of "writer" and "artist" and giving the artist proper credit.

Thomas A. Bredehoft's analysis of Harvey Pekar's partnership with different artists on his *American Splendor* autobiographical comics invokes Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "heteroglossia" (many tongues) to claim that the multiple artists who work with Pekar have equal claim to authorship because their visual style is as important as Pekar's contribution to the aesthetic effect of the comics: "The heteroglossic voices we find in Pekar's works, however, cannot simply be attributed to Pekar himself: the visual styles of Pekar's artists open the door for considering them as author figures as well" (Bredehoft 2011, 99). *American Splendor* shows two types

of "stylistic coherence" working at the same time (104). Consequently, Pekar "is sometimes only the co-author of his comics works, and their status is as much biographical as autobiographical" (100).

While Bredehoft's argument has the merit of giving pencillers authorship credit, the possibility of separating a verbal stylistic coherence from a pictorial one is perhaps too neat. Dialogism in comics is much messier and blurrier than that. The writer does more than contribute words and the penciller does more than contribute images that end up in the published product. Rather, the two work together to varying degrees to produce the sequence of panels, page breakdown, character appearance, and expressions. Even in the most extreme cases, where the writer provides specific detailed instructions to the artist or where the writer provides almost none, negotiation over the way the "code" of the comic works defines collaborative authorship: drawing as a means of (re)writing as the script is only one bit of the code.

In the work of the Tamaki cousins, Jillian and Mariko, the publication information for their texts tells a radically different story than the one they put forward in interviews. In the Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication information for *This One Summer*, Mariko is the first entry as sole "author." The copyright page states that the text is copyrighted to Mariko Tamaki, while the illustrations are copyrighted to her cousin Jillian. For awards and copyright purposes, it seems easiest to uphold a convenient legal fiction about the separation of writer and artist in collaborative comics, but in the case of the Tamakis, that separation does not hold up.

Mariko somewhat jokingly says that she sketches out a story and then Jillian goes away for a year to draw it (McConnell 2014). But their collaborative process is actually an extensive back and forth discussion of how the story will appear. This exchange was more prevalent in *This One Summer* than in *Skim*, and once recognized, it makes a difference. In *Skim*, the text and the images are more disconnected, particularly in the first chapter. In fact, *Skim* started as a "floppy" comic (Berry 2014). There's a lot of text, and it appears to be written over the images rather than integrated with them. In fact, there is some justice in the idea that Jillian Tamaki is illustrating Mariko Tamaki's words in *Skim*. But with each chapter, the initially separate registers of word and image become more integrated, as if *Skim* were in a continual process of *becoming* a collaborative comic.

Speaking about the Governor General's Award, Jillian Tamaki says it is impossible to imagine a graphic novel without words (Tamaki 2014),

but the most striking pages of *Skim* are the wordless ones depicting the protagonist Kim riding the bus on the way to her infatuation, Miss Archer. The sequence and pacing of the panels, along with Kim's poses and expressions, convey a powerful message of anxiety and anticipation over time. These pages demonstrate how comics without words are not only possible but can be particularly powerful in the way they show rather than tell. But which Tamaki is responsible for the way these pages look and work? Does it matter? There are no words on them, so in terms of copyright, they "belong" to Jillian Tamaki. The audience knows that she drew them but not how much Mariko Tamaki directed the drawing, especially given how Jillian distances herself from the places and experiences that gave rise to the comic's plot. This inability to determine responsibility from looking at the aesthetic object itself is fascinating; it dissolves the distinction between writing and drawing and disrupts the conception of individual authorship. The rationale for including Jillian in any conception of authorship in both *Skim* and *This One Summer* is not only that images are as important as words in comics, but also that, as Brown and Seth demonstrate in the introduction to this chapter, disentangling the two to determine exactly what writing is in comics is impossible. The published page does not reveal that information.

In an *Inkstuds* podcast, Mariko Tamaki describes working with her cousin Jillian in entirely positive terms (McConnell 2014). She says that Jillian draws so well that working with her can be intimidating; she is grateful that Jillian accepts her as a writer because she doesn't need one and deserved to be called a writer of *This One Summer*. Ultimately, the way the Tamakis' names appear on the covers of the Groundwood and First Second editions of *This One Summer* tells a truer story of their collaboration than the copyright or library information pages. In the Groundwood edition, Mariko's name is listed on the right and Jillian's on the left. In the First Second edition, the names are flipped. Neither edition explains who did what on the cover.

One way of thinking about the partnership model is as a call and response process that moves both forwards and backwards. Typically, the script of the comic initiates the process, while the drawing responds to that script, writing backwards toward the script, sending a pictorial re-coding of it. The script only starts the conversation; it doesn't complete it. When other contributors, such as colorists, enter the mix, this back and forth becomes even more interesting. Each new element is not just a simple addition. Rather, it transforms everything that has come before it.

A case in point of this phenomenon is the work of colorist Elizabeth Breitweiser on *The Fade Out*. Ed Brubaker sends the script to Sean Phillips, who draws the comic, but then Phillips sends the line art to Breitweiser. In this particular collaboration, direction is fairly light: no contributor restricts the following one on what he or she might do. Consequently, Breitweiser appears to get a free hand in coloring the comic the way she wants, just as Phillips gets to draw it any way he likes. Phillips says Breitweiser "always surprises me with her color choices and does stuff that I'd never think of doing, and that's what makes for a good collaborator" (AV Club 2014). Thus, any analysis of collaboration has to look at all the contributors responding to and re-configuring what they have been given.

Collaborative Teams: The Overtly Feminist Model

The recent meteoric success of *Lumberjanes* from BOOM! Comics presents a model that stresses creativity distributed across a large team notable for the collaborators being women and, in some cases, also queer. The *Lumberjanes* story is significant because of the way the comic's content walks the walk of the collaborative talk. At least some of the success of *Lumberjanes* must be attributed to the fact that it does not feel like comics that have come before: it is about young people discovering their powers and having adventures, but the young people are all girls and the context is a feminist summer camp for "hardcore lady-types," where girls yell "Holy bell hooks!" to register surprise (Stevenson et al. 2014a, b, #1 10; #5 11). The characters are never sexualized, the romantic relationships are both same-sex and tentative, and the major recurring theme is collaborative success through the slogan of "Friendship to the Max!" (#1 10). The enthusiasm this comic generates in mainstream comic shops and conversations (e.g. it's a steady favorite with all major comics blogs), in an industry that had always had female readers but has rarely offered them pages where they may find themselves, should surprise no one.

"Friendship to the Max!" is the key to the achievements of all the girls in the series; they succeed almost exclusively through teamwork and encouraging each girl to contribute her best self to the task at hand. The camp pledge requires the girls "to *always* help and protect my friends," a message underscored by the camp director's admonitions to "stick together no matter what" (#1 13). In each issue, the girls get into a supernatural scrape involving yetis or bearwomen or foxes, and in each a combination of recognizing one girl's special gift and figuring out how to work that gift into the collective group allows the girls to survive their imminent peril.

Sometimes, the form of the comic itself underscores this commitment to collaboration. Chapter 9 (the issues are called chapters in this series), titled "If You've Got It, Haunt It," has the girls telling ghost stories around the campfire; the conflict in this chapter is that Jen needs to tell a ghost story to earn her "If You've Got It, Haunt It" badge and ultimately her Silver Axe pin, but she is not good at telling ghost stories. The girls tell her that she "can do so much better" and take turns trying their own hands to determine what makes a good scary story (Stevenson et al. 2014c, 4). When Ripley's story stalls, because the central character ends up alone with no one to help her, the other girls finish the story for her (and again underscoring collaboration, the protagonist is rescued by discovering her dog and cat has followed her to rescue), noting at the end, "You aren't alone, Rip" (11). The issue underscores this theme by being in itself a massively collaborative work, with each scary story illustrated (and written, in the case of Faith Erin Hicks) by a different female artist, with seven guests contributing to the issue. As a result, the art style shifts every two to three pages, and the reader is constantly reminded of the many hands making the light work of the issue. Each artist's style is affiliated with one of the girls, and just as the girls work together to help Jen and Ripley, the artists work together to make the overall narrative more effective. The work is a celebration of the collaborative process in both form and content.

And yet, marketing demands put pressure on the *Lumberjanes* creative team to deviate from this all for one, one for all approach. In the comics press, *Lumberjanes* is primarily affiliated with Noelle Stevenson, as she handles the majority of the interviews for the series. Stevenson is credited as both co-author and co-creator of the series. She shares creation credit with Shannon Watters and Grace Ellis, and writes Chaps. 2–9 with Ellis, changing to co-write with Watters from Chap. 10. For Chaps. 2–9, the illustration credit goes to Brooke Allen, who in Chaps. 2–9 is also co-credited alongside Stevenson for character design. After Allen departs the series and beginning with Chap. 10, the credit for character design disappears completely: artists continue to follow in the framework of Allen's art, but credit for her contribution is elided. Allen's departure should not be read in nefarious terms: the series was originally only conceived of as an eight-issue arc, and Allen's work was contracted through that period. But it is interesting that, though Watters and Ellis retain creator credit throughout the series, Allen's credit as character designer has an expiry date.

Of course, this is no different from any other mainstream episodic comic. The artistic staff shifts are part of the expectation of comics consumption; readers anticipate that artists will serve for specific runs while writers maintain their commitments to a title, character, or storyline for much longer. But why assume that the artist is transient and the writer permanent? Again, there is a tendency to privilege literary modes in the production and reception of comics, particularly Romantic expressionist theory that stresses the genius of narrative conception over the "craft" of materializing that conception. In spite of the protestations of Seth and Chester Brown about the equality of words and images, the comics world, not just the publishing and non-specialist media worlds, reinforces the truism that comics art is cheap, shoddy, and disposable. In this logic, Noelle Stevenson is *Lumberjanes*, while Brooke Allen merely worked there once. This assertion does not intend to accuse Stevenson and *Lumberjanes* of anything but falling back into patterns of thought about writing and authorship that are difficult to escape even with the best efforts.

Even though Stevenson tends to dominate the media discussion of *Lumberjanes*, she does disrupt masculinist auteurism because the comics world, particularly its more commercial territory, has an anxiety over female authorship and feminist and queer-centered comics. The collective offers a buffer to that anxiety. Noelle Stevenson is no Brian K. Vaughn, another authorial superstar in comics whose name has more pull than the artists he works with (who remembers Pia Guerra's name in relation to Υ *the Last Man*?). She is still early in her career, and *Lumberjanes* and the forthcoming print edition of her webcomic *Nimona* represent her first major titles. She is just the sort of comics artist to trigger a defensive response from traditional quarters. Social media was in a stir in late 2014 as creators and fans responded to "The Sponsor" by James Sturm, a webcomic that acutely demonstrates the depths of anxiety over a young female comics artist who manages to succeed; Sturm's comic, about a frantic male comics artist obsessed with the notion that his success is limited by the success of a 21-year-old female artist with a popular online following, struck a chord with cartoonists all over the world (Sturm 2014). Many female creators noted the gendered nature of the anxiety, while many male readers of the comic rejected any misogynist reading of the comic. Tessa isn't literally Noelle Stevenson, but she isn't *not* Noelle Stevenson, either; Tessa stands in for every female comic artist who is seen as a dilettante, as less serious than her male counterparts, producing what "The Sponsor" calls "online crap" that is mere "distraction." This episode demonstrates

that the Romantic notion of creativity and authorship is deeply invested in that creativity and authorship being masculine.

The rhetorical positioning of *Lumberjanes* as collective and collaborative is an effort to subvert not only the hierarchy of traditional creative roles in comics but also to subvert the repressive gender norms supporting that hierarchy. Consequently, *Lumberjanes* provides a possible model of collaborative authorship as a team in which each person's abilities contribute and combine to form a conscious alternative to traditional hetero-masculinist comics.

Conclusion

In spite of the fact that the "writer" of the collaborative comic tends to get the most authorship credit, the writer's role is the most problematic and most difficult to measure. The range of what is possible for a comics writer extends from the Alan Moore model, which gives extensive directions to his artist from page layout to minutiae, to a model where the writer provides a plot sketch and dialogue, leaving the rest of the creative decisions to the penciller. Even for Alan Moore, much of what the writer "writes" disappears during the production of the work. The extent of Moore's instructions is only accessible from interviews and scrutiny of his notes. The reader of *Watchmen* gets only the resulting working through by the artist, inker, colorist, and letterer. In this sense, the comic book writer assumes a distance from the work that simultaneously makes him or her more mystically powerful *and* more dependent on the work of others. Until Alan Moore learns how to draw, his works are destined to hang on the talents of others.

Comic book writing thus supports Roland Barthes's point in his 1968 essay "The Death of the Author" perhaps even more than typical literary texts do: "writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where the subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" (1977, 142). In comics, the identity of the writer not only "slips away" into writing but into the line of the artist's pencils. Ironically, the penciller's style may be more singular and identifiable than that of the writer. Barthes associates the author with "the prestige of the individual" (143) and capitalist ideology, and his explanation helps understand why discussions of comics privilege the "writer" so much: "The *author* still reigns in histories of literature, biographies

of writers, interviews, magazines, as in the very consciousness of men of letters anxious to unite their person and their work through diaries and memoirs." The primacy of the "author" rather than, say, the work is a powerful ideology that is difficult to dislodge and easy to adopt.

In the purest form of this ideology in comics, the artist merely enacts or depicts the writer's concepts. He or she does not produce any concepts of his or her own or interpret those concepts in a meaningful way. The artist is an extension of the writer's brain; the artist's hand is the writer's hand as a kind of technological extension. While thinking of comics artists in this way has certainly been on the wane, it persists when considering the role of the assistant, and this chapter's earlier discussion of Bryan Lee O'Malley's assistant Jason Fischer in *Seconds* bears this out. Unlike Hockney's assistants who do not make any marks, Fischer contributes to the work but in an "invisible" way. He is a legitimized forger. Nevertheless, Fischer's role makes any critical discussion of individual artistic merit in *Seconds* dangerous. Imagine celebrating the line work of a particular panel as an expression of authentic O'Malley style, only to find that most of it had been done by Fischer. A fine arts critical approach to *Seconds* might cause a critical industry to emerge whose function is to distinguish O'Malley's work from Fischer's. This is the problem that Matthew Cain is trying to get at with his question to David Hockney: if the assistants make marks, how can viewers distinguish them from the true Hockney marks?

Collaboratively produced comics, even those where an *auteur* uses assistants, challenge these notions of authorial authenticity. The tendency to valorize the "writer" is merely a phantasm to cover up the fact that it is impossible to say which contributor is most responsible for the aesthetic effects of the work. In *Seconds,* the work of colorist Nathan Fairbairn is particularly powerful. His reds and browns threaten the line work for prominence. Collaborative comics, examined closely enough, dissolve notions of authorship. Roland Barthes argues that the death of the author means the birth of the reader, the only agent capable of giving the work coherence and unity. The tendency to valorize the writer of a comic may simply be a fantasy transposition of one's own position as receiver of the work onto an ideal producer of that work: the author as an ego-ideal reflection of the reader.

Ultimately, these questions of authorship do matter in terms of how audiences perceive the comic book. This chapter outlines a range of possible methods and modes of collaboration, but the very form of comics destabilizes the notion of authorship. From the reading experience, it is

impossible to deduce authorship. When readers and critics privilege the writer of the comic, they are privileging the least visible part: one can see immediately the contribution of the letterer, colorist, and artist, but only part of the writer's contribution is visible. What audiences privilege when they privilege the writer is actually the *concept* underlying the comic; this is the misdirection of comics, because like authorship, the conception cannot truly be deduced from the final product.

NOTE

1. See Jared Gardner's "Storylines" (2011) for a similar point about the comics artist's "line" as narratological feature.

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Drawing Fatherhood: The Working Father Figure in the Autobiographical Graphic Novels of Guy Delisle

Roei Davidson

The oeuvre of the graphic novel author Guy Delisle provides a unique window into the relationship between work and personal life in graphic novel creation and in cultural work more generally. In two books set in two non-Western countries, *Chroniques de Jérusalem* (2011) and *Chroniques Birmanes* (2007), Delisle considers his experiences as an expat father and graphic novelist, while at the same time depicting daily life and political realities in fraught locations. In another series, *Le Guide du Mauvais Père* (2013–15), he focuses more specifically on fatherhood.

CULTURAL WORK

Leaving aside his fascinating depiction of how political power invades daily life in Jerusalem and Myanmar (Delisle and Verschuuren 2014), these books are an opportunity to consider the tension between private and work life which is a hallmark of cultural work and of late modern work more generally (Hochschild 2001). Often there is a tendency for cultural work to colonize private time (Davidson and Meyers 2016; Hesmondhalgh and

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Baker 2009). The intermittent nature of cultural work takes on addictive aspects (Rowlands and Handy 2012) and leads workers to forsake private obligations for work duties. Contemporary media industries make intense demands on workers to take constant risks to promote themselves and their workplaces (Neff 2012). Through his visual and written narratives Delisle's captivating accounts suggest a way in which such tensions are experienced and navigated by one father who works as a cultural producer.

Creative work is often funded by alternative income sources. Poets devoted to their art must frequently work in other occupations to support themselves (Craig 2007). Several graphic novelists and comic artists also suggest that "a day job is necessary to provide stability and insurance" (Johnston 2013; see also Ware 2014). In a 2014 interview, Delisle suggests that he had unintentionally succeeded in turning graphic novel writing into his main occupation, allowing him to stop working in animation: "[W]hat I did for pleasure, that is books like *Shenzen* and *Pyongyang*, worked well, and what I did while telling myself that 'I have to make a living' didn't work out at all. I therefore chose the first option" (Delisle and Verschuuren 2014). In addition, his graphic novels suggest that additional financial stability and the opportunity to focus his work on unique locations were provided by his partner's work in a medical NGO. It is in this context of relative financial stability that these autobiographical narratives should be considered.

Fatherhood and Work

Many societies have rigid normative expectations regarding male employment. First and foremost, there still exists an expectation that fathers should serve as the main providers for their family and should therefore spend the majority of their time outside the house at work. In addition, occupations are gendered, and men who choose nontraditional careers resort to various strategies to legitimize their choice by relabeling a career as more masculine or emphasizing its "maleness" and "distancing [themselves] from female coworkers" (Heppner and Heppner 2009, 54). Conscious of the moral dimensions of parenting, some stay-at-home fathers also emphasize part-time employment and masculine unpaid work in the household (such as home maintenance) and in the community (such as leadership roles in their children's school) (Doucet 2004).

Nevertheless, a new model of involved and self-reflexive fatherhood has developed alongside the persistence of these distinctions, and fathers often

hold to contradictory fathering identities simultaneously (Humberd et al. 2014). This mirrors the conflicting demands made of women since the end of the twentieth century to take on traditional domestic responsibilities while simultaneously being active and successful in the formal labor market (Douglas 1994; Crymble 2012). Some findings suggest that stay-at-home fathers tend to be more ideologically liberal and less tied to other men as a reference group. Many report enjoying and benefiting from serving as the main care-giver (Heppner and Heppner 2009) while maintaining traditionally masculine interests and hobbies (Rochlen et al. 2008).

Neoliberal capitalism tends to invade the family and forces parents to contend around the clock with external economic demands, which in turn demand constant engagement with external actors though social media (Wilson and Yochim 2015). Parents—both fathers and mothers—raise their children in a media-drenched environment. While both parents and children consume media avidly, work on "parental mediation" has mostly studied how parents deal with the prominent presence of media in their children's lives and how it might draw children's attention away from parents toward the mediated environment (Clark 2011). Delisle's work provides an opportunity to focus on the additional challenges parents face when parenting in a mediated environment.

Analytic Approach

I take a symbolic interactionist approach to analyze Delisle's account of graphic novel writing and fatherhood. This approach argues that our identities are formed in the process of interacting with others. People strive to maintain particular identities in their private and public lives in a manner reminiscent of actors playing a particular character on stage (Goffman 1959). As creators' understanding of their work shifts in relation to the situation in which these understandings are produced (Fine 1996), so should the discourse about creating graphic novels evident in Delisle's books shift depending on the situation in which the characters are placed and—indirectly—depending on the context in which the books were produced. This chapter is based on an analysis of the two Delisle series. I read these books with a focus on themes of parenting and situations in which the author's character interacts with other characters around the author's identity as a graphic novelist. In addition, as is common in qualitative analysis of text, my intensive encounter with these texts generated a discussion of an additional theme related to the author's attempts to secure

spatial and temporal autonomy from family duties. As I read the books, I tagged relevant panels thematically, and then in the process of writing up my interpretation I returned to these tags to provide illustrations of my interpretative claims.

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Prominent Themes

The Distracted Parent

The jackets and covers of all three volumes of the *Mauvais Père* series have a consistent theme. In all of them, the narrator (Guy) is immersed in media while ignoring his fatherly duties. This sometimes results in rather serious consequences. This is an especially prominent theme given the role covers have in Franco-Belgian *bandes desinées* (BD) in attracting readers and setting a book's theme and narrative ambitions (Groensteen 2007). In the front jacket illustration of the first volume (Delisle 2013), Guy is reading a book, a steaming mug at his side. He is unaware that his young daughter, Alice, is reaching out her hand to touch an iron. On the front cover, the scene has changed: the mug is lying on the floor with a puddle of liquid beside it and the iron is on the floor. It looks like Guy and his daughter have left in a hurry to tend to the daughter's injury. In the second volume (Delisle 2014), he is watching what appears to be a violent and loud film on TV while his children are peeking from behind a door that is slightly ajar. Later in the narrative—on the cover—all three are asleep, the dad on the couch and the two kids on the floor beside the door. In the third volume's front jacket illustration (Delisle 2015a), the dad, his daughter on his shoulders, is approaching a doorway staring intently at a tablet or phone. On the cover, the daughter is sitting stunned on the floor with Guy's foot just about to disappear from view. Other jacket and back cover scenes show the dad playing a video game or pushing a stroller with his headphones on, unaware of his son saying: "Look, Dad! A flower."[1] In another scene, he sits at a café with his son strapped to his front in a baby carrier. This scene of paternal intimacy is subverted by the newspaper the dad is reading, which is covering the baby's face. In only one of these

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[1] All translations are my own except in the case of "Burma Chronicles," for which I refer to the English translation (Delisle 2008).

scenes (Delisle 2013, 1) is the dad visibly at work, sitting at a drafting desk ignoring his children's calls from outside the scene.

This dynamic is also central to the opening story of the series. In the story, titled "The Tooth" (Delisle 2013, 3–23), the dad forgets twice to exchange a tooth his son has placed beneath his pillow with a coin. In both cases, the father's media consumption is implicated in his absentmindedness. In an opening scene, the son approaches his father to verify that the exchange of tooth for money will indeed take place. The dad, depicted in front of his laptop, promises it will indeed take place, and by the time the son reacts enthusiastically, he has already turned back to his laptop. Then, on consecutive nights, the dad and mom slump in front of the TV. On the second night, apparently binge-watching, Guy asks his spouse whether they should "watch a third [episode]?" Only after twice forgetting does Guy remember to carry out his tooth fairy duties. Another story titled "Punctuality" (Delisle 2014, 178–191) is set in the kitchen. In it, Guy's son, Louis, sits his backpack on his knees while Guy is drinking his coffee and reading the paper. Guy dares his son to stay cool and be late for school but ends up being stressed out himself. In a bonus image offered to buyers of the third volume of the *Mauvais Père* series, Guy is studying his phone while his two kids struggle to carry their bursting school bags (Delisle 2015b).

All these graphic narratives constitute a perceptive inversion of the literature on parental mediation. While that literature focuses on how children's immersion in media distracts them from family interactions and suggests that parents take proactive steps to divert children's attention away from media consumption, these narratives suggest that frequently it is the parents' immersion in media that distracts them from interactions with their children. While this dynamic could be generalized to apply to many families, it might be especially prominent among parents who produce culture for a living and are therefore especially invested in the media they consume. Its prominence might be heightened further by the difficulty culture-producing parents have in demarcating their work from other aspects of their life in space and time. It is to these two themes in the work of Guy Delisle that I will turn next.

The Search for Spatial and Temporal Autonomy

Guy Delisle's struggles to secure a work space for himself are evident in the two foreign chronicles he created as a parent. In *Burma Chronicles*, in

a story titled "Home (Almost) Sweet Home" (Delisle 2008, 27–30), Guy, his wife Nadège, and their young son Louis find a more comfortable temporary residence. In two consecutive panels, as he explores the house, he notices a desk and wonders: "Maybe I can get back to work. I don't mind playing housedad for a while, but I'd like to get drawing again" (28). In a later story, after moving to a more permanent address, the author provides an overhead chart of the house to show that the parents' bedroom has a separate door leading outside and diagrams the external route he could take from the main door through the yard to the bedroom, which doubles as a work room. In the next panel, Guy waves a smiling goodbye to his son as he exits the house: "[this] means that mornings, I get to look like I'm going to work," he notes and, in a speech bubble, tells his son: "See you later! Daddy's going to work!" (40)

Yet despite the separate entrance, the room's location makes it difficult for Guy to achieve spatial autonomy. In a story titled "Good Old Pablo" (Delisle 2008, 42–43), he complains about the housekeeper, who insists on tidying up his desk and who once leaves an ink bottle capsized on one of his projects. Following the ink accident, in a panel featuring a door with the sign "Access prohibited at all times," Guy predicts "I'll wind up like Picasso" (43). In the following four concluding panels which depart from the more realistic depictions characteristic of these chronicles, "dust accumulates" (43), and Guy's character is clad in the distinct horizontal stripes Picasso was known for. In the two final panels, channeling Picasso, Guy receives under the door of his picture-filled atelier a note from his wife noting that the artist Jean Cocteau had dropped by. Guy in his Picasso outfit reacts: "Ah, that pain in the butt!" (43). The imagined nature of this sequence suggests that, fantasies of autonomy aside, Guy cannot consistently establish spatial autonomy for himself and his work.

This trope is replicated in *Jerusalem Chronicles*, in which Guy, now a father of two, struggles to secure an autonomous work space for himself. In a story titled "The Opposite Colony" (Delisle 2011, 52–56), the smiling Guy is about to sit down at his desk and take advantage of his children's school to begin working on a blog when the housekeeper enters with her "horrible son." After complaining to his wife over the phone, and trying to work despite the noise, he decides to take a walk outside "before [I end up] killing someone." The interfering house-cleaner character reappears later in the book to interrupt Guy, who is yet again trying "to advance work on a new project but with the children watching television nearby it is not ideal for concentrating" (Delisle 2011, 134). In

the final third of the book, which chronicles month by month his year in Jerusalem, he secures a chance to study in a well-known church-hospital complex in East Jerusalem thanks to a comics-loving priest. In one of the final pages of the book, he notes as he packs his possessions: "Ah la la … leaving such an atelier is terrible" (327). In both chronicles, the fight to secure "a room of one's own" (Woolf 1929) is continuous, and victory is fleeting.

Autonomy also has a temporal dimension. Guy presents moments when he can savor the "happiness of working in the evening when the house is empty and everything is calm" (Delisle 2008, 256), only to be interrupted by outside distractions such as a choir singing Christmas carols outside his house. The temporal demands of fathering are even more salient in *Jerusalem Chronicles.* In a story titled "The Logistics of Daily Life" (Delisle 2011, 48–49), the author describes the scheduling challenges that emerge when his children study according to different schedules in distant parts of congested Jerusalem in an education system that has a relatively short school day in comparison to France and other Western countries. In a panel in which he is depicted pouring himself a cup of coffee at home, he notes that his driving responsibilities "leave me with a few hours in the morning to advance a new project." However, being productive within a constrained schedule is difficult and so in the next panel he is depicted snoring, his head on a table. In a later panel, the conflicting schedules of his wife and children are represented by tiny monthly calendars, the weekends of each shaded in gray, while his calendar is shaded throughout the month with this comment above it: "As for me, I do what I can when I can do it." In the final panel, at the end of a long day, Guy is slumped on a couch while his daughter energetically climbs onto another and his son asks him: "What can we play, Daddy?" The panel is ironically titled: "In sum, the exciting life of a housewife." In another story, the nanny has resigned and the children are on vacation. Delisle represents the overwhelming presence of his children typographically by showing Louis' speech bubble directed at his dad crowded to almost bursting with words as—in the same panel—Guy wonders "why I always feel like they are continuously on vacation" (240). Finally, a story titled "Monday Morning" (Delisle 2011, 94–97) depicts a visit to an ultraorthodox neighborhood. In it, Guy notes that the average Jewish orthodox family has seven children and compares it to his own parenting experiences: "I can imagine very well, me who is exhausted with only 2, what the daily life of these women must resemble."

In the latter third of *Jerusalem Chronicles*, after securing the church atelier, Guy ponders his attempts to balance work and parenting in Jerusalem in comparison to Myanmar:

> When arriving in Israel, I thought I would be in a situation similar to the one in Burma where I had lots of time to work on my projects. After three months of teeth gnashing I had the good sense to accept the situation as it presented itself and put my work to the side and take things as they come. I therefore accepted something like a sabbatical year, spending time with the kids, doing sketches, blogging, exploring the surroundings. (Delisle 2011, 226)

In this passage, as in other portions of the book, the temporal demands of parenting conflict with the time a focus on work requires, illustrating the time bind present in the life of most parents trying to balance parenting and work (Hochschild 2001). This bind is perhaps especially fraught for parents whose work is not demarcated spatially or temporally.

"It's not a hobby. It's what I do for a living."

Throughout the corpus of Delisle's books, the fragile occupational identity of a graphic novelist is shaped by his encounters with various actors in his environment. The questionable professional standing of such work echoes other types of cultural work such as journalism that struggle to attain professional status because they lack a recognized corpus of occupational knowledge and skills (Singer 2003). Three separate stories emphasize this tension, along with the insistence, "It's not a hobby. It's what I do for a living" (Delisle 2008, 90).

In "The Nice Drawing" (Delisle 2013, 140–151), a classic interaction between a father and his child is gradually subverted by the father's occupational insecurities. In the story, Guy is busy working when his daughter Alice brings him a drawing she made. His first smiling reaction is typical: "marvelous," initially, and later: "you are a real artist, you know … one day you will make *bandes dessinées* like your dad." However, as the story develops, Guy emphasizes the "hard work" involved in creating BDs and then veers toward a sustained and increasingly negative critique of his daughter's drawing style, warning her that she would never win a prize Guy had in fact won with the kind of drawing technique she was using. This critique culminates with a now angry Guy delivering a tirade against

"those little pretenders that emerge (pètent) like stars and that don't even know how to hold a crayon … those wankers … just a bunch of wankers." While this does not seem to be an attempt at a realistic representation of a graphic novelist's interaction with his children, it does seem to be an expression of the internal insecurities shared by many cultural workers which result from working in fields that are based on a skill-set shared by most adults and many children.

A later story in the series titled "Scientific" (Delisle 2015a, 154–163) bears similar narrative characteristics. As with the previous story, it centers on a common parent-child interaction that begins normally and becomes more trying over time. In this second story, Guy's son, Louis, asks his dad a scientific question: "Is it true, Dad, that the moon is attracted by the earth and that it will end up falling on us?" At first, Guy answers reasonably, citing the notion of gravity. However, he later suggests that the force of gravity will cause the moon to eventually be "head high," to which his son suggests: "this would make a nice story for *The User's Guide to Neglectful Parenting*," and "you could note that in your little notebook." Guy, visibly angrier, tells his son that he might be better at astronomy but in terms "of finding good ideas for a story, I believe that I have quite an advantage; after all, who is the one who won a 'fauve d'or'[2] at Angoulême? Is it you or is it me?" He also mentions this win in the previous story. I would argue that this self-deprecating self-representation does reflect the difficulty many cultural workers face in legitimating their work—based, as it is, on common skills such as drawing and storytelling.

Another story, "Baby Group" (Delisle 2008, 90), echoes fraught interactions stay-at-home dads have reported experiencing in survey and interview-based research. When in their role as stay-at-home dads they meet with other parents, often moms, to provide their toddlers with some needed social interaction, they feel out of place and sometimes even stigmatized (Fischer and Anderson 2012). In the story, Guy and his son Louis are invited to a "huge" house for a playdate. The parents, all mothers, congregate on one side on sofas eating canapés and sipping white wine while the nannies and children sit elsewhere on a mat. Guy, the only nannyless parent, shuttles between the two. In a series of three panels, Guy and one of the mothers, glass in hand, chat amiably when the conversation

veers toward the predictable topic of work. "I draw comics," says Guy, and the mother replies, "Ah, lovely… What a nice hobby," to which Guy replies, "It's not a hobby. It's what I do for a living." In the final panel of the story, "after having gone to the baby group regularly," Guy recapitulates this distinction as he and Louis exit a car in front of their much smaller house: "But it's not just a hobby, it's my job."

In another episode in *Burma Chronicles* titled 'MSF Doctors without Borders,' Guy participates in an interaction that emphasizes his status as an outsider. In it, Guy has a drink with some foreign NGO workers because "after a day at home with Louis" it was an "opportunity to have some adult conversation," but he does not contribute to the conversation because they are discussing their work. He explains to the readers: "the only news I have to share is that City Mart just received a new shipment of Japanese diapers." That panel shows him alone facing us with no other people visible, suggesting that this is a conversational contribution he doesn't really make. It seems that his domestic responsibilities set him apart from other adults.

