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OLDER THAN LANGUAGE

comics as philosophical praxis and heuristic for philosophical canon

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dissertation submitted in completion of the full requirements for

Philosophiae Doctor

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Abstract

The central task of this dissertation is the exploration of the medium of comics, and its connections to both popular culture and philosophy as a practice conceived in the Western tradition.

Comics (at times referred to as both 'graphic literature' and 'sequential art' during this dissertation) constitutes a wholly new object. One that is qualitatively distinct from prose, theater, poetry and cinema. Mimicking the structure of comics wherein two images are juxtaposed to suggest (rather than explicitly state) a coherent sequence in the mind of the reader, this dissertation offers two "images" of its central thesis: one a theoretical element, the other a work of creative fiction. Following on from each other, these "images" interrogate both in their parts and in their sequence, the politics of representation around comics and its connections to philosophy and the popular.

In the first "image" a theoretical work is forwarded to examine the various connections that arise between comics, popular culture and philosophy. The central thesis of this element argues for a nuanced understanding in which the medium of comics provides for a clearer interlocutor of Western philosophy's perennial concerns. The works of Galileo, Vico, Descartes, Darwin, Marx, Freud, Einstein, Foucault and Deleuze are reinterpreted using the aesthetic mechanics of comics as philosophical concept. This dissertation thus asserts that comics functions as "heuristic" for Western philosophy, a method which encodes understanding through practice.

The second "image" offers a brief fiction entitled 'Life in Print'. This work forms the final volume of a fictive collection of works published posthumously. Gathering together both works by the deceased author, and eulogies by his friends, 'Life in Print' posits a twisted reflection of our own world; one in which the essential connections between comics, philosophy and popular culture have been severed.

In this way, *Older than Language* offers an attempt to interrogate not only the formal aesthetics of comics (and in so doing provide a genealogy of the medium's mechanics), but also engage the medium's broader attempts at sociocultural location.

Opsomming

Die sentrale uitgangspunt van hierdie tesis is die ondersoek na die aard van die komiekstrip en die besondere posisie wat dit binne sowel populêre kultuur as Westerse filosofie beklee. Komieks (soms hierna verwys as sowel "grafiese literatuur" as "sekwensie kuns" binne die opset van die tesis) vorm 'n nuwe dissipline. Dit is in hierdie kwalitatiewe aard verskillend van prosa, die teater, digkuns en filmkuns. In 'n poging om die struktuur van die komiekstrip na te boots waarin twee beelde in jukstaposisie geplaas word ten einde te suggereer (eerder as om te stel), word 'n koherente opeenvolging in die gedagtes van die leser uitgewerk sodat twee "beelde" geskep word: enersyds 'n teoretiese ondersoek en andersyds 'n kreatiewe teks.

Samehangend ondersoek beide "beelde" in sowel afsonderlike afdelings as in sekwensie die sogenaamde politiek van representasie wat rondom komiekstrippie bestaan in die verhouding met filosofie en populêre kultuur.

In die eerste "beeld" word 'n teoretiese teks gebruik ten einde die verskillende verhoudings tussen komieks, populêre kultuur en filosofie daar te stel. Die sentrale uitgangspunt van hierdie tesis argumenteer vir 'n genuanseerde begrip waarin sentrale Westerse diskoerse aan bod kom. Die tekste van Galileo, Vico, Descartes, Darwin, Marx, Freud, Einstein, Foucault en Deleuze word herinterpreteer deur gebruik te maak van estetiese bouforme van komiekstrippie as filosofiese konsepte. Die tesis voer aan dat komiekstrippie 'heuristies' funksioneer binne die Westerse filosofie.

Die tweede "beeld" is 'n fiksionele weergawe getiteld 'Life in Print'. Hierdie teks behels die finale afdeling van 'n fiktiewe versameling van postume tekste. Die teks bevat bydraes van die ontslape outeur en huldeblyke deur sy vriende en hiermee gee 'Life in print' 'n skeefgetrekte weergawe van die wêreld waarin die essensiële verbande tussen komiekstrippie, filosofie en populêre kultuur uitgewerk word. So beskou, stel *Older Than Language* sig ten doel om nie alleen die formele estetika van komiekstrippie en 'n genealogie te ondersoek nie, maar ook om die medium se wyer sosiokulturele posisie te bepaal.

Acknowledgements

Sibu, *Capetown is the Gulag Of Happy Endings...*

Frank, *Fight fruit-sugar, buy worldhunger!*

Chuck, *If you believe what I rely on...*

Wardi, *Roots and wings are immaterial in a world made with ropes. But a world of ropes is also the very first stirring of the flowering of the way of the sword.*

Mom & Pop, *who by encouragement and necessity's children taught us all the very real need for escaping the reign of ape-slave-noises.*

Joan Hambidge, *my Doctoral supervisor, without whom...*

I wish to specifically acknowledge Prof. Hambidge for the translation in Afrikaans of the Abstract.

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the theoretical element

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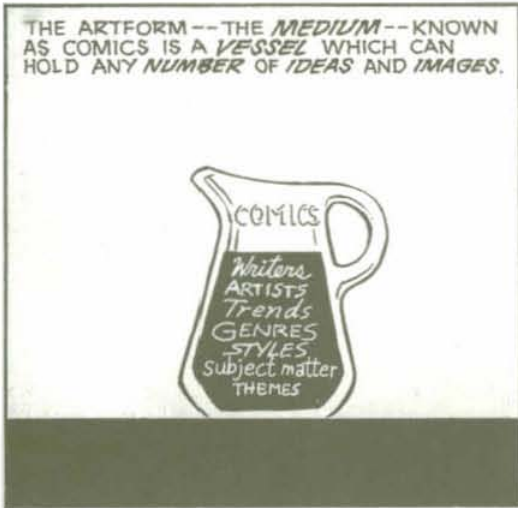
the problem of comics

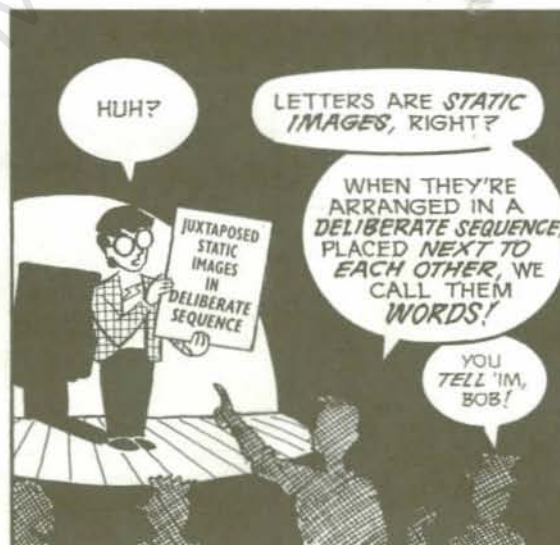
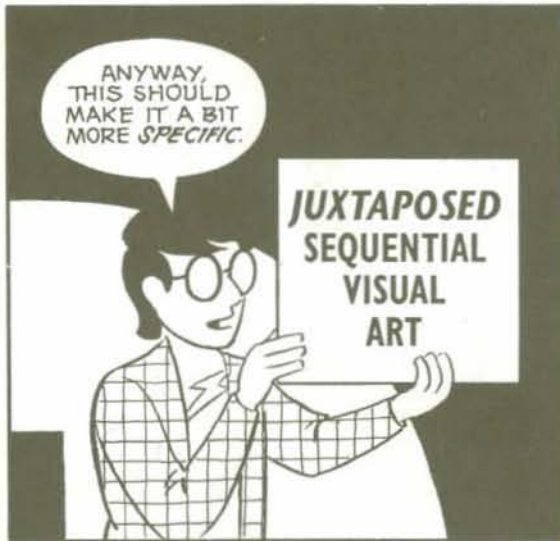
This dissertation (delivered in two parts as segregate but complementary theoretical and creative elements) explores the connection between comics and philosophy. 'Comics' refers to the sequential art (also sometimes called graphic literature) closely associated with cartoons. It is a plural-form used in the singular to denote a single object. This dissertation seeks to examine how the so-called 'timeless' questions of philosophy (of time, and being, and self, and state, and justice, for example) appear, if in a medium not wholly reliant on the conceits of prose.

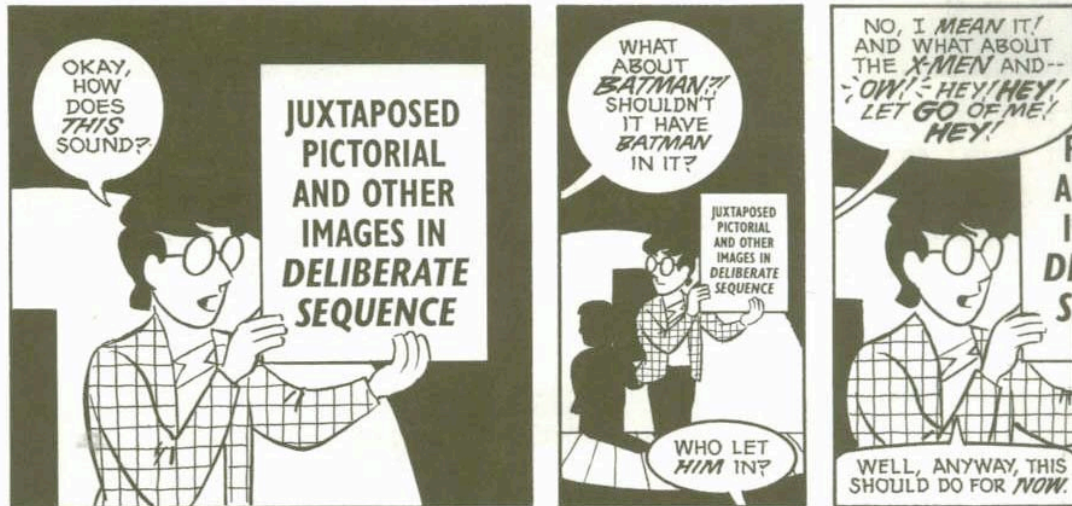
Posing this question constructs two valences of 'comics' and 'philosophy'. Already, these terms should be problematized before the prior question can be more fully examined. Questions are the use of the terms 'philosophy' and 'comics' need to be more fully explored. Exactly by what machineries did philosophy come to be connected with its so-called 'timeless' questions? Also, by what mechanism did comics come to be excluded from philosophy? Or perhaps, through which mechanism did philosophy come to select prose as preferred medium of inquiry?

Questions around comics and its connection to philosophy seem to be able to be answered only after a major work of severing has occurred. Comics is dominated by what many comics scholars and creators have come to view as an arbitrary connection. The filiation between comics and popular culture, primarily the superhero genre, is viewed as strictly non-necessary. It is customary to begin the academic reception of comics, only after the medium has been dissociated from popular culture.

In his seminal *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud (1993) points to how easily the connection between comics and the superhero genre appears as a precondition of the medium itself. Invariably, this relationship is one that eludes interrogation. In the excerpt below, McCloud segregates the medium from its content. While attempting this segregation, he marginalizes the voice of the popular as embodied by an Ideal Reader, here cast by McCloud (1993:4 - 9) as punctilious and overly focused on content rather than medium.







McCloud's strategy is commonplace in recent scholarship. In seeking to 'retrieve' comics as a medium from its association with popular culture, recent scholarship perhaps seeks to elevate the comics medium and demand of it formal academic recognition. This dissertation suggests that the connection between comics and popular culture is itself worthy of critical attention. The recurrence of the comics with popular culture bears examination. The main thesis of this dissertation offers the intuition that an association between comics and popular culture is both rational and consistent. This intuition is grounded in the recurrence of this connection across historical waves.

Thus the relationship between comics and popular culture becomes itself worthy of academic interrogation. Why does this relationship persist? This dissertation attempts an exploration of that curiosity within an academic context, and questions around the formal, academic study of comics is necessarily filtered through questions around comics' connection to popular culture. Ultimately what this dissertation offers is comics as a philosophical praxis.

3 relations in the formal study of comics

To begin popular culture's connection to philosophy must itself be explored. In particular the assumption that philosophy precludes the popular should be interrogated. In attempting this, three relations appear as subject of this dissertation's investigation; the relation between comics and philosophy, the relation between comics and the popular, and the connection between philosophy and the popular.

French poststructuralist Gilles Deleuze articulates the contiguity of these relations in 'Hume':

Thus Hume has a peculiar place in the history of philosophy. His empiricism is, so to speak, a kind of universe of science

fiction: as in science fiction, the world seems fictional, strange, foreign, experienced by other creatures; but we get the feeling that this world is our own, and we are the creatures. At the same time, science or theory undergoes a conversion: theory becomes *inquiry* (this conception originates with Bacon; recalling this conception Kant will transform and rationalize it when he conceives of theory as a tribunal). Science or theory is an inquiry, in other words, a practice: a practice of the apparently fictitious world described by empiricism, a study of the conditions of legitimacy of the practices in this our empirical world. This is the great conversion of theory into practice.

(Deleuze, 2004:162)

In the work of Hume therefore, Deleuze finds a philosophy that is irrefutably evidence of a popular culture. It is this representation of philosophy as the strangely familiar (a representation that Deleuze demonstrates as arising directly from Hume's empiricism) that enshrines an abiding connection between philosophy and popular culture. The 'task' of both philosophy and popular culture, Deleuze argues, is to present a world at once familiar and estranged. Thus the strange becomes recognizable in relation to the familiar. In this sense, Deleuze demonstrates that Hume was able to conceive of philosophy as an extension of the popular. With Hume, the philosophical rigor used to formally observe the world is no different than the intellectual discrimination required to read the genre fiction of popular culture.

In closing 'Hume', Deleuze writes:

Hume is a rather precocious philosopher: he was about twenty-five years old when he wrote his masterpiece *A Treatise of Human Nature* (published in 1739 - 1740). A new tone in philosophy, an extraordinary simplicity and concreteness, emerges from a great complexity of arguments, which simultaneously bring in the use of fictions, the science of human nature and the practice of artifices. A kind of philosophy that is popular and scientific: a pop-philosophy. Its ideal? A decisive clarity, which is not the clarity of ideas, but that which comes from relations and operations.

(Deleuze, 2004:169)

But if Deleuze identifies Hume as the thinker most directly responsible for originally forging the filiation between philosophy and the popular (and, by implication, himself as successor in that tradition), then his most dramatic reading of Hume's contribution to the philosophical canon lies in his description of how 'Hume effects an inversion that will take empiricism to a higher power...".

Earlier in the same piece:

Hume's originality, one aspect of his originality, derives from the force with which he affirms: *relations are exterior to their terms...* Certainly empiricism had always militated for the

exteriority of relations, but in a certain way, its position on this topic was occluded by the problem of the origin of knowledge of or ideas: everything had to have its origin in sense-data, and in the operations of the mind on these sense-data. Hume effects an inversion that will take empiricism to a higher power: if ideas contain nothing else, and nothing more than what is in sense impressions, this is precisely because the relations are heterogeneous and exterior to their terms, impressions, or ideas. The difference, therefore, is not between ideas *and* impressions, but between two kinds of impressions or ideas: the impressions or ideas of terms *and* the impressions or ideas of relations.

(Deleuze, 2004:163)

Here, Deleuze describes Hume's construction of 'relations'. Contrary to earlier empiricists Hume identifies 'relations' as heterogeneous to 'terms'. According to Deleuze, "Such a thesis can be understood only in opposition to the tireless effort by rationalist philosophers to resolve the paradox of relations: either a means is found to make the relation internal to the terms, or a more profound and inclusive term is discovered to which the relation is already internal. Peter is smaller than Paul: how does one make this relation internal to Peter or Paul? Or to their concept? Or to the whole they compose? Or to the Idea in which they participate? How does one overcome the irreducible exteriority of their relation?"