Being a Manly Father

Returning to the flap and cover illustrations, another theme echoes research on stay-at-home dads. On one of the inside back flaps, Guy is using a power tool, eye protectors on, as his children are calling him (2014). This illustration continues the cover and flap theme of paternal distraction, this time with a masculine dimension. Similarly, in a front-flap illustration (Delisle 2013), Guy, baby in a harness, urinates on a wall. In addition, in a story recounted in the same volume titled "Bricolage," Guy makes his son stop playing a video game to help him do some plumbing (2013). He tells his less than eager son that "at your age we were more creative. We made bird traps. We tricked-up bikes" (173–174). All these passages echo studies that have found that stay-at-home dads tend to take up masculine activities as a way of counteracting social perceptions that they are not masculine given their focus on the traditionally feminine domestic sphere.

In parallel, *Burma Chronicles* emphasizes the craft and physical aspects of graphic novel writing. As noted above at the baby group, Guy tells one of the mothers that his writing is not a hobby but rather a "métier" (Delisle 2008, 91), which could be translated into "craft" in English. In another story, Guy decides to "authorize a little sick leave for myself" due

to an aching arm he was suffering from (2008, 121). Though he got the injury doing sports, the injury keeps cropping up as he works. I would interpret this emphasis on physical discomfort, as well as the structured break he takes after finishing a writing project, as an authentic means of highlighting the demanding aspects of a craft some might erroneously consider easy. Some scholars have suggested that the physical aspects and particular skills involved in craft work, as well as the existence of objective evaluative criteria, make craft a potentially satisfying pursuit for workers. Craft also inserts the worker into multiple communities, including a particular community of craftsmen and women (Crawford 2010). This communal dimension is evident in both *Jerusalem Chronicles* and *Burma Chronicles*, in the many interactions Guy has with communities of comics artists and art students. Such communal activities are crucial in other fields for proving one's commitment to one's creative community (Craig and Dubois 2010).

Conclusion

The books interpreted here show how the identity of graphic novelists is forged through the interaction they have with their social environment. When such interactions are absent one feels at sea; when they take place they are a means by which cultural producers can create social boundaries between their work and their domestic responsibilities and between the dilettante attempts of amateurs and the serious commitment of the professional (Lamont and Molnar 2002).

Guy Delisle's books reflect both verbally and visually, seriously and in jest, the difficulties cultural workers face in their daily lives as they try to navigate family, work, and social expectations. The constant quest for autonomy and social standing is shared by many cultural workers, even when they enjoy their parenting responsibilities immensely. The books suggest that finding peers and fans invested in your craft is crucial for one's emotional well-being. These peers and fans provide a professional anchor amid one's parental obligations and sometimes help to secure the physical conditions necessary for cultural production.

The coping strategies presented in Guy Delisle's books are especially relevant to those cultural workers situated at the very beginning of the cultural value chain: those producing the initial text that is later processed and distributed by firms of various sizes. These workers are not embedded in stable bureaucracies and therefore must seek out their own networks

and strategies of support. They are, as Delisle illustrates, in a continuous battle to prove to themselves, their children, their spouse, and many others that they are, in fact, at work.

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Under the Radar: John Porcellino's *King-Cat* Comics and Self-Publishing as Cultural Work

Paddy Johnston

Root Hog or Die: The John Porcellino Story, a 2014 documentary, draws to its conclusion with a scene in which Porcellino describes a conversation he once had with his father about cartooning. "My dad eventually realized I'm a cartoonist," a middle-aged Porcellino explains, "but his thing was … why can't you do *Luann*? Or…*Garfield* is funny, everyone loves it. You could do that! My dad would read *King-Cat*, and we would talk about it … he totally understood the whole [*King-Cat*] thing, but he would say 'you could come up with your own Garfield,' because he wanted me to not be suffering" (Stafford 2014). The scene is introduced by a silent title frame, white, smooth, sans serif text on black, using this phrase to preface Porcellino's description of his father and his father's perception of his cartooning, ensuring a narrative payoff and the sting of irony when Porcellino repeats the phrase, "you could come up with your own *Garfield!*"

The inclusion of cats is, more or less, the only link between *Garfield* and Porcellino's *King-Cat Comics and Stories*, his handmade zine and ongoing life's work, which celebrated its 75th issue and 26th year in 2015.

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Although perhaps not a figure well-known outside of the community of alternative comics and creators—a "cartoonist's cartoonist"—Porcellino's influence is felt far and wide throughout Anglo-American comics. His ethos and approaches to work, craft, production, distribution, and consumption predated and helped to lay the foundations for the rise of the alternative cartoonist and the growth of the lone alternative cartoonist as a figure worthy of critical acclaim and cultural merit. Despite this influence, however, Porcellino still flies largely under the radar, operating within a do-it-yourself (DIY) culture far removed from *Garfield*, a syndicated strip cartoon read by millions of American households at the peak of its fame. The choice of the Garfield quip as the title for the concluding section of *Root Hog or Die*, then, is self-aware, and the irony wrought by Porcellino's description of his father's perception is sharp. The largely relaxed but still nervous Porcellino, wearing a headband, hood, and heavy checkered jacket indoors, is casual here about the physical and mental effects of his work on *King-Cat*, but for his father to notice he was suffering, these effects must have been severe. Why, then, when there exists the potential for him to create commercially successful syndicated strips, would Porcellino voluntarily submit to suffering and continue indefinitely?

The answers to this question lie in the culture of working as an alternative cartoonist and in particular as a cartoonist invested in zine culture and the ethos of DIY creation and production, as well as the impulse to archive and the desire to communicate the self through a visual medium, both of which grip Porcellino and are depicted explicitly throughout the many issues of *King-Cat*. These answers are also extrapolations of the material culture of comics, and especially alternative comics, understood here as those which grew from the underground comics (and/or comix) movement of the 1960s and 1970s and began to undergo processes of legitimation, largely based on institutional contexts, along with cultural and material changes such as the graphic novel format in the 1980s through to the present day.

This chapter examines Porcellino's comics in this context, while also furthering the reading of comics as cultural work and the viewing of cartoonists, with Porcellino as a case study, as cultural workers, concluding that self-publishing and DIY production and distribution are culturally significant activities, the implications of which are significant for Anglo-American alternative comics. I will present a reading of Porcellino as a lone auteur, choosing to self-publish for reasons of freedom of personal expression and other related factors inherent in the culture of alternative

comics and DIY creation. This reading will, consequentially, provide a key insight into the culture of zine-influenced alternative comics and self-publishing, advancing scholarly understanding of comics as cultural, and complex, work.

"The Feeling of Simply Being Alive": The History of John Porcellino and *King-Cat*

John Porcellino began self-publishing *King-Cat* in 1989, inspired by other zines and by the culture of DIY storytelling, centered on local venues and music scenes in his hometown of Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Beginning as a rambling avant-garde expression of the then 20-year-old Porcellino's angst and troubled mind, *King-Cat* has grown over its 75 issues to become a regular series of resonant autobiographical stories and a pillar of the alternative comics community. In the words of Chris Ware, on whom Porcellino has been a great influence despite his rough style being the antithesis of Ware's meticulous and clinical precision, "John Porcellino's comics distill, in just a few lines and words, the feeling of simply being alive" (Porcellino 2007, dustjacket). This quote appears on the dustjacket of Porcellino's first hardcover collection of works published by Drawn & Quarterly, *King-Cat Classix*, as well as on his website, www.king-cat.net, which reflects the lo-fi aesthetic of his cartooning. While this quote's statement is certainly true retroactively and is helped in its realization significantly by the comics in Porcellino's subsequent collections with Drawn & Quarterly, *King-Cat*'s format and content in its early years did not suggest this assessment might ever be made. The earlier zines, the best of which are collected in *King-Cat Classix*, are mostly bizarre accounts of Porcellino's dreams, lists of his top 24 things that month or given period, wacky stories in which crude anthropomorphic animals commit crimes, testosterone-driven sexual fantasies, and simple, uncomplicated narratives of wholly autobiographical stories. His lines are ratty, defying the visual paradigms of comic art. His letters are childish, sometimes italic, kerned irregularly, betraying an unsteady, unpracticed, and unfocused hand. His figures are simplified, driving the reader's connection with the characters toward Scott McCloud (1993)'s idea of the iconic in comics. Porcellino's grasp of anatomy is clearly underdeveloped for a good number of years into his cartooning career. The story itself is quotidian at best; yet, there is, as Ware asserts, an alchemical distillation of the essence of comics art and

its narrative resonance inherent in Porcellino's work, and it is this which has brought him cult popularity and modest fame.

Image and text, in the early *King-Cat* comics, work together to emphasize minutiae, to focus on individual moments of thought and preoccupation, and to create a comic in which the expression of Porcellino's own mind, creativity, and self is of the utmost importance, working at odds with the idea of developing craft and instead developing the idea of self. In his own introduction to *King-Cat Classix*, after acknowledging the rawness and self-indulgent weirdness of his early work, Porcellino (2007, 5) writes:

> I wanted to publish something that I could make all on my own, that could contain whatever I wanted, that could reflect my whole life. Something that would be a direct personal statement from me to the world… If there was one common thread that carried through those pages, it was this: that whatever it was, it was me trying to be true to myself at the time. Whether it was happy, sad, blissed out or desperate—whatever—it was okay… Somewhere along the line, *King-Cat* went from being something I do for fun, to something I do, to what I do. *King-Cat* became my life. Or rather, I saw that King-Cat and my life were not two separate things.

The hardcover book's dust jacket confirms this: "King-Cat Classix presents an artist who has always known what he wanted to do" (Porcellino 2007, dustjacket). Porcellino's self-assessment above is little more than another *King-Cat* story, albeit one reduced to its bare bones by virtue of not requiring the hybrid working of text and image and thus frankly asserting Porcellino's self-driven approach to cartooning that is apparent from his expansive body of work.

This desire to "do what he wanted to do" has led to the continuation of *King-Cat* as a self-publishing enterprise. Despite Porcellino's work with established comic publishers Drawn & Quarterly and La Mano (an indie press run by fellow cartoonist and musician Zak Sally), and even a one-off graphic novel adaptation of Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* for Hyperion, his *King-Cat* stories are always self-published in his zines first. In fact, with the exception of his 2014 standalone graphic novel *The Hospital Suite* and the aforementioned Thoreau adaptation, all of Porcellino's works that exist in book (rather than minicomic, pamphlet, or zine) format are collections of his self-published *King-Cat* comics. These collections are either chronologically curated retrospectives (*King-Cat Classix, Map of*

My Heart, both Drawn & Quarterly) or themed collections, including the slim, coming-of-age memoir paperback *Perfect Example* (also Drawn & Quarterly) and the labor and pest-control autobiography collection *Diary of a Mosquito Abatement Man* (La Mano).

Despite there being over 20 years between the conception of *King-Cat* and the standalone publication of *The Hospital Suite*, the differences are subtle, betraying an artist who has been driven by the continuation and expansion of his vision for self-expression rather than by attempts to master a craft or bring his visual representations of people closer to reality through verisimilitude, anatomical or otherwise. There is a progression visible in terms of the steadiness of hand, the straightness of the line, and the regularity of the lettering: all aspects of the craft which are likely to become more refined over such a length of time through force of habit and regular use of tools and techniques, perhaps more than any conscious attempt to better oneself as an artist. However, the essence of Porcellino's art, and of his visual storytelling, remains the same: sparse black and white lines simply detailing moments from his life with particular emotional resonance. This is in keeping with his explicit desires in relation to *King-Cat's* production—that it should be an expression of his life.

For such a specific, personal, and principled ethos to be fully realized as part of a lengthy and successful career (albeit one not without its significant struggles), Porcellino will have had to overcome various cultural challenges in terms of production, distribution, and consumption, most notably to do with his commitment to self-publishing and independent, DIY distribution, all of which are activities that can, drawing upon earlier scholarship on comics and cultural work and the existing scholarship on comics as work within the field of comics studies, be read as cultural work.

Precarious Conditions and Uneven Rewards: Self-Publishing Comics as Cultural Work

In December 2013, the comics studies website Comics Forum ran a special series on "Comics and Cultural Work" (see Brienza 2013), a series from which this book was developed. I contributed an article to this series that examined the portrayals of labor in the collaborative comic *Conversation #2* by autobiographical cartoonists Jeffrey Brown and James Kochalka (Johnston 2013). Brown and Kochalka are two cartoonists upon whom John Porcellino has had a significant impact, and his influence is felt keenly

in their autobiographical stories, publishing strategies, and visual styles. *Conversation #2* depicts Brown and Kochalka complaining to each other about the tension between their respective day jobs and compulsions to create art, ending in an argument and resolution between the two avatars as together they celebrate their own abilities to create the comics they are compelled to create. I concluded that Brown and Kochalka were comfortable with the idea of an artist having a day job to pay the bills, as long as one can, in James Kochalka's words, find a job that "doesn't want to make you vomit" (Brown and Kochalka 2005, 34). Nevertheless, both had to consider and overcome the economic and practical concerns of labor and economic capital before they could become successful and effective cartoonists, whether this was by deliberately conceiving of their comics as labor or separating their production in the field of comics from the accumulation of economic capital entirely and providing for themselves with the economic capital acquired from an unrelated day job.

The preceding article in the series by Benjamin Woo asserted, drawing on Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, that it is difficult to conceive of comics as labor because the labor of cartoonists is obscured by the capitalist systems which they operate, and also that when comics is conceived of as labor, as *a job*, they are jobs with "precarious conditions and uneven rewards" (Woo 2013) but which come with autonomy, a significant concern for cultural workers. This is especially true for alternative comics, which grew historically from the underground comix movement's championing of freedom in the context of the perceived creative constraints of the Comics Code and the production-line process of mainstream comics at the time. John Porcellino, as a consistent self-publisher, has a significant amount of freedom in comparison to many of his peers, but this is complicated by numerous other factors surrounding his cartooning, notably the need for an alternative cartoonist to have numerous streams of alternative revenue while building a career if they wish their income from cartooning to eventually become significant enough to provide a living.

Freedom and autonomy are concepts that hold significant weight in the study of cultural work. In the context of the Comics Forum special series and the study of comics as cultural work this book aims to advance, anyone involved in the cultural production of comics at any level (letterers, inkers, colorists, printers, flatters, distributors, booksellers, publicists, marketers, editors, and more) should be understood as a cultural worker in comics, with the end product of a comic bearing "signs of co-operation"

(Becker 1982, 1). This allowance has the potential to complicate delineations between cultural work and other forms of work but also here facilitates an assessment of comics as a cultural object, as well as complicating the emergent reading of the alternative cartoonist as an auteur who minimizes these cultural contributions through the process of self-publishing and DIY production and distribution.

Prior scholarship on cultural work provides numerous further examinations of workers in the creative industries, which are useful when conceiving of comics as work and examining them as such. David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker cover cultural work extensively in their book *Creative Labour* (2011) and have also written about the working conditions of those engaged in the industries of television production, broadcasting, and journalism, which are here understood as cultural work, just as cartooning and self-publishing comics are. In an article for the journal *Poetics*, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010) survey a number of workers in the aforementioned industries, the vast majority of them freelance, and find through interviews and surveys that the pay is low, the hours are long, and the terms of employment are precarious and insecure across the board. However, they find that autonomy is the trade-off. In contrast, Mark Banks (2007, 55) writes that "to be (or to *appear* to be) in control of one's destiny is what encourages workers to endorse the systems put in place to expedite flexible production (*italics* mine)." This idea, in which subjective autonomy and freedom in terms of the worker's own personal fulfillment are given precedence over objective financial and personal security to become the chief concern of the cultural worker, is one, I would argue, inherent in the conception of comics as work and one that has driven numerous decisions made in the production and distribution of comics—and zine-influenced alternative comics in particular.

Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010)'s key phrase, which neatly concludes their assessment of freelance cultural workers and provides the title for their aforementioned article, is "a very complicated version of freedom." This phrase encapsulates the reasons for choosing freelance cultural work as an occupation, as well as the aspects of it which facilitate its culture, particularly when applied to the ideas of DIY and to zine culture. These are the cornerstones of John Porcellino's outlook and ethos, prefiguring what would become the culture of contemporary alternative comics. Just as those working in the British broadcast media voluntarily submit to precarious economic conditions in return for autonomy in their actions, choices, and creations, so too does the creator of alternative comics submit to ever more

precarious conditions, often sacrificing the accumulation of economic capital completely, for the autonomy to realize a singular and all-encompassing creative vision driven by their individual selves. In my view, comics, as a field of cultural production, embody the complexities of this dynamic more intensely than the majority of fields studied elsewhere in the context cultural work. These complexities are well-demonstrated well within the field of alternative comics by John Porcellino's works and by his status within the culture of comics as a figure who has accumulated significant cultural capital while struggling to accrue economic capital as a consequence.

Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) also introduce a key complication and tension inherent in the conception of autonomy, drawing on Raymond Williams and Pierre Bourdieu to present a reading of autonomy as largely ambivalent but also conceived of complex historical pressures. Significantly, although autonomy is posited in this book, in comics studies, and elsewhere as an opposition and site of resistance to late capitalism's "increasingly greater interpenetration between the world of art and the world of money" (Bourdieu 1996, 344), autonomy has historical roots in mercantilism and, significantly, is often read as bourgeois. This likewise has significant implications for John Porcellino and alternative comics.

Comics Studies, Alternative Comics, Publishing, and Legitimation

Charles Hatfield's 2005 book *Alternative Comics*, although it overlooks Porcellino in favor of his contemporaries, hints at the importance of autonomy within the field of alternative comics. Contextualizing alternative comics as growing from the underground comix of the 1960s and 1970s with their "pungent critique[s] of American consumerism" (Hatfield 2005, 12), he supports the ideas of autonomy and auteurism driving the movement of alternative comics, here exemplified by John Porcellino: "In essence, comix made comic books safe for auteur theory: they established a poetic ethos of individual expression… Today the privileging of self-expression in alternative comic books is a very strong tendency—the rule rather than the exception—and alternative comics publishers favor the comic book as a 'solo' vehicle for the individual cartoonist" (Hatfield 2005, 17–18). Similarly, Roger Sabin (1996, 178) describes the mainstream as being characterized by "profit-driven escapism," a phrase which is the very antithesis of John Porcellino and *King-Cat*.

It must be noted that Hatfield's phrase "alternative comics publishers" as applied to those who support and drive the elevation of self-expression could certainly be exemplified by Drawn & Quarterly, which, aside from publishing Porcellino's collections, is famed for publishing auteur and autobiographical cartoonists similar in ethos to Porcellino such as Julie Doucet, Adrian Tomine, Lynda Barry, Daniel Clowes, Seth, and many other such leading figures in the field of alternative comics. Equally, this phrase and the weight of cultural assumption that it carries could apply to Porcellino as a publisher or, rather, as a self-publisher, privileging his own expression above all else and creating a publishing operation to sustain that idea as part of a wider comics landscape. Porcellino becomes a lone auteur and retains the essence of autonomy (with its bourgeois and mercantile histories) and self-expression that characterizes his life and work, whether he self-publishes or publishes with Drawn & Quarterly. Either way, the ethos and vision remains intact—another indication of the clear differences between the cultures of mainstream and alternative comics that Porcellino exemplifies.

Porcellino's choice to work mostly in autobiographical cartooning is also one that facilitates a reading of his cartooning as pure self-expression; the genre of autobiography has been inextricably tied to the cultural legitimation of comics and is viewed as a marker of authenticity, a necessary component of a successful and resonant self-expression such as in comics like *King-Cat*. Alternative comics's focus on autonomy and autobiography carries a promise of legitimacy for comics as a result of auteur theory having been prevalent in film (Beaty 2009).

This links to Hatfield's assertion that alternative comics opened the art form to auteur theory using post-structuralist theory and Foucault's assertion that "the author-function continued to exist to the extent that the concept upheld bourgeois sensibilities about art" (Beaty 2009, 229). In alternative comics, a majority of cartoonists work in autobiography because of these cultural promises, and Porcellino is no exception to this: in fact, his autobiographical stories foreground realism (in contrast to the formerly dominant traditions of fantasy in comics) and thus demand legitimacy and cultural acceptance.

Beaty (2009) underscores the reading of autonomy as bourgeois and is therefore more easily sought by those not othered by cultural and socioeconomic conditions. Porcellino is, after all, a straight, white, well-educated male who grew up in Illinois in economically and socially stable conditions, as evidenced by the quiet, green suburban scenes of *Root Hog*

or Die, a documentary which moves at a slow pace concurrent with its shooting in such suburban areas. The reminder here of autonomy's inherent tension—between its roots in mercantile individualism and its reaction against late capitalism's drive toward utilitarian exploitation—echoes Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011)'s reading of autonomy's ambivalence and contradictory nature (2011, 63) and is directly applicable to comics and thus to Porcellino.

Interestingly, Porcellino's emphasis on self-expression does not betray any conscious awareness of his attempt to seek legitimation. This lack of awareness is, perhaps, the reason why Porcellino has not been canonized in the same manner as his contemporaries (e.g., Chris Ware, Daniel Clowes, Alison Bechdel) and has received very little attention within the field of comics studies and within broader scholarship. Porcellino's vision of self-expression, although it sits contextually within alternative comics and within Beaty (2009)'s assessment of autobiography as a genre fulfilling a promise of legitimacy, is one free from concerns of institutions, the materiality of books, the graphic novel format (at least at the beginning of his career, and his primary outputs), and any concern, in fact, except chronicling and emotionally archiving Porcellino's own life. In this sense, Porcellino is atypical though by no means unique; there have been other zine makers, creators of minicomics, and underground cartoonists with similar visions. What makes Porcellino a unique case study, then, is his significant contribution to alternative comics's legitimation while still retaining his DIY ethic. Or, to put it another way, he is the only cartoonist who has been consistently self-publishing a zine for 25 years who receives the publicity of a hagiographic quote from Chris Ware printed on the dustjackets of his collected books. And, it would seem, only a true auteur and bastion of self-expression in comics could manage this feat, this bourgeois pose.

By his own admission, Porcellino has found working with publishers challenging, but he has nonetheless worked to achieve mutually beneficial relationships. Nevertheless, he views them as another outlet for his self-expression rather than as a necessity or an institution from which he stands to gain the legitimacy that Beaty (2009) suggests can be conferred upon comics through bourgeois promises. In an interview for the comics podcast *Make It Then Tell Everybody*, Porcellino discussed publishers with host and fellow cartoonist Dan Berry: "It definitely took me a while to adjust [to working with a publisher], and I think I can diplomatically say that it took some of the publishers a little while to adjust to me"

(Berry 2014). The fact that this adjustment did happen, however, is an indication that Porcellino is not a self-saboteur and does not deliberately allow the complexities of his version of freedom to stand between him and his expression. It seems that if working with Drawn & Quarterly will allow for a new avenue of fulfilling expression, retaining the auteurism inherent in his work with differences largely to do with materiality and publishing formats, Porcellino feels his cultural work to be largely uncompromised. Thus, his publisher affirms his autonomy *and* its bourgeois associations, legitimating his individualism *and* allowing it connect with its capitalist imperative to sell books.

Porcellino is quick to assure Berry, on the podcast, that Drawn & Quarterly are easy to work with: "You can't ask for a more artist-friendly publisher than D&Q … they have suggestions but … they don't say 'you can't publish this' or 'you can't do that'" (Berry 2014). The phrase "artist-friendly" is the most significant here, assuring listeners that Porcellino's number one concern is always his own welfare and treatment, implying that other publishers are not so artist-friendly and are corporate and commercially driven. The podcast interview also made Porcellino's suspicion of commercialism and profit clear, as he concluded the discussion of trade publishing: "Just by the nature of the way these things [zines vs. books] are presented, they're going to reach different people. And my goal as an artist is to reach the people who need to be reached. The books give me the opportunity to do that on kind of a different scale but in a different market, almost … if I can use such a crass word" (Berry 2014). The conception of the word "market" as a crass word is one that holds weight for the producers of alternative comics. However, in the wider context of commercialism and the economy in which Porcellino's publishers operate, the concept of a "market" is an essential one that cannot be ignored. Porcellino will be aware of this, but his engagement with it, like his engagement with publishers, distributors, and readers—indeed every person involved in a comic in the long chain from production to consumption—he thinks to be on his own terms. He can afford, where so many other cartoonists cannot, to dismiss the idea of a market as a crass one because his artist-friendly publishers allow him to do so, as does his success in self-expression and singularity of vision. And it is this contradictory quality of both the content of his comics and his approach to their culture, I would argue, that makes Porcellino a such compelling case study in comics and cultural work.

Conclusion and Discussion

Clearly, Porcellino can be understood as a cultural worker operating under the guise of a "very complicated version of freedom," one who manages to achieve a level of simplicity in his self-expression that makes his comics, as cultural works, unique objects in the field of alternative comics. In the call for chapters for this book, Casey Brienza and I asked whether we can "understand any work of comics art if we know nothing about the myriad varieties of cultural work that went into its creation?" (Brienza and Johnston 2014) In this, we invoked the idea that all art evidences human cooperation and collaboration at various levels (Becker 1982), an idea requiring exploration within comics scholarship because a "narrow auteurist vision of production" has frequently dominated the field (Brienza and Johnston 2014).

However, in the case of John Porcellino, the phrase "narrow auteurist vision" is one which *can* certainly be applied to his own vision of the creation of his comics, and such a vision is unlikely to be detrimental to an understanding of the creation of his comics art, as it may be in the case of mainstream comics. Despite the assumption that mainstream comics are responsible for the auteurist readings that dominate critical assessments of comics (such as the canonization of Alan Moore, Neil Gaiman, and other writers), auteurism appears to be a more useful idea when applied to readings of alternative comics, where autonomy is of great cultural importance. The idea of "a very complicated version of freedom" is complex due to the tension between the desire for the freedom to realize a singular creative vision and the necessity of supporting oneself materially in a society beset by neoliberal conceptions and exploitation of labor. However, in the case of John Porcellino, his freedom is almost absolute and as such is not as complicated as a reading of alternative comics as cultural work may render them. Through dedication, drive, and vision, Porcellino produces his art, and it stands for his own self-expression, though such visions must be situated within a critical reading of autonomy and individualism as bourgeois (Beaty 2009; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011).

Still, there are vestiges of the delineation between cultural work and other forms of work complicating the production of Porcellino's *King-Cat* comics, most notably in *Diary of a Mosquito Abatement Man*. Throughout the book, the labor itself—the long hours pumping chemicals into Midwestern swamps, silently killing mosquitoes en masse —is portrayed as meaningful and engaging, given the same visual poetics as any other aspect

of Porcellino's life as expressed in his comics. In the majority of stories that portray Porcellino's work in pest control, with which he had a teenage fascination, the work itself is a fact of life, an aspect of his being as natural and immovable as driving, gazing at the stars, or taking his dog for a walk. However, the penultimate and climactic anecdote in the book, "Mountain Song," does demonstrate that, for all his plaudits, and his ability to build a career in comics from his own singular creative vision, Porcellino is not immune to the concerns of everyday, straightforward labor and cannot fully escape the concerns of non-cultural work. At the end of "Mountain Song," Porcellino quits his job as a mosquito man, ostensibly because he can't keep killing mosquitoes with a clear conscience. Porcellino is seen, in his mosquito man hat, thinking over the dilemma, saying to himself, "this is a good job… I make good money… I get four months off every year" (Porcellino 2005a, 84). This panel is replicated in numerous other *King-Cat* anecdotes about work, in which the tension between labor's necessity and its effects on cultural production is an occasional theme. The story concludes with Porcellino telling his boss, as he quits, that he "want[s] to try to earn a living as an artist" (Porcellino 2005a, b, 93). Then he drives into the sunset, the story ending abruptly with no indication as to whether this particular economic dream ever became a reality. As such, the anecdote ends with a tension hanging between the lines of its final panel, a tension between cultural work and non-cultural work, and between competing forms of capital.

In an interview for the Domino Books blog, however, Porcellino's idea for dealing with the exploitative commercial monopoly on distribution held by Diamond is shown to be, like his cartooning and his approach to the complex pressures of being a cultural worker, straightforward and free from the apparent complications betrayed in *Diary of a Mosquito Abatement Man*: "As someone who comes from a DIY background, the answer is clear … you make your own system" (English 2011). Porcellino has done this with his own one-man distribution operation, Spit and a Half. Alternative cartoonists have been making their own systems since the 1960s and driven the expansion of their field of cultural production through their own systems, whether these are systems of distribution, production, or consumption. Despite the inherent complexity of the creation of these systems wrought by commercial, economic, and cultural pressures, the seemingly simple solutions, such as Porcellino setting up a distribution network based entirely from his own home that now stocks up to 1000 titles, rely on singular visions and individualized drive and

thought. Perhaps, therefore, when conceiving of alternative comics as cultural work, the narrow auteurist vision of production cannot be scrapped just yet—at least not in the case of John Porcellino, whose auteurist, individualist vision of himself and his life's work informs the production and content of his comics at every level. Or perhaps not. Not everybody has the space to warehouse those books, and Porcellino is privileged in this regard. Finally, as Porcellino points out in the introduction to *King-Cat Classix*, he eventually "saw that *King-Cat* and my life were not two separate things. Maybe that sounds hifalutin', but maybe it's true" (Porcellino 2007, 5). This demonstrates that, were Porcellino to ever attempt to come up with his own *Garfield* as his father suggested, he would fail, as such a mainstream, syndicated comic strip does not fit into Porcellino's life, and his life is *King-Cat*.

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Bearing Witness and Telling It How It Is: Dialogue and Collaboration in the Creation of *Dans les griffes de la vipère*

Annick Pellegrin

On July 11, 2011, I conducted my very first interview on French soil. On what turned out to be pretty much the only scorching hot day of an otherwise miserably cold and rainy summer, I met Vehlmann, the current scriptwriter of the series *Spirou et Fantasio* [Spirou and Fantasio], as part of the fieldwork for my doctoral thesis, a comparative study of representations of Latin America in French, Belgian, Argentinean, and Mexican comics. During the interview, and in answer to a direct question, Vehlmann stated, without giving much away, that Spirou (the hero of the series) might visit a Latin American country in the future. I did not press for more information and made a mental note to keep an eye out for a graphic novel set in Latin America, but I did not yet know that he would enlist my help the following month.

Vehlmann's invitation to contribute to what became *Dans les griffes de la vipère* [In The Viper's Claws] (Yoann and Vehlmann 2013) gave me some insight into how the artist Yoann[1] and Vehlmann work, and this chapter seeks to bear witness to the various types of dialogues involved in the creation of this graphic novel. While it covers my perspective as a

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bande dessinée scholar and Latin Americanist, as well as how Vehlmann dealt with my comments and suggestions, this chapter goes further. Based on numerous conversations and email exchanges with Vehlmann since 2011, it seeks to bring to light the place that collaboration and dialogue hold in Vehlmann's work as a whole, the different people and stages involved in the creation of a graphic novel like *Dans les griffes de la vipère*, and how the scriptwriter manages the comments of his various interlocutors while still telling his story. Although Vehlmann himself has recently shared how he works in special issues of the journal *L'École des lettres* [The School of Arts], the scope and aims of this chapter differ from those of the papers penned by Vehlmann himself. Indeed, in his first paper, Vehlmann shares how he approached the creation of several of his works in general in terms of mixing reality and fiction to maintain a certain credibility (2013–2014, 69–79), and in the second, he explains how he went about telling the life of a character with whom he has almost nothing in common while relying on historical facts (Vehlmann 2014b, 2015, 63–68; Vehlmann and Sagot 2013).

Spirou, Spirou et Fantasio, Marsupilami, and Latin America

For almost a century, the creation of comics set in Latin America has been something of a tradition in France and Belgium. Considered the last survivor of golden age *bande dessinée* magazines (Dayez 1997, 117) and the historical rival of the magazine *Tintin, Spirou* was first published in 1938 by Dupuis and has been the home of many bestselling series, among which are *Lucky Luke, Les Schtroumpfs* [The Smurfs], *Spirou et Fantasio,* and *Marsupilami.* According to Jacques Gilard (1992), it is precisely in these rival weeklies that *bande dessinée* stories set in Latin America were pioneered. Although countless *bandes dessinées* have been set in Latin America since *The Adventures of Tintin* and the equally famous *Spirou et Fantasio*, this region continues to be primarily represented by fictional countries.

Spirou et Fantasio is rather particular in the Franco-Belgian world of comics in that the copyright of the series is held by the publisher, Dupuis. The series is therefore entrusted to either an author or a team of authors for a certain time before being passed on to another author or team of authors. While many great names have left a lasting impression as authors

on the series, Franquin is quite possibly the most revered. Although, as his very first adventure shows, Spirou was created to work as a bellboy at the Moustic Hôtel (Rob-Vel 2003, 3), Franquin transformed Spirou and his clumsy sidekick Fantasio into well-traveled adventurers and journalists. Nowadays, although Fantasio is still a journalist, Spirou earns a living by being the face of Dupuis and he is bound (by a contract) to wear his bellboy uniform (Yoann and Vehlmann 2008).

The Latin American countries in *Spirou et Fantasio* are Palombia, its neighbor Guaracha, and, most recently, Aguaschatas. The former two were created by Franquin, and both Palombia and the marsupilami first appear at the end of *Spirou et les héritiers* [Spirou and the Heirs] (Franquin 1952). Originally described as strong and ferocious, the marsupilami is a fun-loving, friendly, and protective animal (Franquin 1952, 53–63). This egg-laying amphibian mammal has a simian appearance, a distinctive long tail, and leopard-like fur. Since their first appearance, both Palombia and the marsupilami have held an important place in the series, and many more adventures have been set in Latin America: Franquin created *Le Dictateur et le champignon* [The Dictator and the Mushroom] (1956) and the acclaimed "Le Nid des marsupilamis [The Marsupilami Nest]" (1960) alone, as well as *L'Ombre du Z* [The Shadow of the Z] with Jidéhem and Greg (1962); Tome and Janry created *L'Horloger de la comète* [The Comet Watchmaker] (1986) and the unfinished "Zorglub à Cuba" [Zorglub in Cuba] (2011, 5–12); Morvan and Munuera created *L'Homme qui ne voulait pas mourir* [The Man Who Did Not Want To Die] (2005) and then, with Yann's help, *Aux Sources du Z* [The Origins of the Z] (2008); and Yoann and Vehlmann created *Dans les griffes de la vipère* (2013). As for the marsupilami, they exited the series shortly after Franquin stopped drawing Spirou's adventures. He retained copyright of the characters (Bocquet 2010, 19–23), and in 1987, he sold it to Jean-François Moyersoen, the future founder of Marsu Productions (Bisson 2014, 21). Marsu Productions was purchased in 2013, but contrary to what was announced in the news (Dupuis 2013), it was acquired by Media Participations (the group that owns Dupuis) and not Dupuis itself. Marsupilamis and Palombia are at the center of two spin-offs—-*Marsupilami*, from Franquin (2002) to Batem and Colman (2014), and *Marsu Kids*, from Wilbur and Conrad (2011) to Wilbur and Conrad (2013)—and there have been several screen adaptations of *Spirou et Fantasio* and *Marsupilami*.

Vehlmann and Collaboration

Vehlmann debuted as a scriptwriter for *Spirou* in late 1997 with short stories such as *Délicieux frissons* [Sweet Shivers], which eventually became the first in the series *Green Manor*, illustrated by Bodart. Nowadays, his best-known series are probably *Spirou et Fantasio* with the artist Yoann and the saga *Seuls* [Alone] with the artist Gazzotti. A film adaptation of the latter series is expected for 2016 (Cuyer 2014). *Dans les griffes de la vipère* is the 53rd graphic novel of the classic *Spirou et Fantasio* and the fourth *Spirou* graphic novel created by Yoann and Vehlmann. With the exception of the deliberately bad *Bob le cow-boy* [Bob the Cowboy] first created under the pen name Toccard (2000, 41) and a page-long episode of *Seuls* for a special issue of *Spirou* that he scripted, illustrated, and colored alone, Vehlmann is essentially a scriptwriter, and as such his work is therefore inherently collaborative: it usually involves some degree of collaboration with at least one artist. Also, in addition to artists and fellow scriptwriters, there are many more people who contribute to his writing process, including publishers, sources and anonymous contributors. In the case of *Spirou et Fantasio*, the anonymous contributors who sometimes comment on the work include the authors' respective partners; their designer, Fred Blanchard; and their former colorist, Hubert. Readers' reactions are taken into account as well, but they are a delayed form of feedback in the sense that Yoann and Vehlmann use these reactions to inform the creation of subsequent issues.

The Publisher

Vehlmann's first two readers, and those whose opinions hold the most weight, are the artist and the publisher. From the publisher, Vehlmann expects an editor's support, which is usually provided by the directors of the relevant collections within the publishing house. Vehlmann and his various collaborators are always accountable to the publisher and to readers. This is as true of *Seuls* as it is of *Spirou et Fantasio*. As Yoann and Vehlmann did not create most of the characters of the latter series, it is particularly important to include a discussion with Dupuis, the publisher and copyright holder of the series. When the authors are granted permission to use the marsupilami, for example, as is the case for the 55th installment of the series, this involves even more discussions with even more copyright holders in order to ensure that the spirit of this iconic character is respected.

Collaborators

The term "collaborator" here refers exclusively to co-authors (scriptwriters and/or artists) who are paid for their work and whose names appear on the graphic novel covers. Vehlmann's oeuvre can be placed on a collaborative spectrum, and the figure below is my attempt to place all of his major works in comics so far on this spectrum (see Fig. 11.1).

The leftmost position represents the complete absence of collaboration and the rightmost position represents "extreme" collaboration. For instance, although he was not the sole author of *Les Cinq Conteurs de Bagdad* [The Five Storytellers of Baghdad] (2006), Vehlmann was in complete control of the story insofar as the artist, Duchazeau, had agreed to illustrate the script as it was. Thus, this graphic novel is placed quite far left on the spectrum. *Green Manor* (Bodart and Vehlmann 2010) is similar, since the artist did not request alterations to scripts but only illustrated those that he liked. On the other end of the spectrum is *Jolies Ténèbres* [Beautiful Darkness] (2009), co-created with the team of authors known by the common pen name Kerascoët and nominated for an Eisner award in 2015. The original idea for this graphic novel came from Marie Pommepuy, one of the Kerascoët team, and Vehlmann compares his role in this collaboration to that of a midwife, as he put himself completely at the service of Pommepuy's story.

Vehlmann places most of his major works in the center of the spectrum, albeit still with varying degrees of collaboration. The works on the left tend to be earlier works and the center and rightmost works tend to be more recent.[2] This increasing tendency toward collaboration and dialogue are due to both circumstances and Vehlmann's changing views. Vehlmann's early short stories were all scripted without a specific artist in mind as this person was designated by the *Spirou* editorial team. In addition, Vehlmann was initially unwilling to discuss his scripts and expected artists to illustrate his scripts exactly how he had imagined them. The reason behind such a stance was a paradoxical mixture of pride, lack of confidence, and over-idealization of artists' abilities. Collaborations such as the one with Bonhomme on *Le Marquis d'Anaon* [The Marquis of Anaon] (2002, 2008) forced Vehlmann to truly think about the driving force behind a character's decisions. Although this was a rather painful exercise and Vehlmann felt, at the time, that the finished product was somewhat lacking due to the concessions that he had made, he now looks back on the experience as a positive one.

Not
collaborative
•*Bob le cow-
boy* [Bob the
Cowboy]
•*La
Disparition
(encore)*
[The
Vanishing
(Again)]

•*Seuls* [Alone]
•*Spirou et
Fantasio*
[Spirou and
Fantasio]
•*I.A.N.*
•*La Nuit de
l'Inca* [The
Night of the
Inca]
•*Des
lendemains
sans nuages*
[A Cloudless
Future]
•*Wondertown*

Extremely
collaborative
•*Jolies
Ténèbres*
[Beautiful
Darkness]

•*Green Manor*
•*Les Cinq Conteurs de
Bagdad* [The Five
Storytellers of
Baghdad]
•*Sept psychopathes* [7
Psychopaths]
•*Coïncidences*
•*L'Herbier sauvage*
[The Wild Herbarium]
•*L'Île aux cent mille
morts* [Isle of 100, 000
Graves]
•*Paco les mains rouges*
[Red-Handed Paco]
•*Dieu qui pue, dieu qui
pète* [Stinky God,
Farting God]
•*Le Diable amoureux*
[The Devil in Love]

•*Samedi et
Dimanche*
[Saturday and
Sunday]
•*Les Derniers
Jours d'un
immortel* [Last
Days of an
Immortal]
•*Voyage en
Satanie* 1
[Journey in
Satania 1]
•*Le Marquis
d'Anaon* [The
Marquis of
Anaon]

Fig. 11.1.   The collaborative spectrum

Having grown more confident in his ability to find an alternative if the
artist requests changes, Vehlmann now values dialogue and considers that
since he chooses to work with a specific artist for his or her drawing style
and abilities, it is important to give the artwork the space it requires. Thus,
while having very strict control over the script for *Green Manor* enabled
him to maintain a lot of precision in the dialogue and in the construc-
tion of the plot (which is important for a *noir* series like *Green Manor*),

Vehlmann now laments the fact that the tight control he had over *Les Cinq Conteurs de Bagdad* [The Five Storytellers of Baghdad] (2006) constrained Duchazeau's artwork. Moreover, he believes that a happy artist will work well, which is important as it is the artist who spends the most time on the graphic novel. This is not to say that he accepts any request indiscriminately but rather that he takes it into consideration, defends what he considers to be important to the story, and changes what he believes can be improved, as his priority is no longer to keep his original idea intact but rather to create the best graphic novel he can create with a given artist.

Sources

Vehlmann's openness to dialogue goes further, and it is increasingly common for him to solicit help from outsiders. These people (his sources) are not to be confused with collaborators: they are *not* co-authors and are *not* paid for their contribution; they are, however, usually thanked in the front matter. Turning to sources helps Vehlmann to ensure that certain details in his stories are accurate, as well as to obtain information quickly and step out of his comfort zone. In addition, he sometimes finds that his own work takes a different turn as he discovers a universe that was heretofore unknown to him.

While it may seem that the main risk of relying on outside sources is choosing to follow a path or an idea that will not sell, Vehlmann asserts that this is a risk taken with every publication regardless, and it is the author's and the publisher's responsibility to ensure that the work is marketable. The risks linked to relying on sources are more on the plane of human relations; although these conversations usually go well, there is always the possibility of sources overestimating their contribution to the graphic novel, and Vehlmann seeks to avoid misunderstandings that could lead to hurt feelings. However, he reserves the right to use the information provided in any way he sees fit, and the only work to date in which he took his sources' feelings into consideration regarding what to include or withhold is *L'Herbier sauvage* [The Wild Herbarium], as the content of this collection of short illustrated stories is quite personal (sources entrusted him with information about their sex lives). For this rather particular work, he is open to the possibility of *not* publishing a story if he is unable to modify it to respond to a source's reservations.

Yoann and Vehlmann's Spirou Goes To Latin America

When I interviewed Vehlmann, *La Face cachée du Z* was being prepublished in *Spirou* (Yoann and Vehlmann 2011, 5–11), and although he and Yoann had not created a graphic novel set in Latin America, I wanted to interview them not only as the current authors of the series but also because I had greatly appreciated their graphic novel *Alerte aux zorkons* [Zorkon Alert] (2010). As I had explained at the International *Bande Dessinée* Society conference in Manchester a few days before meeting Vehlmann, in my eyes, *Alerte aux zorkons* is nothing less than the anti-L'*Horloger de la comète* (Tome and Janry 1986), a graphic novel that casts Latin America as triply backwards compared to Europe (Pellegrin 2013, 63–110).

Vehlmann is a very generous conversationalist, and while the interview went very well, I did not expect to become one of his sources. Very briefly, the sequence to which I contributed opens with Spirou and his friend the journalist Seccotine talking in a square of the capital city of a Central American country. Pursued by a man with countless financial, legal, and technological means at his disposal, Spirou has escaped to the Republic of Aguaschatas and is keeping a low profile in her capital city. Seccotine has brought him money and a fake passport to help him return to Europe, but Spirou is still unsure how he will fight against this new foe. It is not long before Spirou's squirrel Spip spots two badly disguised mariachis (in reality Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agents) in the square, and Spirou, Spip, and Seccotine run away as the "mariachis" and two more CIA agents chase after them, shooting left, right, and center. Seccotine and Spirou quickly part ways, and despite the latter's best efforts to lose the CIA agents, they continue to follow hot on his heels. Spirou realizes that there is a chip on Spip, which he removes and throws away in a hurry while still running. Unaware that Spirou has rid him of the chip, the CIA agents break into a patio where the chip has landed, all guns ablaze, and announce, "CIA! Personne ne bouge…? [CIA! Nobody move…?]," only to find themselves face-to-face with six very large and disgruntled police officers. One of them greets the agents with "La CIA, vraiment?… L'agence qui prend notre pays pour la cour de récréation des USA? [CIA, really?… The agency that takes our country for the playground of the USA?]." The sequence closes with the incarcerated agents pleading "we love le Guatchatcha! [sic]" (Yoann and Vehlmann 2013, 27–30).

Vehlmann first emailed me regarding *Dans les griffes de la vipère* on August 25, 2011 because he was considering sending Spirou very briefly to Palombia, and he wanted to avoid certain clichés. In my thesis, I consider the ways in which time/space configurations are used to distance Latin America from Europe, question the hypersexualization of Latin Americans, seek to make sense of the apparent jumble that is *bande dessinée* Latin America, interrogate *bande dessinée* authors' marked interest in Latin America, and identify the various comics considered. Having read *Alerte aux zorkons* (Yoann and Vehlmann 2010) and knowing Vehlmann's interest in gender studies, I was not concerned about the first two considerations. I therefore raised the question of what I then termed the "salade russe [the mishmash]"—a term arising from the fact that fictional countries like Palombia tend to be a patchwork of Latin America—and expressed a wish for a more restricted region as model for Palombia. (I recognize, however, that some patchwork countries, such as Hergé's San Theodoros (1976), are quite internally coherent.) I suggested readings such as Gilard's article (1992) on *bande dessinée* Latin America, Néstor García Canclini's *Hybrid Cultures* (1995), and my own work on *Inodoro Pereyra* (Pellegrin 2010a) and *Tintin* (Pellegrin 2010b). There followed a swift email exchange about the location of Franquin's Palombia. Franquin (2006, 142) drew a map on which Spirou's sidekick Fantasio clearly points to a landlocked country found roughly to the northwest of Brazil, and in an interview, he explained to Numa Sadoul (1986, 106) that the toponym Palombia comes from Colombia ("dove" translates as "colombe" or, less commonly, "palombe" in French and "paloma" in Spanish). However, there is a mismatch between the official location given by Franquin and his obvious sources of inspiration: culturally, Palombia is clearly based on Mexico, a country that Franquin knew well.

On September 30, 2011, Vehlmann emailed from the USA to request suggestions for a name for a capital city. At that point, he had decided upon Guaracha because Palombia has accumulated several layers of interpretation and representation over the years both in *Spirou et Fantasio* and *Marsupilami*, and also because the story required a country with a coast on the Atlantic. I promptly reminded him that Morvan and Munuera had used Guaracha in *L'Homme qui ne voulait pas mourir* [The Man Who Did Not Want to Die] (2005) and that the information provided by these authors suggested that it was a Central American country. In the end, Vehlmann decided to invent a country

based on Guatemala and asked for suggestions for names for a country *and* a capital city. I submitted a list of possible country names, and Vehlmann picked Aguaschatas. Like Palombia, the name Aguaschatas ended up being an inside joke for people who can speak both Spanish and French: "aguas chatas" translates literally as "eaux plates [still waters]," but the name was put together to mean that the waters are as calm as a millpond, which is quite funny as the last time Spirou is seen before he reaches Aguaschatas, he is on a small craft that is being battered by huge waves (Yoann and Vehlmann 2013, 23/6). As "eau plate" means "still water" in French, Vehlmann requested a name for the capital city along the lines of "la pétillante [the sparkling one]," in reference to sparkling water. I found this name quite beautiful, as someone who is "pétillant" is lively, and suggested "chispa," a word that can be used when referring to the bubbles in a sparkling drink or in the expression "echar chispas [to set off sparks]."

Six months later, Vehlmann contacted me once more as he sensed some uncertainty on Yoann's part regarding what sources to use to illustrate the pages set in Aguaschatas. Since I agreed to help out, he sent me the script for these pages, and upon reading them, I had some concerns. As Vehlmann was interested in hearing them—and had some questions regarding the credibility of certain details—we discussed them two days later. It was quite clear to me that Gilard's and García Canclini's works, as well as our email exchanges, had been taken into consideration, and in my eyes, the script contained several gems. As such, the concerns I raised were small, and the plot, in essence, remained unchanged, although Vehlmann altered some of the settings and scenes—after consulting with Yoann—in response to my comments. One such change is the outfits worn by the badly disguised CIA agents. They were originally meant to wear ponchos. As I had some reservations due to the fact that there are several types of wraps across Latin America, Yoann and Vehlmann (2013, 28/6) opted for *Men in Black*-like suits mixed with mariachi outfits. The use of ponchos might have stuck to a well-established cliché much more directly, but the mariachi outfits mark Aguaschatas as *not* the same as Mexico, a point that Vehlmann wanted to make quite clear. I was relieved to see that in the final version Vehlmann's idea is not entirely lost as ponchos, *zarapes,* and sombreros are absent from the streets of Chispa, giving an image that is quite distinct from the overabundance of such clothing items that Gilard (1992, 122, 124, 128) so laments.

PUTTING THINGS INTO PERSPECTIVE

I wish to emphasize that I was a source for Vehlmann in the above instance, not a collaborator. The extent of my input was limited inasmuch as the final decision remained, of course, with the authors, and it was always very clear to me that any changes brought to the project were discussed with Yoann. Moreover, while Vehlmann showed me a part of the script and revealed enough for me to guess at many elements of the story and have a very broad idea of what would happen in the following installment, I did not see the entire script at the time. I first saw Chispa properly in the pages of *Spirou* (Yoann and Vehlmann 2012, 5–12). Finally, my input was only for the pages set in Chispa (roughly 8 % of the graphic novel) and their impact on the story as a whole is minimal.

As stated earlier, the original script had several gems in it, and the CIA agents are one of them. These characters are decidedly the scapegoats of these few pages and the way in which they are depicted is patently closer to caricature than the way in which Chispa and her inhabitants are depicted. Aside from the change in their choice of clothes, these characters and their actions are entirely the work of Yoann and Vehlmann, and regardless of what one might say about the caricature, I cannot help but find the words of the police officer who arrests them (Yoann and Vehlmann 2013, 30/7) gratifying in light of the many years of *patio trasero*.[3]

Vehlmann is the first to admit that there are still a number of clichés and approximations in the way Chispa is presented. The most striking one, to me, is the banner in the police station patio, consisting of an odd mixture of Italian and "Hispanicized" French (Yoann and Vehlmann 2013, 30/7). A late addition, the words on this banner are more the result of a lack of time than a lack of care. However, Vehlmann's openness to discussing details that I was uncomfortable with and his commitment to steering clear of the "salade russe" (sometimes stronger than my own) bear testimony to his wish to present a less stereotypical Latin American country within the limits allowed by the story and Spirou's universe.

NOTES

1. For practical reasons, comics authors are referred to by their pen names.
2. The numerous short stories that Vehlmann scripted at the beginning of his career (not included here) would be placed on the left end, near *Green Manor*.

3. *Patio trasero* (literally, "backyard") is a term commonly used to refer to the dynamics of US/Latin American relationship, whereby the US perceives Latin America as its backyard.

I would like to finish by saying that the sporadic email and live-chat discussions with Fabien Vehlmann were a real exchange. Not only did he repeatedly give me insight into his world (something he agreed to do again as he gave his time to contribute material to this chapter), each time he solicited my help he also stepped into my world. He not only drew upon my findings but also contributed to my own thought processes. The reflections on Palombia's location had been on my mind for some time and were taken much further when I wrote the relevant thesis chapter (Pellegrin 2013, 159–216), but some of the points raised in my thesis were formulated clearly for someone else for the first time as I answered Vehlmann's questions. I am truly grateful for his generosity, kindness, accessibility, flexibility, patience, genuine commitment, trust, and open ears.

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Negotiating Artistic Identity in Comics Collaboration

Ahmed Jameel

It cannot be argued that creators are neglected, certainly not in comics scholarship's rush to establish comics as literature, visual art, or its own specific medium. As the field discusses form, function, and definitions, creators are often integral to the conversation. Though this conversation is expanding in many directions, absorbing theories and methodologies from many different fields to great advantage, scholars regularly neglect the collaborative nature of comics. It is taken for granted that a "main" creator loads a work with meaning waiting to be activated by readers.

When exhibiting narrative or intellectual complexity, comics are considered "written" well. This may be because comics scholars often work in literature departments, because comics writers in the 1970s and 1980s emphasized the textual component, and/or because of insistent association of (certain) comics with the respectability of literature, aiming to work against presuppositions that comics are for children. In any case, one result is that complexity is conflated with good writing or literariness. This ignores the fact that writing in comics differs from conventional prose or poetry (Miodrag 2013, 61) and that literariness cannot account for masterful use of visual qualities.

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Take how *Uncanny X-Force Vol. 1*, issues #1–35, tellingly titled *Uncanny X-Force by Rick Remender* in trade paperback volumes, is considered by many to be Rick Remender's *X-Force* "run" (Richards 2012a). Remender was the writer and only constant in the creative team throughout a recognizable, tonally consistent series of story arcs. However, considering Remender a sole genius ignores the division of visual duties into penciling, inking, coloring, lettering, as well as labor related to printing and actual selling, all of which involve countless processes and roles fulfilled by individuals who rotate throughout production and publication. Taking into account the number of people required to bring a comic to a reader, even just the assumption that a creator who both writes and draws comics is a sole genius can be rendered false.

The idea of a "main" creator within a team comes from a deeply rooted and cultivated notion that works are loaded with authorial intent, meanings intended for readers to uncover. If the aforementioned *Uncanny X-Force* run is loaded with Remender's authorial meanings, the series is as loaded with the interpretations of these meanings and whatever additional layers of meaning resulting from the many visual factors put into play by artists. Many readers and scholars are aware of such things, yet it is easier to buy into the idea of authorial intent and subsequently the assumption that collaborations have one author who crafts this meaning, whose intent either overrides or pulls other collaborators' intents into its field of gravity. This school of thought is referred to as auteur theory or auterism.

Auteur theory suggests that the singular vision or voice of an author emerges from a work, despite production being possible only due to the efforts of many others. The belief is that there is a larger personality to the auteur that subsumes all others (Abrams 1981, 19). Such theories take on a number of different new forms as the old ones are dismantled. While some contemporary versions break with previous incarnations in lacking outright claims that the fingerprint of an auteur is clear to the audience, the idea that the intention somehow reaches the audience in some form persists. This is adherence to the idea of the author implying a "final signified" (Barthes 1977, 147), or "true" meaning, which imposes limitations on how readers may construct meaning from texts. These assumptions did not, of course, go uncontested.

AGAINST THE AUTEUR

Anti-authorial views began at the turn of the twentieth century. Parallel to socioeconomic developments were technological developments that partly define the beginning of modernism. Subsequent to a belief in technology ushering in an Age of Reason and greater enlightenment was World War I, which saw innovative means of humans destroying one another on an unprecedented scale. Early modernism reacted to the exaltation of reason and ingenuity that facilitated such destruction, rejecting the values behind systems controlled by the bourgeois. Alternative and radically innovative groupings of artists emerged, combating the dominance of these systems and finding their own means of production, distribution, and promotion. These were the modern artists, the avant-garde, who were often fully oppositional movements attacking the establishment and the social order from which the establishment's power stemmed (Williams 1989, 50–51).

Underlying the avant-garde movements that rose and fell, just as often overlapping and reacting against each other, were philosophical and political currents that raised questions about the materiality of the practice, context, and commodification of art (Kelly 1999, 99). Postmodern artistic practices represented a deeper break from the values preceding modernism, as well as from modernist art itself, by repudiating the "notions of genius, originality, and taste, by introducing material processes, series, systems, and ideas in place of an art based on self-expression" (Kelly 1999, 92), values held in high regard by modernism. Postmodern avant-garde artists "expelled gesture, denied expression, contested the notion of an essential creativity" and robbed the dealer of "the authenticating mark which figures so prominently in the art market's peculiar structure of desire and exchange" (Kelly 1999, 90). This was an embodiment of anti-authorship.

For the purposes of this chapter, I take for granted that there are general currents flowing through the modernist and postmodern eras, culminating in schools of thought denying traditional notions of authorship which still dominate contemporary culture. It should be noted that even with the privilege of decades of hindsight, to consider either postmodernism or modernism as a whole is taking a great liberty. The philosophies of postmodernism in different disciplines, mediums, forms, and genres had entirely different and often incomparable trajectories. Any discussion of the matter must presuppose a number of things that might not be true in another context.

To return to these general currents: until modernist art emerged, artistic endeavors were largely pictorial and based on representing the real world. Until postmodernist art emerged, the authenticity of artistic endeavor was rarely brought to question. Modernist art asked what art was; postmodern art asked who the artist was. Theorist Charles Green (2001) posits that artists used collaboration as the key means to ask this latter question. He proposes that "the intersection of collaboration with a discourse of silence and inaccessibility shows us that the representation is neither a transparent window into authorial subjectivity nor sufficient to index the self" (Green 2001, xii). By placing authorship in parallel to issues of artistic identity, Green suggests that artists appeared both in the center and margins of their work, in the various forms of crafted tells, signatures, and preferences—"the intersection of subjectivity" (Green 2001, ix).

Artists code themselves in their art, manipulating the way they appear, and while this may not mean they are interested in the politics of artistic identity, they are not necessarily innocent of trying out different identities that have already existed in history, authorial identities which might be out of view for the time being. This contradicts the Romantic idea of the artistic genius waiting for inspiration. Green (2001) refers to the works of certain conceptual artists such as Gilbert & George, Marina Abaramović and Ulay, and Christo, who identified completely with their work and cultivated and manipulated public perception, sometimes in intentionally inconsistent ways. The works and lives of these collaborating artists used strategies of doubling, echoing, and inaccessibility to create a sense of the uncanny. Gilbert & George would refuse to acknowledge the public during the enactment of their "living sculptures." Abramović and Ulay would sustain actions over extreme periods of time, drawing out the tension and forcing audiences to experience a strong sense of unease. Christo and his partner consistently gave conflicting accounts of their work, creating a question of whether the name Christo referred to the person or the partnership.

By creating a sense of uncanniness through doubling, total identification with their work, and refusal to engage with the public and criticism in any traditional way, these artists dissociate themselves from their works, raising the question of who the author is and whether there is an author at all. Similar examples can be found in American superhero comics with almost any given company-owned character. In many cases, the original creators of popular characters are either deceased or retired from the industry, so the stories of their characters are continued by writers and

artists working under editors representing the mandates of the corporate owners of the characters. The most celebrated of these creators often have very strong artistic identities. When they collaborate on a work featuring characters and histories made by other creators, they superimpose their own signatures over those of the previous creators, especially when they are working with the grain of what is considered the spirit of the original creators' intent. But such conditions presuppose existing intellectual properties with established followings and bodies of work attributed to the creators, in addition to a great number of obvious collaborators. The following section provides examples from a more simplified version, a (seemingly) two-person collaboration of which I am a part.

Rendering and Relationships

I am already exploring these issues as part of a practice-based PhD project in which I use my position as an early-career comics writer to explore questions of authorship and collaboration through my own work. This is to be presented as an autoethnography, a reflective account operating within a methodology accommodating the subjectivity of the creative process. At the time of this writing, I am collaborating with artist Ali Hasen Didi to independently create a high fantasy comic titled *The Last Days of Dys*. Some background is required here to contextualize some incidents that illustrate the interesting aspects of collaboration.

Ali and I wanted to work together on a comic of ambitious scope, but we were based in different countries and had not worked together before, so we settled on adapting material I already had at hand rather than conceiving something from scratch. I presented a novel manuscript I had already edited in its entirety several times, taking this as an opportunity to fix the problems I had recognized. Ali and I agreed that the novel would only ever be a loose guide for plot and worldbuilding; there would be room for changes. One half of the story follows the journey of a golem called Crag, who is trying to acquire a soul. The world is populated by various fantastical beings, all of whom have a stake in the degradation of the magical ecosystem—the redemption or damnation of which lies in the outcomes of the protagonists' journeys.

With a 120,000-word document as the source material, it could easily be assumed that the story for the comic was authored by myself alone and that using it as a core for the comic's world might skew the authority within the collaboration in my favor before production even began.

However, there was never any point where I was in a directorial role. Right from the start, the project bore Ali's unmistakable fingerprint, thereby influencing whatever might be perceived as traces of my authorial intent. An easy example can be found during the conceptual stages when Ali experimented with designs for the golem Crag and her traveling companion, the earth elemental Ge. We initially settled on the designs on the left in Fig. 12.1.

I felt it a departure from the spirit of my intention: what I perceived contained hints of repressed anger and existential angst within Crag. Where Ge was once far subtler in exerting control over Crag, embodying thematic dichotomies of youth/age and innocence/experience with her sexuality and employing a veneer of girlishness to appeal to a besotted Crag, her dominance has taken a blunter form. She is forceful and confrontational with Crag now, swaying the golem with obvious instead of subtle power. Ali's early designs made Ge more confident and direct and
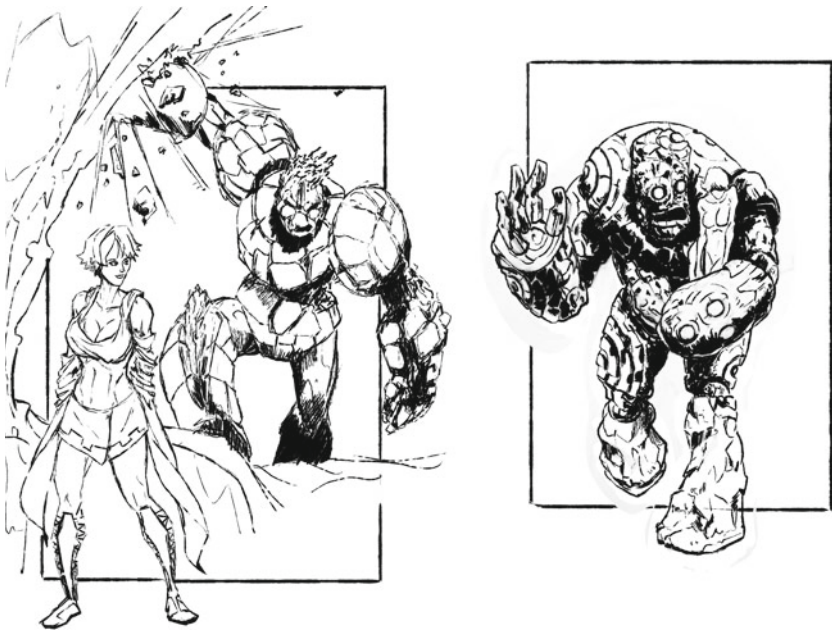
Fig. 12.1.   An early design of Crag and the final version of Ge (left) and the final version of Crag (right) drawn by Ali Hasen Didi as part of a comics collaboration

more obviously powerful than I had hinted in the first two-thirds of my novel manuscript. Not that these dimensions were pulled from thin air. They were more veiled in my novel draft but had become externalized and emphasized in Ali's renderings. The material I provided Ali with did not explicitly describe Crag as melancholy, although the chapters written from her point of view always implied a certain amount of frustration. With the exception of a single early chapter, Ge is shown through Crag's flawed and naïve point of view, painting Ge as cool and remote, the very nature of her existence constantly in flux.

I had also made peace with the fact that Crag's face might have to change for the comics version to be more emotive; I had written her with a static face capable of emoting only through the change in the color of her glowing eyes. But the first iteration we settled on, while I felt still contained the essence of Crag, compelled me to change dialogue to better reflect the people Crag and Ge had become. Where the essence of the dynamic was and is still true to the source material in that Crag is enamored of Ge, who uses this as a means of dominance, the specifics of the dynamic have altered. While the designs are faithful to the descriptive text I provided and are accompanied by detailed rationale from Ali regarding his choices, it is interesting how the artwork has caused the text to be consumed directly by reader—namely captions and dialogue—to change to a great degree. The final iteration of Crag's design, made long after the first major alteration to the script, comes from a need to render her more quickly. The new result, also more indicative to me of Crag's origins in using designs that suggest found material and her "father's" carelessness in crafting her, reflects Crag's vulnerability by emphasizing her clumsy attempt at carving a mouth for herself. I find this makes Crag more sympathetic—a necessity, as the second strand of the story features a protagonist with an abrasive personality.

Each choice made by the collaborators seems to affect the comic in small degrees, altering things subtly. The matter of artistic identity becomes ever more complicated by questions and phantom echoes of intent. If, according to Foucault, authorship is a means of classification in that the idea of an author establishes relationships between texts, "implying homogeneity, filiation, reciprocal explanation, authentification" or "common utilization" (Foucault 1980, 123), and *The Last Days of Dys* hovers slightly outside the relational boundaries of what can be classified as creation, how does one rationalize authorship as a classifying function? In order to progress toward an answer, certain concepts need to be revisited and expanded.

Making Meaning

To return to certain postmodern agendas of destroying the notion of authorship: Green (2001, 174) points out that structuralist and post-structuralist relativizations of identity impacted artists in the 1970s and 1980s, as did cultural theorists' and art historians' relativizations of meaning as socially contingent. Green considers that the break of postmodernism from modernism is most acute in the postmodern contestation of the modernist assumption that the personal handwriting of an artist was intimately connected with art (Green 2001, 3). If one were to bear in mind that this is broadly true of the general postmodern current, the way to dismantle authorship becomes apparent. Much postmodern philosophy is very firm in the notion that authorship as false and readers are no mere activators of meaning. Barthes (1977) argues that a text in itself does not contain predetermined meaning, and that ascribing an author to a text limits the possibilities of meaning.

So where is meaning made? Entire scholarly disciplines dedicate themselves to the study of meaning, but a general argument that stands particularly firm is the one that focuses on the experience of consuming art. By stepping back and looking at the experience as a whole, rather than the acts of reading or viewing by themselves, it can be surmised that meaning is constructed through cultural bricolage, "making do" or piecing together one's experience of culture with whatever is at hand, including audience expectations and ancillary material cultivated by sellers. All artworks are in fact experiences "produced in the moment that they are consumed by and circulate among the viewers" (Sturken and Cartwright 2001, 7). Looking or reading are in themselves acts and often involve learning culturally dependent ways of interpreting and communicating, and this inevitably leads to influencing and being influenced (Sturken and Cartwright 2001, 10). The context in which a work is experienced is as important as how it is interpreted by an individual.