Deleuze establishes a schema of philosophy which deals with discrete units. These units, 'terms', are dispensed with according to one of two distinct methods based on the formal categories within philosophy itself. Either, as according to the Rationalist tradition, relations are homogenized with terms or a super-ordinate term is constructed. According to empiricism however (as Deleuze demonstrates of Hume), terms are constructed as discrete units upon which relations act, allowing the transition from one term to another. Deleuze demonstrates how Hume opposes the inherent heterogeneity of empiricism to the collapsible insularity and ultimately homogeneity of Rationalist thinking.

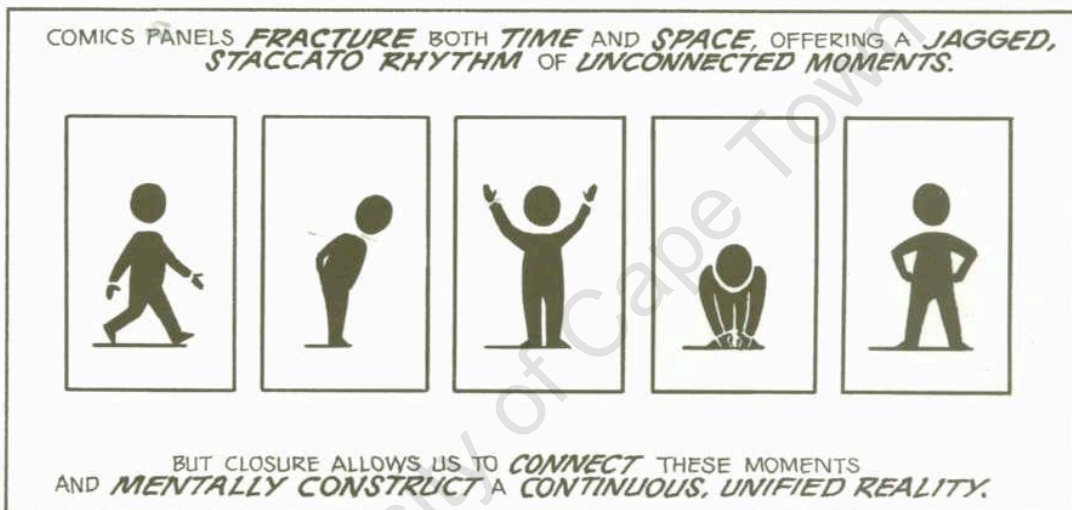
Thus,

...what allows a passage from a given impression or idea to the idea of something not presently given. For example, I think of something "similar"... When I see Peter's portrait, I think of Peter who is absent. In vain would we search in the given term for the rationale of the passage. Relation is itself the effect of so-called principles of association: contiguity, resemblance, and causality, which indeed constitute *human nature*. Human nature means that which is universal or constant in the human mind. It is never this or that idea as a term, but merely ways of proceeding from one particular idea to another.

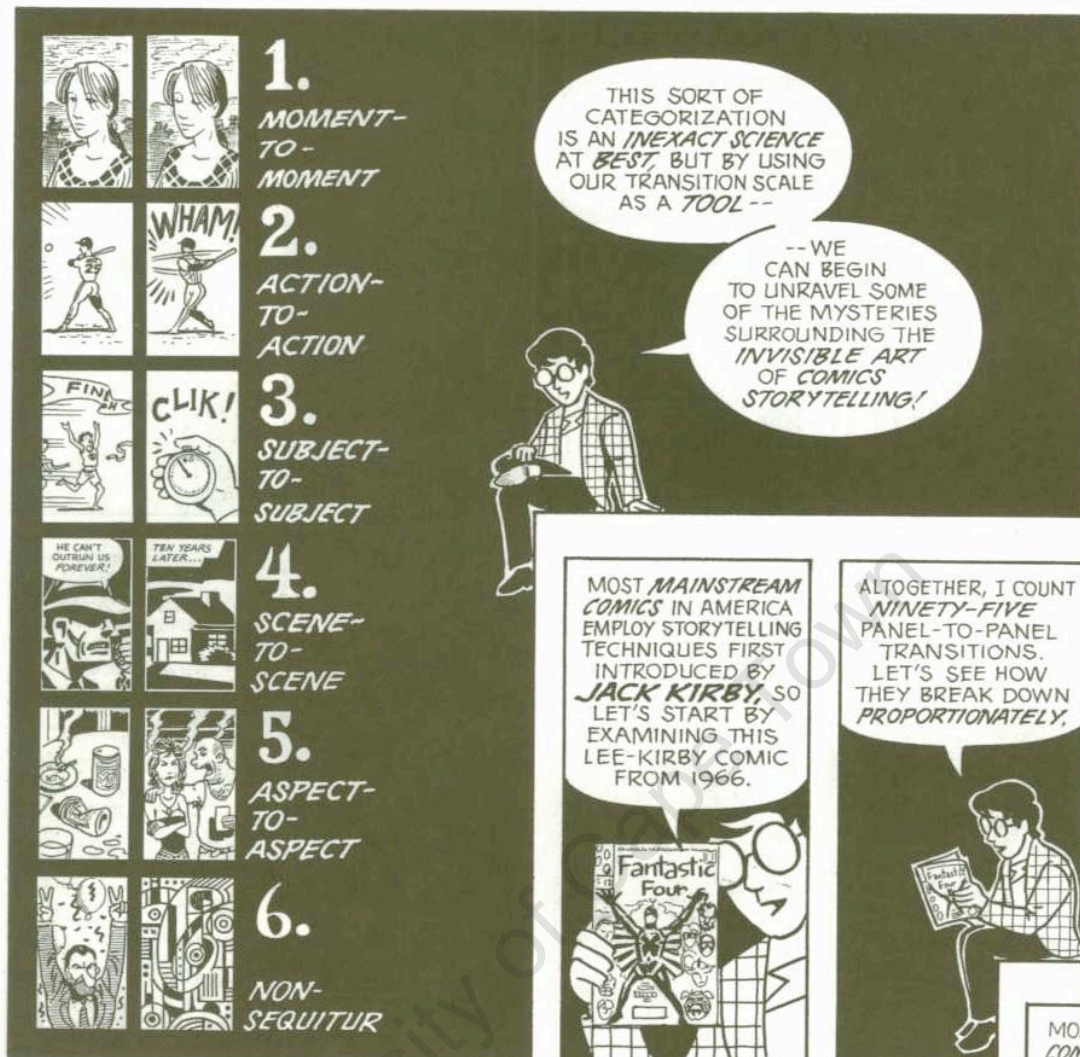
(Deleuze, 2004:164)

Deleuze renders philosophy properly as discrete terms and fluid relations which operate upon these terms. Thus he implicitly establishes philosophy as a practice within comics. To return to McCloud's formulation presented in *Understanding Comics*, comics is "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence". With comics relations arise from the juxtaposition and deliberate sequencing of images, pictorial or otherwise. It is an inherent strength of the medium that it allows readers to animate for themselves relations, while placing terms as visible and discrete units before them. In comics, what readers see are panels, the framed images containing story and artwork, while what remains unseen is the passage from one panel to the next. Comics shares with philosophy its composition as terms and relations. In comics, panels signify terms. While relations remain undepicted, they cause readers to move from one panel to the next.

Although not depicted in comics, the medium relies heavily on these relations. McCloud (1993:67) emphasizes the significance of the gutter, the technical term for the open space between comics panels in comics. It is in the gutter that the relational is active.



Continuing in the same chapter, McCloud (1993:74) offers the following as one possible topology of relations within the comics medium:



What evidences itself then, are two connections spoken to in the schema of the three relations. The terms 'philosophy' and 'popular culture' are shown to be connected as early as Hume. Deleuze's examination of Hume also excavates an implicit connection between 'comics' and 'philosophy'. After Deleuze what is readily understood by 'comics' appears as interchangeable with empiricism's 'relations' and 'terms'.

Thus through Deleuze's reading of Hume 'comics' comes to be connected with 'philosophy'. As well, 'philosophy' is connected with 'the popular' (or popular culture). The third and final connection in the schema for this dissertation remains to be accounted for. What is the connection between 'comics' and 'popular culture'? Relying on 'philosophy' as an homogenizing term that establishes a relation between 'comics' and 'the popular', is simply to reestablish the rationalist dilemma. A relation cannot be established simply because 'comics' and 'popular culture' can be related to a common element in 'philosophy'. What is called for is a more

detailed topology, a new system of machineries through which a unique relation between 'comics' and 'the popular' can be forged.

death, the author, and authorship

The central task of this dissertation is to provide a convincing examination of the ways in which transitions from comics to popular culture, and vice versa, are effected. This dissertation uses the terms 'popular culture' and 'the popular' interchangeably. The use of these terms connote fictions with ease of access both in terms of distribution and in their lack of needing technical training. Pulp fiction of the 1920's could be considered popular literature within its cultural milieu. Within the context of the 2000's, this kind of literature ceases to be popular in the sense that it is no longer a literary staple part of the cultural mainstream. Novels by Jodi Picoult or Stephen King might come to replace these older pulp fictions as 'the popular'. The subsequent chapters of this dissertation explore the relations between comics and the popular in prose. It is therefore initially necessary to illustrate a relational map of comics and popular culture as constructed in comics.

In "Pulp Vir Pappoppies"¹, Joe Dog (2005) offers three formal statements around literature. In offering these statements in the medium of comics, Dog forges an implicit but powerful relation between comics itself and the popular. Moreover, once established, Dog uses this relation between comics and pop culture to explore the relations between high art and low. The statements Dog makes are firstly²:

¹ "Pulp For Nitwits". Anton Kannemeyer writes under the pseudonym 'Joe Dog'.

² **Panel 1:** 'Not that I think Philip K Dick is shit... on the contrary... (and incidentally: *UBIK* is good but *A Scanner Darkly* is better...'**Panel 2:** ...then there's *the Ganymede Takeover* (one of his most absurd, and maybe even his weakest), memorable because I read it during a storm in my car.../ Not at all sentimental./ Slept in the caravan park at Koeëlbaai...// **Panel 3:** Yeah, and what about *Time Out of Joint*, one of his best works after his earlier gothic period.../ [*Time Out of Joint* quote omitted]/ Whole book shamelessly ripped off in "The Truman Show".



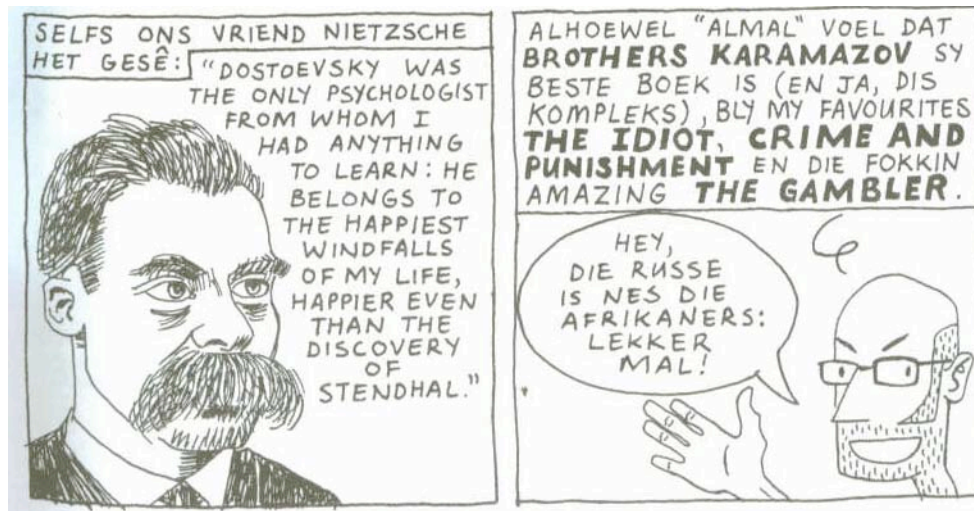
Followed by³:



And finally⁴:

³ **Panel 1:** And you can't really talk about Bukowski without first looking at Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*.../ [Hemingway extract omitted]/ I reckon the feminists have fuck-all love for Hemingway...// **Panel 2:** Hammett naturally, was fucking good - it's a fact that he transcended his genre (and invented a new one!), but his earlier *Continental Op* stories can, in my opinion, be given a miss. He wrote just five novels, of which *the Maltese Falcon* and *the Thin Man** are his best./ [*the Maltese Falcon* excerpt omitted]/ *Ripped off by A J du Plessis in his novel *die Skraal Man* ["the Thin Man"]

⁴ **Panel 1:** Even our friend Nietzsche said:/ [Nietzsche quote omitted]// **Panel 2:** Even though 'everybody' believes *Brothers Karamazov* is his best work (sure it's complex) my favorites are still *The Idiot*, *Crime and Punishment* and the fucking amazing *The Gambler*/ "Hey the Russians are just like the Afrikaners: just plain crazy".



In the first statement, Dog (2005:34) establishes the liminality between reader and character, as conceived of in the pulp tradition. A character, particularly in the pulp tradition that Dick engages, is nothing more than an emotionally charged template of readers. Dog is able to make this statement by contrasting depicted hands. Compared with the rough linework of Kannemeyer's own hand in the first panel, Gumm's⁵ hand in the third panel is fraught with heavy detail, a by-product of the hatching used to shade it.

The technique of using an increase in the inking detail (as above with Gumm's hand) to emotionally differentiate between 'character' and 'content' is common in comics and known as the masking effect. The masking effect allows readers to emotionally invest themselves when less inking is used; readers find it necessary to 'animate' the struggles of such 'empty' spaces in these cases. This is why there is an immediate, almost intuitive, reader association with Kannemeyer's character.

The greater the level of inking however, the more readers tend to disassociate from a given illustration in comics. Greater levels of detail are usually left for solid objects (cf. the mountains in the 'Hemingway panel'), and consequently, villains or historical figures (characters as objects) are presented with great detail in a deliberate attempt to prevent reader association.

But for Dog, the detailed linework of Gumm's hand is even more profound; it is particular to his personal history with the stormy night spent reading Dick in his car. Dog uses the hatching of the storm-weather (Kannemeyer's own memory) to construct Gumm as an object, insofar as Gumm is himself a fiction being gestured towards in the third panel. Dog asserts that pulp fiction (as evidenced by Dick) is only made properly fictional through personal

⁵ The protagonist from Dick's *Time Out of Joint* is Ragel Gumm

history. This argument he makes visually, using the resources of the comics medium.

One relation between comics and the popular then, is the use of emotional investment. Dog makes this argument by providing readers with the masking effect (already a statement about emotional investment) as a powerful visual metaphor for a similar movement of the emotional investment in pulp fiction.

In the second excerpt, Dog (2005:35) uses the masking effect to draw parallels between the construction of the author in high art, and the construction of the protagonist in popular art. In the third excerpt, Dog points to how the author is constructed in absentia through both the critic (Nietzsche/ high culture) and the reader (Kannemeyer/ popular culture). Again Dog effects a subtle inversion of values; the privilege of the cultural critic is overturned as the reader (through the use of the masking effect) associates more readily with Kannemeyer than with Nietzsche. The rise of the reader (marked by the comicbook reader's association with Kannemeyer) and the absence of the author is once again a visual metaphor for a leitmotif of literary theory, that of the 'Death of the Author'.

'The Death of the Author' (1977:148) poses an opposition between Author and reader:

Classical criticism has never paid any attention to the reader; for it, the writer is the only person in literature. We are now beginning to let ourselves be fooled no longer by the arrogant antiphrastical recriminations of good society in favour of the very thing it sets aside, ignores, smothers or destroys; we know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at to cost of the death of the Author.

(Barthes, 1977:148)

Barthes therefore, conceives of the reader and the Author as antithetical to one another. In the history of literary criticism, the reader is repressed while the Author is valorized. For Barthes the situation is simple; "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (Barthes, 1977:148). The legitimacy of 'meaning' is of primary concern to Barthes. He therefore calls into question the underlying power structure which legitimates the right of the Author to produce meaning, but simultaneously marginalize the reader.