If art is to be considered a process, audience participation and criticism are integral parts of a loop comprising the process. In the case of comics, creators create, the audience beholds and makes meaning, critics and commentators articulate how the comic functions in society or comics culture, and the creators respond, possibly even by appearing not to respond, in future works (Hobbs 1984, 78). The process is an act of communication (Hobbs 1984, 65). The experience of art does not happen in vacuum, so a work cannot contain pure intent within itself. Reception shapes meaning;

a work may take on different meanings depending on when and where it appears, and in what form. So authorship is only relevant if it is relevant to the way a viewer or reader chooses to look. There is a whole sea of subjectivity.

This does not mean that authorial intent is nonexistent; it merely means that it is the least of a series of factors that play into an experience, and uncovering it through biography and other means are less important than what a reader feels. I have demonstrated that I did intend certain things with the characters in my story—I certainly have a preference for a way the story and my characters are interpreted. But there is no way of knowing all the dimensions of what Ali intends with his renderings, despite our communications, because a large portion of his work's visual quality cannot even be verbalized. Experiences and associations will always occur that neither of us can anticipate, especially as we cannot control the contexts in which our work is read.

There is also the looming fact that none of the contextual events were pertinent to experiencing the comic until I introduced them. Authors certainly are not going away entirely so long as the whole system of valuation and selling exists as it does, but it is important to begin to make sense of authorship in a way that combats the reductivity of auteurism. All rests in the hands of the reader and whatever they choose to, are conditioned to, or happen to see. But if the subjectivity of the reader and the conditions in which a comic is read are taken into consideration, should not the subjectivity of the different collaborators also be considered? What is required to reconcile the creation and experience of a comic book is a conceptual framework that incorporates all this subjectivity, such as Simon Grennan's model of diegesis (Grennan 2011, 114), which he presents as a relationship of different subjects.

Intersubjectivity

Expanding on the work of narratologists, Grennan breaks down the reading experience into two parts: *histoire* and *discours*. To crudely summarize, *discours* is what is narrated, and *histoire* is what is extraneous to the narration but still part of the experience. Plot is narrated, but the entirety of the story will not be present in the plot. The entirety of the author will not be present in the narrative, nor will the reader cease to exist outside the text. Both author and reader experience things outside the narrative such as criticism and ancillary material that affect a reader's expectations, which

can greatly influence the consumption of the text. It stands to reason that the experience of a comic is thus: a creator creates a work within which a portion of his intent exists. Meaning is made by the reader contingent on the conditions of the experience and the subjectivity of the reader.

This interaction of subjectivity can be disentangled with the concept of intersubjectivity, which Grennan defines as "subjectivity arising relative to other subjects" (2011, 26). In the sense of the diegetic relationship between the subjects Grennan describes, the relationship between the author and the reader cannot be directly intersubjective—the comic book object and its narration together serve as a buffer. Collaboration is special because "at the very least [it] involves a deliberately chosen alteration of artistic identity from individual to composite subjectivity" (Green 2001, x). This becomes relevant to when considering how multiple collaborators enter the picture.

By complicating Grennan's model just a little to reflect my own collaboration (Fig. 12.2), a series of overlaps can be discerned, which I have shaded. These are intersubjective spaces where negotiations of artistic identity occur. Namely, these overlaps are between

1. artist and narrator
2. artist and writer
3. writer and narrator
4. artist, writer, and narrator

All of these are worth exploring and have a number of implications. Where either artist or writer overlap with the narrator as individuals (inter-
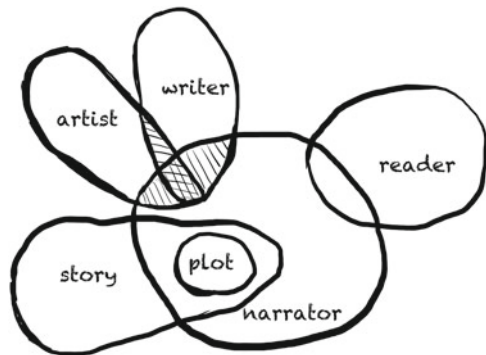
Fig. 12.2. My alteration of Grennan's (2011, 114) diegesis diagram

sections 1 and 3), the implication is that the creators leave traces of their individual artistic identities in a work. Where artist and writer overlap with each other as well as the narrator (intersection 4), it is implied that a negotiated sense of their artistic identities leaves a trace. Where the artist and the writer overlap with each other but not the narrator (intersection 3), it is implied that this merging occurs outside what is "available" to a reader. It is the latter two instances of overlapping that are of interest here. It is most likely that these intersections are exactly where the negotiations of artistic identity in collaboration occur.

It is expected that new understandings of identity will appear in collaboration, understandings which Green says "may or may not be consistent with the artists' solo productions before they take up collaborative projects" (2001, x). It must be acknowledged not only that readers have a stake in the process of diegesis but also that multiple creators do as well. It might be more accurate for the diagram to include everyone who shares artistic duties, such as colorists, inkers, and editors, perhaps going even further to include those who handle bookmaking or the platforms used to publish electronically, but here it is simpler to consider two creators representing two processes: writing and drawing. In any case, there is no more room for auteurism. Beyond this, there is something significant occurring in the intersubjective spaces that requires further conceptualizing.

The Third Hand

It is necessary to return to previous examples of conceptual artists. Their identification with their works of art, including labor and process, was entirely deliberate, and their uncommunicativeness was echoed by their work. The identities of the individual artists are obscured by depersonalization, creating through their collaboration a phantom third identity or "third hand" (Green 2001, 155). This refers to the sense of the uncanniness in relation to authorship, specifically to the feeling that there is another agency at work. Gilbert & George are not simply Gilbert Prousch and George Passmore, nor do Marina Abramović and Ulay give any indication that their personalities are present. Christo is used to refer to the individual as well as the collaboration behind the artistic endeavors.

In some ways, this is not applicable to comics. Creators rarely, if at all, identify wholly with their processes or attempt to be remote. However, the effects are comparable. In a large-scale collaboration, the works of collaborators whose names do not get the top billing are obscured, when

in fact it might be more accurate to consider them a whole identity in and of themselves. To return to the earlier example of *Uncanny X-Force*, Remender explicitly mentions that colorist Dean White and artist Jerome Opeña were integral parts of the book's identity, stating that they even provided much of the story and plot. Remender also negotiated the presence of a regular cover artist, Esad Ribic, to create the specific identity of the series (Richards 2012b). While not unprecedented, this is rare. Similarly, Remender states that White's continued presence was integral to sustaining a visual identity for the series (Richards 2012b).

From Remender's conversation it is clear that he, White, and Opeña have a rapport that extends into an understanding of how they operate in their own compartmentalized roles. As frequent collaborators, it might be fruitful to examine the idea that they together represent something that each individual alone does not. The phantom identity in collaborations, or "the third hand," is more than a mixture of compromise, synergy, and aleatory improvisation that comes from individuals feeding off each other's artistic energy. It implies an "authorial character exceeding the identity of…collaborating artists" (Green 2001, 179). This partially addresses the inherent problem with contemporary auteurist thought, which seeks to "resurrect" the author after Barthes (1977) "killed" it, while also believing that a work is fixed and immutable and that the meaning cannot change.

Conclusion

So where can one land to avoid the notion of the auteur cultivated by the market? The idea of socially and situationally contingent meaning is a far more viable alternative, and Grennan's extrapolation of narratological frameworks provides a useful model for the experience of comics. Green's work points the way toward filling the remaining gaps. By marrying Green's idea of the third hand to Grennan's models of diegesis, further extrapolating the latter to accommodate multiple authors, several intersections with interesting implications begin to emerge.

The manipulative simulation of an individual artistic identity by conceptual artists' collaborations forced the equation of identity between artists and artwork. Would it be more useful to start reevaluating how collaborations are considered by considering bodies of work in terms of collaborative identities? When looking back at my own work in progress, it becomes useful to think of the creative team as a whole identity for purposes of classification. Didi-Jameel might be a new entity of classifica-

tion that shares qualities with Ahmed Jameel and Ali Hasen Didi but also contains qualities exceeding and unable to be predicted by these identities in isolation. This may seem like a labyrinthine way of saying that the whole is more than the parts, but the implications exceed the notion; the composite might be closer to a separate thing unto itself. The idea brings fresh perspective and warrants further exploration.

In fact, the only thing that is definitively clear is that the auteuristic way of considering comics is simply inapplicable—authorship only matters if one is interested in classification and discourse. One looks at one comic, and it does not matter who made it, but when one looks at a body of work, suddenly it does. This is a good enough start. After all, in a medium where one would not separate image and word, why should one separate writer and artist?

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To the Studio! *Comic Book Artists: The Next Generation* and the Occupational Imaginary of Comics Work

Benjamin Woo

Everyone knows that comics—or, at least, properties based on them—are big business today. But, like creative labor in general, the work behind this success is often misunderstood by the general public and even by many dedicated comics readers. The average fan of North American comics, for instance, probably knows that Siegel and Shuster, Jack Kirby, and other writers and artists were denied—or signed away for significantly less than their value—ownership of characters that have since generated billions of dollars for media conglomerates. They may know that some creators have ended up in penury, since the freelance model of work does not provide health insurance or pensions. But, then again, they may also know that some creators (John Byrne or the Image founders, say) made millions in royalties and that others successfully licensed their creations for television, film, and merchandising. Similarly, many fans probably have ideas about what the day-to-day working life of a comics creator is like, but the accuracy of these ideas varies widely. Do they imagine spending hours with pencil and brush at a drawing table or working on a Wacom tablet with Photoshop or Manga Studio? Do they think of attending editorial

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summits and postconvention parties or of frantically photocopying, folding, and stapling minicomics late into the night?

In this chapter, I want to explore one example that brings to light some popular assumptions about comics work, a recent documentary produced for AT&T U-verse Buzz, *Comic Book Artists: The Next Generation* (TNG). This 30-min video profiles the artists occupying a shared studio in Toronto. In boosting these artists' accomplishments, the documentary also provides a rare glimpse into the working lives of comic creators. While acknowledging some of the sacrifices they make, this picture of the life of a comics pro is overwhelmingly positive, portraying comic book artists as the rock stars of the new, geek-friendly entertainment industry. In describing these particular creators' careers, TNG constructs an image and imaginary of what success means for comics creators and how to achieve it. This occupational imaginary is not, however, without its contradictions.

Making Comics as Media Work

Developing from various trends in media industries research, creative labor has become a significant area of inquiry in communication, media studies, and cultural studies. This "labor turn" responds to a central irony about contemporary media practices:

> As people engage with media in an increasingly immersive, always-on, almost instantaneous, and interconnected way, the very people whose livelihood and sense of professional identity depend on delivering media content and experiences seem to be at a loss on how to come up with survival strategies—in terms of business models, effective regulatory practices (for example regarding copyrights and universal access provisions), and perhaps, most specifically, the organization of entrepreneurial working conditions that would support and sustain the creative process needed to meet the demands of a global market saturated with media. (Deuze 2014, 1)

The broad sweep of this literature has been neatly encapsulated by Andrew Ross (2006): "Nice work if you can get it." That is, as creativity ascends to the position of cultural dominance, creative jobs have become the ideal for many workers, especially young ones (Campbell 2013). However, these jobs are rare and provide only a precarious living, if that. The arts and culture sectors have long constituted winner-takes-all economies of a few stars, some modest successes, and many disappointed wannabes and could-have-beens. However, rising education costs, changing markets for

cultural goods, and the dismantling of social safety nets make it a particularly difficult time to enter the cultural workforce—even as governments and consultants promote the creative industries as panacea for virtually any social ill in de-industrializing economies.

This picture should sound familiar to any comics aficionado. However, the study of creative labor is still relatively marginal to comics studies, where political-economic or industrial analysis typically plays second fiddle to interpretations of comics texts. When creators do show up, it is usually as the authorizing figure behind an oeuvre, more Foucault's (1977) author-function than Benjamin's (1978) "author as producer." Hence, the field focuses on a relatively small number of "great comics artists," while the majority of workers, including those who aspire to careers in comics but never "make it," are absent. Hence, the picture of the comics world constructed by scholars is biased by fannish notions of celebrity and importance and provides little guidance for understanding comics as a market, industry, or labor process. Norcliffe and Rendace (2003), Rogers (2006), Farmer (2006), Brienza (2010), Murray (2013), and Priego (2014) have drawn attention to important features of the organization of comics production, but these have been largely programmatic statements. For an industry of its age, relatively little empirical research on labor in comics has been published in English. (Lefèvre and di Salvia's (2011) survey of artists in the Franco-Belgian comics and illustration field is a notable exception.) In this near vacuum, critics and reporters in the comics blogosphere have recently undertaken several initiatives to collect information about work in comics: the Ladydrawers collective published a series of nonfiction webcomics on gender in the comic book industry on *Bitch Magazine*'s website; Janelle Asselin (2014) conducted a survey of sexual harassment in comics; and *The Beat* and *Devastator Magazine* surveyed exhibitors to estimate economic activity at various comics conventions (MacDonald 2015).

My research in this area has tried to construct a systematic picture of the creative workforce in Anglophone comics publishing.[1] Due to a lack of probability sampling, one must be cautious about generalizing from these results, but they are suggestive of working conditions in the field. Most strikingly, when asked to estimate the proportion of their income derived directly from creative work in comics, the median response was 10 %. That is, half of respondents make one-tenth or less of their income directly from making comics (derivative income sources, such as royalties and original art sales, were counted separately). Given the freelance or entrepreneurial

nature of most comics production, it came as a pleasant surprise that 73 % of respondents reported having at least basic health coverage, whether from insurance or a single-payer health system.[2] Finally, only 31 % of respondents agreed with the statement, "I have a plan for retirement," while 67 % were "anxious" when they thought about the future. These figures suggest that making comics is, for many, a "bad job" characterized by low and/or unpredictable remuneration, uneven provision of benefits, and a lack of old-age security (Kalleberg, Reskin, and Hudson 2000).

However, work is more than working conditions. What is making comics like from a subjective point of view? A cultural perspective on comics work analyzes the discourses through which people—chiefly, but not exclusively, creators themselves—make sense of their careers in comics. Individual statements are motivated by contextual factors, but taken together they constitute what Barley (1989, 53) calls a career script:

> Careers can be thought of as temporally extended scripts that mediate between institutions and interactions. Like all scripts, careers should therefore offer actors interpretive schemes, resources, and norms for fashioning a course through some social world.

Comic creators routinely call upon scripts like these to interpret and evaluate the world around them ("Is this a good job or a bad one?") and to guide action ("What opportunities should I pursue next?"). As "lay theories," career scripts do not look like scholars' formal theorizing, though they share some of its functions (Morris, Ames, and Knowles 2001). They are a form of practical consciousness responding to practical demands. These beliefs, theories, and ways of speaking constitute a horizon of experience, a specifically *occupational* social imaginary through which people "imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (Taylor 2004, 23).

Perhaps the most obvious place to look for comics's occupational imaginary is statements made by creators themselves. However, as John Thornton Caldwell (2008) suggests, self-theorizing discourses are embedded in a range of artifacts produced by and around media industries. For example, a comic's credits page embodies an industrial theory of the creative process—of who is a creator deserving of name recognition and who is merely a hired hand. Publishers' promotional communication, such as

the house advertising that built up the "Myth of the Marvel Bullpen" (Hatfield 2011, 78–79) or Image Comics's "Experience Creativity" campaign (Woo 2013), also construct images of comics work. My point here is that there are "facts" of production as revealed in political-economic analyses and creator surveys, and there is the cultural working-up of those facts. Fans and scholars have many sources from which glean information about the situation of creative professionals in comics. These sources will have varying relationships to the lived experiences of individual creators, but their "content" matters less than how they discursively produce the meaning of making comics. They are not pictures *of* comics work but pictures *about* comics work—and, like all creative acts, they include a mix of intentionality and (un)happy accidents.

Comic Book Artists: The Next Generation

In what remains of this chapter, I will analyze *Comic Book Artists: The Next Generation* (TNG), a short documentary produced for AT&T U-verse Buzz. It seems remarkable to me—and, apparently, to commentators noting its posting on the U-verse website (Steinbeiser 2014; MacDonald 2014; Booth 2014)—as a rare document taking work in comics as its principal subject. As one of the profiled artists, Ramón Pérez, relates early on, people are inherently interested in what comic book artists do but do not really see it as work—at least, not without ironizing finger-quotes.

TNG opens with sound bites from Marvel's Stan Lee and DC's Jim Lee (no relation) discussing the ideal superhero hideout intercut with shots of the Toronto building that houses the Royal Academy of Illustration & Design studio. Of RAID's ten members, the documentary focuses on Pérez (introduced as the studio's responsible organizer), Francis Manapul ("the hip rock star"), Marcus To (the studio's "heart"), and to a lesser extent, Kalman Andrasofszky. The documentary shows the creators at work, follows them to the comic book store and the San Diego Comic-Con, and watches To pitch a creator-owned series to BOOM! Studios (represented by executives Filip Sablik and Stephen Christy).[3] I am interested in this documentary not because it was widely viewed or influential but because it explicitly portrays the working life of comics professionals.

Pros and Cons: Narrating a Comics Career
Defined sociologically, careers are sets of connected social roles, typically but not necessarily organized in a sequence. Careers are also stories about

who you are, how you got where you are now, and where you are going next. While there are, of course, individual differences in these stories, they also rely on shared understandings and tropes. The career narratives depicted in TNG, for instance, resemble those used by creative workers and artists in other fields, as reported by Taylor and Littleton (2012).

One common means of establishing a creative identity is the discourse of prodigiousness, that is, "references to an early enjoyment of, interest in and talent for creative work" (Taylor and Littleton 2012, 48). TNG presumes that fandom is the first stage in a comics career. Pérez describes himself as a quintessential nerd, reading not just comics but pursuing hobbies like *Dungeons & Dragons*, and To's juvenilia (although he only received a 70 % in high-school art classes because he drew comics instead of the assigned projects, an instance of the "academic vs. creative" discourse [53]) and photos of the young Manapul in superhero costumes are shown repeatedly. The default fan position is further evidenced by Jim Lee's advice to creators not to get caught up in world-building and backstory when pitching their creations to publishers. Many people enjoy drawing when they are young; "references to 'making' and 'drawing' [in childhood] construct a relationship of continuity, accumulation and coherence between past and present creative interests and engagements" (49). Prodigiousness—figured as fannish obsession with comics—foreshadows the artists' contemporary work and differentiates them from the mass of nerdy consumers and fans.

This naïve stage in which drawing is a form of leisure eventually gives way to the pursuit of a career. In North American comics, this early stage, poised awkwardly between professional and amateur, is typically referred to as "breaking in." This bears a strong resemblance to the narrative of the "big break," which

> suggests that an individual may continue working without acknowledgement or reward, possibly for many years, until suddenly they achieve exceptional success, including creative and monetary recognition that simultaneously validates their life choices and work. (Taylor and Littleton 2012, 68)

For instance, Pérez describes his dismay at being described as an "out of nowhere sensation" after winning an Eisner award, despite having a 15-year career in comics. Notably, the big break's unpredictable character justifies persevering in a creative career for "an undetermined, though possibly extended, period of time" (69). Manapul began his career at a

moment when the industry had collapsed and there were few, if any, paying entry-level jobs to be had in comics. While viewers never learn how he finally succeeded, this story allows him to display his persistence. Not only did he stick it out long enough to reap rewards, but he can now construct his commitment to making comics as pure and autonomous: "You took the money away; I still wanted to do it." While "love" alone does not make up for skill or talent, the love of comics functions as explanation for the success of those who succeed and, conversely, the failure of those who never get their break.

Based on the evidence provided, the artists of RAID studios apparently make comics full-time (or more!). At least, making comics is central enough to their working lives that renting studio space is a reasonable investment. In one sense, then, they are all successes, having persevered through a difficult stage where many careers falter. But, more specifically, TNG offers two somewhat overlapping and somewhat contradictory definitions of success for contemporary comics artists.

The first is the opportunity to work on well-known characters, principally Marvel and DC Comics superheroes. Stan Lee and Jim Lee are representatives not only of those illustrious publishers but also of previous "generations" of comic book artists (though Smilin' Stan was, of course, an editor and scriptwriter, not an artist, *sensu stricto*). The film's discourse locates RAID's members in this tradition, as when Christy justifies the attention being paid to these artists, saying, "Out of this room, new legends of the greatest superheroes in the world are being told." They are successful because they have been chosen to continue the adventures of these superheroes that comics fans know and love.

If telling stories with fan-favorite characters is the goal, then Manapul, identified as writer/artist of *Flash* and *Detective Comics*, should be the pinnacle of success. However, he also expresses interest in pursuing creator-owned projects someday. Similarly, To says, "it's exciting to finally get started on something that I am creating." This path has previously been taken by Pérez, who serves as TNG's model for comic creators setting out on their own: "There's nothing more satisfying than going in and creating your own character from scratch and telling whatever story you want with that character." If *creating* is the comic artist's ultimate good, then it follows that developing new ideas, rather than iterating on old ones or merely executing scripts provided by others, should be their goal. In this light, the Lees also represent generators of characters. The value of creating not merely content but also concepts is clearest in the documentary's

final arc when To presents his proposal to BOOM! executives. Christy provides a suitable sense of occasion, clearly defining the RAID artists' career trajectory: "They've had the opportunity to work on these amazing characters like Batman, like the X-Men, and now they're doing their own. And the stuff that these guys are doing here is going to be the stuff that they're making movies out of twenty or thirty years from now." The setup of the pitch sequence, which resembles competition reality shows like *The Apprentice*, suggests that To "wins" when his pitch is approved (a foregone conclusion, all things considered; see note 5). He pumps his fist in the air, having reached the climax of his career script.

Cultural Contradictions of Comics Work

But the script has some loose ends. TNG's portrayal of comics work exposes several significant contradictions that it never resolves, and these tensions trouble its implicit models of success. Mark Banks (2007) argues that cultural work must be understood in terms of the relationship between "art" and "commerce," which are typically construed as opposites. The RAID artists are engaged in a commercial art practice that leaves little room for "art for art's sake." But the documentary always insists that this *is* the art they want to be producing. In TNG, the problem is not commerce as such but the demands made by a "tight business" (Christy) on a labor process still based in small-scale craft production. Comics books can be mass produced, but there are limits to how quickly their *content* can be produced. For all the glamour TNG associates with making comics, it also acknowledges that it can be a punishing grind. Christy describes the pressure on artists to keep up with publishers' schedules. The following sequence focuses on the long hours worked to meet deadlines as artists push themselves well beyond full-time hours. In Manapul's words, making comics "really does take a lot out of you physically, mentally, emotionally." The dilemma of creative work is that it is so often constructed as *not* work—as fun or leisure—and yet is constrained by very work-like demands.

There's a joke about how popular characters like Batman and Wolverine are portrayed as loners but, because of their popularity, are members of virtually every superhero team their publishers can put them in. A similar contradiction is seen in comics work, which TNG represents as simultaneously isolating and sociable, solitary and highly collaborative. This comes off in three distinct ways.

At several points, the artists joke that they spend more time together than with their families. As De Santo describes the ideal hideout-cum-

studio, it is "a place where they work, it's a place where they can feel comfortable, where they can take off their masks." The studio (both physical space and social entity) gradually becomes a world in itself. Indeed, it serves as surrogate family: coming to the studio "is like coming home" (Manapul). This heightened version of the preexisting cultural division between the sphere of work and the domestic sphere is highly gendered. All of the RAID artists interviewed are men, and studio members are collectively referred to as "guys" throughout; the only woman who speaks during the entirety of the documentary is the actress Alyssa Milano. When the filmmakers want to highlight the toll of long hours on the artists' personal lives, they focus on Manapul and his partner Rachel Richey, but they never give any insight into her perspective as she silently watches him packing for a convention. Although she is not identified in the documentary, it is worth noting that Richey has published two collections of 1940s Canadian comics, for which she (along with sometime collaborator Hope Nicholson) was recently named among *FLARE* magazine's 30 Canadian women under 30 (McKeon 2015). The fact that she, too, has a career in comics is erased, leaving the audience with the mistaken impression that the comics world is a masculine sphere opposed to the femininity of home life.

The homosocial character of the studio (as TNG portrays it) is registered not only in the silence of women but also in how the artists talk about their professional relationships with one another. The motivation the artists receive from working alongside peers is a repeated theme. Their craft has a dimension of friendly rivalry, leading them to put in longer hours and work harder. The artists explicitly discuss their relationships in terms of intangibles like inspiration, friendship, and mentorship. But they talk about their artistic development with physical metaphors like "pushing," and the competition to put in the most hours is colored with macho masochism.

Finally, the film gives little insight into the artists' relationships with collaborators outside the studio. For instance, Marcus To previously worked with writers Collin Kelly and Jackson Lanzing on *Hacktivist*, and they appear as co-writers of *Joyride* in the pitch sequence, but TNG does not show their working relationship at all. And this to say nothing of those performing "below the line" work—art assistants, inkers, colorists, letterers, and other production staff. Andrasofszky acknowledges them in an offhand comment, but it is never unpacked. Indeed, studio members are shown inking and coloring their own work, erasing the existence of these

other roles. In taking the writer/artist as the ideal-typical comics pro and obscuring their place in the labor process, TNG re-entrenches auteurism at the heart of its discourse of comics work, even as it seemingly exposes the production process to scrutiny.

Conclusion: Comic Book Rock Stars?

In this chapter, I have proposed that *Comic Book Artists: The Next Generation* articulates a career script—a set of interpretive resources for making sense of one's career and guiding career decisions (Barley 1989, 53). In it, comics creators are assumed to be white or Asian men and lifelong comics fans who "always" drew superheroes. Careers begin with efforts to break into mainstream comics, culminating with work on Big Two superheroes. This is not only a vehicle of personal fulfillment but also a way of proving oneself and building an audience. There will come a time, however, when he should put away fannish things and move into creator-owned (but not alternative) comics in order to create new characters, "properties," and stories of his own (an ability not always afforded to artists). Most importantly, he will find peers who share his love of comics to offer camaraderie and support—something captured perfectly in TNG when Manapul proposes a toast "to the studio."

In this view, comics are the beating heart of the content industries, the wellspring of intellectual property that will fuel Hollywood for decades to come. This fecundity is grounded in relationships among creative individuals who are not only fellow craftsmen or colleagues but also friends. This reproduces the "triumphal" narrative of geek culture, the idea of an epochal inversion in popular culture driven by blockbuster sci-fi, fantasy, and superhero franchises. In TNG, RAID's members emblematize the humble comic book artist's elevation: they are shown wearing fashionable clothes, posing for photographs with beautiful women, eating at trendy restaurants, and being mobbed by their fans at Comic-Con. Milano describes them as "rock stars": "They're just cool, they're fun to be around—and creative and inspiring." Notwithstanding the contradictions mentioned above, who wouldn't want to make comics for a living?

But this is hardly representative of work in comics. TNG may speak to these artists' experiences accurately, but this is a narrow slice of the comics world, even within the confines of English-language publishing oriented to the US market. For instance, although disproportionately male, the comics world is not as male as usually supposed. My survey suggests that

roughly one quarter of comics creators identify as women or another non-male gender identity. Neither should it be assumed that the particular career path portrayed in the documentary—namely, working for or with publishers under work-for-hire or creator-owned contracts—is the only choice. Roughly equal numbers of respondents have some experience in work-for-hire, creator-owned, print self-publishing, and webcomics/digital self-publishing (about 60 %, 54 %, 68 % and 60 %, respectively), and nearly half identified either print or digital self-publishing as the primary way their work was made available to the public in the previous three years. Neither is the experience of making comics full-time in a supportive context like the RAID studio generalizable to the rest of the comics workforce. The median time spent at making comics was 24 h per week, suggesting that few are sustaining a full-time creative career. Nearly nine in ten survey respondents said that they do their comics work in a home office/studio, while only 6 % work in a shared studio space.

In conclusion, there are many people making comics who are not addressed by this discourse of comics work. They are different kinds of workers making different kinds of comics, and their experiences may not match those depicted in TNG. This is not to say that the film's occupational imaginary is false but that it is partial. It offers artists, aspirants, and academics alike tools for thinking about what is good and bad about comics work, but it does not embrace all the possibilities for what a comics career could be.

Notes

1. An online survey was conducted between November 2013 and February 2014. I assembled a directory of over 1000 creators based on exhibitor lists at major comic conventions and festivals as well as *Previews* solicitations and emailed invitations where publicly available contact information was available. Several comics blogs posted links to the survey in news stories, and it was promoted over social media. The study was approved by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board and was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. My thanks to Bart Beaty, to Tom Miller for assistance with the creator directory, and to all the survey respondents.

2. The survey was conducted just as the USA was implementing the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act ("Obamacare"). Several respondents indicated an intention to purchase coverage through

the new insurance exchanges, while others may be affected by expanded eligibility for Medicaid.

3. The documentary is somewhat incestuous: Christy and De Santo are credited as producers and appear as featured interviewees; De Santo and coproducer Bradley Cramp co-wrote *Cyborg 009*'s English adaptation, which was drawn by Marcus To and published by Archaia Studios Press; Archaia also published Pérez's *Tale of Sand*; and Christy was Archaia's editor-in-chief until 2013, when it was acquired by BOOM! Studios. TNG is, basically, an extended native advertisement for BOOM!

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Pushing the Boundaries

Gatekeeping in Comics Publishing: A Practical Guide to Gatekeeping Research

Pascal Lefèvre

The 2014 output of comics scholarship in English is focused on only a few substantive areas. The predominant focus is on superheroes, and to a lesser degree there is interest in social issues (such as the representation of minorities), biographical histories, and works of individual artists.[1] In contrast, other areas, such as the economics of comics publishing, are largely neglected. Yet before the widespread introduction of the internet, publishers were the only way to get a comic mass distribution.[2] It was (and largely still is) the publishers who invested their money in the material production, distribution, and promotion of a comic, and even today they take on greater financial risk than all other players later in the chain, such as distributors or retailers. Book publishing remains, after all, "a complex, adaptive, semi-chaotic industry" (Greco 2013, 5).

Publishers—whether large or small—have played an ineluctable role in the development of the global culture of graphic narrative since the nineteenth century. These entrepreneurs were also responsible for launching conventional publication formats, such as the many types of serial publication (like comic strips or comic books in the USA, weekly or monthly manga magazine and tankōbon in Japan, weekly comics magazines and

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album series in Western Europe, etc.).[3] The influence of such publication formats on the work itself cannot be underestimated, but it is, unfortunately, often mostly overlooked in formal or content analyses (Lefèvre 2000, 2013).

While in the past most publishers were focused on print activities, nowadays they are trying to take a more active role in various other fields because the entertainment industries are increasingly exploring the cross- or transmedia possibilities of intellectual property (Hesmondhalgh 2009; Jenkins 2006). As such, it is no surprise that they are attempting to deploy their content as efficiently as possible across various platforms and media. The structure of the organizations is changing, too; while in the beginning of the twentieth century a significant number of publishing houses were small businesses, today they usually are part of a larger media conglomerate. But as Clark and Phillips (2014, 10) contend, "there will always be room for innovative, imaginative and entrepreneurial small publishers that are more agile compared to larger competitors."

Admittedly, sometimes articles and books on comics publishers are written as well, but on the whole such publications have more interest in what these companies have published and their popular artists than in their organizational structures or economic models.[4] Seldom do these texts pay deep attention to the people working "behind the scenes," or to the financial data, or to the process of selecting material to be published from artists' submissions. Concerning this last aspect, other fields of publishing such as news reporting in dailies or weeklies, by contrast, often came under the scrutiny of so-called gatekeeping researchers. This kind of methodology, I argue, should be fruitful for analyzing the comics publishing industry as well.

Gatekeeping Research: A Brief Overview

Over the past 60 years, the process of selecting and preparing items for publication or broadcasting has been relatively well studied. What is somewhat surprising from today's perspective is that gatekeeping research, originally, began with a study of how food reached the tables of families. Kurt Lewin, a German-American social psychologist, came up with the concept of channels and gates. At various sections of the channels, he stated, one or more keepers control the gates, and at those sites, it is decided which items (be it food or a news item) may pass. Shortly after the posthumous publication of the Lewin paper in *Human Relations*, David

Manning White, a journalism professor at Boston University, adapted Lewin's theoretical framework to analyze how a wire editor on a small-city newspaper made a selection from the items received by three wire services during the period of a week (Shoemaker and Vos 2009). Later on, in 1972, communications scholars Donohue, Tichenor, and Olien broadened the concept of gatekeeping by exploring factors such as the shape, display, timing, withholding, or repetition of messages.

For this chapter, gatekeeping studies in the field of the trade book publishing industry are of importance (e.g. Coser 1975). In their full-scale study of the modern US publishing industry Coser et al. (1982, 5) claim that a published book is very much the product of many individual decisions made by persons within the publishing industry. Furthermore, they saw that all editors had standards guiding them in the selection process, often left unarticulated but nonetheless there (Coser et al. 1982, 62). Greco (2013, 161) remarks that the acquisition editor acts as the corporate gatekeeper who plays a substantive role in acquiring, selecting, and supervising the works: "They open the 'gate'; they anoint a writer with 'Holy Chrism' and transform him or her as into an author… This is a hard, gritty work; at times it can be unpleasant because they are held accountable for the titles they acquire and publish as well as for the ones they reject."

It is crucial to remember that the metaphor of gatekeeping does not have to be taken literally. Generally, a gatekeeper does more than "let in" or "keep out"—he or she is also involved in the transformation of the items that pass through a gate. Since Manning White's inaugural study, gatekeeping research has been primarily conducted in the field of news reporting; other domains such as the management of technology, information science, and political science have more recently come under scrutiny from this particular methodology. However, there has not been much interaction between the various disciplines, as Karine Barzilai-Nahon (2009, 1) remarked: "The literature on gatekeeping is fragmented in terms of epistemologies, theories and models, vocabularies, heuristics, and research challenges both within and between disciplines and fields." The reason for this is that each academic discipline works in relative isolation. Moreover, since the introduction of the internet, various scholars (e.g. Bruns 2003; Tandoc 2014; Singer 2014) have stated that through new audience information systems, such as web analytics, the influence of the audience on the news construction process is increasing as well. Also, in the field of graphic narrative, the traditional system of publishing has seen new phenomena, such

as crowd-funded publications and artists dealing directly with their public. Self-publishing through digital platforms may help authors to overcome barriers to entry into the field, to achieve creative expression, and to directly connect with readers, but as Gunderson's study (2015) reveals, such self-publishing platforms as Lulu and Amazon Kindle Direct have their restrictions as well; self-published authors continue to struggle for legitimacy against institutionalized systems of gatekeeping and authority in the traditional publishing industry.

Unfortunately, little gatekeeping research has been conducted in the field of entertainment; there are very few studies that use the theoretical framework of gatekeeping (Matsui 2009; Deluliis 2013). However, sometimes research in the field of comics studies explores similar problems without using the term or concept of gatekeeping. For instance, Sharon Kinsella's (2000) book *Adult Manga* considered the problematic relationship between manga artists and publishing company editors.

This chapter will discuss a few ways that gatekeeping research can be conducted in the field of comics studies and provide some practical tips for comics scholars. The general methodological issues will be illustrated by examples from the field or from my own experiences (Lefèvre 1986) of conducting a gatekeeping study in the mid-1980s. After all those years, it still remains one of the few studies to have used this particular approach to study comics publishing. Based on these experiences I will propose some practical suggestions as to how to carry out such research.

Dupuis and Lombard as Gatekeepers

Before proceeding, however, it would be appropriate to summarize the subject and findings of my own methodological work in this field. My gatekeeping study (Lefèvre 1986, 2015) focused on two of the biggest comics publishers in Belgium, Dupuis and Lombard. Both firms were then already some five decades active in the field of comics publishing; both not only had a weekly comic but also many popular series of comics albums. Dupuis launched its weekly comic *Spirou* in 1938, followed later by the Dutch version of *Robbedoes*. Dupuis also started publishing albums quickly, but those only became more commercially significant from the 1970s on. By 1971, Dupuis had sold some three million albums, but 12 years later, in 1983, the number had risen to 12 million albums (Martens 1988, 22). At the time of my research, almost 800 people were employed by Dupuis. The company needed new investment to keep growing, but

there were serious disagreements between the main shareholders (all family members), and in 1985, Dupuis was sold to Groupe Bruxelles Lambert, Hachette, and Éditions Mondiales. In 2004, Dupuis was bought by Groupe Dargaud (which was itself part of Média-Participations). Dupuis is arguably most famous for the title hero of the weekly *Spirou* but also published series such as *Lucky Luke*, *Gaston Lagaffe*, and *Les Schtroumpfs.* Lombard would become Dupuis's main competitor with a new weekly *Tintin* (which had also a Dutch-language version, *Kuifje*) and similar album publications. Among the many famous series launched by Lombard are *Blake et Mortimer, Michel Vaillant*, and *Thorgal.* In 1985, the year of my research, Dupuis published 74 album titles and Lombard 48, of which many were also translated into various languages.

On the basis of an exploratory gatekeeping study at the editorial offices of Dupuis and Lombard and various contemporary interviews with both the gatekeepers (editorial staff) and the artists, I traced out the process of gatekeeping: how were comics selected, how the editors and creators interacted, what the profile of the gatekeepers was, what criteria they used for selecting comics to publish, and so on. Both publishers had similar processes: a proposal for a new comic had first to go through the selection of the editors of the journal before it could move on to the next phase, the selection of comics fit for album publication. Though there was some interaction, quite different teams of gatekeepers were responsible for each phase. Among the positive forces increasing the chances of a submission being published, according to the gatekeepers, were the former commercial successes of the artist, the "quality" of the script and the artwork, and the degree to which a project was appropriate for children. Of course, a submission also had to meet the requirements of the usual publication formats of both publishers.

Selecting a Publisher

Any publisher of graphic narrative can be an interesting object of gatekeeping research, but it all depends on what one wants to know about the comics publishing industry. In countries with a well-developed comics industry (such as Japan, the USA, South Korea, the UK, France, Belgium, Spain, and Italy), there are many publishers of graphic narrative, often specializing in particular genres, types, or readers. Depending upon the publisher's profile and catalog, the organization may use quite different criteria in the gatekeeping process and in how they deal with authors. It

might be interesting to analyze more than one firm in the same field of publishing—for example in my own research, where I chose to study the two most important Francophone publishers in Belgium, both of which were largely targeting at the same young audience with quite similar publication formats.

THE IDEAL SITUATION

In an ideal world, the researcher would be allowed access to all the projects that enter a publishing house and to all the phases of the selection process (for instance, being allowed to directly observe how gatekeepers decide upon or discuss submissions). This ideal situation is, however, very unlikely to happen because, if there is one aspect that a publisher does not really like to share with the rest of the world, and especially with their competitors, it is the way they organize and conduct their selections. The selection is indeed crucial for the survival of the whole organization. Finding the best talents that fit within the objectives of the company and helping talent to develop is, by and large, considered to be a company secret. As usual, creativity is a rather scarce commodity and certainly not one that you as a publisher, and therefore an investor, want to share with your competitors. Furthermore, publishers will also try to commit talents that they have found and fostered to their own company; however, as in any relationship, sometimes the relationships become troubled and artists may venture into adventures with other publishers.

Second, contrary to the gatekeeping process of news items by mass media, a comics project is a much more personal project, one that generally demands a much greater investment from the creator than a news item does of a reporter. In Francophone culture, a comics artist is generally able to complete an album of 46 pages in eight to ten months (five pages a week). So, if a project is accepted, it means that an author has to spend at least eight months at work. Since the creation of comics is a sensitive subject (it is not only a personal creation, but also a matter of income), it is thus understandable that neither comics publishers nor the artists themselves are generally very welcoming to a researcher wishing to scrutinize the process. Also, in my own gatekeeping research, I was not allowed to attend the meetings where editors discussed and decided on the projects.

All of these reasons make it rather implausible that a publisher will allow a researcher to have complete access to all the phases of the gatekeeping process. Nevertheless, while the input phase may remain quite secret to

outsiders, the output (what is published) is quite easily accessible to the researcher because it is completely public. But even in this final stage, various aspects are generally not shared willingly—such as contract details between publisher and author or circulation figures—except when the comic is a bestseller, in which case publishers generally like to boast about its enormous success.

For an ideal gatekeeping study, data concerning these aspects are important:

- number of submissions received, number of titles published, circulation figures, and the various times a work is republished and/or adapted to other media
- an organizational chart of the gatekeeping process
- the criteria that the organization claims to be using, as well the criteria that are used in practice

The number of submissions, in the case of large publishers, can be quite large. For instance, in the field of US newspaper strips, one of the main syndicates, King Features, state on their website (as of July 19, 2015) that they receive thousands of submissions each year but only a few of those are eventually chosen for syndication. The organizational chart of a publishing company is equally important. Not all publishing divisions and departments are significant, as the focus will be, quite evidently, on the editorial teams and related colleagues or superiors. There is an enormous variety of companies, ranging from companies run by one person to globalized conglomerates with numerous divisions. The size of the company will obviously influence the gatekeeping process, and one can expect that the bigger the firm, the more people will be involved in this process. So, it is important to figure out the levels at which the gatekeeping process is conducted, which members of staff are relevant to the process, and how they are interconnected. This will very likely influence the modes in which such a publishing house operates and performs. Furthermore, in addition to the formal organization, there is always a degree of informal organization, the interlocking social structure that governs how people work together in practice. The informal organization can blend with the formal one, but it might also carry potential disadvantages and problems, such as role conflicts or resistance to change. Finally, there may be differences between the criteria that gatekeepers believe or pretend that they are using and the criteria that they *actually* use.

Alternative Methods

Given the likelihood that a publisher will not be willing to offer complete access to all the phases of the gatekeeping process, the researcher has to consider other means of getting some insight into the gatekeeping process. The following are a few possibilities:

Surveys

The researcher can try to contact the individuals concerned in the process, both the authors and the members of the publishing company staff. A survey of authors and/or members of the editorial staff is one method, though the response rate is likely to be low. In a survey that we conducted among 604 comics artists and illustrators in Belgium (Lefèvre and Di Salvia 2011), 263 filled in the questionnaire: 191 out of 421 on the French-speaking side (45.3 %) and 72 out of 183 (over 39 %) on the Dutch-speaking side. In both language groups, over seven out of ten participants were between the ages of 25 and 44, so this age group was disproportionally represented. More participants of the younger generations filled out the survey, so the results of the survey may not be representative of older artists. The more established artists are, the less likely it is that they will participate in such a survey because they are less likely to experience any gain (foremost on a financial level) resulting from such a survey. Young debut artists, on the other hand, may hope that such a survey can help to improve their mostly fragile working conditions.

Interviewing Gatekeepers and/or Authors

Instead of a large survey, a researcher might opt to select only a small sample of gatekeepers and/or artists and try to interview them. This is a less anonymous approach, but a willing and quite open participant can deliver far more detailed information on particular aspects of the gatekeeping process in such an interview, as a survey cannot go in-depth, and length may discourage possible participants. The researcher may try to get permission to speak to the staff members of the publisher involved in the gatekeeping process. In that case, one will not get direct access to the process itself, but at least the people involved can express their views and explain their methods of working in a more general way—without having to go into particular cases or referring to the actual names of artists.

This is the method that I used in my own study of Belgian publishers. Of course, a crucial and problematic aspect of this method is assessing the veracity and completeness of these responses. It may be that all respondents tell more or less the same "story," but it is also possible they were briefed about what they should and could say. This may still, however, be the truth.

In my gatekeeping study of Dupuis and Lombard, there was no consensus among the interviewees at various points, even among gatekeepers within the same publishing house. The statements differed on some aspects to such an extent that I was almost sure that the gatekeepers were not just repeating a line. In fact, due to these contradictory statements, it became clear that even among staff members working for a single publisher, views and selection criteria could sometimes diverge considerably, and collective discussion was a crucial element in the gatekeeping process. Every participant in such a process may have their own interests, and these may not always align or be compatible.

Furthermore, sometimes there were signs of frustration. For example, two editors at the same level but each separately responsible for their own division (one for the periodicals, the other for the albums), did not agree on certain choices their colleague made. Though there was an important consensus on the selection criteria among gatekeepers of different positions or levels, in both publishing houses disagreements were often noticeable as well. By comparing the verbal accounts of both gatekeepers and comics artists and considering the whole context and the interests of the interviewees, I attempted to arrive at a balanced view. Not only the similarities but also the differences or variations between respondents may be quite telling.

Reading the Submission Guidelines

If the researcher cannot get access to any comics artists or staff members at all, there are still alternative sites of research, such as the official submission guidelines that publishers present on their webpages. Before the widespread use of the internet, it was much more difficult to obtain such information. Today, most of the publishers offer some contact information and some elementary considerations for future collaborators. Some big publishers, such as DC and Marvel, explicitly reject unsolicited proposals, be they unsolicited artwork or scripts. Others, like Fantagraphics, provide submission FAQ pages. For standardized publication formats,

such as North American newspaper strips, there are strict rules regarding the height and width of a daily strip. By contrast, an alternative publisher like Fantagraphics does not impose a particular dimension or page count because the "format should serve the story" (fantagraphics.com 2015).

Submit a Project Yourself

In the worst-case scenario where publisher does not allow the researcher any access to the workspace or to its staff and submission guidelines are opaque, there is one other option: you can submit a project yourself. By sending in a submission (possibly in collaboration with an artist) to a publisher, one can measure the time it takes before the publisher answers, and one can analyze the response of the publisher. Does the publisher give any reasons for accepting (to a next phase) or for immediate rejection? Ideally the publisher must not be aware that this submission is part of a research project; otherwise, this knowledge may influence the way the publisher reacts. However, some ethics review boards may be wary of researchers actively deceiving research subjects in this way.

For my own gatekeeping research, I also tried to submit a project. I wrote a short story (of six pages), and a young, unknown artist named Thierry Schiel drew the pages in black and white. I did not conceal my name, so it might be possible that the gatekeepers remembered me because I had interviewed them just few weeks before. Within three days I received a letter from both publishers. There were notable differences. The letter from Lombard was much shorter and less detailed. The letter from Dupuis, meanwhile, indicated which panels were not well drawn. Moreover, while Lombard answered me as if it was the project of one person, though my letter clearly explained it was a collaboration, Dupuis made separate comments about the writing and the artwork. Dupuis rightly remarked that the script resembled the theme of another one of their series. Lombard said nothing about the script, except that the drawing was stiff and ill-proportioned. Though the letter from Dupuis was somewhat encouraging, in neither case was our proposal accepted. In this way, I experienced what many others had likely been experiencing; it was quite hard to get into the comics business as a creator. The speed of response arguably indicates that this project was probably only checked by the editor-in-chief or by their assistant. This submission was probably not presented to the complete gatekeeping team.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Depending on the kind of data collected, quantitative or qualitative, various methods are suited to the analysis and discussion of the results. There is no need to go into these aspects in detail here because they are well discussed in many methodological handbooks. Aspects such as coding and sampling are obviously very important because they will influence various aspects of the study, such as the significance and representativeness of the data. Information does not have to be delivered only in text form; visual means may help to communicate some general concepts or insights. Flow charts or organizational charts, for example, may be useful tools in clearly presenting the gatekeeping process.

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, gatekeeping research is largely lacking in comics studies, but the reason for this is understandable: it remains a rather time consuming methodology and is difficult to realize because the researcher is largely dependent on the goodwill of a publisher to gain access to the crucial data necessary for the research. Nevertheless, there might be some alternative approaches worth considering. Some alternatives have been briefly presented and discussed, such as author surveys, interviews, official submission guidelines, and submitting one's own project. Every method clearly has its own strengths and weaknesses, but generally a combination of various methodologies in data collection and analysis is likely to result in a valuable contribution to knowledge in the field of comics studies.

Notes

1. Of 46 English-language books on comics in 2014 in the Bonn Online-Bibliography, almost a third (13) are dedicated solely to superheroes, six focus on social issues (such as representation of minorities), and five are dedicated to only one creator.
2. For an overview of the various functions of publishers, see Greco (2013, 5–6) or Clark and Phillips (2014, 1–2).
3. Of course, graphic narratives can sometimes do without established publishers; there have been cases of self-publishing by artists themselves—think, for instance, of the amateur market, which is really impressive in Japan (Noppe 2014)—or cases of crowdfunded publishing. Moreover, for a lot of new

creators, self-publishing is often the only way to get their work distributed (e.g. Ren 2014).

4. Notable exceptions are the PhD dissertations of Rogers (1997) and de Vries (2012) and the book on manga publishing in the USA by Brienza (2016).

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Toward Maturity: Analyzing the Spanish Comics Industry Through a Comparison of National Graphic Novels and Gafotaku-Oriented Manga

José Andrés Santiago Iglesias

The consolidation of the manga market signified by the emergence of gafotaku[1] readers and the current popularity of the national graphic novel are two parallel streams within the comics industry in Spain which are only now beginning to overlap. The worldwide shift of comics from periodicals to books began in the late 1980s with the development of the graphic novel. In recent years, this trend has culminated in a surge of popularity of comics in Spain. New works receive acclaim and critical review in newspapers and other publications, while alternative "avant-garde" manga titles join graphic novels on the shelves of major bookstores.

Comic books and manga evolved as two separate phenomena in Spain, from comic books to national graphic novels and from mainstream manga to gafotaku-oriented products. Yet both share certain properties in how this shift took place, which I refer to as a process of reaching maturity: mature both sociologically and aesthetically, as acknowledged by society and cultural authorities, but also in the sense of content, style, and diver-

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sity, defining a cross-generational readership and becoming a field of interest within the market.

In order to examine the Spanish comics market as a whole, the multiple agents involved (authors, readers, publishers, and retailers) and their functions within the industry as a complex system must be considered.[2] I would emphasize that the interaction between all four of these agents (e.g. as opposed to the actions of authors only) has led to the maturity of Spain's comics industry. This maturation process is evident in the rise of the national graphic novel and the appearance of the gafotaku as a new kind of manga consumer. I will explore these two phenomena in detail in this chapter.

Adult Comics and Mature Readers

I will first explain how I employ the term mature. For this section of the chapter, I would like to draw attention to Berndt's (2006) essay, "Adult Manga: Maruo Suehiro's Historically Ambiguous Comics," and how "adult" is used in comics:

> In comics' discourse, however, the attributive term "adult" refers less to economical or cultural maturation than to issues like the following three: first, to sexual or pornographic content; second, to a specific kind of reader [...] and third, to comics as a valuable form of art. [...] "Adult" should be understood less as a matter of thematic content or reader's age-groups than as a mode of expression and a way of reading. (Berndt 2006, 109)

From here on I will refer to the third kind of comics described by Berndt as "mature," while limiting the use of "adult" to those referring to adult topics not aimed at children or teenage audiences. Although I agree with Berndt's reasoning, I prefer the word "mature" (when applied to comics) due to both the subtleties of the term and what it connotes as a process.

The revival of a national graphic novel is addressed in the widely influential monograph *La Novela Gráfica* [The Graphic Novel] by Santiago García (2010). According to García, comics have grown up into graphic novels. In García's statement "along the past twenty-five years a phenomenon took place as comics arose as an adult art form" (2010, 15), he uses "adult" to mean "mature," implying a rich medium and stressing the process implied by the word.

Some researchers analyze "adult" comics with a focus on topics and reader age, instead of approaching graphic novels as a mature art form. This attitude stems from the old idea that comic books are meant for children. It is well accepted that manga as a medium touches on a myriad of topics for a diversity of readers. While most manga titles released today in European and American markets are mainstream teenage-oriented series, in Spain adult topics were introduced with the very first manga publication.[3] However, only within the last decade (and with the arrival of gafotaku) has a mature Spanish manga industry emerged.

On the matter of how the label relates back to consumers, gafotaku is driven by historical, conceptual, and intellectual concerns, rather than by specific themes or genres, and therefore it should be acknowledged as mature. A mature reader seeks titles outside the mainstream, distinct in regard to form, visuals, and narrative. Here I refer to those titles that do not have an original artistic intention but rather are meant for popular consumption as mainstream. Although this applies to all manga,[4] in Japan, in Europe, and the US scholars distinguish between popular titles and those that should be addressed as art because the latter resemble *bande dessinée* (*BD*) and use alternative comics's stylistic language or because both the works and the mangaka [manga artists] have gained a reputation as experimental or avant-garde due to groundbreaking or unusual narratives. Of course it is possible to read mainstream manga in a mature way, but non-mature readers do not seek this experience, preferring rapid consumption. Therefore, I use the word "mature" rather than "adult" to address the readers who do not only read mainstream manga titles but also read a broader range of titles. If they read mainstream manga, they may seek a deeper experience than rapid consumption. "Mature" suggests a degree of comics-related knowledge or expertise regarding a specific topic, while "adult" implies an age:

> The idea behind this argument is the absolute equality between the maturity of the public and the maturity of the work. Claiming for itself a mature audience, the graphic novel implies it is a mature medium too. […] It cannot be said that, by the simple fact of being addressed to an adult audience, the product must necessarily be mature and therefore more developed, or vice versa. There is a confusion of terms that, although related, are not interdependent: the adult/mature/developed comic on one hand, and the comic meant for an adult/mature/educated public on the other. (Gómez Salamanca 2013, 176–177)

Gómez Salamanca (2013, 177–178) explains the concept of mature comics (with regard to the graphic novel but also applicable to manga) in two different ways. The first addresses comics that are "mature" because of the skilled use of the codes of the medium, regardless of the specific content being transmitted. The second suggests that an intellectually mature audience legitimizes a particular type of work. Many adults read mainstream manga but lack expertise in this medium. For example, while many people would describe Miura Kentaro's *Berserk* as adult for the sex and violence depicted, it is a title not necessarily aimed at a mature reader.[5] A newcomer might enjoy it as well. However, this is not the case for Kago Shintaro's *Kasutoroshiki*, a scatological and sordid eroguro [erotic-grotesque] manga promoted as underground and avant-garde.

The debate over the meaning of "adult" and "mature" continues. At this point, Berndt's analysis of manga circulation in Europe and the USA comes into consideration. Aside from mainstream, well-known titles, Berndt adds another two other classifications of manga:

> One type of manga the typical manga fan would not easily obtain, is the second sort: comics reminiscent of avant-garde or underground traditions, which often draw upon horror, pornography, and scatology, popular for their shock value [...] The 'third manga', works that neither unconditionally serve not drastically provoke their readers. Dedicated to this type [...] is the label Sakka [author]. (Berndt 2006, 107–108)

The authorial perspective (the "third manga" Berndt mentions) is important to my argument inasmuch as it connects with the prevalent global discourse on the graphic novel. It is also deeply rooted within Spanish discourse, as García suggests (2010), which I will discuss later in this chapter. Berndt continues with a catchphrase used in the early twenty-first century by the French publisher Casterman in reference to the sakka collection: "Sakka, l'autre manga" [sakka, the other manga], accompanied by the Japanese sentence "manga wa otona ni naru," literally "manga becomes adult" (2006, 108). Casterman still uses the sakka label to differentiate its manga line from BD but does not distinguish between mainstream shōnen and shōjo titles and those originally labeled as sakka, such as the works of Jirō Taniguchi or Seiki Tsuchida. Ultimately, in the French market, l'autre manga is just manga. In Spain, however, the boundaries remain quite clear between the three types of manga described by Berndt. Some smaller publishers specialize in the third type (the author manga), such

as Ponent Mon or Astiberri, while EDT was popular among fans due to its line of eroguro manga. There is remarkable compatibility between the idea presented by Milky Way Publishing's Chief Editor Carlos Subero in an interview on Zona Negativa [Negative Zone] and Casterman's old catchphrase: "We represent the other side of manga" (2014).

Casterman's statement "manga wa otona ni naru" clearly advocates the idea of "auteur" comics as a marker of "adult," implying that mainstream manga is childish. This line of thought is problematic as it uses the adult label irrespective of quality. While the word "mature" would equally address stylistic virtuosity (without judging the age of the readers), "adult" attends to the hypothetical preferred reader's age. In this regard, Subero's idea of highlighting the quality of the works as distinctive from mainstream titles, rather than focusing the debate upon the reader's age, is apt. At any rate, sakka manga has been absorbed by the comics industry in Spain, labeled differently from other manga (as is also the case with nouvelle manga), and clearly intended for a distinct readership (familiar with the European graphic novel and its visual style). Many of these auteur manga appeal to a global audience since they cannot be easily identified as "typical manga" or mangaesque (Berndt and Kümmerling-Meibauer 2013). For example, Jirō Taniguchi or Taiyō Matsumoto's works are typically labeled "author manga." While some of these titles remain unknown to mainstream readers, they make up a disproportionate amount of the manga studied by academics, which therefore may create a distorted view of what typifies manga.

The Maturation of Spanish Comics Creators via the Graphic Novel Phenomenon

Although to those less observant it might look like a spontaneous and unpredictable phenomenon, the graphic novel is just the embodiment of the "auteur comic" project developed from alternative comics since the 1980s. For this to happen, several phenomena had to occur, both technological and economic: the lowering of production costs; the proliferation of international contacts through internet and multiple comics conventions; and the interest shown by general bookstores for a new product which might counterbalance the losses that digital music and movie downloads left in their sections of CDs and DVDs. Other phenomena have been generational: a batch of authors have matured in the last twenty years, and so have the readers used to alternative comics when they were kids—and wanted

to keep doing it once they became adults. [...] It is they who made graphic novels available to non-fan readers in the only place where they could have been discovered: general bookstores, therefore creating the critical mass necessary to maintain a new industry: an industry of auteur comics. (García 2013, 13–14)

This above quote raises three significant issues that I will address in this chapter: the maturity of the agents that make up the complex system that is the comics industry (readers, authors, publishers, and retailers), the recent expansion of comics availability from specialist bookshops to generalist superstores, and the critical mass necessary to bring about these changes in production and readership in Spain.

2007 should be highlighted as a milestone for the graphic novel in Spain,[6] as that was the year the government established the National Comic Award, a public gesture toward comics' cultural (and economic) value to Spanish society. The very fact that this prize was created implies that comics have become mainstream, even institutionalized, and that national comics in particular have gone from a niche interest to a valuable asset, owned and branded, by the Spanish cultural industries. In the same year, Paco Roca's graphic novel *Arrugas* [Wrinkles] was a major success, attracting not only comic enthusiasts but also a broader readership that had never read a comic book before. *Arrugas* won the National Comic Award in 2008 and was subsequently adapted to a feature-length animated film of high acclaim.

From Mass Medium to Art: An Auteurist Perspective

Many graphic novel authors themselves adopt the auteurist perspective on their own work, recognizing only themselves as the reason for market change. Meanwhile, they neglect other factors, namely the role of publishers and advertisers in discovering new cultural and commercial potential and the role of distributors and retailers in sustaining and expanding availability during previous decades. Along with the readership, these agents are the main components of the aforementioned complex system that spurred this major shift in the Spanish comics industry. Undeniably, while both authors and publishers played an equally important role (in spite of disparate individual aims) in this revival of the Spanish comics industry, some scholars tend to forget the essential role of the consumer:

without a receptive, mature substratum of readers, regeneration would not have been possible.

García (2014) states that the rise of the graphic novel in opposition to the traditional comic book entails a major model transformation, involving both authors and readers, while the industry attempts to adapt: it is "not a crisis[7] [...] It is the end of the story, a whole major shift, the dusk of an era making way to a whole different one." Crisis and adversity act as catalysts of creativity and new cultural identity; within the context of crisis in the comics industry, authors often explore new codes and artistic expressions, and Spanish authors in particular are migrating to new languages that can satisfy their changing interests, which simultaneously helps to create new markets full of potential. For García (2010), any major artistic shift in comics history is connected to a deep crisis in the publishing industry of the time. Some Spanish authors believe the graphic novel is no longer a mass medium, choosing instead to acknowledge it as art. Ultimately, García defines the graphic novel as an art movement within the comics realm, considering this maturation as an art form closely related to how authors are positioned within the industry. Rather than focusing on changes in style or theme, he emphasizes the seminal role of the authors and their creative freedom in bringing about these and other sociocultural developments.

García reaffirms auteurist discourse instead of adopting a more comprehensive approach when he quotes McLuhan on Art Spiegelman: "every form, when it is no longer a mass medium, has to become an art or disappear" (García 2014). Thus, he chooses the perspective of the avant-garde author in addressing the graphic novel as a mature medium aimed at a mature readership. I consider this a valid approach, given that the way the graphic novel has shaken up the Spanish comics industry in the last decade is unprecedented. Yet his claim, echoed by many Spanish comics creators, that this artistic shift is the main or only reason for change is inadequate. Pepe Gálvez (2008, 75–76) states that "the emergence of the graphic novel involves a double maturation: language and contents, and it is the result of an interplay between the will of the authors, audience demands, and changes within the comics industry." The artistic shift in the Spanish comics industry is not purely an author-driven phenomenon. It is deeply connected to actions by publishing and retail agents and the emergence of a mature readership.

Gómez Salamanca (2013) proposes a broad and unifying definition for "graphic novel," not as an art movement (García 2010) but as a change

in narrative and stylistic aspects of comics. Moving away from García's position, this inclusive perspective shifts the focus from the authors to the industry, underlining a formal transformation from comic book to graphic novel and linking the term to marketing strategy instead of authorial intention (Gómez Salamanca 2013). I do not consider a debate between the inclusive and the culturalist perspectives[8] to be directly relevant, as my pursuit here is an exploration of the role the graphic novel has played within the industry's transformation rather than a definition of the term itself. However, it is interesting that Gómez also ascribes attributes such as auto-conclusive, ambitious, authorial, adult, mature, and "addressing serious issues" (Gómez Salamanca 2013, 81) to the graphic novel. The emphasis on both "adult" and "mature" is relevant to my point here.

Manga from the Graphic Novel Perspective

García (2010) argues that the graphic novel as a medium of comics was so distinct that it was necessary to find a new name to identify it. This line of thought is the basis of the "culturalist" perspective as defined by Gómez Salamanca (2013, 81). However, García's claim lacks specificity as he provides only a vague description. He defines graphic novels as modern adult comics that demand different readings and attitudes from traditional comics. Yet manga also demands different readings and attitudes from traditional comics. Even something as simple as reading the page from right to left demands a change in approach.

As such, some scholars include manga as part of their theoretical discourse on the graphic novel in an unsuccessful attempt to conflate the two, positing that manga characteristics such as black and white printing and tankōbon book size are rooted in artistic choices in the same way that certain features of a graphic novel are determined by the author. However, in the case of manga, these attributes have little to do with the author and everything to do with format and commercial issues that are deeply rooted in the Japanese manga industry. A better focus, perhaps, would be how the rise of manga in Spain led to the shift of comics from specialized bookshops to superstores, how it influenced Spanish creators, and how it affected comics readers.

Some publishers have recently attempted to use the term "gekiga" as a synonym for graphic novel[9] in their marketing strategy, as the "graphic novel" label has become attractive to a wider audience beyond only comics fans. By doing so, they expect to reach comic book readers who usually

avoid the typical "manga style." However, it is worth recalling Jaqueline Berndt's warning concerning the broad use of the word gekiga, as follows:

> The universal use of this historically specific term is problematic in three respects: first, it is deeply rooted in the Japanese manga discourse of the 1960s; second, it was closely tied to the so-called rental libraries (kashihon'ya) and the peculiar communicative interrelations engendered by these sites which have disappeared in the 1970s; and third, gekiga's stylistic accomplishments have become components of story manga in general. (Berndt 2006, 107)

However, gekiga is useful in this analysis, inasmuch as it offers a means of comparison between the current state of the industry in Spain and manga's early history in Japan. In the aforementioned interview posted on Zona Negativa, Carlos Subero stated that "perhaps Spain is facing that stage, similar somehow to what the birth of gekiga meant in Japan" (Estrada 2014). The label "gekiga" was coined in the late 1950s to distinguish new dramatic and adult-oriented manga (such as Yoshihiro Tatsumi's or Yoshiharu Tsuge's) from comics aimed at children (such as Osamu Tezuka's early works). Gekiga stood out due to the crude realism of many of its stories, and it became the origin of new underground, experimental manga and magazines such as *Garo* (1964) and *COM* (1967). Ultimately, gekiga laid the foundations for contemporary manga and brought about a renaissance in terms of style, theme, and genre. It is notable that Carlos Subero does not attempt to translate gekiga (as graphic novel or otherwise). Instead, he spotlights how gekiga represented a shift toward mature topics and a mature manga industry in the 1960s and how a similar shift can be seen in Spain in the last several years.

Gafotaku: Toward Maturity of Readership

Most European and American countries may share a similar approach in defining manga, whether through consumption patterns or what people expect when they read Japanese comics, but a comprehensive notion of manga is elusive. Though the average manga reader is most likely a teenager engaged with a broad selection of mainstream manga, many scholars tend to focus on experimental or alternative manga instead. A different understanding of the manga phenomenon and how people view manga greatly depends on which authors, series, and genres are published and

distributed in each market and whether they are considered mainstream or alternative.

In the initial years following the boom in the global manga market in the early twenty-first century, readers in Spain were generally teenagers interested in mainstream manga, but recently, older readers—those from the generation of the first manga craze in the late 1980s and early 1990s—have become a significant market segment. Many of those readers are now in their 30s and 40s, have higher incomes than younger fans, and have more mature tastes. As a consequence of the current economic situation, publishers are turning to these mature readers by offering a variety of publications to meet this demand.

Hence, the Spanish manga industry is currently undergoing a shift related to the change in consumption habits of a growing substratum of readers: readers of the older generation of manga aficionados who seek mature titles with a variety of storylines and topics. Referred to as gafotaku, these readers differ from the average manga reader in that they are interested in both mainstream works and marginal/less commercial manga and appreciate the more intellectual aspects of manga:

> Gafotakus won't have problems to find a wide range of shōnen titles […] and would probably feel satisfied if they're eventually interested in Taniguchi or other casual manga by Mizuki. But there is a gray area in between that defines the essence of gafotakus; where their unique personality lay. […] Gafotakus have usually gained some 'age' or 'seniority,' but that does not mean there are not younger readers that might be considered as such. (Estrada 2012)

Gafotakus embody the main attributes of mature manga readers in Spain. They aim for a reading experience that embraces visual innovation and narrative that prohibits rapid consumption, while also demanding the artistic standards applied to Franco-Belgian BD and avant-garde independent comics. I deliberately refer to gafotakus as "mature," not "adult," as their intellectual curiosity is not necessarily linked to age or generational gap. Carlos Subero states:

> People who never read manga, and those who read manga years ago and quit, are now starting to read again the range of titles that we are publishing. Booksellers are surely surprised that some people usually interested in graphic novel, or European or American comics, are paying attention to our releases. (Estrada 2012)

Many of the titles published by Milky Way—Inio Asao's *Nijigahara Holograph*, Asumiko Nakamura's *Utsubora*, and Natsume Ono's *Ristorante Paradiso*—are not identified as mainstream manga by a large majority of Spanish readers but rather as gafotaku material. Gafotaku-oriented titles such as these play a dual role in the manga industry; on one hand, they target the mature generation of manga readers through complex and thought provoking content, while on the other hand, they incorporate topics and artistic qualities that are attractive to a broader readership familiar with European alternative and independent comics.