The text itself is always open to multiple productions of meaning. Barthes (1977:142) notes that "Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body of writing". And later in the same essay, "The text is a tissue of quotations

drawn from innumerable centres of culture" (Barthes, 1977:147). According to Barthes view, the text can only be interpreted once it is acted upon by an exterior force. A choice must therefore be made whether the method for unifying the text (and thereby creating its meaning) arises from a process associated with 'the reader' or 'the Author'.

For Barthes there can little doubt that the processes of unifying the text by reader and by Author are diametrically opposed. Barthes (1977:143) reminds readers of the popular view of texts:

The image of literature found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his tastes, his life, his passions, while criticism still consists for the most part of saying that Baudelaire's work is the failure of Baudelaire the man, Van Gogh's his madness, Tchaikovsky's his vice. The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* confiding in us.

(Barthes, 1977:143)

Thus the Author becomes a totalitarian feature of the text, forcing upon readers the belief in a 'correct' reading of the text. This correct reading is one that stems from the Author's own interpretation of the text. Barthes goes on to suggest:

To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. Such a situation suits criticism very well, the latter allotting itself the task of discovering the Author (or its hypostases: society, history, psyché, liberty) beneath the work: when the Author has been found, the text has been 'explained' - victory to the critic. Hence there is no surprise in the fact that historically, the reign of the Author has also been that of the Critic, nor again in that fact that criticism (be it new) is today undermined along with the Author.

(Barthes, 1977:147)

While the situation seems overwhelming, Barthes himself is quick to remind readers that the Author is nothing more than an historical contrivance, the product of sociocultural processes.

The author is a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism

(Barthes, 1977:145)

Also,

Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance of writing

(Barthes, 1977:143)

As a sociocultural product, the Author can be discarded. It is this dispensing with of the Author that in Barthes

view, marks the liberation of the text and its meaning. For Barthes then,

The removal of the Author ...is not merely an historical fact or an act of writing; it utterly transforms the modern text...

...a text is made from multiple writings drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader not, as was hitherto said, the author.

(Barthes, 1977:147)

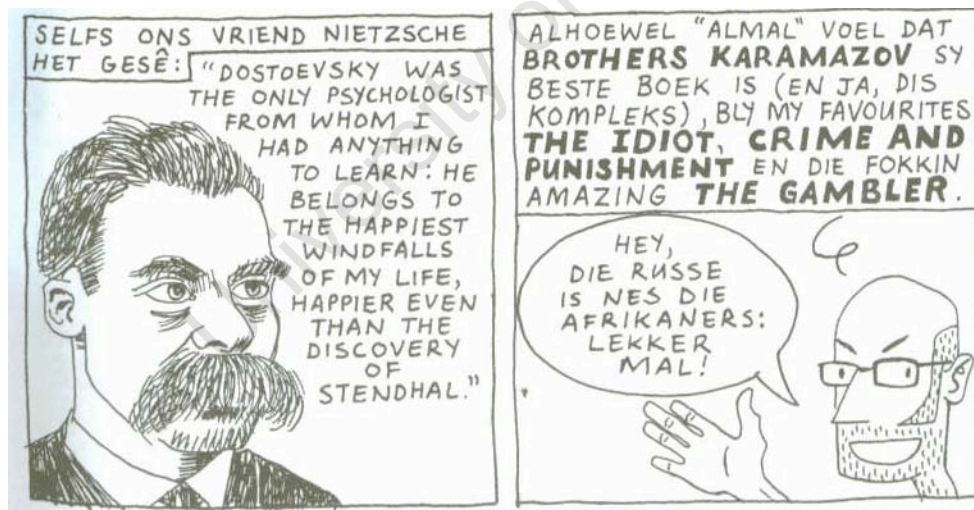
Since the Author is compromised and ultimately unable to unify the text (except to restrict its meaning), Barthes turns to another site.

The reader is the space on which all quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's final unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that *someone* who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted.

(Barthes, 1977:147)

The subtle complexity of Barthes' argument is not lost on Dog (2005:35), as he attempts to reconstruct it in the medium of comics.

To return to Dog's earlier statement.



Dostoevsky, the author himself, fails to appear.

While Barthes constructs an oppositional paradigm between author and reader, Michel Foucault (1991) subjects both author and reader to the lens of historical construction. Foucault attempts to rarefy what historical and cultural processes have come to displace the hero as the central figure of literature⁶, replacing it with the author. (Foucault, 1991:102)

Foucault (1991:102) initially notes the effects of this literary displacement. Replacing the hero with the author comes with a reversal between a text's attitude towards life and death, Foucault (1991:102) observes. For the Greeks, an epic was life-affirming, commemorating the hero and immortalizing him through a retelling of his deeds. By virtue of an untimely and tragic death, the Hero would himself be perpetually celebrated in the epic. Through the epic, the hero escapes his own death (Foucault, 1991:102). According to a different tradition, *One Thousand and One Nights* describes how Scheherazade uses storytelling to forestall death⁷.

Recent texts however emphasize writing's connection with sacrifice, and often even the sacrifice of life (Foucault, 1991:102). Moreover, this sacrifice is rarely apparent in the text itself since it is evidenced in the writer's own life, Foucault (1991:102) notes. Proust, Flaubert, Kafka are all examples of writers whose works have conspired to act as their authors' 'murderers' (Foucault, 1991:102). Furthermore, writers today make use of various stratagems that work to neutralizing their individuality. It is as if writing demands of the author, Foucault (1991:102) suggests, their assumption of the role of 'dead man' prior to the act of writing.

It is this assumption of a death posture prior to the act of writing, and the historico-cultural act of replacement that leads Foucault (1991:103) to interrogate concepts that have come to "replace" the author in its "death". For Foucault (1991:103), these notions that have come to stand in the author's stead, threaten to preserve the privilege traditionally held by the author. And in so doing, undermine the author's "death" (Foucault, 1991:103).

The task of modern criticism is to express a kind of 'relational map' of the text (Foucault, 1991:103); to demonstrate the existence of various elements internal to

⁶ To substantiate, Foucault here cites the position of the hero in a literary tradition dating as far back as the Greek epic.

⁷ A story told only halfway on one night would prevent her impending execution the following morning. The following night would again afford her sufficient time to complete the telling of the pending story, but of half of the subsequent tale, again forestalling her execution.

the text, and the various means by which transitions are effected from one element to the next. But for Foucault (1991:103), this is precisely where a problem arises. He (Foucault, 1991:103) questions how works come to be constituted, if not by an author. Foucault (1991:103) uses the example of Sade to demonstrate. The difference between Sade's papers being taken as a work, and other writings being excluded from the same category is Sade's own status as an author.

Even if authorship is considered as necessary precondition for a work, the problem of definition is further compounded (Foucault, 1991:103). How is a work defined in relation to all writings of an author? Foucault (1991:103) demonstrates how quickly the notion of describing 'everything' written by an author as a work becomes ridiculous. Nietzsche's aphorisms are to be defined as a work, so too his rough drafts, and perhaps even his deletions, notes and workbooks (Foucault, 1991:103). But what of, contends Foucault (1991:103), Nietzsche's laundry lists? Or his shopping lists? Where is the line to be drawn?

The second notion preserving the author's privilege even in the face of its apparent death is writing itself (Foucault, 1991:104). Contemporary writing refers to neither the process of writing (as internal to the text) nor to the act of ciphering meaning into the text (by the author), Foucault (1991:104) observes. Instead writing speaks to the construction of a general condition for each text, and the consequent study of how a text is evolved in a specific space and time ((Foucault, 1991:104). Thus it seems that writing takes primacy over the author. But Foucault argues that this primacy of writing achieves only an inauthentic gesture, the partial removal of the author (Foucault, 1991:104). In securing writing as essential, modern critics play off two features of writing, the critical and religious, Foucault (1991:108) argues.

'Religious' in the sense that writing is perpetually tested with oblivion or repression and 'critical' in the sense that it is comprised of hidden meanings (Foucault, 1991:108). Both these features are attested to by the very fact of writing's history which conceives of it as absence.

This notion of writing ostensibly reconstitutes the privilege historically reserved for the author (Foucault, 1991:108). While the author may have been in a death-state since Mallarmé, the understanding of the author (and consequently also its attendant privilege) is maintained through an interplay between the work and writing (Foucault, 1991:105).

For Foucault (1991:106), the Author's Death simply points to a new set of ruptures, and the potential emergence of new tyrannies. These tyrannies are possibly linked directly the Author's name and its various uses.

The Author's name functions much like any proper noun, pointing to a particular person (Foucault, 1991:106). In its stead, a series of descriptions might come to stand. 'Aristotle' might come to be replaced by, 'founder of ontology' or 'author of *Analytcs*', for example. But the problem is complicated, Foucault (1991:106) argues, since the author's name and the proper name (the name of the person having written a given text) do not always share a common meaning. In the case of a proper name, although physical details might alter, this proper name will still refer to the same person.

Not so with the name of an author, Foucault (1991:106) argues. Should it be proven that Shakespeare did not write the sonnets attributed to him, or should the works of Bacon and Shakespeare be proven to have been written by a single person, a substantial and qualitative shift in the meaning of the author name 'Shakespeare' would ensue. The author's name therefore is not a proper name like any other proper name (Foucault, 1991:106). The author's name exists as a kind of paradox (Foucault, 1991:106). It is within narrative discourse that the author's name fulfills a classificatory function. Despite Homer not having had a material existence, Homer is no different to Balzac. The names of both these authors establish for their various works a classification that simultaneously unites them, authenticates them, and segregates them from the works of other authors.

Thus it appears that the author's name does not extend beyond the text, instead it denotes the text's limit (Foucault, 1991:107). The author's name points to certain set of conventions of discourse, and demonstrates these conventions as they play out in society and culture. Hence it is possible to argue for certain writing modes being designated by the 'author function' (Foucault, 1991:107). Private mails, contracts, graffiti are all deprived of this 'author function', while books and other literary paraphernalia are endowed with this function.

synopsis of the dissertation

In this dissertation's creative element, Barthes' (1977) notion of the author's death and Foucault's more subtle interrogation of the various machineries imbricated in sustaining the author's privilege even in death are given form in prose fiction. *The Miscellanies*, the final volume of the biographical series 'Life in Print', collects the hitherto unpublished manuscripts of a fictional comicbook writer. In its pages both metafictional characters

scripted by the fictional author, and fictional characters who were friends and colleagues of that author come to terms with a world that is just beginning to legitimate its popular culture through historiographic interest.

The fictional author was on the cusp of a new generation. His work and the work of his colleagues form the basis of a new legitimacy for popular culture. In a further postmodern twist, the fictional author shares a name with the doctoral candidate and author of this dissertation, 'shathley Q'. The world of the fictional shathley Q however, is not our world. The fictional world of shathley Q is a horror story wherein two revolutions in popular culture have failed to occur.

The first revolution is the popularization of learning that occurs as a consequence of the social reorganization resulting from the invention of the printing press. The second revolution in popular culture is the crumbling of the Renaissance system of artistic patronage (a system that undermines even as it supports artistic endeavor) and its replacement with Enlightenment commerce.

Like the analyses espoused by Barthes and Foucault, this fictional piece attempts to interrogate the Author, its influence and the effects of its concealing its constructed nature. However, in speaking directly to fictional failure of two revolutions in popular culture, the creative piece also speaks directly to concerns raised by the theoretical element of this dissertation. Ultimately, the creative piece poses the same questions asked by the theoretical element; questions around authenticity, legitimacy, socialization through technology all filtered through the contiguity of philosophy, comics and popular culture.

While the creative element explores these themes through the lens of fiction, the theoretical element proceeds more formally. Its chapters cite various 'skirmishes' between philosophy, comics and the popular.

In the theoretical element of this dissertation, the second chapter (following on directly from this introduction) begins by examining a cyclicity which connects popular fiction, technology and political systems. What evidences itself in this cycle is the role of technology as socializing force. It was Renaissance theorist Giambattista Vico who first identified technology in this role. Through examples of money-lending during the Crusades and cultural conflict in postwar Japan, the second chapter details how comics itself appears as technology. Moreover, how comics reenacts the role of socialization that Vico reserves for technology.

The third chapter explores the various tropes of modern comics; as artefacts of either low art or high, or mainstream or 'boutique' publications. While a credible genealogy is established, this tool is ultimately undermined by the writing of Marshall McLuhan. Challenging the presuppositions of thinkers like Eisner and McCloud and creators like Kubert, McLuhan offers a radical view. It is not comics that modulate themselves, but society that changes. Since comics is produced by society, the popularity of different comics (and comics forms) at different times points to a situation that invariably overturns the earlier genealogy. With the work of Warren Ellis on *Fell* as one example, this chapter traces to origins of the earlier genealogy to a happenstance in Descartes' famous Cogito. To answer his personal concerns around interactionism, Descartes suggests the formulation "cogito ergo sum" instead of the more technically efficient "cogito sum". In so doing, Descartes introduces the notion of narrative. It is this notion that is ultimately responsible for the view of society as stable and its byproduct technologies as mutable. A formulation of "cogito sum" and a continual wrestling with "ergo" can be found in the subgenre of superhero origin stories. The chapter closes with an examination of two examples of origin stories.

To begin, the fourth chapter identifies a puzzling and monstrous (at first glance) logic at play in the popular science fiction novel, *Childhood's End*. In it, hard science fiction author Arthur C Clarke, posits a link between the end of childhood and suicide. Furthermore he explodes this idea to an evolutionary level; what if a species can only evolve itself by the mass extinction of its current form? While counterintuitive and frightening, this logic can be traced back (through xenosociology) to formulations by both Saussure and Freud. These formulations, Saussure's linguistic sign and Freud's deathdrive, are arrangements based on specific linear arrangements of the vertical and horizontal. Moreover these formulations produce a specific vision of a linear time. In theorizing a folded time (as 'crystallization' of time) Gilles Deleuze is able to overturn the rigid formulations of Saussure and Freud. In Frank Miller's *Daredevil* and Will Eisner's *Life on Another Planet*, the sensation of time produced by vertical-horizontal shifting seems to endorse Deleuze while severely critiquing Saussure and Freud. Moreover, in Miller specifically, the superhero resolves the suicide quandary originally posed by Clarke. What must happen for childhood not to end in suicide? In *Daredevil*, Miller suggests a motivating factor must appear. This motivating factor could be seen to conform to the superhero.

The fifth chapter explores emergence, a scientific concept arising in the field of biology. Emergence addresses the evolution of systems, and the radical reconstitution of these whole systems, by its elemental components. As example, eyes may have evolved by different paths (light sensitive tissue in freshwater fish or fluid-filled sacs in saltwater fish), but once eyes have been developed, they are applied everywhere from birds to mammals. Eyes therefore become the most basic unit in a far more complex evolutionary system that allows for predation to emerge. While classical physics attempts a downwards (or reductive) understanding of the physical environment (reductionism towards the simplest element), with emergence evolutionary biology suggests an upwards (or emergent) understanding. Emergence stands as a 'lawless' endeavor in that its iterations cannot be predicted or described before the fact. As a philosophical concept emergence seems to share a conceptual frame with comics in that both probe Hume's Naturalistic Fallacy. Comics and emergence both attempt to illustrate the derivation of prescriptive statements from descriptive ones. This chapter concludes by demonstrating how apophenia (a reading strategy arising as a complex of two comics techniques) engages the works of the political philosopher Karl Marx.

The Closing Meditation examines the marketability of nostalgia in comics. Nostalgia, this chapter contends, is insufficient in that it invariably attempts to bend together text and image in a composite. Rather than a prelapsarian view in which text and image are primordially related, this chapter examines cartoonist Wallace Wood's argument. Wood posits that through elemental panels that recur throughout comics, comics is generative and germinal rather than nostalgic. By presenting individual moments in comics as fractionated, and forcing the reader to initiate a process of defractionation, comics speak to what can be built. This process of defractionation stands in stark contrast to the nostalgia hypothesis that presents comics as oriented around the past.

With both the theoretical and the creative elements, this dissertation hopes to achieve a meditation on comics not as artifact, but as phase in a broader cycle. This cycle circuits through comics, just as it does philosophy and popular culture. Moreover, this cycle ties into a broader cycle that unites technology and society. A misreading of this second cycle allows for the incorrect interpretation that society endures while technologies alter. This dissertation contends that what is ultimately at stake however, is the relational; how a human mind is able to move from technology to society, only to produce newer,

emergent technologies, and thereby produce radical new forms of society.

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a telling joke

Early comics scholarship, whether it identifies its object as 'graphic literature' or 'sequential art', often misidentifies its object. Falsely it alludes to comics as a hybrid of image and word. Scott McCloud's (1993:4) *Understanding Comics* effects a radical statement in comics scholarship in that it acknowledges comics as a singular object. McCloud's project offers a direct challenge to the notion of comics as hybrid. The argument for comics as the prodigal of word and image, unfairly limits the scope of comics and its scholarship. To countermand the notion of comics' hybridism, McCloud conceives of comics as a medium far older than twentieth century. Under the definition of comics, he includes works for Medieval Europe (the Bayeux tapestry) as well as pre-Columbian Aztec scrolls, and Egyptian picture-stories painted on the inside of temples. McCloud's search for an originary moment for comics equates to the Foucauldian notion of 'the birth of'. Foucault (1996, 1997, 2003) introduces this literary trope to describe the natal moments of the prison, the hospital, biopolitics, modern medicine, psychiatric technologies and other methods of regulation in what he termed the modern 'disciplinary' state. This chapter therefore seeks to produce a theoretical 'birth of comics' by examining three occurrences of SF or Science Fiction.

In his review, '*Easy Rider*: a film like its title' German filmmaker Wim Wenders (1991:26 - 31) offers SF as a telling joke. The entire article seems to conspire around this single line, '*Easy Rider* is a political film. Also here in Germany, it's a science fiction film. Well, maybe not for much longer.' Wenders identifies the film as a single point in a cycle which connects SF and the political. Far from being a terse reminder of humor, the snide comment of the quote's final sentence indicates processional connection between SF and the political. In time, SF can become the political. For Wenders, SF is designated by the novelty of human achievement, in an 'unworldly' organization. Like Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four*, or Huxley's *Brave New World*, or Wells' 'the Time Machine', or Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*, or even the fact that the design for the orbiting satellite was first proposed by Arthur Clarke in a short story, Wenders depicts SF as the deployment of recognizable tropes of present-day human society, extrapolated into as-yet undreamed-of forms. Noel Redding, of the Jimi

Hendrix Experience, in a 1969 interview with *Circus* magazine (quoted in Wenders' (1991:28-29) review) captures the essence of Wenders' view of SF. Redding recalls:

I never thought I'd go to America. I remember thinking in the plane coming across the Atlantic about the biggest country in the world - and then we landed in New York. I thought to myself, 'Cops and robbers, cowboys and skyscrapers, hot dogs and all this - it's going to be great, isn't it?' And I get off the plane and there's some geezer with a cowboy hat on, he's about 40, with a big stomach, Bermuda shorts, and those socks - and HE laughed at ME!

(Wenders, 1991:28-29)

For Wenders SF takes on a mythographic function. In a more telling comment, made earlier in that same interview, Redding suggests, 'But America's very uniform, it's like Nazi Germany, except that it's modern'. Viewed through Wenders' eyes, SF becomes less of a literary genre and more of a literary machine for organizing a world-view. For Wenders SF becomes a technique for organizing information around *Easy Rider*. Wenders does not offer an ordinary kind of review, that would encourage viewing or avoiding the film. Instead his review is a filmmaker's view of both *Easy Rider* and the mass of media generated by the film. Wenders offers us his thoughts inter-spliced with song lyrics and interviews with songwriters, performers and filmmakers. Making an openly political statement, *Easy Rider* producer Peter Fonda gives the origin of the film's title in a *Rolling Stone* interview,

'Easy rider' is a Southern term for a whore's old man, not a pimp, but the dude who lives with a chick. Because he's got the easy ride. Well, that's what happened to America, man. Liberty's become a whore, and we're all taking an easy ride.

(Wenders, 1991:28)

Wenders (1991:29) suggests beauty as the true political idyll of the film.

Easy Rider isn't a political film because it shows Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper dealing in cocaine at the beginning, or because it shows them getting thrown in jail for *nothing*, being *simply* shot down, or because it shows Jack Nicholson being shot by vigilantes, or how a sheriff is allowed to behave. It is political because it is beautiful: because the country that the two huge motor-bikes drive through is beautiful; because the images that the film country are beautiful and peaceful; because the music you hear in the film is beautiful; because Peter Fonda moves in a beautiful way; because you can see that Dennis Hopper is not only acting, but that he is also in the process of making a film; between Los Angeles and New Orleans.

(Wenders, 1991:29)

For Wenders beauty is interchangeable with the political, and both are rooted in SF. The political (or beauty) is allegorical for an everyday world, viewed in a non-ordinary way. Beauty (the political) and SF both are aggregates; pieces-of-things re-communicated in 'unworldly', unusual ways.

In a similar vein, Fukuyama (2002) provides a meditation on the cyclicity of SF and the political. He perceived a danger posed to political stability by an emerging technology first described in a SF novel. In *Our Posthuman Future*, Fukuyama (2002:3) delineates the contiguity of the political from SF. 'The two books [George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*] were far more prescient than anyone realized at the time, because they centered on two different technologies that would in fact emerge and shape the world over the next two generations', Fukuyama writes. Citing Huber, Fukuyama suggests *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* telescreen, has primarily been realized through the internet and the home PC. He comments (2002:4), '...instead of becoming an instrument of centralization and tyranny, it led to just the opposite: the democratization of access to information and the decentralization of politics'. Fukuyama (2002:5) concludes that biotechnologies described in Huxley's novel pose a genuine threat. Huxley presents an insidious twist; the populace welcome their oppression viewing biochemical regulation of their neurophysiology as the norm. With the rise of biotechnology (technologies that range from genetic manipulation to neuropharmacology) the institutions of democracy are under subtle but credible threat. Who is to say that the ideals of democracy and multiculturalism would hold true were it the case that an actually superior breed of human, superior at a genetic level, were engineered?, asks Fukuyama. Would democratic institutions themselves outlast this coming revolution in biotechnology?

Fukuyama (2002:10) ponders,

What should we do in response to biotechnology that in the future will mix great potential benefits with threats that are either physical and overt or spiritual and subtle? The answer is obvious: *We should use the power of the state to regulate it.*

(Fukuyama, 2002:10)

Like Wenders, Fukuyama conceives of politics and SF as different phases on the same cycle. Fukuyama (2002:3) however emphasizes the personal as mitigating SF and the political.

For any person growing up as I did in the middle decades of the twentieth century, the future and its terrifying possibilities were defined by two books...

(Fukuyama, 2002:3)

Later (Fukuyama, 2002:5),

Of the nightmares evoked by these two books, *Brave New World's* always struck me as more subtle and more challenging...

In *Brave New World* by contrast, the evil is not so obvious because no one is hurt

(Fukuyama, 2002:5)

With 'Space Case', Spain (2002:90 - 1) offers one further thesis on the cyclicity of SF and the political. 'Space Case' muses on the fluency with which SF has been transposed into the political. Spain writes, 'From the funny business around the Kennedy assassination to the homosexuality and corruption of J. Edgar Hoover to the movie star president, recent history sounds like a very bizarre science-fiction story... If, in the fifties, I had told my dad what would happen in the last half of the 20th century, he would really have thought I was nuts'.

Using the resources of comics (specifically the shading technique known as hatching) Spain develops a drama of textures. 'Space Case' foreshadows a special relationship between the narrator and his mother. This relationship is marked visually by hatching that runs diagonally right to left⁸. The visual code prefigures the later line, 'Eventually my mom got into science fiction herself...'



old, made, new...

⁸ Pictured on the narrator's jeans and his mother's sweater in the first panel, this hatching is repeated on the sleeve of his mother's sweater cropped in the second panel.

SF emerges as a literary technology. SF is not the new, but the already recognizable, deployed in an unfamiliar arrangement. Wenders' 'cut-up' method of review, Spain's 'drama of textures' or Fukuyama's personal as the interlocutor between the political and SF, point to SF as a technique (genre) for arranging information. SF is a praxis, similar in scope to the theoretical practice of the cinema, as suggested by Deleuze (2005:268). 'A theory of cinema is not "about" cinema, but about the concepts that cinema gives rise to', writes Deleuze, 'The great cinema authors are like the great painters or the great musicians: it is they who talk best about what they do. But, in talking, they become something else, they become philosophers or theoreticians...'. Similarly SF is a literary practice that gives rise to a theoretical practice. SF is 'about' the arrangement of the ordinary in a way that is not easily recognizable. It is this arrangement that produces a cyclicity between the literary and the political.

The idea of a praxis that cycles between literature and the political dates back to the eighteenth century. In 1725 Giambattista Vico proposed a similar cyclicity in his book *the New Science*. He considers the state of philosophy post the work of Galileo and Newton. Vico's (1999) primary task is to achieve for the 'world of nations' what such thinkers as Galileo and Newton achieved for the natural world. His first conceptual project divides the natural world (which he understood as God-made) from the world fabricated by the human. As Celia Miller (1993:12) indicates, Vico argued for the impossibility of knowing the precise nature of the natural world. For Vico this would require knowing the mind of its creator. Yet the 'world of nations' (the world fabricated by the human) could easily be understood. Vico's premise was that by studying modifications in culture, and tracing back a historical path, a scholar could unearth the truth of the human world. Miller herself suggests, 'Vico's argument has nothing to do with the creation or reproduction of mankind. It is the social institutions created by man, the "world of nations", which was his concern. For in this sense, man made the "world of nations" (*il mondo delle nazioni*): society and government'. Miller (1993:12) continues,

...Vico proclaimed that it was human history and not the sciences of which we could hope to have complete comprehension. *Verum* (truth), *factum* (all human artifacts - law, marriage and society, but not religion, according to Vico), and *certum* (certainty; knowledge which comes only from creating something) were the three key terms in his argument. That *verum* was convertible [interchangeable] with *factum* indicated that human creations could be accepted as both

truthful and legitimate. No such guarantee or relationship could ever be hoped for in the study of nature, which God created and thus only He could comprehend fully.

(Miller, 1993:12)

In suggesting *verum ipsum factum* (what is made, is true) as motto for his thought, Vico suggests an economy of exchange between truth and the fabricated. This cyclicity between the fabricated and the true in Vico correlates with the cyclicity between theory and practice in Deleuze and the cyclicity of the literary and the political in SF.

Deleuze, expounds on the convertibility between theory and practice in conversation with Foucault. Deleuze suggests (Foucault & Deleuze, 1988:205)

Possibly we're in the process of experiencing a new relationship between theory and practice...

The relationship which holds in the application of a theory is never one of resemblance. Moreover, from the moment a theory moves into its proper domain, it begins to encounter obstacles, walls, and blockages which require its relay by another type of discourse...

Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall...

A theorising intellectual, for us, is no longer a subject, a representing or representative consciousness. Those who act and struggle are no longer represented, either by a group or a union that appropriates the right to stand as their conscience. Who speaks and acts? It is always a multiplicity, even within the person who speaks and acts...

Representation no longer exists; there's only action - theoretical action and practical action which serve as relays and form networks.

(Foucault & Deleuze, 1988:205)

Deleuze's convertibility between theory and practice bears a resemblance to Vico's cycle of truth and fabrication. Vico's writings direct the cycle of truth and fabrication towards penetrating the past. Hence Vico utilizes *verum ipsum factum* to excavate filiations of the old with the new, as both are subordinate to the made. *Verum ipsum factum* therefore produces a secondary cycle of 'old-made-new'. For Vico the 'made' is contiguous with both the 'old' and the 'new'. Following on from there, the 'new' is simply the 'old' reconstituted in a different historical context. Vico thus presents a materialism that unifies fabricated objects (tools, implements, statues, et cetera) with abstract concepts (language and social institutions as they form part of the 'world of nations'). It is this unification of the

'old' and the 'new' through the 'made', that correlates with the principle of cartooning.

Vico's use of the underlying principles of cartooning can be seen clearly in his frontispiece to the 1744 edition, *the New Science*. Vico (1999: xxxvi) includes the following tableau.



To introduce both the frontispiece and the work itself, he (Vico, 1999:1) writes in the 'Idea of the Work',

Before reading my work, you may use this tableau to form an idea of my New Science. And after reading it, that this tableau aids your imagination in retaining my work in your memory.

(Vico, 1999:1)

In delineating the exact meaning of each part and each specific spatial relation Vico offers the tableau as mnemonic. Moreover he offers the tableau as a highly rigorous sign-system that relies on communicating itself as both word and image. In essence Vico relies on the mechanism of comics as identified by McCloud (1993:4).

ad astra per aspera

The stars, by a rough road.

Verum ipsum factum, comes to be used as a literary technology for analyzing and comprehending the 'world of nations'. With its use, Vico hopes to accurately articulate the past. This is effected through analysis of new social forms' transformations from older ones. Like Foucault and McCloud, Vico hopes to discover an originary moment; a 'birth of' human civilization. The object of study for Vico is therefore the transmogrifications of

social institutions (language, literature, law, et cetera) between historical contexts. As Vico (1999:22) himself suggests,

The second language used heroic emblems - such as similes comparisons, images, metaphors and descriptions of nature - as the principal lexicon of its heroic language, which was spoken in an age when heroes ruled.

(Vico, 1999:22)

Adopting Vico's method, identifying the originary moment of SF (as a means of finding an originary moment of comics) becomes less a question of tabulating the earliest publications of SF and more a question identifying those moments that form a popular record of science. SF in a sense useful to a Vican interrogation would be rendered as the 'fictions' of 'science', the folklore of scientific discovery. Thus Newton's Theory of Gravitation is significantly less important than Newton seeing the moon behind the apple remain aloft while an apple falls.

Biagioli (1990:239) emphasizes the 'heroic' understanding Galileo had of his own position with respect to his patron house of the Medici.

Knowing that gold and silver medals were usually struck to commemorate major dynastic events, in September 1608 Galileo wrote Cosimo's mother, the Grand Duchess Christina to propose an emblem for a medal. The letter is a concise summary of Medici dynastic ideology and presents a quite subtle "scientific" metaphor for the "naturalness" of the Medici rule.

(Biagioli, 1990:239)

In his letter Galileo explains that the 'body', the image, of the emblem should be made of lodestone with some pieces of iron around it. The 'soul' or motto, should read 'Love produces power'. Naturally the lodestone would attract the iron pieces. Biagioli (1990:240) continues,

Galileo recognized the ambiguity of representations of the Medici's absolute rule that stressed its "naturalness" and the acquiescence of its subjects while also emphasizing its power and its lack of tolerance for deviant behavior; in the sympathetic attraction between lodestone and the small pieces of iron he found a fine metaphor for such a political scenario. According to Galileo's image, the pieces of iron (the subjects) seemed to be voluntarily driven up (elevated) to the lodestone (the Medici power), for its force was not felt by other materials. They wanted to be attracted. At the same time such an uplifting attraction was powerful and ultimately inevitable. It was based on love but manifested itself as power.