From Niche to Superstore

Thus far, I have used the term "mature" to signify "art" in regard to comics as an important part of the authorial discourse within the Spanish graphic novel. I have also addressed readers as "mature," conveying a high degree of comics literacy and exemplified by gafotaku. The maturation of the retail agents in Spain can also be seen in the shift from specialized bookshops to malls and superstores as the graphic novel is targeted at a broader readership (alongside some gafotaku-oriented manga titles that appeal consumers of European and American comics).

In an article for *El Cultural* [The Cultural] on November 18, 2008, Paco Roca stresses the importance of the transition from aficionados to general readers and praises the promising future of the Spanish comics industry. Roca makes two controversial statements on the graphic novel: on the one hand, he stresses how graphic novels are aimed at readers "who don't like comics," implying that graphic novels target a broader readership outside the fandom. Furthermore, while he "blames" traditional comic books like superhero comics or French *BD* for being symptomatic of market stagnation, he places manga alongside the graphic novel as catalyst of a new creative and commercial period. On the other hand, he thinks graphic novels should be "compared to high literature" and therefore should not be limited to specialized bookshops but should also be available in superstores and malls. His remark on the discourse surrounding high culture versus low culture seems outdated, but I find his comments on the commercial movement from comic book stores to general superstores in line with Casey Brienza's assertions on this subject (Brienza 2009).

Brienza presents reasons for the migration of manga from the comics field to the book field in the USA, and her explanation should also

be taken into account when analyzing the graphic novel phenomenon in Spain. Brienza argues that "manga publishing migrated from the comics publishing field to the book publishing field, [and] the logic of this new field fueled the manga boom" (2014, 473). The differences between the American and the Spanish market must be considered; regardless, her analysis of the manga boom in the USA, also entailing a turn from niche (specialized shops) to a mainstream (general bookstores), is clearly relevant here, as these developments are mirrored in Spain.

As claimed in the last annual review conducted by *Tebeosfera* (Barrero and Tebeoeditores 2015), more than 73 % of comics published in Spain appear in book format (as distinct from magazines and pamphlets). In terms of printed size, the American-sized comic books (23–26.9 cm vertical length) remain most common, but in recent years the smaller "manga-sized" tankōbon books (17–22.9 cm) have become much more prevalent, exceeding the number of French *BD*-style albums (27–42 cm).

This shift from specialized bookstores to malls and superstores is also related to changes in media consumption. The rise of the consumption of digital content via the internet rather than through physical purchase has caused a reduction in the space dedicated to these products at large brick-and-mortar stores. Managers have filled this space with comics, which are gaining popularity among a broader social spectrum but have not fully made the jump into the online market.

Market Equilibrium and Critical Mass

The age range and gender of Spanish comics consumers has changed over the last decade. Not only male teenagers but female and middle-aged readers (mature aficionados in their 30s and 40s) are now interested in new manga releases and graphic novels. In a video interview on Tomos y Grapas [Volumes and Staples], Paco Roca draws attention to the discussion regarding gender readership, pointing out how the graphic novel is slowly gravitating toward female consumers: "Women are the missing piece of the comic puzzle if we want to address it as a normalized and fulfilled medium. Until recently we lacked both female authors and female-friendly topics" (Román 2014). The role of female readers has been stressed as a game changer for the contemporary industry. The maturity of the Spanish readership cannot be understood without acknowledging the growing number of female readers interested in a wide range of comics. With regard to manga, the shift from a vast majority of mainstream shōnen

titles to a broader variety has boosted the female readership in Spain as well. The greater amount of genres available, including seinen and avant-garde works, has changed the way manga is perceived by aficionados and general readers alike.

Within the context of economic crisis post-2008, the market trends in Spain have also shifted. According to a survey conducted by Marc Bernabé (2015), the number of manga volumes released annually since 2010 has dropped drastically from more than 700 new releases a year to fewer than 400 over the last five years. Exact circulation figures are not released by Spanish publishers, but the total number of new manga volumes released annually from 2011 to 2014 shows trends similar to those back in 2002 and 2003. The manga market in Spain has found an equilibrium between 350 and 380 new annual releases.

Bernabé's review offers several statements regarding the Spanish manga market that deserve further analysis. One of the most significant findings is how the now-defunct gafotaku-oriented publisher EDT has been replaced by other major companies in Spain (Santiago 2014). Publishers such as Norma, Planeta, ECC, and Milky Way have expanded their manga portfolio from shōnen and shōjo titles to a broader choice of genres and topics in order to attract former EDT readers. Due to the crisis, Spanish manga publishers are finding a balance between mainstream new releases and gafotaku-oriented titles for mature readers within a stagnant market. In the last few years, they have brought out several manga in limited editions for collectors. Milky Way, a small new publisher, has gathered momentum by targeting a very specific demographic of readers—gafotaku—and focusing mostly on critically acclaimed titles and short-running series, a departure from the long-running manga that are common in the Spanish market. This allows for a more agile and adaptive publishing strategy. Milky Way has shown an aggressive and innovative marketing strategy based on social networking and direct, near-immediate feedback from their consumers, relying on an online store, Twitter, and word-of-mouth to publicize new releases and important announcements.

In the last two years, a greater amount of single-volume manga have been published, many of them targeting gafotakus. Furthermore, many of these manga also appeal to other graphic novel aficionados and general readers interested in new narratives. For many years, both graphic novel and manga readers have remained segregated and often oblivious to each other, and manga readers rarely engaged with US superhero comics or

French *BD*s. Recently, both mediums have started to overlap, and now a gafotaku may read manga, US comics, *and* Spanish graphic novels, unaffected by prejudices common in the recent past. This scenario underscores the maturity of Spanish comics publishers—their solid market position, diverse catalog of titles and genres, and diverse readership demographics.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

The proliferation of gafotaku-oriented titles and the national graphic novel has revitalized the Spanish comics market. They share similar production mechanisms but have also become symbiotic commercially and creatively. Therefore, the mutual benefits of graphic novels and manga as crucial to the recovery of the Spanish comics industry must not be understated. For this to have happened, two factors must have come into play: (1) the maturation exhibited by the four agents of the comics industry (readers, creators, publishers, and retailers) and (2) the necessary critical mass for the system as a whole to be sustainable. This critical mass entails a mature cross-generational readership; gender and interest inclusivity; strong cultural support for Spanish authors, as comics are now being legitimated by social and educational institutions; the momentum of mature publishers, targeting a large variety of readers; and the critical mass of retailers who revitalized the market by turning comics from a niche product into a mainstream product. Thus, the manga and graphic novel phenomena, which ran parallel for years, are finally overlapping; as both have undergone processes of maturation, they have become industry kin.

NOTES

1. On Twitter (March 9, 2012), four Spanish bloggers coined the term *gafotaku* (Estrada 2012), a portmanteau of *gafapasta* (pseudo-intellectual hipster) and *otaku*, to define experienced, mature, and critical manga fans (Santiago 2014).
2. A system composed of interrelated parts that exhibit properties and behaviors as a group greater than the simple sum of the individual parts. I am using *complexity* here as it is used in mathematical or media technologies discourse rather than in a philosophical or epistemological sense.
3. For example, Tatsumi Yoshihiro's *Qué triste es la vida y otras historias* [Life Is Sad and Other Stories] published by La Cúpula in 1984.
4. Berndt (2015, 107).

5. First published in 1988 in *Young Animal* (a *seinen* magazine); however, because of the epic plot with fantasy elements, the narrative similarity to *shōnen* adventure titles, and stylistic conventions, *Berserk* is appealing to a mainstream audience.

6. A deeper discussion on the origins and development of the graphic novel, and how it should be addressed or defined, is not within the scope of this chapter. Rather, I hope to provide a broader perspective on the maturation of the comics medium in Spain.

7. García is not only addressing the publishing crisis in economic terms but also pointing out a crisis relating to values and creativity within the industry.

8. I am quoting Gómez Salamanca's definition of "culturalist" (2013, 81). What he terms "culturalist perspective" has nothing to do with cultural studies (2013, 16). Rather, he summarizes the approach by García and other authors who define the graphic novel as an art movement within comics.

9. See Shigeru Mizuki's *Gekiga Hitler*, published in Spain by EDT as *Hitler: La novela gráfica* in 2009.

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The Tail That Wags the Dog: The Impact of Distribution on the Development and Direction of the American Comic Book Industry

David K. Palmer

This chapter explores the production of culture as represented by comics work. It explicitly recognizes the diverse inputs of the larger network which ultimately delivers comics work (i.e. graphic narratives in a variety of formats) into the hands of readers, the ultimate consumers of the work. This network of individuals and organizations fulfills a number of vital tasks that directly influence the finished work and its viability in the marketplace. Some of the contributions of that network are traditionally overlooked and are not fully recognized by consumers or, indeed, even by scholars of comics work. One of these necessary but routinely disregarded roles is that of distribution. The role of distribution is often ignored or minimized because it is not customarily viewed as a creative activity, especially in the context of an industry which views itself as "artistic" or "creative." Distribution is considered to be a mundane activity, and its profound impact on the success (or failure) of comics work is therefore easy to overlook. Comic book historians can better understand and

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interpret the full richness of the American comic book industry and its history by explicitly incorporating a more thorough investigation of distribution into their analyses. To make the role of distribution in the production of comic books as culture more visible, this chapter applies the notion of constraints on the production of culture developed by Richard A. Peterson (e.g. 1982, 1985) to an analysis of a number of pivotal events in the comic book industry. This analysis is augmented by also integrating concepts from strategic management, especially those of Michael Porter (1979, 1980).

Fundamentally, the American comic book industry revolves around a commercial transaction: someone purchases a comic book (whether as a physical printed object, or, more recently, and increasingly, as a download). The purchaser need not be the eventual reader; he or she may be, for example, a parent making a purchase for a child or a library adding to its lending collection. Both parties willingly enter into a mutually beneficial transaction, and each perceives him or herself to be better off than before the transaction. The purchaser has a comic book that was desired, and the seller has money that will contribute toward staying in business and continuing to create comic books, or pay to have them created. Of course, in order to facilitate that transaction a great deal has taken place "behind the scenes."

In a brief primer on how the industry works, comic book writer, historian, and blogger Mark Evanier (n.d.) explained in broad strokes that "there are three aspects to what a comic book publisher must deal with," notably finance, editorial, and printing. According to Evanier, finance represents the publisher and the processes and arrangements involved with financing the undertaking and, importantly, shouldering the risk. Editorial involves the creation of the "content," or purchasing the "content" from the creators. Editorial produces the "cultural" artifact that people typically identify with the industry. This is often the focus of scholars as they examine comic books. Finally, printing is the "physical mass reproduction" of the content. Of course, the content (e.g. original artwork) exists separately from reproduction and has its own market (Weist 2000); it is a viable topic for study in its own right, but one beyond the scope of this chapter. However, as a publishing industry, the reproduction and sale of the content is the critical consideration, as the industry would not exist without reproduction and sale. In the twenty-first century, the concept of printing has broadened with the advent of digital delivery of content, but the point remains that providing multiple faithful reproductions is still crucial.

The comic book as a cultural artifact is certainly influenced by the three aspects Evanier (n.d.) described. Regarding editorial, the impact of this aspect on the production of culture is obvious, as this is where the content is created. The impact of finance is less obvious, but due to publishers and consumers' willingness to pay for certain types of content (e.g. superheroes) as opposed to other types of content (e.g. romance), it influences what creators are willing to expend time and effort producing. Printing influences the final product by constraining what is physically possible. For example, computer technology has made a greater palette of colors available for more reliable and nuanced reproduction than was possible with four-color offset printing technology in the past. Newer technology has opened up formerly constrained possibilities, and artistic expression has evolved accordingly. Thus, in direct and indirect ways each of the aspects Evanier describes influences the production of culture represented by comic books.

The primary concern for most purchasers, whether readers and/or collectors, is having the comic book in their hands (or on their screens). Despite its crucial role in the commercial transaction, the actual mechanics and logistics of "how it got there," which is the essence of distribution (and retail), is of less concern. Evanier (n.d.) did mention distribution as a fourth aspect of comic book publishing, but did not elaborate on it further. Although seemingly taken for granted, and despite its mundane and invisible aspect, distribution is critical to understanding what ultimately gets created, printed, sold, consumed and studied. Fundamentally, how, where and when something is made available for purchase influences who will purchase it. In turn, who could conceivably have the opportunity to purchase a product influences what will ultimately be produced and supplied to the retailers. For example, if, in some alternate universe, comic books were only offered for sale in beauty salons catering to women, then publishers would likely produce comic books of interest primarily to women and generally not of interest to men (who would rarely be exposed to them).

Additionally, when considering distribution, a "chicken and egg" dilemma arises: Which comes first, the product or the distribution channel? Will publishers (editorial/finance/printing) produce comic books without a way of distributing them to potential customers? On the other hand, would anyone spend the resources and take on the risks of creating a distribution network before there is ample product to move through it and, thus, generate the revenue necessary to pay the bills? Distribution and the

opportunities it affords for purchase are major antecedents of editorial and financial (and, by extension, printing) decisions.

While mundane, distribution remains a critical aspect to consider in the production of comic books as culture. It is the process that links the creator of a cultural product to whoever ultimately consumes and experiences it, although producer and consumer may never physically encounter each other and personally interact. Without facilitating this transaction, commercial success would be impossible. Furthermore, without commercial success, the production of culture (in this case comic books) would be vastly different and possibly greatly diminished, and would be in danger of disappearing.

Theoretical Framework

Brienza (2010, 109) suggested that the work of Richard Peterson (1982) "is an excellent framework to apply when beginning to think about the production of culture in modern societies." Ultimately, Peterson posited six facets, or more appropriately, constraints: technology, law and regulation, industry structure, organization structure, occupational careers and the market (Peterson 1985; Peterson and Anand 2004). In support of the production of culture perspective, Peterson and Anand noted it "focuses on how the symbolic elements of culture are shaped by the systems within which they are created, *distributed*, evaluated, taught, and preserved" (2004, 311; emphasis added). They approvingly discussed the development of this perspective, which "illustrated elements of culture being shaped in the *mundane* process of their production" (2004, 312; emphasis added). Nothing could be more mundane than the distribution of comic books, but this aspect does play a role—sometimes an outsized and long-lasting one—in shaping the content and the cultural implications of comic books.

The production of culture perspective, while not a theory in itself (Santoro 2008), suggests a methodological framework for investigating comic books. Peterson's framework can be further augmented by considering ideas from strategic management, given that the comic book industry is commercial in nature and is driven by considerations of profit and loss/supply and demand. The strategic management process is that branch of management/business administration which Barney and Hesterly (2008) defined as "a sequential set of analyses that can increase the likelihood of a firm's choosing a strategy [plan] that generates com-

petitive advantage" (353) and allows it to survive in the marketplace. In formulating strategy, managers are asked to look inward to internal strengths and weaknesses, and outward, or, in the words of the field, "to scan the environment," at external threats and opportunities. This process, SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), forms a key component of the strategic management analytical process (Anderson 2013).

One of the key tools for scanning the external environment from strategic management is PEST analysis, which is sometimes expanded to PESTLE. This mnemonic stands for the factors of Political, Economic, Social, Technology, Legal, and Environmental (Anderson 2013). PESTLE maps well onto Peterson's (1985) constraints, highlighting that Peterson's focus was generally external (to the organization) and the potential complementary nature of Peterson's formulation and related ideas from strategic management.

Table 16.1 shows the correspondence of these two strategic management tools, SWOT and PESTLE, with Peterson's (1985) six factors, demonstrating that they are indeed complementary conceptualizations. An added benefit of considering strategic management as an analytic tool is an explicit recognition of the roles that internal strengths and weaknesses of an organization (e.g. publisher) might play, above and beyond just a consideration of threats and opportunities that are external to the organization. This internal/external distinction, while implicit and understated in Peterson (i.e. organization structure vs. industry structure), is explicit in strategic management.

Table 16.1. The correspondence between Peterson (1985)'s constraints on the production of culture and the strategic management analytic tools of SWOT & PESTLE

Peterson (1985)	SWOT	PESTLE
Technology	External (O & T)	Technology
Law & Regulation	External (O & T)	Legal
Industry structure	External (O & T)	Economic
Organization structure	Internal (S & WT)	*(no match)*
Occupational careers	External (O & T)	Economic
Market	External (O & T)	Economic, Social, Political, Environmental

Note: SWOT: S = strengths, W = weaknesses, O = opportunities, T = threats

Considering internal versus external factors may enhance analysis, but it is important to realize that the distinctions noted in Table 16.1 are not as rigid as they initially appear to be. For example, technology could be developed in-house and be proprietary, and not necessarily external and thus available to all competitors. While occupational careers may imply an external orientation in that the "occupation" (e.g. writer, artist, letterer, editor, printer) cuts across multiple actors in the industry, occupational careers, on the other hand, may also have a strong internal aspect in the sense of organization-specific career paths (e.g. internal promotion from office assistant to writer to assistant editor to editor to editor-in-chief). The study of the production of culture can be become more fine-grained by applying some of the extant analytic tools and frameworks from strategic management.

One such tool with the potential to enhance the application of Peterson's (1985) six constraints is Michael Porter's (1979, 1980) Five Forces Model. Although primarily external in focus, the Five Forces Model can add detail relevant to understanding the impact of distribution-centric events. The first factor is the intensity of rivalry within the industry. In essence, to what extent and how forcefully will competitors react to each other? For example, if one publisher tries a new genre, will the others respond quickly with their own versions? Or, if one competitor changes prices, then how aggressively or cautiously will others respond? The second factor is the possibility of new entrants and how easy or difficult is it for new competitors to enter an industry. Publishers need to be wary of not only current competitors (i.e. intensity of rivalry) but also potential competitors that may enter the field. For example, the music industry was fundamentally changed when Apple entered the market with iTunes; Apple heretofore had not been a factor in the music industry. The third factor is the power of suppliers. To what extent do suppliers exercise control over a crucial input to the production process (e.g. is a supplier the only supplier, or one of many)? For example, could artists and writers (as suppliers) form their own competing publishing concern (as a number of high-profile Marvel Comics creators did in 1992 when they formed Image Comics)? Porter's fourth factor is the power of buyers. It asks how much power does a buyer exercise over a producer? Is the producer dependent on one or a few buyers, who could conceivably dictate prices paid and terms, or are buyers diffused and unorganized and hence able to exercise minimal influence? The fifth factor is the threat of substitutes. This is one that is particularly germane for the comic book industry. Reading comic books is a leisure activity. There are many other activities that people could substitute in its

place, such as other hobbies, watching television, or playing videogames. For example, television rapidly became a threat as a substitute leisure activity as the percentage of households with televisions went from 9.0 % in 1950 to 64.5 % in 1955 and then to 87.1 % in 1960 (*TV Basics* 2010). For many years, alternative leisure activities and ways to spend disposable income have been a real threat to the industry.

Four Examples

To illustrate these points, four pivotal events in the history of the American comic book industry, two of relatively recent vintage, will be discussed. Each is centrally concerned with distribution, and each had a profound effect on the content of comic books and what became possible in the marketplace. Without understanding the role that distribution played, it is difficult to fully appreciate the changes in content that took place.

The Comics Code (1954)

The first event is one that is arguably the most important in understanding the American comics industry (Daniels 1971; Gabilliet 2010; Hajdu 2008; Nyberg 1998; Palmer 2010; Schelly 2013). By 1954, the industry faced an existential threat from which its very survival was legitimately in doubt. There arose a furor over the content of many comic books, particularly crime and horror comics, stoked in large measure by Fredric Wertham's 1954 book *Seduction of the Innocent* and by hearings conducted by the US Senate Judiciary Committee in April and June of that year. The involvement of the US Senate carried with it the real threat of government intervention in the industry, providing strong evidence for the role of Peterson's (1985) constraint of the law.

Due to heightened parental concerns over adult and graphic content, and calls for "something to be done," the industry faced a public relations nightmare. Of critical note is the pressure that distributors (and retailers) felt to cease distributing (and selling) comic books with questionable content. The publishers, and by extension the creators, may have been the ones put in the public spotlight, but it was the distributors and retailers who were the ones taking the risks and facing possible penalties. By refusing to carry controversial material, distributors, in turn, put pressure on the publishers to modify the content (Daniels 1971; Gabilliet 2010; Hajdu 2008; Nyberg 1998; Palmer 2010; Schelly 2013).

In an attempt to head off possible governmental regulation and in light of existing ordinances and restrictions, the industry turned to self-policing. Many of the major publishers banded together as the Comics Magazine Association of America and created the Comics Code Authority, which, based on a set of guidelines, would assure the public of the appropriateness of the content of comic books, and would assuage the fears of distributors by offering some mechanism to deflect criticism and possible prosecution (Daniels 1971; Gabilliet 2010; Hajdu 2008; Nyberg 1998; Palmer 2010; Schelly 2013).

Although certain stigmatized genres (e.g. horror, crime) were not necessarily "outlawed" by the Comics Code, they were severely constrained by the fact that if they did not pass muster, then they would not be distributed, and no publisher would waste resources to produce comic books that could not be offered for sale. Many other genres were still available (e.g. westerns, funny animals, humor, war, science fiction), although all were under increased scrutiny. So even though crime, horror, and romance were still permitted, their content was much toned down, which resulted in less appeal for older readers and fewer sales. Since the content no longer targeted older readers, it should come as no surprise that readership by this segment declined. As a result, readership began to skew younger (Daniels 1971; Gabilliet 2010; Nyberg 1998; Palmer 2010; Schelly 2013). By favoring comic books explicitly targeted at children, the fact that comic books increasingly became identified as a product for children was a self-fulfilling prophecy. Critics of comic books could then point to these comic books and say, in effect, "see, comic books truly are for children, and we were justified in protesting the questionable content so as to protect the children."

In an effort to placate and protect distributors and retailers, the Comics Code wrought many changes on the industry, especially on the content of comic books and the public perception of comic books. For a time, the very real threat of being denied distribution compelled publishers and creators to restrict allowable content and served to limit experimentation. To properly analyze the content of comic books in the later 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, until attitudes began to noticeably shift and the influence of the Comics Code waned, the impact that the threat of not distributing a title created must be considered. Although technically not the buyers of comic books, in the sense that they did not legally take title to them, distributors, in this incident, exercised great influence over the industry and certainly over the content, or the culture, that was produced.

The Direct Market

By the 1970s and 1980s, the traditional publishers of Code-approved comic books reached a crisis point (Dallas 2013; Gabilliet 2010; Palmer 2010; Sacks and Dallas 2014). Sales had been dropping for decades. One of the key contributing factors was the loss of traditional outlets (e.g. newsstands, "mom and pop" corner stores, cigar stores) as they closed and were replaced with larger shopping centers and supermarkets, which had followed families (and, importantly, children) to the suburbs from urban centers. Of the remaining outlets, many stopped carrying comic books because there was no longer any profit in selling them at their established low prices. Arguably, it cost more to put them out on display than they generated in revenue. Valuable shelf space was devoted to products with better margins (Palmer 2010). Another factor, reflecting Porter's (1979, 1980) notion of substitutes, was the abandonment of comic books by many children for television (Dallas 2013; Gabilliet 2010; Palmer 2010; Sacks and Dallas 2014). However, at this stage of the industry, barriers to entry for new competitors remained relatively high in that distribution through the traditional newsstand channel required large print runs (and costs), usually on the order of hundreds of thousands of copies of a single title.

Another important development in the 1960s was the emergence of a thriving "fandom" which organized conventions and forged links with industry professionals, sold back issues and used comic books to each other, published newsletters, and engaged in early comics scholarship (Schelly 1999). By the 1970s, this group had grown to the point where it had an impact on the industry in the form of an influential "buyer." This group was overwhelmingly male and particularly interested in super-heroes, fantasy, and science fiction. It was also older, for example, older teens and young men—older relative to the presumed audience of children. Its influence was magnified by the relative decline of other audiences (e.g. young children, women). This group did not view comic books as disposable but instead as desirable and sometimes expensive collectibles. Publishers began to target material at this audience (Dallas 2013; Gabilliet 2010; Palmer 2010; Sacks and Dallas 2014). Additionally, many of the creators (e.g. writers, artists, editors) then entering the industry came from the ranks of fandom. As older creators retired, their replacements reflected the interests of fandom and a corresponding narrowing of content and genres (Gabilliet 2010). As per Porter's (1980) Five Factors, it

can be seen that for the first time in the history of the industry a segment of the buying public had "organized" and was exerting increased influence on what was produced.

To serve the growing market of dedicated fans, stores appeared which catered to this market by selling both new comic books and back issues in support of a thriving collectibles market. At first, these stores were in large urban centers, but eventually they expanded to smaller communities. Typically, they were stand-alone stores, independent of larger retail chains, and were often founded and staffed by knowledgeable fans. Throughout the 1970s and the 1980s, this "direct" distribution channel, which was independent of traditional newsstand distribution, ultimately came to be the dominant model for the industry. One consequence of focusing on this narrow segment of a once diverse market was that comic book shops generally carried a limited range of genres, which, in turn, did make good strategic sense given the tastes of the niche audience of buyers (Dallas 2013; Gabilliet 2010; Palmer 2010; Sacks and Dallas 2014).

As the direct market changed the economics of the industry, it became possible for publishers to prosper with much lower print runs. Titles with sales in the tens of thousands became profitable, where in the past, under the old distribution system, sales in the hundreds of thousands had been necessary. With one of the major barriers to entry (i.e. high entry costs for large print runs) removed, industry structure (Peterson 1982) underwent a major transformation as many new publishers and creators flooded into the market. No longer beholden to traditional newsstand distributors with their fears of possible government intervention and public protest, comic book publishers could again experiment with content while ignoring the restrictions of the Comic Code. In pursuit of sustainable niches, there was an explosion of experimentation, and a greater diversity was evident in the comic books (e.g. *Cerebus the Aardvark*, *Elfquest*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*), although it should be noted that those diverse offerings still converged on the constrained demographics of the traditional clientele of comic book stores: male, late teens and older (Dallas 2013; Gabilliet 2010; Palmer 2010; Sacks and Dallas 2014). Again, the opportunities afforded by a change in distribution were amply reflected in the culture produced.

Essentially, in the course of a decade or so, the industry shifted from having a mass market focus to having a niche focus. By the 1980s, the majority of comic books were sold through the direct market (Dallas 2013; Gabilliet 2010; Palmer 2010). In many ways the aspects of the

industry represented by finance, editorial, and printing (Evanier's tripartite description of the "core" industry) had remained basically unchanged, but distribution and retailing had undergone a radical transformation, one which had a profound impact on the content of comic books. Arguably, the innovation that was the creation of the "direct market" saved the industry, but at the cost of abandoning large swaths of the potential audience (e.g. young children, women). Without clearly understanding the factors articulated by Porter (1980), such as the influence of buyers and new entrants, as well as suppliers (e.g. popular creators with increasingly loyal followings) and increased industry rivalry within the only niche now available, an understanding of the transformation of content through the 1980s and into the 1990s is incomplete.

Recent Developments: Manga and Digital

Brienza (2009) provided a vivid example of distribution facilitating a new form of content, and that was the recent explosive growth of manga (Japanese comic books) in the USA. There existed a fascination and respect for Japanese manga, partly fired by anime, but also its embrace by respected American creators (e.g. Frank Miller) (Schodt 1986; Dallas 2013). However, manga remained a niche within the niche of the direct market/comic book shop distribution channel. The material that was translated and published was generally limited to what would appeal to the tastes of the typical customer (i.e. male, older) such as *Lone Wolf and Cub*. Additionally, manga was published in the format familiar to the target audience (i.e. monthly installments of 32 pages), which made initial sense, since direct distribution was oriented toward selling "periodicals" as opposed to longer form formats. The full richness of the genres manga represented was not being exploited. For example, much manga was created with the intention that it be read in larger sequences, sometimes of hundreds of pages, so the traditional format of the comic book was not conducive to presenting manga in its best light.

Innovative publishers reformatted manga so that it more resembled a paperback book than a comic book magazine (Brienza 2009). Additionally, it expanded into the distribution channel for bookstores and once there enjoyed great success in such outlets as Barnes and Noble and Borders (Brienza 2009). Distribution to bookstores exposed manga to a different audience, one that did not typically frequent comics stores served by direct distribution. The audience was more female and enthusiastically embraced

a number of titles and genres that would likely have met with little success, and quite possibly outright resistance, in the direct market. The success of manga in the American market cannot be understood without first appreciating the role that distribution played and the possibilities that a new distribution mode opened up. Without distribution beyond the dominant modes of direct distribution and comic book stores, it is very likely that manga would have experienced minimal market penetration and would likely have never attracted a substantial female readership. New publishers (entrants) and buyers changed the contours of the industry and the range of content available.

The final event to consider is the advent of computer production and digital distribution. Comic books and computer technology are not a new combination. Creators have used computers as a tool for creating comic books for decades. Comic books fully created on a computer began to appear as early as 1985 (e.g. *Shatter* #1, June, 1985). Beyond just utilizing computer technology to create comic books, the industry has, as have other print media (e.g. newspapers, books, magazines) moved into the digital delivery of content (Palmer 2010). As with the direct market, digital distribution radically changed the costs of distribution, again removing a barrier to entry for new publishers and creators. As an example of Peterson's (1985) constraint of technology, digital comic books are freed from the limitations of the printed page, and this freedom opens up the possibility for further experimentation with the form (Guigar et al. 2011; McCloud 2000).

CONCLUSION

Hirsch (1972) and Peterson (1982, 1985) insightfully opened scholars' eyes to the importance of some of the overlooked and mundane aspects of the production of culture. At first glance, distribution would appear to qualify as mundane and not worthy of extensive consideration. However, these examples should serve to highlight the contribution that a thorough investigation of distribution, especially through a finer-grained framework such as Porter's (1980) Five Forces Model, can make to an understanding of the comic book industry and the interpretations that are made of the content of comic books and the culture that was produced.

This chapter is too brief to fully explicate these events, but by painting in broad strokes, some indication is given of how the constraints imposed and the opportunities afforded by distribution have influenced the content

of comic books, and how an understanding of that content is deepened by considering the impact of distribution. The logistics of the physical movement of product from Point A to Point B would, on the surface, appear to offer little to enhance cultural scholars' understanding of comic books. However, distribution has, at times, exerted an outsized influence on the culture the industry has produced. The first example, the existential crisis of 1954, can ultimately be seen as a refusal by distributors to handle product unless there was some mechanism to ensure that they would not be prosecuted. The Comics Code became that mechanism as it served to mollify distributors. However, for decades the Comics Code constrained what was produced by mainstream American publishers. Additionally, this event reinforced the perception that comic books were intended for children, with the concomitant impact that this perception had on content and the long struggle to achieve legitimacy and consecration (Gabilliet 2010). The Comics Code may have saved the industry in 1954, but as Peterson (1982) and Porter (1980) would suggest, it placed constraints on what was considered appropriate content and what was ultimately produced and available for study.

The traditional distribution of comic books as mass market periodicals began to break down in the 1960s and 1970s for a variety of reasons and had become untenable by the 1980s. It was replaced with a new form of distribution that shifted risk to the comics shops, which catered to a segment of the market made up of dedicated fans who were typically older teenage boys and young men interested in a limited range of genres. The industry survived, but it no longer served a mass market, focusing instead on a narrow niche of its former market. Content became more graphic and "mature," which did not always translate into more sophisticated. Most publishers no longer even attempted to offer material that would be of interest to most young children or to female customers.

More recently the industry has witnessed two disruptive distribution focused events with profound implications for content. One is the rise of manga. The other is the shift to digital and away from print. Without the ability to piggyback on bookstore distribution, the explosive growth of manga would not have been possible (Brienza 2009) and the heretofore untapped market of female readers may have been missed. Digital publishing and distribution has been disruptive in other areas of publishing and in the production of culture broadly (e.g. music, film), and its impact on the comic book industry is no less profound (Palmer 2010). Now that comic creators have been freed from the confines of the printed page, further

experiments testing the limits of graphic narrative are not only likely but inevitable (Guigar et al. 2011; McCloud 2000).

As the industry unfolds and evolves in the twenty-first century, Peterson's (1982, 1985) notion of constraints on the production of culture, as augmented by insights borrowed from strategic management (e.g. Porter 1979, 1980), provide a powerful methodological tool for future comic book scholarship. The consideration of the opportunities and threats offered by distribution, filtered through the finer-grained lens of strategic analysis (e.g. Porter's Five Factors), adds depth and telling detail to understanding the cultural output of the American comic book industry.