(Biagioli, 1990:240)

Here emblem follows the underlying principle of comics since it can only be understood once word and image are considered together. Moreover, Biagioli identifies in Galileo the use of an 'heroic' language of emblems as identified by Vico. Daston (1984:302) suggests,

Galileo subscribed to a view of the imagination, derived largely from Aristotelian sources, that severely restricted his use of analogy. While Galileo was a master of the expository analogy - decking out new scientific ideas in similitudes, examples and diagrams in order to reach an audience beyond the university lecture hall - he employed explanatory analogies only rarely, and then with evident reluctance.

(Daston, 1984:302)

Galileo's view of the imagination differing from Aristotle's is produced by Daston as a literary *factum*. This verifiable, fabricated Vican truth prepares for a critical appreciation (an 'heroic' appreciation in Vican terms) of Galileo's life. The moment experienced by Galileo, circa 1583, in the Pisa cathedral takes on an 'heroic' or emblematic significance. Observing the period of a swinging chandelier, Galileo used his pulse to measure the period of the swing. It was this moment that allowed him to distil the laws of pendulum motion.

Similarly the intellectual life of Albert Einstein is subject to emblemizing. Before proposing the groundbreaking Theory of Specific Relativity in 1905, Einstein formalized a thought experiment involving travel at the speed of light. This thought experiment would allow Einstein to formulate the Theory of Specific Relativity. Einstein pondered on his reflection in a mirror. Would he, traveling at lightspeed, be able to see his own reflection? The problem is that light traveling from the mirror in a 'reverse' direction should not reach the viewer's eye, traveling in a 'forward' direction at the same speed. The velocities of lightspeed and minus lightspeed should negate each other, producing a zero-sum system. The reflection should therefore be invisible. Disagreeing with the common sense view, Einstein theorized that the reflection should in fact be visible. He based his argument on Galileo's law of motion that states that motion at a uniform velocity is imperceptible, and indistinguishable from rest. Given that displacement (distance traveled) is the product of velocity and time, Einstein's insight allowed him to describe time correctly. Rather than displacement or velocity, is subjective or in Einstein's own words, 'relative'.

system/flows

These episodes from Galileo's and Einstein's lives, allow for an emergence of SF. This is properly the SF alluded to by Wenders, Fukuyama and Spain. It is a SF reliant on the Vican principle of convertibility and the Deleuzean notion of the convertibility of theory and practice through a system of relays. With the episodes from Galileo's and Einstein's lives, convertibility is rendered visually as a system of flows. SF as a System of Flows. With Galileo, the flow of his pulse is used to measure the flow of the chandelier. With Einstein the system becomes even more significant since it contains contradictory flows; light moving away from the pilot's eye and light moving rushing towards it.

Once perceived of as a system of flows, SF becomes ubiquitous appearing even in classical mythology. As with the Greek myth of Theseus, the Minotaur already slaughtered, the hero retraces his path to the Labyrinth's mouth using Ariadne's thread. The forward flow of narrative is reversed upon itself. In *Ariadne's Clue*, Stevens (2001:3) states,

Our word 'clue' is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *clew*, meaning 'a ball of thread'. The most famous ball of thread in Western culture belonged to Ariadne, the beautiful daughter of King Minos of Crete, who fell in love with Theseus when he arrived from Athens as part of the tribute of youths and maidens sent to the great Labyrinth of Knossos to be sacrificed to the Minotaur. Theseus promised to marry Ariadne if she helped him to kill the Minotaur and escape. Accordingly she gave him her clue of thread to be paid out as he entered the Labyrinth so that, once he dispatched the Minotaur, he could find his way out again. The deed done, Theseus carried her off to Naxos, where he abandoned her, and she eventually married Dionysus...

The symbolism both of the thread and the labyrinth gives expression to the notion of fate guiding the passage through life, but nowhere more completely than in Greek myth and legend. The distaff is an attribute of Clotho, the youngest of the Three Fates: Clotho prepares the thread of life, which Lachesis spins, and Atropos cuts off. The thread and the labyrinth come together in the symbolism of the spider's web - a mandala reconciling the opposites of creation and destruction, with its creator sitting at the centre.

(Stevens, 2001:3)

Stevens (2001:3) identifies the sociocultural flows of the thread and the labyrinth and the organizing system of the myth which arranges these flows. The 'heroic' tale of Ariadne and Theseus is presented as SF.

The Japanese myth in the Shinto tradition seems uncannily to foreshadow Einstein's thought-experiment of travel at lightspeed. Campbell (1993:210 - 12) writes of a trick played on Amaterasu, the sun, by her storm-god brother, Sunsanowo. After Amaterasu's weaving-hall is disrupted by Sunsanowo, she retreats to a cave. After the disarray

caused by the sun's absence, in both the heavenly and mortal realms, the eight million deities assemble to formulate a plan to lure the sun from the cave. The deity Thought-Includer devises a plan that requires an eight-foot long mirror, tied between two trees. The young goddess, Uzume, dances boisterously and the Sun's curiosity forces her to peek outside. The Sun, perturbed that there could be joy in her absence, asks about the reason for celebration. Uzume respectfully indicates that an even greater god than Amaterasu has made her appearance. Campbell (1993:211) continues,

While she was thus speaking, two of the divinities pushed forward the mirror and respectfully showed it to the sun-goddess, Amaterasu; whereupon she, more and more astonished, gradually came from the door and gazed upon it. A powerful god took her august hand and drew her out; whereupon another stretched a rope of straw (called the *shimenawa*) behind her, across the entrance, saying: "Thou must not go back further than this!" Thereupon both the plain of high heaven and the central land of reed plains again were light. The sun may now retreat, for a time, every night - as does life itself, in refreshing sleep; but by the august *shimenawa* she is prevented from disappearing completely.

(Campbell, 1993:211)

The Shinto tradition uses trauma and a mirror to organize the flow of the Sun, the flow of the mortal world, and the divine world to explain the diurnal/nocturnal cycle.

The SF appears even in high modernism, in Joyce's (1992) *Ulysses*. In the thirteenth chapter, corresponding to the 'Nausicaa' book in Homer's epic, Leopold Bloom, sometime protagonist of the novel, finds himself on the shore of Sandymount Strand. Sullen after a recent altercation at Kiernan's pub and at his wife's infidelity, Bloom finally achieves a sexual release (albeit auto-erotic) that he unconsciously sought all day. On Sandymount Strand he masturbates at the sight of Gerty MacDowell washing her family linens in Dublin Bay. In the aftermath of the act, he writes with a stick in the sand, 'I am a', without completing the sentence.

More than simply the flow of sperm and the flow of language, or the flow the body (both as writing and masturbation) and the flow of language (as the imaginative revisualization of Gerty and the words written in the sand), Joyce writes this chapter as a System of two Flows. Two literary styles come to blows in the 'Nausicaa' halving the chapter almost perfectly. Gerty MacDowell's observations of the situation are rendered in the rich fantastical language of romance novelettes, while Bloom makes use of a minimalist utilitarian language. In annotations to *Ulysses* Kiberd (1992:1083) comments,

The chapter is divided almost equally between her 'namby-pamby jammy marmalady drawersy style' as Joyce dubbed it and Bloom's honest, if disillusioned, demetaphorization of those moments.

(Joyce & Kiberd (ed.), 1992:1083)

Brivic (1990:737) argues for a kind of convertibility between Joyce's writing and the thought of French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan. He writes,

What protagonists of James Joyce's *Ulysses* perceive, in fiction as in fact, is not a field of things, but of words. Stephen Dedalus and Leopold and Molly Bloom are each focused on a tissue of signs, indirect linguistic indicators that suggest possible concealed realities the characters seek. In recognizing this, Joyce assumes Ferdinand de Saussure's principle that the signifier is sundered from what it stands for, and he builds on this assumption to anticipate an idea developed in related ways by Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida: that what we see are signifiers, not signifieds...

The veil of signs that recurs as an image of textuality throughout *Ulysses* is equated with all that can be seen, and it seems to conceal what is desired. Its structure is therefore parallel to the field of perception in Lacan, who argues in his *Four Fundamental Concepts* that vision cannot see without aiming at an object of desire that is never really visible.

(Brivic, 1990:737)

In Deleuzean terms, Brivic casts Lacan in the role of theorist to Joyce's practitioner. Brivic argues for language itself as a kind of system of flows (SF) wherein flows of meaning and flows of objects in the world at large are coordinated; to the point where, for users of language, it is no longer possible to engage with the world of objects. Furthermore, Brivic reemphasizes the place of desire as a motivating force. Desire fuels language to both illuminate and conceal the world of objects, a paradoxical task performed by the ego.

money for nothing

SF appears once more in the history of medieval commerce and the development of the modern number system. Gandz (1931) offers not one but two Arabian numeral systems which impact on our modern numeral system. He distinguishes between Ghubar or western numerals (used predominantly in Spain and North Africa) and classical or eastern Arabian numerals inherited from Hindu culture. The notations (Gandz, 1931:394), noticeably variant, appear as:

Hindu	१	२	३	४	०	५	६	७	८	९
Ghubār	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Modern	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

Furthermore, Gandz posits two separate theories for the origin of Ghubar numerals. According to the first, the earliest use of Ghubar (though without a zero) can be traced to a Latin manuscript of 976 CE. Ghubar numerals thus arrive in Europe with Arab expansion through North Africa. Woepcke posits a second theory that Ghubar numerals were present in Spain prior to the arrival of Arab culture. He surmises that the presence of these numerals comes as a result of various diasporas of the neo-Pythagoreans who themselves came into contact with Hindu culture. According to Gandz, Woepcke's theory is sound since it explains discrepancy in notations. Moreover Gandz recalls that it was customary for Arab colonies to adopt numeral systems from conquered territories. He cites the adoption of Greek numerals in Damascus and Syria and Coptic numerals in Egypt as examples of this latter point.

Gandz continues by researching the etymology of the words used to describe the numeral-systems in various languages. He (Gandz, 1931:400) offers,

On the other hand, we find also that the term knots, in Arabic *'uqūd* and in Latin *articuli*, does refer to the numerals, but only to a certain class of numerals, that is, to the tens or to the higher decimal classes in general, as distinguished from the units or digits.

(Gandz, 1931:400)

Translating al-Biruni Gandz (1931:403) offers,

There is one thing, on which all races are agreed in their system of numeration, and this is the decimal proportion in which all its <<knots>> stand to each other. So that in each order the one is the tenth part of the following and the tenfold of the preceding.

(Gandz, 1931:403)

Gandz confirms what al-Biruni argues; that adjacent numbers follow on from each other by gain, each tenfold of the preceding.

The world in which the use of Arabic numerals, Ghubar or classical, was popularized was a world of protracted conflict. This was a world of Crusade, where Europe and the Mid-East came both into conflict, but also into and cultural exchange. This political reality brought about a new relationship between power, literature and the

European view of history. As Nichols (1986:21) identifies the literary activity of crusade preaching fulfilling a vital role in establishing a European worldview:

To displace Saladin ultimately requires warfare, but first the monologic authority, the universal normativity of Latin Christendom must be reaffirmed. Crusade preaching is not just a device for recruiting armed forces, then, but a socioreligious act reasserting the power of monologic discourse.

(Nichols, 1986:21)

Nichols offers this world of Crusade as a SF. He (Nichols, 1986:23) further suggests,

Precisely because they critique a historical present characterized by fissionary forces of linguistic heterogeneity, accounts of the preaching of crusade offer important contemporary testimony to the pragmatics of language as mediator of the conflict between idealized norms and perceptions of practical reality. Not only do such accounts constitute a fertile ground for studying the mediations of language and power, but they provide signal testimony, in this formative period of medieval literary history, to the consciousness of the conflicting forces of cultural expression that threatened to destroy the concept of a harmonious language model. The threat was real for a culture dependent on a language model that, like Christ, or the king, "its feet on earth and its head in heaven." For the language model mediated the transcendent world order, on which, at least in theory, the medieval social order depended. And it did so hierarchically by predicating a multiplicity of voces at the terrestrial level, dominated and harmonized by the One transcendent Voice.

(Nichols, 1986:23)

Lieber (1968:233) offers an equally incisive view of the cultural filiations between Europe and Araby. He argues for a Vican convertibility between Arab and European banking practices. He (Lieber, 1968:233) writes,

The bill of exchange of medieval Europe, on the other hand, appears to owe a great deal to the Muslim world. The term *aval* is clearly derived from the Arabic *hawala* another name for the *suftaja*, which, as already mentioned, was often a bill of exchange. The Islamic *hawala* did not necessarily contain an exchange element, since the interest was defined as a payment for avoiding transport risks. The medieval European merchant had, however, to conform with the Church's doctrine on usury. He therefore went a step further and introduced the element of foreign exchange, which served to camouflage the payment of interest. This made the exchange contract an integral part of the medieval European bill of exchange; a fact which lead Usher to contend that the mercantile bill of exchange, which first appeared in Europe in the fourteenth century, was a distinctly new instrument of commerce.

(Lieber, 1968:233)

The vivid medieval world of crusade and cultural convertibility creates a paradox in our own time. As Gandz (1931:403) recalls in al-Biruni, the Arabic numeral system (Ghubar more likely than classical) was responsible for counting in factors of ten, that each subsequent digit in a written number be tenfold the preceding and one tenth the following digits. Were this the case, the notation, 123 should properly refer to the number three-hundred and twenty-one, as the units should appear first, followed by the tens, followed by the hundreds. But in a notation system borrowed directly from Arab culture, where script begins at the right-hand rather than left-hand margin, the numeral 123 refers to one-hundred and twenty-three. From a Western perspective the numeral appears in reverse. A graphic representation of this paradox, the numberline, recalls a system of flows similar to Einstein's lightspeed experiment; 'backwards' within 'forwards'. As numbers increase in magnitude from left to right, within themselves they increase in magnitude from right to left. 433 being greater in magnitude than 334.

As SF the numberline includes within it not simply flows and counter-flows of magnitude, but also traces of cultural flow and counter-flow. Although this cultural remains largely repressed in the modern world, the numberline recalls a moment when filiations between East and West was both unclear and uncertain. Unsure as to either commerce or conflict, the era of the Crusades is no longer indelibly linked with its cultural product, the numberline. The numberline itself, stands as a kind of origin-less *factum*, where the cultural crucible that has birthed it has long been forgotten. And the numberline's association with that cultural crucible has long since receded. The numberline begins therefore to take on the guise of a universal technology, an heirloom of all of humankind. Its universal nature is the product of its utility, the ease of use and convenience it provides. A decimal number system is both easy to use and intuitive. As such it almost by necessity fails to recall a specific cultural context.

Japanese comics (manga) have become, through a series of resemblances, correlate with the cultural space of the numberline. This is evidenced both in terms of structure and as a system of cultural flows. Manga stands as a mainstay of western comic culture. Gravett (2004: ??) attributes the popularity of manga in western markets to the Meiji-era ethic of *oitsuke! oikose!* (catch up! surpass!). Throughout the 1990s, manga has been digitally altered to better appeal to western market, allowing the reader to approach from left to right, top to bottom. Recently, manga has been reprinted with the only

alteration being the English text, the right-to-left flow of the original Japanese being maintained. Eisner (1995:41) declares that there is indeed a correct way to read a comic panel.

In sequential art the artist must, from the outset, secure control of the reader's attention and dictate the sequence in which the reader will follow the narrative...

The (western culture) reader is trained to read each page independently from left to right, top to bottom. Panel arrangements on the page assume this.

This, ideally, is the normal flow if the reader's eye. In practice, however, this discipline is not absolute. The viewer will often glance at the last panel first. Nevertheless, the reader finally must return to the conventional pattern.

(Eisner, 1995:41)



a classic style page layout, the 'conventional pattern' as Eisner suggests, runs similar to the western 'conventional pattern', from left to right



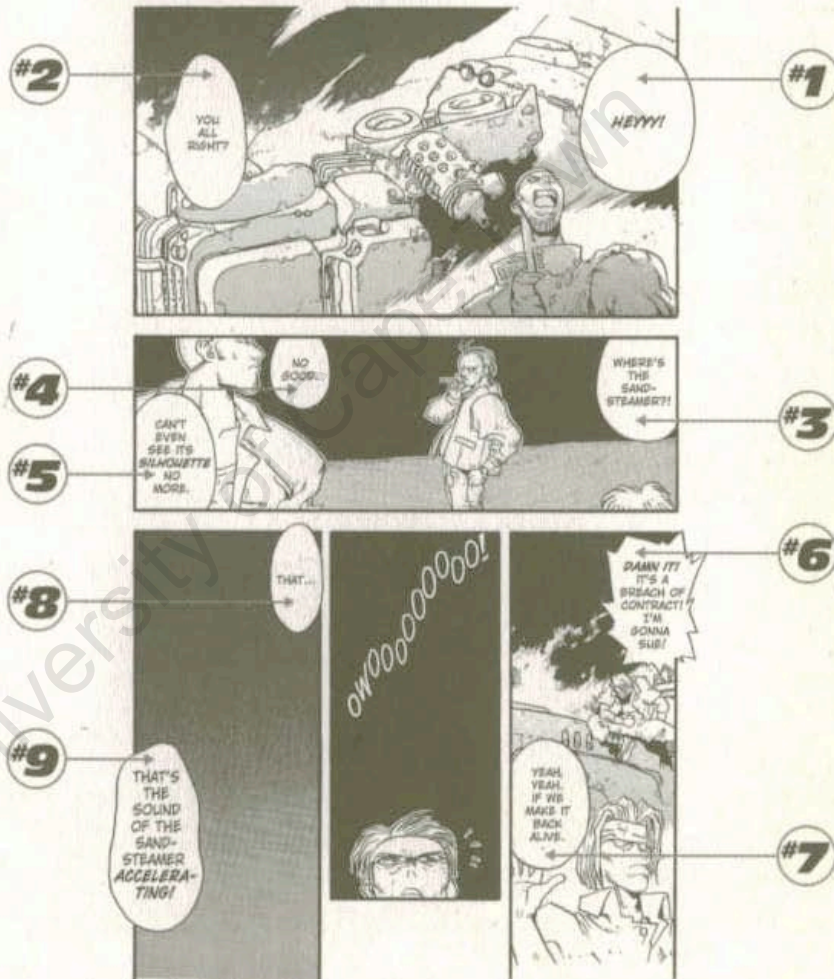
an example of modern manga, maintaining the Japanese 'conventional pattern', the conversation in the second panel expresses Eisner's idea that the sequential artist should 'secure control of the reader's attention and dictate the sequence in which the reader will follow the narrative ...', hence the panel is read right to left, and the characters look to page left



STOP

This is the back of the book!

This manga collection is translated into English but oriented in right-to-left reading format at the creator's request, maintaining the artwork's visual orientation as originally published in Japan. If you've never read manga in this way before, take a look at the diagram below to give yourself an idea of how to go about it. Basically, you'll be starting in the upper right corner and will read each balloon and panel moving right to left. It may take some getting used to, but you should get the hang of it very quickly. Have fun!



modern-day manga often save the last page of the book (the first recto page when reading the book left to right) for a similar warning [from Trigun #1]

Gravett (2004:8) correlates the birth of manga to the cultural crucible that produced the numberline and the Crusades. He writes,

In 1951, the Japanese gave General Douglas MacArthur a hero's farewell. After nearly six years overseeing the American occupation and post-war reconstruction of Japan, MacArthur had been abruptly recalled after disagreeing with President Truman over US military policy towards the Chinese in the Korean War. Japanese admiration for MacArthur evaporated overnight, when, during his subsequent three-day testimony to the Senate, he described the Japanese patronizingly as being 'like a boy of twelve'. In fact, he had intended to express his regard for the Japanese 'susceptib[ility] to following new models, new ideas', and therefore to declare them more trustworthy than the Germans. But his unfortunate and clumsy phraseology provided a rude awakening for the Japanese, who interpreted what was well-meant as an insult. Nevertheless, MacArthur's phrase was very revealing of how the West now saw them: childlike, immature, very much the dependent junior to a paternalistic, controlling America.

(Gravett, 2004:8)

As in medieval Europe there is more than a single colorization possible of the postwar relationship between America and Japan. Moreover, from the above scans, modern manga seems to evoke both the numberline and Einstein's mirror. A reverse flow, within a greater forward flow; English from left-to-right within image from right-to-left. A system of flows. Like the numberline, manga appears as the product of a cultural context that has already receded from the popular imagination. Yet ever-increasingly, manga is growing dislodged from its originary cultural context.

Manga suggests the medium of comics itself begins to appear as technological product of a forgotten cultural conflict. Manga emphasizes the unity of comics as a single object (rather than a conjoining of word and image), comics as kind of multiplicity. An elegant description of comics as multiplicity (rather than word-image hybrid) exists in the history of American comics, with the work of Windsor McCay (2000). In his *magnum opus*, the *Little Nemo* stories, McCay describes the rise of comics as a multiplicity, without the crutch of additional storytelling. Beginning in 1905, McCay could almost be said to subscribe to the view of comics-as-hybrid. Each panel is neatly segregated from the next, all dialogue, all image-elements are neatly contained within the panel's frame. Associated with each panel, is a caption-box containing a neat and insular narration of events in within the panel. McCay's first conceptual shift, is to use the language narration in the caption-boxes to deliver an entirely different affect; to offer

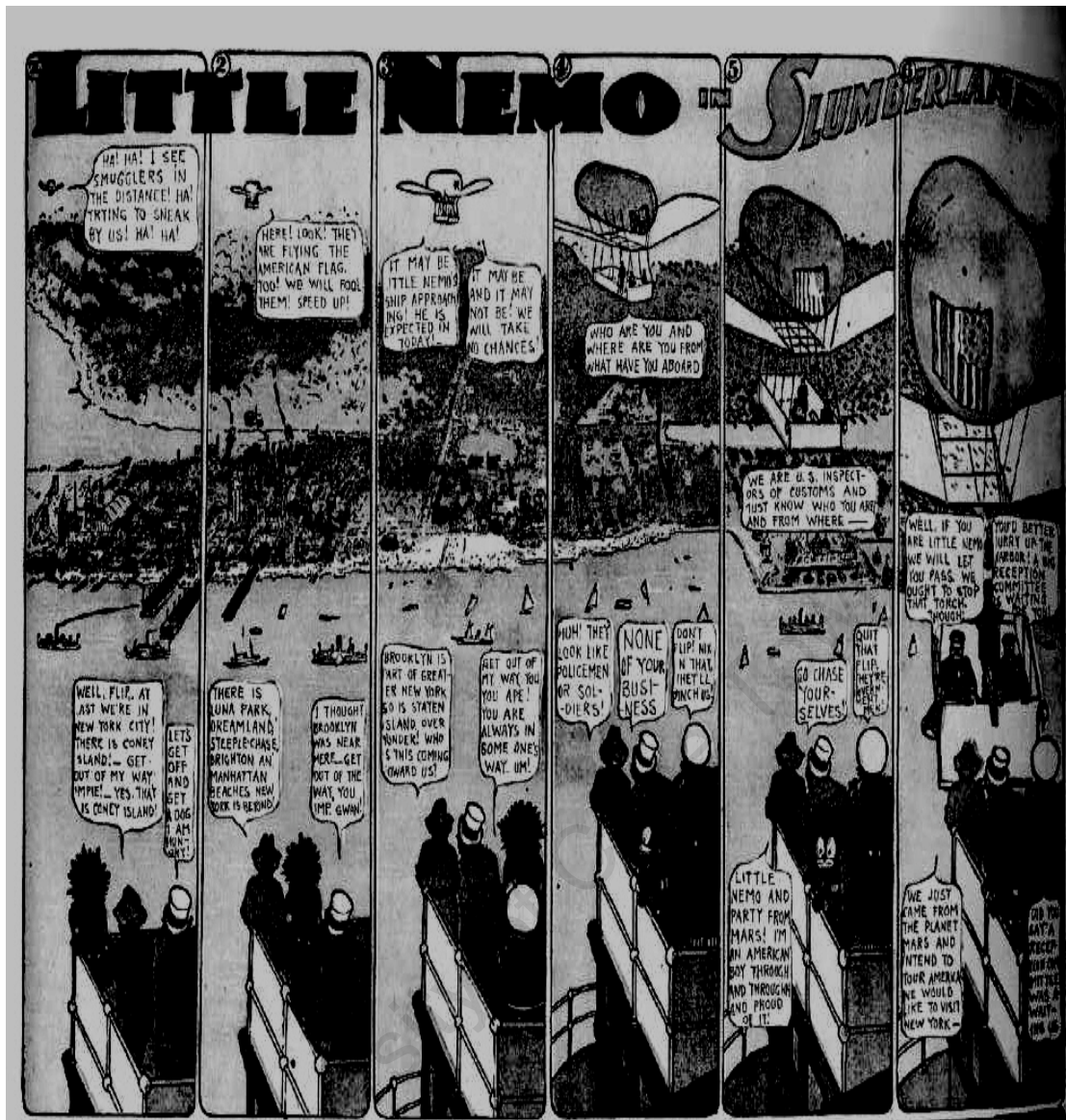
information not offered by the sequential flow of images, to tell a different story, as it were. McCay's next conceptual shift is to disengage language narration from image narration, and present two different narrations, allowing language narration to exceed the panels' frames. McCay finally dispenses with the use of the language narration altogether. In his last conceptual shift McCay introduces triptychs, continuous backgrounds wherein the characters are bound by the panels' frames, but the backgrounds are not.



a panel from McCay's *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, October 1905 shows a clear division between word and image.



three panels from February 1906 show McCay's growing disregard for panel frames dictating breaks in language narration.



McCay, November 1910, offers readers a continuous background or triptych.

What McCay evolves is not so much a libidinal flow of childhood desire (peppered with the same themes as Baum and Freud) together with a political flow (the shifting hierarchical nature of Slumberland society as commentary on a New World of eastern seaboard metropolises seeing the first stirrings of the destruction of European empires), but comics as the notion of a multiplicity, as the singular arising from the plural. *E Pluribus Unum*. The use of the triptych by McCay points to the singular multiplicity of comics.

Mike Allred (1993:N. pag.), pens a continuous background of his own.



One that appears at a significant moment in the tale. Frank Einstein and crusading scientist Dr. Flem, appearing in the rightmost panels, are joined by a government secret agent (a so-called Man In Black) and a Uraltic space-hero in tracking down the missing alien. Once the alien is discovered Frank sums up the adventure in the following way.



An ages-old explorer, alien to the civilization he finds himself in, speaks in the direct vernacular of each of his auditors, Allred's alien, as analog, for comics itself is uncanny. Allred's alien recalls McCloud's description of the continual resurgence of comics, time and again, appearing across various civilizational waves; the classical Egyptians, the Greeks, the Aztec, the Japanese, all of these cultures have used comics, sequential art, to one affect or another. However, it is exactly this vastness across human cultures that allows McCloud to bemoan the absence of any kind of history that

gives scope to comics' full and proper lineage. In this way, McCloud writes himself into a tradition of defenders of the medium of comics. Like Miller, Eisner, Moore, Ennis, Morrison, Gaiman, Spiegelman, Adams and a host of others both before and subsequent to him, McCloud offers a defense of the comics medium, and a justification for the academic pursuit of the object. It is this defense, a trope that arises time and again, comics writers and artists, already theoreticians as Deleuze might suggest of them, begin to counteract the proper historical organization of comics. Althusser formalizes his idea of a history as beginning with an epistemological break that defines a new scientific object. Prior to that break, there exists a series of ragtag experiments in other genre, in the histories of other objects that all tend towards, but fail, to define that new scientific object. He names these experiments a 'prehistory' of the new object. It is this that epistemological break that Foucault often refers to as 'the birth' of the object, most popularly he speaks of the birth of biopolitics, the clinic, he offers 'the birth of the prison' as an alternative title for *Discipline and Punish*. Like McCay who falsely, in the first instance, views comics as a hybrid, only to correct that impression by quickly offering a 'pure' comics, like Allred who offers, perhaps in answer to McCloud, comics as both alien integral to human civilization, so too, theoreticians who offer a defense of comics always emphasize the object's prehistory. If it needs to be explained, defended, if its study must be justified, we are always returned to the moment of comics 'birth'.

chapter three: origin story

schism

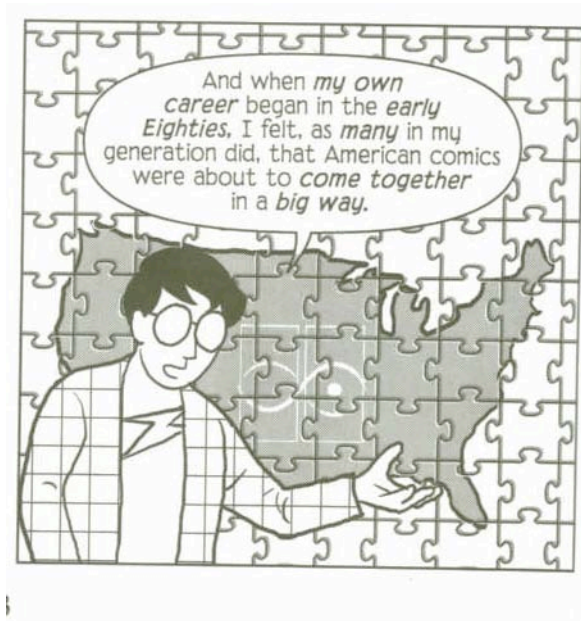
Where did comics 'begin'?

This chapter explores the question of the origin of comics less in an attempt to position comics within a historicity, and rather to articulate their exact nature. To complete this interrogation, this chapter relies on the 'origin story' as a conceptual template. The origin story that tells of a superhero or supervillain's 'birth' (the moment of their receiving their superpowers and growing to the awareness of using them). Such a story is always rooted in the character's narrative 'present' rather than their past, it is often an attempt to 'unearth' some element of the character's psychology that pertains to a point in the character's 'immediate' present. In a similar vein, this chapter attempts a pseudo-historical analysis while intending to pursue the question of comics' essential characteristics. The questions then, can easily be framed thus.

Are comics theoretically more productive when they are part of the mainstream of human life? Or are they more productive when involved in rarefied, 'laboratory' conditions of a boutique of popular culture? This chapter seeks to examine the variances between comics as mass medium, and comics as boutique of pop-culture.

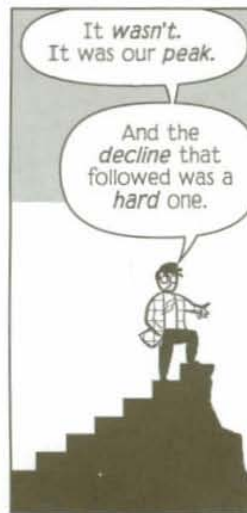
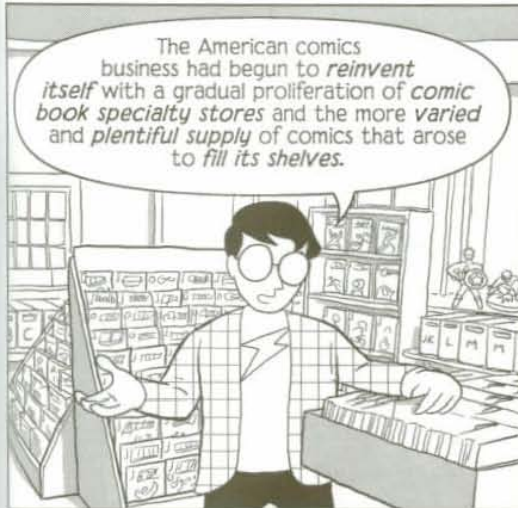
Contemporary thinkers involved in comics (as creators, cultural critics and scholars) have increasingly conformed to the idea that a 'schism' has irrupted in the history of the comics medium. Modern comics (produced during and after the mid-eighties), are conceptually different to the comics of yesteryear.