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Reconfiguring the Power Structure of the Comic Book Field: Crowdfunding and the Use of Social Networks

André Pereira de Carvalho

Comic book publishing in Brazil is guided primarily by the general principles of supply and demand. However, internal specificity in the field of comics produces certain economic configurations. Thus, to understand how actors organize themselves to succeed in this field, it is necessary to explore production strategies and possibilities. One of the methods now used by comic book artists to produce material is crowdfunding.

Crowdfunding in this sense is new to the digital age and requires online support infrastructure. Kickstarter and IndieGoGo are among the most well-known. In Brazil, however, Catarse (www.catarse.me) is the largest crowdfunding platform. It hosts comic book projects, as well as music and theater projects, from artists seeking funding to release their products. A project generally requires people who can financially contribute enough to achieve the funding goal. This way, an artist remains independent and is not dependent on a publisher. Crowdfunding platforms such as Catarse take care of resource collection and deduct a percentage of the proceeds.

The main difference between crowdfunding and the traditional methods (i.e. publishing houses) of comic book production is the criteria that

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define who can and cannot publish their work. When seeking crowdfunding, an artist must have elaborate strategies in place to ensure good project performance through the Catarse platform: use of social networks, attendance at project-related events, and asking people to share their work, among other measures. Once artists achieve their required number of contributors and meet their funding goals, they can successfully publish their work. Publishing houses, on the other hand, to avoid financial injury, typically favor artists with high sales potential. This means many unknown artists struggle to get published.

This chapter aims to explore the duality between creators of and financial contributors to projects. It also analyzes the new configurations of power distribution in the field of comics made possible by new mechanisms of independent production. This chapter begins with the assumption that social relations matter as publishing strategies and are developed to build reputation and recognition. To achieve this objective, a network analysis was conducted to observe these social relations at work. The analysis was performed using the computer software Pajek 4.01. The construction of a network is designed by considering field specifics and characteristics observed using an ethnographic approach. Attributes such as the relative significance of actors and subgroups formed within the networks are retrieved, and Pajek is used to filter and analyze quantitative data in a more effective manner than simple field observations. By examining the structure of social relations in the comics field, I attempt to understand which factors are relevant and to what degree, not only to the production of comics but also to the accrual of recognition from one's peers. I hypothesize that social relations are a field in which strategies are built and specific capital is circulated, making it possible for certain artists to gain recognition within the field.

SOCIAL SKILL, AGENCY, AND STRUCTURE: OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COMIC BOOK FIELD

Although the logic of comic book production through crowdfunding is largely similar to that of production through traditional publishing, there are certain peculiarities to the former. This section highlights specific rules to follow to succeed in publishing through crowdfunding, as well as the power structures in the comic book field in Brazil. It is possible to observe elements that point to the existence of a Bourdieusian social field with regard to comic books. Pierre Bourdieu defines a cultural field as the formation of a

social microcosm, wherein the structure of power and hierarchy and its rules are relatively autonomous with respect to the society in which they apply (Bourdieu 2006). This situation is characteristic of comic book production in Brazil, particularly since it possesses elements that represent relative autonomy, such as specialized stores (comic book stores), journalism (websites and journalists specialized in the field), field-specific academic research groups (Observatório de Histórias em Quadrinhos and the Jornadas Internacionais de Histórias em Quadrinhos), and comic book events (such as the Festival Internacional de Quadrinhos and Comic Con Experience).

These factors have been gradually developed over time in an effort to align comics with Brazil's creative traditions. Some of these elements have even strengthened the field of comics, allowing it to branch out into other cultural fields such as literature and cinema. In some instances, such attributes and capital have become particular to the field and thus cannot be imported from other fields. A social actor who desires recognition and status in the field of comics must engage in a struggle for capital and therefore acknowledge the rules that define "the right way" to play this game. So, what are the legitimate rules that one must obey to accumulate symbolic capital (prestige) in this field?

Such rules do not exist objectively; they are built from social positions within the field. Those who have achieved sufficient recognition act according to the rules that legitimize their own position. Most of these rules are not written but are common knowledge to actors in the field. The rules can also be adjusted according to the flexible configurations of the field. This flexibility occurs because changes in the field's form have been influenced either by the society in which they are implemented (although the field *does* have relative autonomy) or internal contingencies regarding the social actor's agency.

The analysis of the field's rules demands specific delimitations with respect to time. A historical analysis would elucidate not only the rules that guide actors' behavior in the field but also their main positions, which in turn would allow identification of the established classes and how they play by the rules. To the best of my knowledge, this study is the first to explore the rules of the comics field while accounting for the newly established tool of crowdfunding. Crowdfunding, as a new strategy of action in the field, is perceived by social actors as a new way to deal with specific struggles for capital. With the addition of this new element, the field is undergoing various changes, and some actors are in a position to accumulate capital more effectively.

The degree of efficiency, however, is not consistent for all actors who employ crowdfunding. The field already possesses a structure of symbolic power and a distribution of recognition and status, and the actors already possess different degrees of capital. In addition, each actor's social network is different, and thus, the contribution of the network varies depending on the "quality" of each network. This chapter considers the symbolic value held in an artist's network and its degree of impact on the field. As such, quality means that the larger an actor's network, the greater the reach of the project's content. In addition, the greater the status of the network contacts, the more recognition the project gains. For example, when a high status actor promotes or discusses the project through comments and shares online, it gains visibility.

This study focuses on comics published through the Catarse platform. This type of production began in 2011, and the website offered the raw data needed. The data refer to backers, creators, projects, and the regions they are from. A person creates a project on the website and sets a funding goal. Once this is done, the creator must rigorously sell the idea of the project. Given that the end goal of the project is incomplete, contributors not only commit to buying it but also allow it to be created in the first place. The amount of money one can pay is flexible, and the creator can set different values. Each value can have a reward attached to attract pledges of greater amounts. There is a limit on the number of days for each project to meet its minimum funding goal.

My data include only projects that are complete and have been successful in achieving their minimum goal from 2011 to September 2014. From a total of 107 concluded projects during this period, only 80 were successful in meeting their target amount. From these, a total of 23,834 backings were analyzed. A total of 508 were done anonymously and have been excluded from the analysis.[1] The remaining 23,326 backings were made by 14,159 backers, an average of 1.65 backings per supporter on Catarse.[2]

ACTIVITY AND ATTRACTIVITY IN NETWORK ANALYSIS

The techniques of affiliation network analysis were applied to examine the data. This was the basis for the construction of a two-node network composed of 80 projects, 14,159 backers, and 23,326 ties. Affiliation network analysis is a tool that analyzes the relationship between two sets of data that differ in nature. This type of analysis can identify how elements of one group connect with those of another. This section first analyzes the

two-node network to understand how projects and their creators connect with backers and, conversely, how backers connect with projects. Second, each node is examined separately, correlating the similarity of each node's elements and hypothesizing the role of the main actors in the network. This study considers approved comic projects in Catarse as a proxy of independent comic production.

Three factors may conceivably lead to good performance in the field: the project creator's social skills, the artist's status or recognition in the field, and the project's artistic style. From the first observation of the network, a certain degree of inequality in the field is detectable, where certain actors find themselves in central positions,[3] allowing them to exercise control over the field. While some actors centralize support (i.e. the number of backings for their project are above average), most of them possess few backings. Of the 14,159 backers, only 3308 backed more than one project. On average, each backed 2.77 projects. This subgroup that backs more than one project comprises actors that have the highest participation in the field.

This finding allows for consideration of the existence of a relationship that has heretofore gone unnoticed: solidary support. The majority of backings (10,851) were made by backers who only supported one project. Given this low degree of involvement, I would argue that the data point to mobilization of solidary support from the friends and family members of the creator and/or random supporters, for example, those who respond to promotion strategies or events that give the specific project visibility.[4] Supporters of this kind were separated from the network, and I then compared the effects of this mechanism on the degree of project attractiveness. Table 17.1 shows the results of the first and last five projects.

The table above lists the projects and ranks their attractiveness (columns 3 and 4) as affected by solidary support.[5] As shown in the table, Zinecórnio is the most affected and was supported by only 10 backers, 6 of whom were solidary supporters (i.e. only supported this project). The table shows that solidary support improves the attractiveness of the project by 444 positions.[6] This shows that without such a mechanism, a project can lose its relevancy in the field, including several backers that are more active than the project itself. This analysis leads to the following questions: What do these projects have in common? Why are they so affected by the solidary support mechanism?

Analyzing the lower half of the table, it's clear that some projects have lower ranks despite the solidary support mechanism. Applying the same

Table 17.1   . Effect of solidary support on project attractiveness

Project	Degree of importance of solidary support for project attractiveness	Effect of solidary support on project attractiveness	Rank of attractiveness with solidary support	Rank of attractiveness without solidary support	Backers of more than one project (%)
Zinecórnio	100.00	444	239	683	40.00
Vida de Leiturista	3.362	136	76	212	22.92
Armas Vivas e Extragenes	2.349	89	84	173	36.36
Happy Slap	1.207	36	80	116	40.91
Menina Distraída	1.034	28	27	55	25.59
…	…	…	…	…	…
Petisco	1.94	−11	35	24	74.69
Cara, eu sou legal	1.72	−12	43	31	70.35
Votu	1.72	−12	65	53	70.80
Nem Morto	1.51	−13	52	39	68.24
Mistiras	0	−20	62	42	78.68

criteria used to identify the group above, it is verified that 11 projects lost more than seven positions when the solidary support mechanism was activated. It can therefore be argued that these projects are more involved in the field. At the same time, their creators presented themselves as important actors who exercised field control over the projects. According to Bourdieusian logic, the structures not only apply to the field and their actors but they also undergo transformation from improvisation and are contingent on actors.

An analysis of the first few ranks sheds some light on the effects of the status mechanism in this field. The case of the *321* project is an example. This project significantly improved its rank, from seventh to first, when the social support mechanism was not considered. This is partly due to the recognition attained by its creator. The creator of the *321* project previously launched two other projects—one on comics and the other on cinema—both of which were successful. The creator employed creative marketing strategies and shared authorship of the project with several artists. Forty-two artists contributed to the project, which was divided

by artistic categories, including original idea, script, pencils, and inking, among others. Thus, there were many artists already directly invested in the promotion and success of the project. Moreover, many of these 42 artists are recognized in the field independently. In the case of the *321* project, the creator made use of contacts in his personal network to establish himself in the field. *Lost Kids*, another project by the same creator, received 848 backings, and 156 of those supporters also backed his *321* project.

This analysis of the first five positions confirms that the status mechanism is significant, even though the effect of solidary support is marginal. Actors who can easily access resources circulating in the field are more likely to be able to increase a project's recognition. As will be shown in the following analysis, this project is part of a subgroup of projects that share supporters and together exercise significant power over the field as a whole.

The existence of solidary support demonstrates that status alone does not necessarily lead to a project's success. A creator's social skill is also an important factor in a project's success, along with personal ties and other strategies (e.g. low costs and attractive rewards). Thus, the independent production of comics allows artists to avoid being controlled by the field, particularly when creators are seeking public support from outside the field. Nevertheless, the control exercised by the field over its actors remains an important explanation of the performance of some crowdfunding projects.

As shown above, the production of independent comics is formed mostly by its artists and readers. All other actors in the field (e.g. publishers, publishing houses, specialized bookstores, and thematic events) are not considered to have a major role in the production of independent comics. Thus, control of the field is exercised in two dimensions: On the one hand, artists (creators) influence the production of comics if they hold a high status or have achieved recognition within the field. These actors occupy the highest positions and support multiple projects. On the other hand, supporters can exercise control, also known as "control by the field." Great supporters[7] are agents that have a strong influence in the field, consume circulated resources, and have the capacity to evaluate the merits of projects—especially when the projects appeal to their preferred style. Unlike consumers, supporters invest in a product that is not yet finished, thus also investing their trust and belief that the projects will not

only be produced but will also be of good quality. In a certain way, this makes them indicators of the creator's status.

Control "of" the Field and "by" the Field

As discussed above, actors immersed in the field tend to exercise some degree of control over it. In this process, some actors use this control to find allies and accomplish their goals. Thus far I have shown that, in the independent comics production field, this control may be verified by the differential capacity of creators in gathering resources. I also show that the field has solidary support, an example of external mechanisms that influence the capacity of actors in fulfilling their goals. However, beyond this, it is assumed that mechanisms of status and artistic style are also significant. Creators must extract resources from supporters who show high participation in the field (with more centrality) by either mobilizing their recognition or associating with other known actors, thus reaching great supporters. To present a better understanding of the process of control of the field over creators, an analysis of the network for a particular group of projects follows. This node can be represented by a one-node network composed of 80 projects and valued relations that represent the number of common backers.

Those in a better position to control the field are recognized as actors. They are less affected by the solidary support mechanism and can share their backers with other creators of a similar status. The relationships between these actors are relevant because creators can exploit them for more productive outcomes and opportunities in the field. By analyzing the islands of actors in the projects' networks, I find islands that have a minimum of 2 actors and a maximum of 18. This way, smaller subgroups were located among the 80 projects that indicate the existence of a core or several cores in the creator's network.

Figure 17.1 shows the islands found. There are two subgroups: one with 18 actors and the other with two. These are subgroups that share more backers among themselves than with other projects. When analyzing the larger island, the core of the field, there is evidence that reinforces the supposition that control of the field is exerted by actors who are least exposed to the effect of solidary support. The identified core is formed by all six projects that are among the top ranked for attractiveness (black circles); the only exception that does not share ties with all the components of this subgroup is the *Ryotiras Omnibus* project.

Fig. 17.1. Islands of the one-node network of project affiliations (only great supporters)

Beyond these projects, 10 other projects suffer negative effects from the solidary support mechanism (double-banded black and gray circles). As shown, these projects are more prone to control by the field; however, they find themselves in more favorable positions to exercise control over the field, either in their independence from external support or their relationships with more attractive and higher status actors. The other two actors include one that does not suffer the interference of the solidary support mechanism (white circles), while the other suffers a smaller interference from this type of support (double-banded white circles).

The evidence presented here shows that project performance depends on a creator's recognition, past projects (with good performance), and captured resources that circulate in the field, as well as the creator's ability to not be exclusively dependent on support from backers outside the field. Besides, the common supporters in this core represent readers that are immersed in the field and are thus more responsible for the control exercised by the field.

Island analysis is applied to supporters of the affiliation network comprising great supporters. In considering subgroups with a minimum of 2 actors and a maximum of 18, there was a single core of 16 actors in

Fig. 17.2.   Island of the one-node network of great supporters

the network that shared at least 20 projects.[8] These were actors who were more immersed in the field. Figure 17.2 shows this subgroup and its members' relationships; the intensity of these relationships shows the number of projects that both actors backed. This figure presents the prominent activity of the most central actor, Leandro Andrade Ribeiro, who maintains strong relationships in the field. This actor directly connects with the strongest actors in this subgroup and the other seven actors on the island.

When analyzing the data, it must be observed that the most central actors who support comic book production through crowdfunding are either unknown in the field (with few exceptions), or they are actors with a high degree of field recognition. To obtain information about supporters, I employed field knowledge and data from online social networks such as Facebook. Of these actors, only two possessed a high degree of field recognition: Marcelo Naranjo and Ivan Freitas da Costa. Marcelo Naranjo is the correspondent for a prominent informational website for comics (Universo HQ), and Ivan Freitas da Costa is a curator of large-scale comic book events in Brazil (Festival Internacional de Quadrinhos). The remainder appeared, on the basis of their activities and relationships on online social networking sites, to be simple consumers of comics.

Conclusions

This chapter has identified the structural organization of status in the field of comics—an organization that grants certain actors a more important role than others. Strong position is not reached through a supposed higher quality of product but through mechanisms, both social and marketing. The Catarse staff recommend the use of personal contacts to obtain success when producing a project, and here it has been observed that some actors make better use of their social networks than others. When a project shares many supporters with other projects, it shows articulation between the most immersed actors in the field of independent comic book production through crowdfunding. This neither represents the entire Brazilian comic book industry nor is it totally disconnected from it.

The data shows that a series of emergent actors in the field did not possess much centrality outside the crowdfunding field. Also, many creators and supporters were found to not have a high degree of centrality in the field. Crowdfunding did not grant them recognition but rather has become a new strategy for visibility for actors who cannot break through traditional imposed field barriers to entry. Well-established actors manage to publish their comics within the norms of the field because they already possess the necessary capital to be accepted by publishing houses. The importance of these actors is still beyond the scope of my analysis; nevertheless, this chapter does point to a new type of configuration of power arising through crowdfunding.

There remains much opportunity and potential for further research, including discovering the peculiarities of the emergent actors observed in this research and identifying the main mechanisms employed by them to determine the degree and importance of solidary support in projects and consequently, the impact of social mechanisms on the production of independent comic books in Brazil. My next step, along with perfecting the network analysis by adding more attributes, will be to adopt an ethnographic approach to understand how actors perceive their practices and their effects on the field to elucidate the orientation that guides their actions and the effective changes in the field. There is still much more research to be done.

Notes

1. Anonymous backings were excluded from the analysis because it is impossible to identify how many of these are single people. Also, it is difficult to identify how many projects a single anonymous backer supported.

2. Backers are not only individuals but also companies, organizations, collectives, and other forms of group representation. However, the nature of these supporters does not affect the present analysis, since I analyze the relationship between the projects and their creators and backers.

3. Here, "centrality" denotes more ties (or relations) binding one node (backer or project) to the others, making them central points in the network.

4. Because of data constraints, I decided to limit the argument on solitary support to cases with only one registered backing. Support given to more than one project were divided into two categories—large and small backers—on the basis of the average support given in the absence of solitary support (2.77). This way, I attempted to control the effects of supporters who may be solitary or beginners in the field.

5. The projects are included on the basis of their aggregate ranks as per solidary support and withdrawal from a project (column 2 in Table 17.1). Values were normalized on a scale of 0–100 using the formula $[(X - \min)/(\max - \min) \times 100]$. Values close to 100 mean that projects' attractiveness was more affected by social support, whereas values close to 0 imply that projects were more controlled by the field or submitted to rules for artistic style and other mechanisms.

6. The number presented under the rankings denotes a project's position in the network based on backers. For example, Zinecórnio's 239 rank in terms of solidary support includes not only projects, which were merely 80 within this number, but also additional backers who have more centrality (i.e. more ties binding them to other nodes of the network).

7. Great supporters are defined by their rates of participation. Given the limitations of the given data, great supporters are defined as those who have an above average participation rate (2.77 or higher).

8. The Pajek software did not complete the network to reach the limit of 18 because there were more than two actors with the same number of shared projects. The software, instead of randomly chosing the actors who would compose the network, chose to exclude them.

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"A *Fumetto*, a Comic, and a *BD* Walk into a Bar…": The Translation of Humor in Comics

Alex Valente

The translator and comics scholar's fascination with humor in the medium is due, partly, to a popular misconception about what comics are notionally "supposed" to be or do, that is, be funny and make us laugh. This can lead to a variety of misconceptions about it, such as belief that the entire medium of comics is comprised of "the funnies." Furthermore, humor is extremely difficult to define, which makes creating an objective, practical framework for its translation very complicated (e.g. Vandaele 2002).

This, combined with the relatively small amount of research on the translation of comics (c.f. Zanettin 2008), renders the task of effectively and successfully translating humor in comics from one culture and language to another extremely difficult: each translator must rely on instinct, gut feeling, and intuition and improvise a solution for each instance.[1] Yet what they do are indeed strategies that can be identified, and what I provide in this chapter is an outline of a practical framework for analyzing, identifying, understanding, and ultimately translating the mechanisms behind the humor present in an original comic for an audience potentially unfamiliar with its source culture.

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For this purpose, I initially intended my primary texts to be representative examples of contemporary Italian comics, including publications broadly falling into the categories of Disney Italia, creator-owned work (though published by Panini or smaller presses such as Bao Publishing), and traditional Bonelli albums. The last of these did not provide sufficient material for the analysis, so my focus here is on the highly successful and popular Disney Italia sci-fi/superhero Donald Duck series *Paperinik New Adventures* (*PKNA*) and the Panini-distributed humor/superhero parody *Rat-Man* by Leo Ortolani.

Finding the Funny

A combination of strategies derived from Klaus Kaindl (2004), Salvatore Attardo (2002), and B.J. Epstein (2012) inform what I suggest to be a viable approach to translating comics containing humor. What I will proceed to illustrate now are the practical issues to consider in translating the humor used in comics. Exemplifying this are the two Italian comics series mentioned above. I will look at examples, offering my own translation solution for each, and from there provide strategies for the typology as a whole.

Where Is the Humor?

Using Kaindl's five different categories (2004, 176), I analyzed the first issue of each series in order to identify the frequency of humorous instances (Table 18.1). The choice to focus primarily on these issues is due to my belief that, for a comics publisher, the sales of the first issue of a new series will determine whether further installments are viable or not. Very much like a pilot episode of a television series, the first issue of a new comics series is indicative of whether it will continue selling. Additionally, this pragmatic approach is in keeping, I would argue, with the functional stance of my chapter as a whole.

As expected, Ortolani's *Rat-Man*, which started out as a parody of the American superhero comic book genre, is the comic containing the higher frequency of humor. These results further prove the claims of Zanettin, who regards humor as one of the integral properties of a text, especially in longer narratives, rather than "just located at specific points in the text" (2010, 44), and of Mangiron Hevia, who recognizes the value of humor as a tension breaker and intensifier of enjoyment derived from the plot (2010, 91).

Table 18.1:   Sign-play in two series

Types of sign-play	Rat-Man *Le Sconvolgenti Origini del Rat-Man!*	PKNA *Evroniani*
Only verbal signs	4	6
Verbal reinforced by nonverbal	4	4
Combination-dependent	13	10
Nonverbal reinforced by verbal	5	10
Only nonverbal signs	3	1
Total panels	83	398
Total instances of humor	29 (34.9%)	31 (7.8%)

The brief quantitative analysis of the presence of "sign-play," which I define as the comedic tension between image and text, to convey humor in both *Rat-Man* and *PKNA* emphasizes the importance of the co-presence of both verbal and nonverbal signs. It does not, however, help to identify what types of humor are being used in the source texts. There is heavy reliance on multimodal-dependent humor in both series, but this only informs a translator about having to rely on the visual aspect; a strategy to translate that verbal/nonverbal dependency is still lacking. The current approaches shown above are more useful in a descriptive analysis, rather than suggesting a working method, which is my intention below.

What Is the Humor?

By analyzing the individual instances of humor listed in Table 18.1, I devised a working hypothesis of different subcategories of sign-play. Some of these, unsurprisingly, correspond to Attardo's list of Logical Mechanisms (2002, 180), and my methodology is significantly influenced by Epstein's research in the translation of figurative language in children's literature (2012). My categorizations, presented below (see Table 18.2), are by no means meant to be a definitive list of all humor typologies in Italian comics; rather, they are just the ones observed in the two series considered by my analysis for this chapter.

Furthermore, the categories are not entirely distinct entities and can be used in combination to achieve a more humorous effect. I do believe, however, that given the qualities of the Italian mainstream comics market (comprised of Disney, Bonelli—not featured in this chapter—and Panini/

Table 18.2: Humor typologies in *Rat-Man* and *PKNA*

Types of humor

Category	Description
Metahumor	A panel's caption, dialogue, and/or image respond each other meta-textually or contain references of awareness of other elements in the series/medium and/or of being a comic
Self-undermining	Self-referential (of character), downplaying remarks or actions; differs from metahumor in the lack of narratorial presence
Onomatopoeic	Comedic effect is in the sound-words themselves; sound-words are used to add to, or contrast, the rest of the action in the panel
Consequential	An unexpected conclusion to a sequence, a reversal of the intended or established consequence of a plot/scene/action
Linguistic	Includes wordplay, dialects, neologisms, and any non-standard language usage
Politically (in) correct	Sex jokes, toilet humor, bad taste, humor related to either hyper-correctness or deliberate incorrectness, for example, regional, social, or national stereotypes
Parody	The situation bears similarities to, or contains references, to another object, person, situation, usually within the genre or culture it is trying to emulate (e.g. superhero comics, sci-fi, aspects of pop culture) but mocks it
Childish	Groaners, Christmas cracker-style jokes, "bad" humor, not including elements of toilet humor or similar
Absurd	The situation depicted defies expectations, real-world or text-world logic

Marvel publications, plus imports), there will be little variation in the macro-categories, except for some additions within them; further research with a wider corpus is needed to prove this point definitively. Examples of the different typologies and a wider definition and discussion for each are provided below.

Translating the Humor

Delia Chiaro (2010, 11–12) suggests five types of translation for humor in media texts, and although these appear fairly straightforward in theory, the complications of their practical application are obvious, and every case will have to be analyzed, compared, and checked before being translated. What Chiaro does additionally suggest, however, is that the primary function of humor is a social one (2010, 13), therefore allowing, in my opinion, for a

more wide-ranging spectrum of potential translational strategies. In the same book, Zanettin accurately summarizes Kaindl's strategies by stating that, when translating humor in comics (note that this can be applied to all translation of humor), there are three possible outcomes: the humorous effect will be (1) preserved, (2) changed, or (3) omitted (2010, 46). His earlier claim that "images can be seen as both helping and hindering the translator's task" (2010, 45), which introduces the concept of constrained translation, is more useful in terms of translation strategies, despite being an obvious assertion.

The idea of constraint in translation, and its being a contribution to creativity rather than a hindrance to it, is a concept well established in the field of translation studies and one with which I am in full agreement. The translation of humor in comics, I would argue, is concerned with pragmatic and technical issues, with constraints, physical and temporal, and with reproducing a specific effect in the translated text rather than having to interpret a possible meaning from the text, as is the case for, say, poetry. Therefore, a functional approach is fundamental to devising translational strategies which will ensure successful reproduction in the translated text: simply put, a good translation of humor present in the source comics, therefore, will be funny in the translation too.

Down and Dirty

By focusing on examples of the different typologies highlighted above, I will show how this framework can lead to the development of both general and specific strategies for translating humor in comics. My overall approach is based on Attardo's mini-theory of joke translation (2002, 183): to move through the hierarchy of the Knowledge Resources for each instance of humor, according to each typology. Applied to the translation of comics and the humor present in single panels, pages, and stories, an apt rephrasing for my system of strategies is the following: Translators should employ any of the strategies at their disposal in order to ultimately *retain* the tension between verbal and nonverbal elements, using the latter as frame of reference. I attribute this to the practical and pragmatic reasons of not having the option, in most cases, of redrawing images in the comics. Therefore, only modification of the text is possible. The strategies are, obviously, not necessary in the case of a full reinterpretation or adaptation of the original comic. This system is, of course, only meant to replicate the intended humor, as the final result will only become obvious to each individual reader, if it does at all, in the perceived humor of the translation.

Metahumor

The first category, *metahumor*, includes all instances of humor which use references to the characters being aware of their status as fictional creations, where captions, speech bubbles, and images are meta-textually in dialogue with each other, correcting or expanding on a narrative comment, and/or references to other stories, panels, or issues of the same series or its characters.

This is a not uncommon feature in English-language comics, both mainstream and underground, known as "breaking the fourth wall," so the strategies used by a translator will not, arguably, have to find ways of introducing a new concept to the translation. The most common type sees a narrative voice intervening, in the form of a caption, in order to comment on the scene depicted in the panel. An instance of this typology can be found in the actual dialogue between framed subjects and caption. There is no obvious difficulty here, as the humorous effect is conveyed through the contrast between the verbal elements of the caption (e.g. "No one could stop this champion of justice!") and the speech bubble (e.g. "Messenger of justice! Messenger! Don't confuse the two…"), reinforced by the visual elements in the frame. If the same contrast is retained, no matter what the precise phrasing of the translated text, the effect will be reproduced. The translation I presented in parentheses, above, does not literally translate the Italian word "ambasciatore [ambassador]" but employs the same mechanism as the original's source of humor because "ambassador" is used in lieu of "messenger" in the Italian version of the idiom, "Don't shoot the messenger."

More complex issues, however, arise in the case of metahumor that is not limited to one panel or those in its immediate contextual surroundings. Arguably, these instances could also be classified as referential or extra-textual, as they refer back to other episodes in the series or even other series altogether, in which case it can also be classified under parody, which is discussed later in the chapter. The strategy I would suggest for this instance would be to keep the multimodal aspect, in order to not have to modify the image, and *retain* the situation as it is in the source text. Then, the translator or publisher will have to add paratextual information, either in a footnote or preferably at the beginning of the issue and all sequels in which the information is relevant, in the style of a "who's who" in the series.

In summary, when faced with metahumor in a comic, my suggested translational solution is one of *adaptation*, that is, to modify the text in

order to suit the translation more, while keeping the same tension between the text and image that was present in the source text. Where this is not possible, *addition* of paratextual material is an alternative strategy but remains ultimately at the editor/publisher's discretion.

Self-undermining

The category of *self-undermining* includes all instances of humor in which characters undermine their own importance, courage, or positive qualities, in most cases playing against established tropes of the superhero, action, and sci-fi genres. Characters impugn the hero's infallibility and trivialize their own seriousness or actions as guardians of justice, for example, usually by completing other, completely unexpected and almost counterintuitive tasks, commenting on themselves or their actions, or just overtly, although not necessarily intentionally, pointing out insecurities and shortcomings.

The *PKNA* series shows Paperinik ultimately revealing that under his vigilante costume, he is still the traditionally cowardly Donald Duck. The scene in *PKNA* #0 (p. 9, ff. 5–6) gains its humorous effect due to the contrast with the first part of the sentence: the idiomatic "Quando il gioco si fa duro…" / "When the going gets tough…" (lit. "When the game gets tough") is completed with "…io vorrei essere da un'altra parte!" / "…I'd rather go (lit. 'be') somewhere else!" thwarting the reader's expectations. Where they would expect the character, a superhero fighting invaders from space, to finish the cliché with "…i duri cominciano a giocare!" / "…the tough get going!," PK shows his fallible nature, reacting with quite a natural thought for anyone actually facing that type of situation. The contrast is accentuated by the two different stances of the character, from defender to nail-biting worrier. It should be noted, in addition, that this particular scene is mostly verbally expressed humor, reinforced by the visual depiction of the character's worrying attitude.

Therefore, a translator faced with instances of this particular type of humor can usually rely on nonverbal signs for suggestions or clues regarding how to reproduce the verbal elements. This is the case for all five types of sign-play. Indeed, considering the example above, a translator could choose to ignore the correlation between the two panels and opt for something completely different that still fits the image in the latter. As long as the humor technique is maintained, that is, that it remains self-undermining, the tone of both the source text and the translated text will contain the same elements of not taking itself too seriously, and the effect,

from the perspective of a writer/translator at least, will also be *retained*. In order to achieve the same categorization in the translated text, then, a translator's strategy will once again be that of *retention* in most cases. Where retention is not possible due to the presence of culturally-specific elements, *adaptation* is another solution, though this strategy must keep in mind that nonverbal elements should be given precedence in the process.

Onomatopoeia

This typology includes humor being conveyed through the use of sound-words and interjections, either as funny in themselves, both linguistically and typographically, or in combination with the images also present in the panel. In *PKNA* #0 (pp. 58–59, ff. 8, 2), PK, the vigilante/superhero main character, faces Evronian soldiers, invaders from space who feed on emotions. The two panels are almost directly consecutive, with only one slim horizontal one between them. The sound-word in the first panel, "SRUNK," does not pose any translation issues, or particularly humorous connotations for that matter, and can be left as is. The second word, on the other hand, contains an added humorous element by the addition of the prefix "RI-," indicating a connection between the two and a repetition of the same action on possibly the same character (the pictures are not clear in this regard, as all the soldiers look almost the same). This may have to be translated as "RESRUNK," as an English reader could pronounce it as "ree-srunk," or misread it as "reshrunk." The effect here is given by the sound element of the sign representation "ri-" / "re-" (indicating repetition), and the spelling does not differ that much, but if left untranslated it might still cause issues of incomprehension or remove the effect.

If a sound-word is using a particular linguistic convention or is playing with an Italian word to create a particular effect, then it will potentially have to be removed from the frame and reintroduced once translated. This would in fact require re-lettering. This may not be possible for a translator, especially if working outside of the publishing company or without access to the pre-lettered panels. Furthermore, publishers may not want or be able to fund extra resources in providing pre-production material to the translator, resulting in having to keep all elements not included in speech bubbles as is.

In the case of *Rat-Man* (p. 21, ff. 8), for example, the word "SPALANC" is used to indicate the sound of a sudden opening of a door. The humorous effect is achieved, for this particular instance, by the fact

that "spalancare" literally translates as "to throw open" and has no actual onomatopoeic relation to the sound of a door being opened. Italian readers have not shown any issue with accepting "SPALANC" as a viable sound-word conveying an idea of openness. My suggestion in this case, for a successful English translation, would have to retain those qualities, while at the same time be a recognizable word meaning to "open." The only potential candidate I have found is "AJAR." While it does not retain the full meaning of the original, it has the same type of open vowels and number of syllables.

The overall strategy for translating interjections and sound-words meant for humorous effects, in my opinion, is to retain where possible the connotation of the source text's phonetic effect, which may result in *adapting* the spelling of the original to fit English orthographic representation of sounds. If this is not feasible, a word that maintains the same semantic properties, and can be made to assume the phon-aesthetic quality of the action being described, can be used. I would argue that this type of strategy is extremely relevant to comics translation, and it is crucial to successfully translating these sound elements, as they contribute to the paratext in conveying affective information to the scene.