McCloud (2000:8 - 11) argues as follows,



(continued on following page)

University of Cape Town





Comics professionals didn't always *agree* on their *long-term goals* for the *art form*, or for the *industry*, but there was some *common ground* at least.

Ideas that few *objected* to, and many worked hard to *achieve*.

One: That comics can yield a body of work *worthy of study* and meaningfully represent the *life, times* and *world-view* of its author.

Comics as Literature

(continued on following page)

Two: That comics' formal *artistic properties* might be recognized as capable of achieving the *same heights* as forms like *painting or sculpture*.



Comics as Art

Three: That *comics creators* might gain more *control* over the *fate* of their creations and a *fair financial stake* in them.



Creators' Rights

Four: That the *business* of comics might be *reinvented* so as to better serve *producer and consumer* alike.



Industry Innovation

Five: That the *public perception* of comics could be improved to at least acknowledge the *potential* of the form and be prepared to *recognize progress* when it occurs.



Public Perception

Six: That *institutions of higher learning* and the *law* could overcome popular prejudice and treat comics with an *even hand*.



Institutional Scrutiny

Seven: That comics could *appeal to* more than just *boys* and be *made by* more than just *men*.



Gender Balance

Eight: That comics could *appeal to* and be *made by* more than just *straight white upper-middle class* males.



Minority Representation

Nine: That comics was capable of handling a wide *variety of genres*, not just *adolescent power fantasies*.



Diversity of Genre

But if McCloud (2000:8 - 11) identifies the era of the mid-eighties until the mid-nineties as the most significant era in modern comics history, Eisner (2001:284) identifies the roots of that era in the mid-

sixties. In his interview with Phil Seuling (Eisner, 2001:284),

Eisner: ...Then in the middle '60s, out of the socio-cultural turbulence, came a wave of nostalgia. Comics became a collectible item. Comics became a tool for protest literature. Fans emerged. Suddenly there existed a whole generation who had grown up reading comics as a literary staple. They became articulate. Conventions - or "comicons" - appeared. This had perhaps the most far-reaching impact on the field's evolution. It is to me a most important development in the history of the comic book marketplace. I believe it will be seen by historians as an underlying force that changed the direction of comic book content. There's no one [with whom] I can identify this phenomenon more than Phil Seuling.

(Eisner, 2001:284)

Earlier in *Shop Talk*, Neal Adams describes the introduction of social realism into superhero comics, a kind of superhero 'Kitchen Sink', in the 1970s. Adams (Eisner, 2001:27) identifies that, '(w)hen superheroes knock down buildings in deserted parts of the city, there's not much emotion in that. What [*Green Lantern/Green Arrow* writer] Denny [o' Neil] and I did, we took typical superhero situations and tried to place them more in the real world.' Adams describes how Green Arrow, after being shot with a crossbow bolt in the chest, fails to secure help from passers-by, even a police officer. Upon eventually dragging himself to an emergency room, he is asked by the nurse to complete insurance application before being attended to. Or how Green Lantern anticipates thanks for saving a man from what appears to be a mugging only to discover the 'victim' is a slumlord intent on demolishing an apartment block where the 'mugger' was the sole means of support for his invalid grandmother. With the grandson arrested, the grandmother is now indigent.

It is at this point in history (perhaps inaugurated with the establishment of the 'comicon'), that it becomes conceivable to speak of a "professionalization" of comics. Not so much in comics production itself, but within the cultural reception and cultural production of comics. At the point of the comicon, comics becomes "professionalized" in that there is an attendant body of knowledge required of one, before one can in any sense become a "specialist".

Discussing a similar point in history, artist Joe Kubert, (Eisner, 2001:228), identifies a shift in culture with the creation of fandom, and the 'professionalization' of comics interest:

Kubert: Well, I believe the biggest change to take place in the past two or three years is our audience. Our reader 30 or 40 years ago was a cross section of the general population. That is, most of our material was sold at newsstands and most

people had access to newsstands or candy stores. This kind of material we were doing then was of a general nature to satisfy and be of interest to that kind of audience. As you well know, our audience today is heavily fan-oriented. Not too long ago - within the last ten years - if you got a very vociferous letter from a fan and followed his suggestions, you knew that sales were going to drop; the fans were in the minority. So, whether fans liked or disliked material really bore very little relationship to what a general audience would accept.

(Eisner, 2001:228)

Phil Seuling and Joe Kubert present opposites ends of the debate around comics as popular culture. For Seuling comics is about the rise of its reception, the recognition that there are those for whom comics has always been a literary staple. Kubert recalls halcyon days of comics as part of mainstream culture, and views the specialization of a comics readership as the secession of the medium from that mainstream culture.

Thus a 'schism' emerges, one that partitions comics into discrete time-periods. Comics it seems, is articulated by very different cultural machineries across the schism. In the period before the 'professionalization' of comics, the production of comics was geared towards production of a mass medium. During this period comics storytelling was imbricated in and reflective of the social reality of day-to-day life. "Post" the schism, comics production is articulated as a 'specialist' field, one that requires a specific knowledge by the 'user'.

Comics' influential position, when it is a part of the mainstream of society, is something appreciated by Eisner in his discussion around Milt Caniff in *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative* (Eisner, 1996:132). Eisner writes,

There is a major structural difference between newspaper storytelling strips and comic books. In comic books, stories come to a definite conclusion, a tradition that began when the early comic books advertised that each story was complete. A book is free-standing whereas newspapers are connected to the pattern of daily life. In a daily continuity, therefore, the storyteller need only segue into the next adventure. Caniff understood that the story had to emulate the seamless flow of life's experiences and that the human adventure doesn't have neat endings. His work shows us how to tell a story that could make itself part of the reader's daily life.

(Eisner, 1996:132)

Eisner (1996:132) identifies not only a cultural exchange but also a difference in storytelling technique and methodology between newspaper strips and comicbooks. Unsurprisingly, it was Caniff, (Eisner, 2001:82) who as a young writer, who struggled in defining the form of

newspaper strip stories. Caniff (Eisner, 2001:82 - 83) outlines the problems he encountered when first beginning to write regular installments,

CANIFF: Well, when I first started, I'd been doing a daily strip for the Associated Press called *Dickie Dare*, which had no Sunday page so I didn't have to worry about that. It just jumped from Friday to Monday, and that was that. But once, into the Sunday page thing, which had to mesh, I was facing a problem with Mollie Slott, who at the time was the editor of the Chicago Tribune-New York News Syndicate. She said, "Why don't you ask some of the old boys who've been at it a while and see what they do?" So, I wouldn't have dreamed of asking Harold Gray or even Chester Gould, who was not all that new - he'd been around for a couple of years at this point - but, anyhow, I wrote a letter to Harold Gray and waited for the blow to fall of no answer or a negative answer or a nasty something. Instead I got a four-page, single-spaced typewritten letter from Harold saying various things, but this in particular: On Monday morning, any given Monday, I have to use at least one panel to recapitulate the weekend thing, which has all been in the Sunday page. And then another panel to conjecture on what I might have been able to do with whatever the dilemma is. And in the last panel you advance the strip; in other words, you use something you had not used in the Sunday page - maybe the first two incidents which you view from a different point of view. There's a fight in the Sunday page, for instance. You see that fight. On Monday two guys will say, "Hey, did you see those two guys fighting over there?" Well you've told exactly the same story over again from another point of view. And a perfectly legitimate is that, gimmick-wise, in the last panel you have the door open and in comes a man with the gun. Then you're off into Tuesday, you're off and running.

EISNER: Well, how much story did he say that leaves you? He leaves you one panel to develop your plot?

CANIFF: Again, it's more a matter of what your plot is *going* to be. In other words in the Raymond Chandler thing of the door opens and there's the man with the gun, that's all you need to start a mystery story.

EISNER: That's true, but -

CANIFF: Well, in effect, that's what he was doing here. The one panel is enough to suck you into tomorrow. Then tomorrow is all going to be new gravy. Now you may have needed the second panel just because [the reader] missed yesterday's Sunday paper. But surely you need that last panel because he doesn't know what's going on out there in the hall or what's going to happen when the doors opens and admits the man with the gun. The panel is usually enough to hold the audience and to advance the story. Then on Tuesday you can jump around any way you want to, assuming the reader is with you.

(Eisner, 2001: 82-83)

What Gray's letter distinguishes, what Caniff constructs from it, and what Eisner correctly apprehends is a set of ethical considerations that produce a regular form of

comics (the daily newspaper strip. What is at stake for comics as part of the mainstream of everyday society, is the idea that storytelling values almost necessarily dictate form. The 'schism' in comics' reception then, is not so much questions of fan-base, or values, or economies of meaning, but a question of storytelling itself. Eisner (1996:132) correctly identifies this shift in values (marked by the rise of the comicbook format), and labels this value-shift as a 'major structural difference' between the comicbook and the daily newspaper strip. The 'schism' in the readership and reception of comics is not a debate between generations, nor is it the secession of a fan-culture from the mainstream of society; it is a question of two very different kinds of storytelling, each produced by a very different sets of ethical values. Comics, as a medium, seems thus to produce itself as something entirely novel. For comics a change in values signals a change in form, rather than a change in content. The question, however, remains (one addressed later in this chapter) whether that change in form triggers a attendant change in function.

The schism that produces comics as either mainstream or boutique culture, simultaneously interrogates the medium as to its cultural validity. 'Can comics be seen as high art?', has always been at cultural value at stake in comics. The 1929 'wordless novel' *God's Man* (Ward, 1997) initiates this question that will eventually become a perennial trope in future comics scholarship.

What remains is a genealogy of comics reception predicated on two questions: does a particular work present itself as low-art or high, and does a particular work embrace or secede from the social mainstream? Comics can thus be one of four possible brands. A good example of mainstream comics viewed as low-art might be the daily newspaper strips that Eisner praises Caniff for, *Steve Canyon* or *Terry and the Pirates* or Chet Gould's *Dick Tracy* to name only a few. Alternatively, a good example of mainstream comics viewed as high-art might be Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, a tale told in harrowing detail of his father's survival of Nazi-era Germany and of the Auschwitz death-camp that entered the mainstream imagination in 1992 after winning the Pulitzer. 'Boutique' comics (comics that secede from the cultural mainstream), viewed as low-art might find an example in the comicbooks of the 1930s and 40s and subsequent. High-art 'boutique' comics might find an example in Frank Miller's *the Dark Knight Returns* or Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' *Watchmen* or Neil Gaiman's *the Sandman*. These are comics that have had a profound impact on the reception of comics, within the confines of comics readership. Albeit their importance is acknowledged, this

acknowledgement does not transcend the 'club' of comics readership itself. Alternatively, reading such comics might engender the new identity marker of becoming a 'comics fan'.

The schism therefore presents a comics rarefied through a range of cultural values, and synthesized by a number of cultural discourses. The schism between comics as high-art and comics as low-art, produces a discourse of either catharsis (insofar as low-art is deemed a part of the everyday mainstream of social life) or gestalt (in that comics is themselves a singular medium beyond the scope of word added to image). Moreover, the schism between 'mainstream' and 'boutique' comics similarly renders either a discourse of catharsis (for 'mainstream' comics) or gestalt (as the 'purity' of medium emerges with 'boutique' comics). Consequently, each of these discourses are identified with a set of formal decisions, and recognizable techniques that become apparent in the comics themselves. As Gray's reply to Caniff (Eisner, 2001:82 - 83) indicated, newspaper dailies are of a certain form, a form at variance with the comicbooks of the same era (Joe Simon and Jack Kirby's *Captain America*, for example) but also a form at variance with Gaiman's *Sandman* or Spiegelman's *Maus*.

To take these specific comics as example, the 'schism' comes to stand as a reasonably sophisticated system of cultural classification. 'Sophisticated' in that it responds appropriately to the impulses and appropriations of the cultural valences already established by comics and its reception. Understanding the history of comics production, and the history of comics reception, the 'schism' becomes a tool for correctly interpreting these phases of recent comics history. The schisms presents not simply the idea that comics is of different eras; it presents the notion that different eras produce wholly different comics.

Chet Gould's daily newspaper strip, *Dick Tracy*, first published in 1931, elegantly conforms to the ideals of comics as literary staple of mainstream culture. *Dick Tracy* is 'low art' in that it constructs itself almost purely as entertainment, and finds its niche within the mass medium of the daily newspaper. Gould produces a comic strip that embraces the day-to-day not only at the level of form, but of content also. Gould's daily cartoon strips conform to the genre of 'police procedural'. It is published was originally published as a strip in daily newspapers. It deals with the topic of crime as it affects the ordinary citizenry, and the police work meant to interdict such crime. *Dick Tracy* is blue collar fiction, for a blue collar audience. This point is emphasized by Max Allan Collins (2006, N. pag.) in his

Introduction to *the Complete Chester Gould's Dick Tracy, volume one*⁹.

In these pages, *Dick Tracy* performs ballistics tests, uses a lie detector, traces fingerprints and uses the teletype between his and other police stations.

(Gould & Collins, 2006:N. pag.)

Tracy is a "cop story" aimed at telling the story of how police detectives work in the modern city. The characters are not armchair detectives in the tradition of Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot who solve crime as an intellectual exercise.

Daily strips¹⁰ from 1932 (June 22 and 23) show Tracy and Pat Patton using an electric phonograph to gather evidence from a known felon.

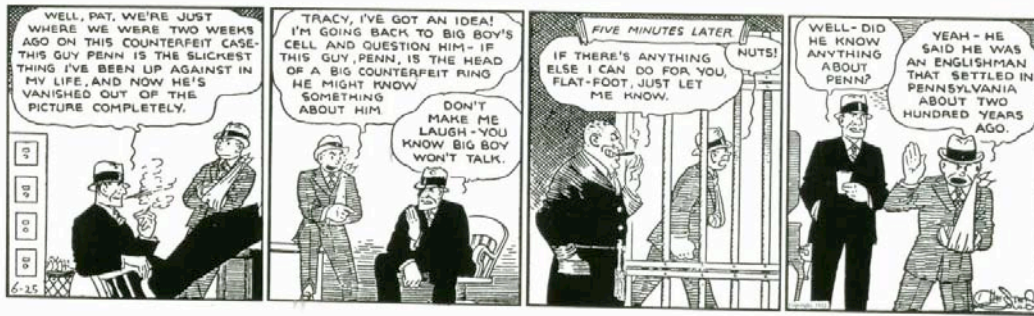


June 22nd and 23rd, 1932

The daily strip from the following Saturday (June 25, 1932) demonstrates how effectively *Dick Tracy* constructs itself as blue-collar entertainment. Here Gould dramatizes one of the small episodes of police-work. This strip presents a humorous encounter the police officer and the arrested criminal. This workplace humor would rarely find its way into more-established mainstream media.

⁹ IDW Publishing, 2006

¹⁰ from *the Complete Chester Gould's Dick Tracy vol. 1*.



June 24th and 25th, 1932

But, distinguished from the everyday, mainstream comics that Gray, Caniff, Eisner, Gould et. al. employ, is the comics of the comicbook. The schism between the comicbook and the daily comic strip arises from a comics that wants to assert itself as a singular cultural product. This comics of a cultural 'boutique' is a format that comes to be associated most closely the comicon.

The comicbook format of comics endures well through the 1960s, the 70s and on until first decade of the new century. A clear examples of this format can be found in *Turok* (Newman & Delbo, 1975:1 - 13) the Gold Key publication from the 1970s.