(Anti)Climax

The category of *(anti)climactic* humor includes instances in which the effect is given by thwarting the reader's expectations of a series of connected panels or actions. It can also occur at the end of a build-up, creating a surprise, and sometimes paradoxical, ending to an action or piece of dialogue. While it may appear similar to the "self-undermining" category discussed above, I have chosen to differentiate them by categorizing under this typology all the instances which do not strictly involve major characters or, for that matter, any characters at all; if it does, it does not contribute to the development of the characters involved and is usually used as a one-off gag or, if recurring, is confined to one issue.

In *PKNA* #14, PK and his arch-enemy the Raider have just been debriefed after an unlikely allied mission, which involved a lengthy explanation of time travel paradoxes and similar sci-fi issues. PK, from the twenty-first century, has difficulties grasping all the concepts common in the twenty-third century and wonders out loud how the Raider can possibly cope with all of it. The answer ("cachet"), in the third panel, is the punch line to the build-up, thwarting the reader's expectations and

achieved through the combination of verbal ("cachet"—used to indicate medical pills, usually painkillers) and nonverbal signs (the expression of both characters' faces). As "cachet" is not used in the same way in English, the translator may consider changing this to "painkiller" or "aspirin."

The translator's aim for this type of humor, then, is to maintain the tension between the verbal and nonverbal elements of the source text; in order to achieve this, *adapting* the comic effect of the panel would be a useful strategy. The nature of the humorous mechanism is to create a build-up through either referential material or dramatic tension, usually via nonverbal reinforcement or sign-play. The visual elements, therefore, should be used as prompts for the translation.

Linguistic

This category is possibly the one which raises the most issues in terms of the translator's engagement with the source text and its rendition in the translation. Under the *linguistic* typology, I include all instances of humor achieved through a reliance on language itself, although this by no means excludes multimodal sign-play. Its subcategories are: *language varieties*, including regional dialects and national varieties, and *language deviations*, or use of incorrect grammar, syntax, and spelling.[2] In terms of overall strategies for linguistic humor, therefore, I suggest two general alternatives: *adaptation*, when there is an English equivalent for the source text's device and *compensation*, when there is not. In the case of language varieties and deviations, both solutions can be achieved through either *grammatical* or *syntactic representation*.

Political (In)Correctness

Under the category of *political (in)correctness*, I include all instances of sex jokes, bad taste, and politically incorrect and scatological humor. This category, in fact, may present the translator with even more complications than the previous one. The difference lies in the fact that while linguistic issues are tied to the conventions of language and can eventually be compensated for or, in extreme cases, omitted, politically incorrect humor is highly cultural.

Rat-Man is the only series which employs this type of humor. To omit it in order to adhere to English standards may remove one of its defining features, resulting in its translation being, in my opinion, pointless.

In fact, the series itself, at times, refers to this issue. In a *Lord of the Rats* scene, Granbrakko[3] is commenting on the world changing: he must now be called "afroamericanomante" (a play on words, lit. "african-american mancer") because "negromante" ("necromancer," which in Italian contains the word "negro," the equivalent of the derogatory English term "nigger") is no longer acceptable. The humor is due to the exaggeration of having to consider all words even vaguely related to the non-acceptable ones as also non-acceptable. A translator should consider this typology of humor to be non-offensive, as a closer reading of the text reveals that the butt or target of the joke is almost exclusively a main character, who defining traits including being a maladapted and incompetent member of society. In this sense, the sexual humor too is, in fact, a critique of him and the ideals he embodies. So, with this in mind, I would suggest the following as a translation of the "necromancer" scene:

Panel 1   The world is changing, [Sedobren Gocce]… people now call me "[Granbrakko] the African-American Magician!"
Panel 2   "African-American Magician?" "We can't say 'Black Magician' anymore."

The *adaptation* strategy used here, using the same type of political hyper-correctness, actually seems to add to the original, due to the character being the one to say it, and to the even more exaggerated prohibition of using the word "black." Speaking in more general terms, adaptation appears to be the best overall solution, thanks to the difference in "acceptability" between the two languages.

Parody

The category of *parody* can be defined as a humorous version of intertextual references or allusions; Vandaele recognizes it as resulting from an "exaggerated imitation of aesthetic norms," as opposed to satire, which imitates "social norms" (2002, 155). In other words, parody takes accepted norms of how other media look, behave, and are presented and offers an exaggeration of them, while satire is more concerned with the social commentary. Both series employ parody in order to both create comic effects and locate their narratives within a specific cultural frame. The series' authors acknowledge the fact that readers will have a working understanding of wider comics culture and potentially of other popu-

lar media and genres. They insert references to these comics and media into their series while subverting the connotations that those references might have and removing the original seriousness or dramatic tension for humorous effect.

The majority of instances of parody are based on English-language, mostly American, cultural products and attitudes toward them, which Italians have appropriated (such as "nerd" culture); there are very few instances in which attitudes and reactions to Anglo-American culture differ in Italy from their original context, making the task of translation a relatively straightforward one. This is probably due to the nature of the Italian comics market, which relies heavily on imports from US publications and to the perceived prestige of Anglo-American products. In the case of a different reaction, though, I would suggest changing the referential context to a more well-known product with similar connotations, if the visual elements of the joke allow for it.

There are, however, a number of references which are almost exclusively Italian (examples include the almost religious/superstitious attitudes toward the World Cup and soccer, the passion for spaghetti Westerns, the proliferation of Catholic publications at newsagents, the traditional "tombola," a game similar to bingo, which is usually played on New Year's Eve, and other Disney comics titles), and they tend to appear in nonverbal form (or a combination of nonverbal and verbal signs). In such cases, a translator may have to follow an *adaptation* strategy, making the references conform to the target culture, selecting an aspect of the target audience's cultural references which contains the same connotations as the source text's (e.g. the Super Bowl in lieu of the World Cup for a US publication). In the case of nonverbal dominance over verbal aspect, however, paratextual material may have to be added in the form of footnotes or endnotes in order to explain the cultural significance to the target readership.

Absurd

The category of *absurd* humor includes all instances of nonsense, surreal situations, events, and actions defying real-world, and even comic-world, logic. This type is not as frequent in *PKNA*, where the action in the stories is already rather far-fetched.[4] *Rat-Man*, on the other hand, is a different matter. This category often makes for added difficulty, as most absurd comedy relies on the nonsensical elements depicted visually, and a translator may not be able to modify them. The only alternative strategy,

in these cases, would be to *add* some textual information, possibly an explanation of the action, in the hope that the visual component of the panel will retain its comic effect. An example can be found in *Signore dei Ratti* (p. 17, ff. 1–3) where the gnome Gnome, son of Gnome ("nano," "dwarf," in the original), does not speak. The other characters, however, seem to completely disregard this fact and constantly comment on his eloquence, remarks, and occasional rudeness. In the example below, one expresses a slight disagreement with the concluding part of his speech, whatever that might have been.

Panel 3 Well spoken, Gnome. But I disagree with the last thing you said. [lit. Very well, Dwarf. But I don't agree with the final part of the speech.]

My suggested translation contains the *addition* of textual information about the character "speaking," even though there is no visual indication that this is the case, to make sure the reader knows they are supposed to accept that Gnome is saying something. In other cases, where the absurdity is conveyed more through nonverbal elements, this is unnecessary, and *retention* strategies are sufficient.

Childish

By *childish* humor, I group together all instances which employ jokes similar to English cracker jokes, so-called bad humor (without resorting to toilet humor), childish humor proper, and other similar types, which find their cultural counterparts in both Italian and English. The category is based on the concept of relief humor, as mentioned by Krikmann (2005, 28), in which there is no specific target, nor are there any intended victims or levels of superiority/inferiority for the humor to be exerted upon. The whole *Rat-Man* series plays on this type of gag almost as a leitmotif, tied to the character's inherent idiosyncratic incompetence. The following scene from *PKNA* depicts a bad joke cracked by the main character on meeting Computer One, playing on the latter's name:

Panel 1 Courage!—I don't know what you are, but you're facing [Paperinik]! Pleased to meet you! I'm One!

Panel 2 You're One, hey? Where did you leave the others?
         Groan! That's an awful joke! It's terrible!

The "badness" of the joke is even acknowledged and made explicit by
the artificial intelligence itself. The series relies less on playing against the
main character's skills, as ultimately he is a superhero, albeit an unexpected
one. As pointed out above, this particular category is almost a universal
one, and *adaptations* of the source text's choices can be found in the
translation.

Combinations

Of course, all of these categories should not be taken as being clear-cut,
absolute distinctions; all of them can be, and indeed are, combined, mixed,
and blended together to obtain an even further humorous effect. In the case
of both the characters of Rat-Man and PK, for example, almost all of the
humor plays on undermining and downplaying their skills, courage, and,
especially in the case of the former, their intelligence. Similarly, absurdities,
abundant in *Rat-Man*, or parody can be used to refer to the existence of
the comic as a comic. A scene from *The Lord of the Rats* special takes place
during the orcs' attack on the protagonists' keep and is the continuation of
four other panels in the same style with the same characters, Granbrakko
and Tamara (Queen of the Elves), describing the action in detail and com-
menting on the visual magnificence of the final victory. The author mixes
the absurd repetition of the same panel eight times with the parody of the
extremely detailed battles in the original novels and also adds a reference to
his own existence as artist and creator, through comment made by his own
characters. The final panel can be translated as follows:

Granbrakko: Don't you find it embarrassing when Ortolani can't be
              bothered to draw?
Tamara: Quite.

In terms of translating combinations of categories, therefore, a translator
should first identify what typologies are being used and then attempt to
translate at least one of them successfully. The ultimate goal is to always
maintain some sort of comic tension between text and image, and this
may come at the cost of *deleting* one of the aspects of added or secondary
humor.

Summary and Conclusion

As I have discussed throughout this chapter, the ultimate purpose of translating humor is to maintain the humor in the translated text as it was in the source text. Accordingly, the categories I have identified throughout the previous sections are an aid in determining what type of humor is being used in each case. For each category, I have suggested a type of translational strategy based on Epstein's models (2012) for expressive language in children's literature. These are summarized in the following table, listed by category, in Table 18.3.

I would argue that the heavy reliance on adaptation strategies is due to the nature of humor itself as a culturally driven aspect of comics. Both cultures considered in the discussion, Italian and Anglo-American, appear to have either similarities in their approach to humor or influences on each other (in the comics medium at least); where they differ, it is mostly because of a typology of narrative strategy in the joke or the language aspect of it. Following Attardo's suggestions, therefore, removes the

Table 18.3: Summary of strategies per category

Category of humor	Strategies
Metahumor	*Adaptation*
	If the references are present in translation
	Addition
	If the references are absent in translation
Self-undermining	*Retention*
Onomatopoeia	*Adaptation*
Anti-climax	*Adaptation*
Linguistic	*Adaptation* via *grammatical/orthographic representation*
	If the features are present in translation
	Compensation via *grammatical/orthographic representation*
	If the features are absent in translation
Political (In) Correctness	*Adaptation*
Parody	*Adaptation*
Childish	*Adaptation*
Absurd	*Retention*
	If the elements are understandable
	Addition
	If the elements are not readily understandable
Combination	Give precedence to one of the elements, as long as at least one category is maintained

issues raised by the latter, as the translation will obviously have to switch from the source language to translated language yet maintain the tension between the elements that ultimately create the humorous effect of the joke, sketch, panel, and/or dialogue.

Building on a combination of pre-existing theories and strategies, I have devised my own framework to identify and analyze the humor present in the source texts of comics. For each typology, I then proceeded to suggest, through examples, potential strategies to successfully reproduce sign-play, at least at a level of intended rather than actual or perceived humor. These strategies appear to be sufficiently functional, based on the presupposition that a translator might not be able to modify the images and should therefore use them as reference. Nevertheless, additional research into the translation of comics will not only provide readers in the Anglo-American market with more entertainment material but will also allow for better, more contextualized criticism and healthy cross-pollination and influence. In order to achieve this, the framework developed here ought to be an excellent foundation for future scholarship.

Notes

1. I firmly believe that even a limited amount of theoretical background can and does help practitioners such as myself (c.f. Boase-Beier 2006).
2. While a more fine-grained definition is possible, subcategories cannot be developed further here due to the scope of this chapter. Further study is needed.
3. In the comic, Granbrakko is a spoof of the Ranger Strider/Aragorn from *The Lord of the Rings*, who is depicted here as being a man of color; this is due to the character being based on Brakko, a regular in the main series.
4. *PKNA* is a series about an anthropomorphic duck whose vigilante alter-ego becomes a superhero in order to fight against alien parasites from outer space.

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Subcultural Clusters and Blurry Boundaries: Considering *Art Worlds* and *Fields of Cultural Production* through Localized Manga Production in Hungary

Zoltan Kacsuk

The 2006 autumn AnimeCon in Budapest was a milestone for the Hungarian anime and manga[1] market and fandom in several respects, one of which was the introduction of official Hungarian tankōbon.[2] The first volumes of *Usagi Yojimbo* (which is in fact a US comic), *Warcraft: The Sunwell Trilogy*, *Princess Ai* (both global manga), and *Shin Angyō Onshi* (Blade of the Phantom Master in English, a manga or manhwa depending on categorization) were all released at this event.[3] The four publishers present (Vad Virágok Könyvműhely, a then-fledgling independent comics publisher; Delta Vision, an established Hungarian science fiction, fantasy novel, role-playing and board games publisher; Fumax, also a rookie independent comics publisher at the time; and Mangafan, the now leading

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domestic manga publisher debuting at the event), all of whom would go on to publish a string of titles aimed at this market, exemplify the most important areas from which actors emerged who would play the leading roles in the exponential unfolding of the anime and manga fan-focused market in Hungary. The explosive growth of the supply side[4] of this market was predicated upon the existing networks and infrastructure of not only the core of early adopter domestic anime and manga fans, but also of related subcultures and fan cultures already established in the country, most notably comics fandom and SF/fantasy role-playing culture. This interdependence of related fan cultures and subcultures involved in localized manga production is the focus of this chapter.

The interplay between manga publishing, the comics industry, and major book publishing companies followed different patterns in the USA (Brienza 2009, 2011) and various European countries (Malone 2010; Pellitteri 2010) based on the size of the markets and the position and tradition of the comics industries within them. The defining characteristic of the Hungarian case is the small scale of both the US/European comics market and the manga market, leading to both domestic markets now being defined by small specialist publishing companies mostly run by subcultural producers.

Beyond the effects engendered by the scale of the domestic manga market, this chapter also focuses on the wider anime and manga fan-focused market, and a correspondingly wide range of actors such as convention organizers, shop owners, magazine editors, and so on, as opposed to only participants whose work most directly relates to localized manga production.[5] This is for three main reasons: Firstly, as Itō (2005) emphasizes, manga are no longer the primary entry point into these worlds of fiction or media-mixes (Steinberg 2012), and as a result, manga consumption is often couched in a wider range of consumption practices and social interactions (c.f. Pellitteri 2010). Thus, a vibrant fan culture with events, a range of meta-content, and related goods increases the appeal of the core products (manga, anime, and games) themselves. This realization has been one of the driving forces behind Mangafan's strategy of expanding beyond manga publishing first with a print magazine—*Mondo*—and later the MondoCon convention series, with all three elements helping to increase the appeal of the other two and the culture as a whole. Secondly, as this chapter discusses later, there is an even more direct relationship, as the growth of manga publishing in the country initially also depended financially on the existence of a strong convention series. And thirdly, roles and positions have proven to be fluid over the course of the development of the market, with almost all actors involved in manga publishing directly also having been engaged

in other facets of producing the fandom as magazine editors and writers, as website creators and moderators, as convention staff and helpers, and so on.

ON ART WORLDS AND FIELDS OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION

It is no surprise, then, that both Becker's *Art Worlds* approach (1982) and Bourdieu's framework from *The Field of Cultural Production* and *The Rules of Art* (1993, 1996) are obvious candidates for making sense of this social environment, as both draw attention to the number and variety of different actors involved in the actual production and dissemination of artistic and cultural products. Although there are various competing frameworks of sociology of art and cultural production approaches (see Brienza 2010; van Maanen 2009) both Becker's *Art Worlds* (Bacon-Smith 1999; Jenkins 1992; Valyi 2010; Woo 2012) and various elements of Bourdieu's field framework (Hills 2002; Hodkinson 2002; Kahn-Harris 2007; Muggleton 2000; Thornton 1995; Valyi 2010; Woo 2012), his distinction between aesthetic dispositions (Fiske 1992; Jancovich 2002; Jenkins 1992) are the most commonly employed in research into fandom and subcultures. Furthermore, the concepts of cultural capital (Brown 1997), cultural intermediaries (Lee 2012), field (Lopes 2009; Brienza 2009), and art worlds (Brienza 2013) have also been taken up in comics studies and manga research.[6]

While the two authors mutually acknowledge each other's work, they are both keen to point out how different their approaches are (Bourdieu 1996, 204–205; Becker and Pessin 2006). Examining, however, the actual content of their frameworks, it can be seen that they offer quite compatible descriptions and share a number of concerns—as also suggested by van Maanen (2009) and Battani (1999)—the full extent of which I will not be able to cover within the scope of the present chapter. Even though Becker, drawing examples mostly from music and visual arts, is concerned with cooperation and concentrates more on the actual production process of works of art, and Bourdieu, paying attention to the literary world, focuses instead on struggle and the constitution of the artist as artist (c.f. Becker and Pessin 2006), they both position convention and innovation as a central structuring dichotomy. The reason I chose to single out this element of correspondence between the two approaches is because the relationship to conventions both structures the position of participants within and plays a central role in constituting the boundaries of the art world/field for both authors.[7] Becker's description of integrated professionals and maverick artists can be seen to correspond to Bourdieu's description of actors positioned toward the heteronomous and the autonomous poles of the field of cultural production. Irrespective of whether these participants

reproduce or contest the accepted conventions of the given art world/field, they are defined by their relation to it. This sets them clearly apart from naive artists who are defined by their lack of knowledge of these conventions and the history of the art world/field, and are thus outside its boundaries.

Although the outlines of the art world/field seem clearer in relation to actors responsible for core artistic endeavors, the boundaries become less and less well defined as both authors struggle to take into account all the relevant actors (from support personnel to critics, from curators to audiences) and effects that contribute to making art works and artists what they are, to the point of introducing formulations that would make the concepts of art world/field diluted beyond any utility (Becker 1982, 35, 214; Bourdieu 1996, 225–226). "The proliferation of fields in Bourdieu's theory and the uncertainty that necessarily arises when the boundaries and object of the field are objects of struggle" (Martin 2003, 24) is mirrored in the way Becker's art worlds "may be subdivided into separate and almost noncommunicating segments" (1982, 158) on the one hand, but at the same time they "typically have intimate and extensive relations with the worlds from which they try to distinguish themselves" on the other (1982, 36). While neither the boundaries nor the subdivisions of art worlds/fields will conform to firm boundaries, in part as a result of the relatively weak barriers to entry in these areas of activity (Bourdieu 1996, 226), both authors' approaches—somewhat more pronounced in Becker's case—of concentrating on actual activities, markets, and work within these art worlds/fields offer a possibility for distinguishing actual boundaries, as fluid as they may be.

The Interrelationship of Anime and Manga Conventions and Manga Publishing in Hungary

The case of manga publishing and the wider anime and manga fan culture in Hungary is especially interesting in that it offers an example of a small-scale creative industry, an art world/field (c.f. Hesmondhalgh 2006) void of the activities which would most likely be considered its core artistic endeavors: the primary production of anime, manga, and games. This is not to say that there is no creativity or artistic effort involved in the production of this fandom and market—beyond the localization of manga (itself a highly creative process), a variety of meta-

content/content is created, ranging from articles and illustrations published in magazines to cosplay, performances, fan art, fanfiction, anime music videos, and so on, which all involve high degrees of creative and artistic input. Rather, it is to draw attention to the way the present art world/field consists of activities that localize and disseminate the primary creative products (anime, manga, games) and create meta-content/content around them. This obvious lack of core artistic activities helps underscores the breadth and role of a range of further actors implicated in cultural production.

As opposed to translation and retouching work, for example, convention organization does not figure highly on people's lists of activities that seem essential for localized manga production. The major conventions, however, played a key role in Hungary in providing a large enough direct market for the small publishers putting out official volumes of manga to be able to continue financing their operations and upcoming volumes, since sales through the major distribution channels often entail both forfeiting a significant cut of the revenues and accommodating an operational lag in receiving the proceeds. The initial 2008 "Anime Christmas" event—turned convention the following year—was created by Mangafan specifically to provide a direct sales opportunity for all the new manga titles they were publishing for the Christmas season, as previously there had been only two major conventions, the spring SakuraCon and the autumn AnimeCon and a smaller-scale summer event organized by the Hungarian Anime Association (HAA) each year. The entry of Mangafan into the convention scene, while also a profitable long-term strategy in itself, was in fact initially driven by the immediate needs of manga publishing.

The major conventions were so important for the publishers that the release schedule of new publications followed the convention calendar. This also meant that for those working in some way in manga publishing in Hungary, their yearly work rhythm would entail spikes in their respective workloads prior to each of these conventions. To rephrase all of the above, the more one's cash flow (in the case of enterprises and organizations) and one's workload and tasks (in the case of individuals) depended on and were a function of the major conventions, the more one could be said to belong to the art world/field of manga publishing and the related fan-focused market. And the majority of these actors could be seen to have been subcultural producers.

FROM SUBCULTURAL PRODUCERS TO SUBCULTURAL CLUSTERS

Subcultural producers—a term adopted from Hodkinson (2002)—are the actors coming from within the culture who are responsible for the creation, reproduction, importing, and dissemination of the products, events, media channels, and infrastructure of subcultures. I employ the term subcultural producers in relation to anime and manga fan culture in line with the position taken by a number of authors within fan studies literature that the inner core, the producerly side of fan culture, is subcultural in nature (most notably, Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998, but also Jenkins 1992; Sandvoss 2005).

Hodkinson is very clear about the importance of outside market interests during the boom period of Goth culture—his field of investigation—and the way insider specialist actors catering to the subculture became central afterwards (2002, 110–116). The Hungarian anime and manga fan-focused market was characterized by corresponding shifts in the makeup of relevant actors. On the one hand, there was the manga publishing imprint of Athenaeum—one of the publishing companies of the major domestic publishing house and distribution chain Líra Books Corporation—debuting in 2007, Mangattack, exemplifying outside market interests for many. Incidentally or not, Mangattack was also the first to exit the Hungarian manga publishing market in 2010. At the other end of the spectrum is the string of anime and manga fandom-specific enterprises, such as Mangafan, AnimeLand, AnimeStars, Moonlight Meido, and SakuraZaka, that came to be established during the second half of 2000s. However, further elaborating Hodkinson's insights, I wish to draw attention to the way subcultural producers from related art worlds/fields played a key role in facilitating the emergence and development of the anime and manga fan-focused market.

Not only were subcultural businesses from related areas important during the fledgling period of the fandom, when the necessary subcultural goods could be obtained through the fringe offerings of these businesses—ordering and/or purchasing manga volumes and anime DVDs at comics specialty stores like Trollbarlang and later Trillian or figures at HoldfényTeam's trading card, figure, and collectibles store, for instance—but these actors also proved to be the most prepared to step in as producers, offering imported or localized subcultural goods once the market demand became apparent. Besides having had access to an already exist-

ing infrastructure (established enterprises, operating retail spaces, existing channels of communication, etc.) and personnel, these businesses were also more aware of the shape of demand in the fledgling fan culture as a result of their role as auxiliary suppliers. The owner-manager of Fumax publishing, for instance, decided to publish boys' love (BL) manga and set up the specialist BL imprint Maxxx precisely because he was aware of the demand for the genre through his comics trade activity. Furthermore, these actors were not bound by the implicit fan ethic—an ad-hoc mix of the logic of amateurism and anti-business sentiments—emphasized within certain segments of the core of the organized fandom. Thus, in Hungary three of the five major manga publishers came from related areas: Vad Virágok Könyvműhely and Fumax from comics, Delta Vision from SF/ fantasy and role-playing games. And while anime and manga specialist shops and webshops like AnimeLand and AnimeStars would emerge to service the market, established comics book stores like Trillian and figure shops like Holdfény Fantasy were both first to the market and remained active to various degrees.

To approach this phenomenon, I introduce here the concept of subcultural clusters to refer to the larger groups of related cultures which are characterized by a significant level of connectedness with regard to a number of their dimensions such as (a) correspondence between stylistic and thematic elements and focal interests, which translate into (b) a higher level of convertible capital and (c) a higher proportion of shared infrastructure and media channels, which both feed into (d) an increased mobility of participants among the given cultures and enable (e) a greater level of cooperation and competition for subcultural producers operating within these art worlds/fields. The makeup of these clusters changes over time, and the rise of anime and manga fandom outside Japan is one such example. The current anime and manga fan culture in Europe and America by all accounts seems to be embedded in what I refer to as the geek subcultural cluster, also comprised of further fan cultures and subcultures organized around science fiction, fantasy, role-playing games, miniature wargaming, board games, US and European comics, collectible card games, computer games, and so on.[8]

Concentrating on only the final point of the above scheme for now, it can be seen that the crossing-over of subcultural producers between these markets is facilitated not only by the relative proximity of the themes of these interests, but also by the very similar working conditions, relations, and rewards these markets offer—conditions that are in many respects not

unlike those of other types of creative labor (see Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). Furthermore, these markets are also comparable in scale, and all are characterized by the presence of free labor and a subcultural motivational and reward structure specific to these art worlds/fields (c.f. Hodkinson 2002). Finally, in the case of manga and comics, the work of localization was close enough for specialist knowledge, such as comics editing and typesetting, to be transferable. This is, of course, not to discount the role and significance of anime and manga-specific expertise. Looking at actual work relations, it is striking, for instance, that Darklight, co-creator and co-host of the pioneering anime and manga themed *Japanimánia* radio show, is the principal translator of manhwa and manga for both publishers coming from comics, Fumax and Vad Virágok Könyvműhely. While their other employees, contractors, and supporters were drawn from the domestic US/European comics culture, the owner-managers of both enterprises explained to me that a thorough understanding of sequential art in general and a knowledge of manga and manhwa and its various genres in particular was required for successfully translating these works, and that this was the main reason they chose to work with her. Although the bulk of her translation work remains manga and manhwa specific, she has also translated a volume of the Italian comics series *Dampyr* for Fumax, demonstrating that actors can and do cross over from anime and manga into other related art worlds/fields with similar logics, a point I will return to again below.

As purchasing power started to wane, however, during the years following the global financial crisis of 2008, actors from related areas proved to be just as likely to gradually recede into their original fringe positions in relation to the fandom, their core business elsewhere. The movement of these enterprises and actors first toward and then away from the anime and manga market is indicative simultaneously of the *proximity* of these related areas of interest to, and their *distinctness* from, anime and manga fandom.

POST-BOOM DEVELOPMENTS IN HUNGARY AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE TO SUBCULTURAL CLUSTERS

But what happened to the market and actors from within the fandom as businesses from related cultures started to recede? It wasn't just external actors and those from related areas who found that the recession in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis was taking a toll on their

businesses. The newly established anime and manga-specific enterprises also started to face problems, and as such, their typically self-employed proprietors mostly either chose to cut back on their level of activity or completely closed shop. Some returned to their previous non-fandom-related jobs, while others would exit through career trajectories based on the types of skills, knowledge, contacts, and work experience accumulated within fandom, working in graphic design or photography, for instance.

At the same time, a differentiation took place with regards to the positions of the previous core members of the HAA—responsible for the first major domestic anime and manga conventions as well as acting as the center of gravity in relation to the Hungarian fandom—who, for the most part, had occupied freelance and part-time positions during the establishment and growth phase of the market. With the market moving into stagnation despite the fandom still showing all the signs of vibrancy and Mangafan/Mondo emerging as the dominant market actor, one faction of the HAA returned to their roots, concentrating on operating the association through voluntary work and organizing fewer and smaller-scale conventions, partly as a result of MondoCon having taken over as the principal domestic anime and manga convention series. Another group of actors coming from the HAA graduated to full-time work engagements, mostly with Mangafan and Mondo. In a way, the formation of the fan-focused market from its initial purely fan-driven stage to the business-driven mature stage involved the opening up of possibilities for the people who were already engaged in organizing events, related fan merchandising, and unofficial mediation of the culture. As the market became more developed, the tensions between fan ethics and positions and business logic led to the above-described differentiation occurring among principal fan actors, toward either a return to fan culture proper or a full-time work trajectory on the business side.

At the same time, the shrinking of the paying market spurred another development, again highlighting the relevance of subcultural clusters: the emergence of the opening up of the anime and manga convention circuit to related fan cultures and subcultures. I have already touched on the way the first Mondo conventions were a result of the need for a direct sales channel for the Christmas releases of Mangafan. Another market actor, HoldfényTeam, also started their own convention series, HoldfényCon, in 2010 alongside a different dimension of business considerations. Whereas Mangafan came

from publishing, HoldfényTeam came from trading card, figure, and games retail, none of which was anime and manga specific, and their aim was to expand the anime and manga fan-focused market toward a more overarching spectrum of geek interests in line with their core business offerings. While anime and manga fandom was—and still is—clearly the largest active fandom and market in the country, and could be counted on to act as the backbone of such a convention, HoldfényTeam aimed to bring together a host of different fan cultures from anime and manga and US comics to science fiction and fantasy-oriented fan societies and so on. This move has since been emulated by MondoCon as well, now also drawing in and hosting more and more related interest groups and cultures in an explicit attempt at cross-marketing and cross-pollination.

One of the effects of this move by subcultural producers is that anime and manga cosplayers and various science fiction/fantasy fan organizations and historic costuming societies have begun to find common ground in relation to, for instance, craft practices and knowledge. And now it is not only business-oriented subcultural producers who are facilitating these connections but also non-profit actors such as the Alkimista Laboratórium group, which organizes summer camps and events with participants from both traditional SF-Fantasy-RPG interest groups and anime and manga fandom.

Things are thus coming full circle both in relation to work and subcultural producers and the reconfiguration of the geek subcultural cluster. On the one hand, the actors coming from fandom who have taken up full-time employment in anime and manga have now also started to work in related cultures, mirroring the way actors from related art worlds/fields participated—and to a certain extent still do—in the anime and manga fan-focused market. On the other hand, the anime and manga fan culture and market is now acting as the driving force behind the development of the geek subcultural cluster, just as fantasy and role-playing games and, prior to those, science fiction fandom once had. Furthermore, both HoldfényTeam and MondoCon have started to orient themselves toward the video game culture and market, which is of course in no way new and is hardly a fledgling market, but which a number of my interviewees have noted as the potential successor to anime and manga fandom as the next dominant culture within the geek subcultural cluster. Fumax, for example, having exited manga publishing, have now found success publishing video game-based novels.

Conclusion

Although I introduced the concept of subcultural clusters to better explicate the phenomenon of multiple attachments, interrelations, and transitions among various fan cultures and subcultures (c.f. Muggleton 2000; Hills 2002), the patterns of interaction and interconnectedness among subcultural producers within the same subcultural cluster can also help reappraise the problem of boundary setting in relation to Becker and Bourdieu's frameworks of art world/field. Relations of work and networks of cooperation and interests can indeed map out discernible art worlds/ fields of interaction, and not just core artistic activities but also so-called support activities such as mediation and dissemination. And while the boundaries of these art worlds/fields are characterized by a high level of porousness, as evidenced by the entry of external business interests into the anime and manga fan-focused market in Hungary, the high number of actors coming from within the fandom or from related cultures seems to point toward the existence of a more or less well-defined art world/field, with identifiable interrelated sub-worlds/subfields.

Notes

1. My decision to group anime and manga together throughout this chapter is meant to signal the strong interrelation of the two forms in the context of the American and European fandoms in general and the Hungarian case in particular.
2. Similar to the USA and other European countries, a brief and unsuccessful attempt at manga publishing based on the US comics standard of single or double issue length pamphlet form publishing (c.f. Brienza 2009; Malone 2010) also took place in Hungary from 1999 to 2001.
3. All works—including manhwa, manhua, and global manga—positioned by their publishers as in some way "mangaesque" (see Berndt 2013 for the original use of the term) will be referred to with the umbrella term manga throughout this chapter.
4. The development of the market demand for these volumes owes a lot to the screening of anime on Hungarian broadcast and cable TV channels (c.f. Malone 2010; Pellitteri 2010), neither of which will be covered in the present discussion, and to a certain extent to the work of the domestic and international fandom.
5. However, this chapter focuses only on formal mediation and dissemination. For a discussion of the role of informal or unauthorized mediation and dis-

semination and its interplay with formal authorized channels, see Mihara (2010) and Lee (2012).

6. Not unlike the rift between the readership of comics and manga, comics studies and manga research have developed so far within mostly separate discursive spaces, due in part to the mutual language barriers involved. However, there have been attempts and calls to bridge this divide in recent years (see, e.g., Berndt 2010; Brienza 2012).

7. This is further mirrored in subcultural formations as well (c.f. Hodkinson 2002; Valyi 2010), underlining the applicability of the art world/field frameworks in those cases too.

8. Woo (2012) provides a highly congruous analysis of interconnected subfields of interest in a "nerd-culture scene" in Canada.

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Note: Page numbers with "n" denote endnotes.