For *Turok* as for many other comicbooks, writers and artists were regularly exchanged, and writer-artist teams were often interchanged. 'Continuity' was thus served by the character arc of the protagonist, and an attempt to homogenize the various artists' styles into a single production 'house' style for comics. With one writer-artist team (and more often than not, a single cartoonist) daily strips never had to establish such 'house' styles¹¹ (Newman & Delbo, 1975:1 and 14).

¹¹ Example art by José Delbo and Oscar Novelle, 1975.

TUROK
SON OF STONE

The EXPLORER

TUROK AND ANDAR START RAFTING ACROSS A WIDE, UNKNOWN SWAMP WHEN SUDDENLY A MIST SURROUNDS THEM! THE CRIES OF HONKERS CAN BE HEARD, WHEN SUDDENLY...



TUROK, SON OF STONE, No. 99, September, 1975. Published monthly except February, April, June, October, and December by Western Publishing Company, Inc., North Road, Poughkeepsie, New York 12602. All rights reserved throughout the world. Printed in U.S.A. Copyright © 1975, 1966, by Western Publishing Company, Inc.

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Moreover, also as demonstrated in *Turok*, comicbooks rendered longer, self-contained stories. While the stories themselves maintained a sense of a pop-culture 'quick' read (a sense, no doubt, heightened by the reliance on pictures for storytelling), these stories

contained greater depths of character development, and often more detailed plot mechanics.

The central conceit of the Turok stories (at least the version published by Gold Key) concerned the Native American Turok and his cousin Andar finding a safe passage from the Lost Land, an ancient valley of primitive man where dinosaurs still roam. The story 'the Explorer' from issue 99, written by Paul S. Newman with art by José Delbo (1975:1 - 13), demonstrates the evolution of comics storytelling.

While a number of 'episodes' make up the encounter between Turok and Zan, the primitive-man explorer of the story's title, these are reduced to mere scenes within the broader context of the story itself.

The form of the comicbook is also able to concretize the generic elements of Turok, perhaps more effectively than the daily strip. There is an ongoing mythology around Turok. Not an uncaring man, Turok often seeks to uplift the conditions of the primitive peoples of the Lost Land.



Ironically taking action to escape the Lost Land, Turok frequently hinders the evolution of these peoples. The central tragedy of Turok, is that of a character who must choose between returning to a better past, or acting to improve his present circumstance.



The comicbook attempts to distinguish itself from the daily strip simply by articulating a new format (the pop-culture 'boutique' of the comicbook format). The comicbooks of McCloud's era (the mid-80s until the mid-90s) which later come to be collected as so-called graphic novels, attempt a distinction on multiple fronts. As with comicbooks that came before them "graphic novel" comicbooks reconstruct comics as a specialization, something that is not of interest to the general public. However, as articulated in parts of McCloud's (2000:11) Manifesto, establishing comics as a special interest 'boutique' of popular culture is not enough. Comics creators seek to distinguish themselves by producing works worthy of institutional recognition. While comicbooks attempt to segregate comics from the mainstream, "graphic novel" comicbooks attempt to construct a further tier of separation; separating comics from pop-culture altogether.

This two-tiered segregation can easily be observed in graphic novels that emerge from that era, like Gaiman's (1997) closing volume of the *Sandman* saga, *the Wake*.

Gaiman's (1997) *the Wake*, represents a number of crucial distinctions between the so-called graphic novels of McCloud's (2000:8) era and the comicbooks of earlier generations. In the first instance it, singularizes itself commercially. Rather than (as comicbooks prior have done) continue the commercial venture of *the Sandman* with different creative teams, publisher DC supported Gaiman's decision to terminate publication of the monthly comicbook with the publication of *the Wake*. It was this storyarc¹² that would be collected as the graphic novel, *the Wake*.

¹² a 'storyarc' is a single story told over a number of monthly issues of a comicbook. Often individual storyarcs are collected as graphic novels.

In the second instance, DC (uncharacteristic for a publisher in the late 1980s) supported enormous creative freedom for Gaiman, acting more as a patron involved in artistic considerations than a publisher concerned with commercial imperatives. DC permitted Gaiman having final selection of the artist for any given storyarc. This resulted in Gaiman using a wide array of artists to define different points of view of the mythological 'Sandman', the King of Dreams. These different styles in turn met admirably with the theme of the Sandman being both alien but familiar.

These decisions by DC, as well as its branding of the comicbook as a 'Vertigo'¹³ book, allowed Gaiman to maintain creative control of *the Sandman*, and give credence to the idea that he was telling a single story from issue one until issue seventy-five, when the series finally ended.

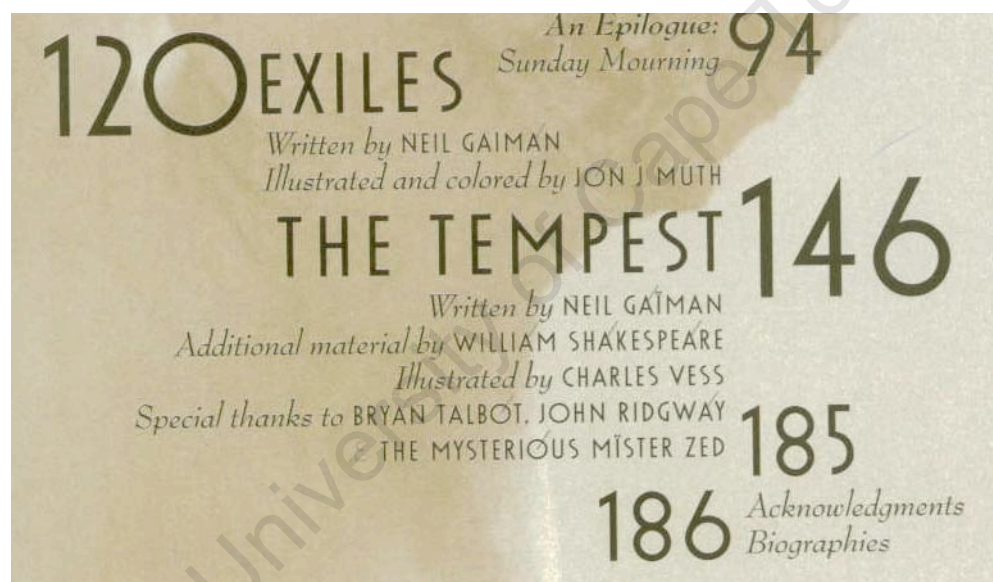
Yet, what Gaiman was able to achieve, was not only recognition within the comics industry, but outside it as well. The individual issue 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' (Gaiman, 1991) graphic novel, became the first work of comics to win a Nebula Award. With the publication of this issue, Gaiman's project of using not DC superheroes, but also the characters which populate world mythologies become abundantly clear. These characters with substantial mythographies of their own were to become bit-players in telling the story of the King of Dreams. Later, with the introduction of such fictional portraits as that of Augustus Caesar and Marco Polo, Gaiman would extend this trend to historical personages as well. But perhaps the most involved use of a historical personage is reserved for William Shakespeare.

Shakespeare makes his first appearance in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' (Gaiman, 1991), wherein the King of Dreams commissions a performance of Shakespeare's play of the same name for the Queen of the Faeries. Shakespeare appears a second and final time in 'the Tempest' (Gaiman, 1997) in the closing issue of *the Sandman* monthly comicbook. Gaiman (1997) paints an intimate portrait of a doddering Shakespeare, returned home to Stratford from the London stage. Shakespeare faces his twilight years with indifference. The bulk of his plays already performed, Shakespeare finds himself chained to his desk correcting publisher-proofs of earlier work. His daughter is being courted by the village lout, and his wife treats him like a child. While he is energized by the visits of his friend Ben Jonson, Jonson himself sees these meetings as jousting matches. Shakespeare rewrites psalms for the Church of England, and finishes his final play *The*

¹³ 'Vertigo' was the adult-content branding established by DC in 1993.

Tempest. It is this play, the mirror of his daily life animated by the characters and setting he imagined, that is to be the payment of his final debt to the King of Dreams. In the conceit of the *Sandman* mythography, it was the King of Dreams who 'opened a door' for Shakespeare to 'give men dreams long after (he) was dead'¹⁴. In return, Shakespeare was to write two plays for the King of Dreams, first the comedy *a Midsummer Night's Dream*, and finally *the Tempest*. Now, in his old age (47), Shakespeare fears he may have contracted with a Pagan deity, and, in so doing, compromised his Christianity.

Gaiman's acumen in using the Shakespeare's last days as thematic ending to the *Sandman* story, requires rather than constructs, an ideal reader who is highly literate. The contents page which lists 'the *Tempest*' as "written" by Gaiman with "additional material by William Shakespeare" demonstrates Gaiman's cultural project; deconstructing Shakespeare by using his life and his play to interpret the Sandman's story.



There can be little doubt that Gaiman's 'the *Tempest*' is a work of comics. Charles Vess's use of watercolor to depict the world of the play, and pencil-and-ink with digital color to portray the humdrum world of Shakespeare in Stratford-Upon-Avon successfully resurrects the notion of sequential storytelling. Vess constructs the enmeshing of 'fantasy' and 'reality' (the life of *the Tempest*, and life in Stratford) in four discrete phases.

In the story's early stages, he offers a complete segregation between Prospero and Shakespeare. By doing this, two distinguishable realities are constructed. The

¹⁴ From *the Wake*, page 178.

opening page of the story, which demonstrates this notion of two visually distinct and segregate worlds, also demonstrates the overlap of one world with the next. Although segregate worlds, they are not unconnected.

University of Cape Town



Actus Primus. Scena Prima.

*A Tempestuous noise of Thunder
and Lightning heard.*

*Enter a Ship-master
and a Boatswain.*

Master. Boatswain.

Boats. Here, master: what cheer?

*Master. Good: speak to th' mariners:
fall to't yarely, or we run ourselves
aground: bestix, bestix.*



NOVEMBER, 1610.



FATHER?
THERE IS A STORM
BREWING.

WHAT'S THAT,
JUDITH? A STORM?
YES...

THERE
WOULD BE
A STORM.

Later, as Shakespeare writes of Trinculo's jeering at

Caliban, the visuals tell another story. The individual penciled panels, evocative of falling cards, speak of a Shakespeare as wracked and disrupted as Caliban. Although the dialogue gives no indication of Shakespeare being distraught, Vess uses the comics medium to visually associate Shakespeare with the cowering Caliban rather than the jeering Trinculo.

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What have we here?
a man or a fish?
dead or alive?

A fish! He smells like a fish;
a very ancient and fish like smell;
a kind of not-of-the-newest
poor-John. A strange fish!

Were I in England now,
as once I was,
and had but this fish painted,
not a holiday fool there but
would give a piece of silver.
There would this monster
make any man;

any strange beast there makes a man;
when they will not give a doit to relieve
a lame beggar,
they will lay out ten to see a dead indian.

DEAD OR
ALIVE

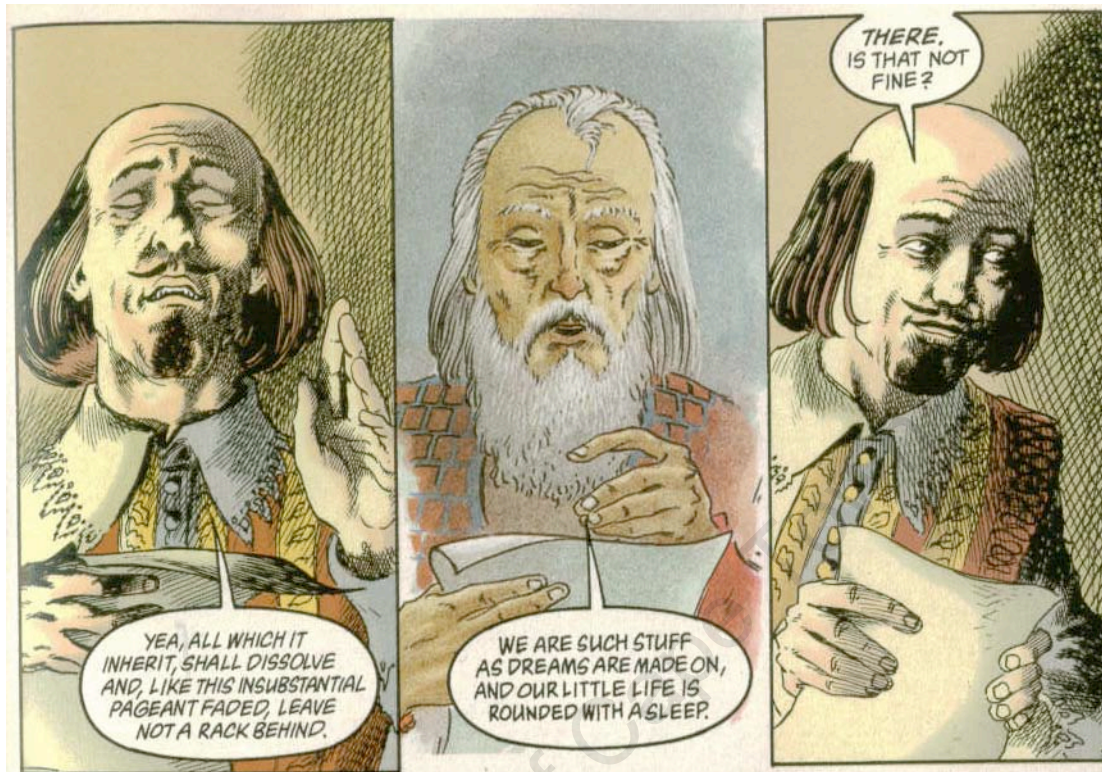
THERE WOULD THIS
MONSTER MAKE
ANY MAN

TEN TO
SEE A DEAD
INDIAN

c. Jess 96

169

In the third phase, Vess offers an integrated view of the two worlds. Shakespeare and Prospero interchange as they speak words that could easily pertain to both their situations.



In the final phase, Prospero's world becomes more real than Shakespeare's, the former wholly eclipsing the latter.



Alonso. I long
To hear the story of your life,
which must
Take the ear strangely.

Prospero. I'll deliver all;
And promise you calm seas,
quiescent gales,
And sail so expeditious,
that shall catch
Your royal fleet far off.
— My Ariel, chick,
That is thy charge.
Then to the elements
Be free, and fare thou well!—

Please you, draw near.

While comicbook elements in the Wake reinforce notions of a secession from the mainstream, the Wake as graphic novel contracts a secondary secession; a further

secession from popular culture. To successfully read *the Sandman*, a reader must confront both the gestalt of comics, and of literature. *The Sandman* and comics of similar ilk rely on specialized knowledge, not easily becoming a part of the blue-collar mainstream as daily strips like *Dick Tracy* have.

Graphic novels like *the Sandman* appear perhaps at the farthest remove from the notion of comics as a literary staple that segues neatly into human experience of the day-to-day.

In producing *But I Like It* (2006), cartoonist Joe Sacco constructs his ideal reader through a very different set of values. *But I Like It* is more a "graphic album" (in the sense of rock album rather than photo album) than a "graphic novel". It chronicles Sacco's time spent with the hard rock band the Miracle Workers on their European tour. More than simply detailing this period though, *But I Like It* is a register of Sacco's personal involvement with blues and rock 'n roll music.

While *But I Like It* does secede from the notion of comics as 'low art', the book does, in many ways, reach back to the mainstream, attempting to reincorporate its content and themes with the flow of ordinary life. As with the daily newspaper strips, Sacco offers episodic glimpses of life on the road with the Miracle Workers, his time spent in Switzerland as a professional poster artist for rock bands, and his growing fascination with blues in his later life. The book also includes promotional posters drawn by Sacco, and a CD containing the four-track set played by the Miracle Workers at a live concert in Enger, Germany.

Rather than assume a body of cultural knowledge in the way the so-called graphic novels do (as *the Wake* assumes knowledge of various world mythologies and historical personages), Sacco offers an education of rock 'n roll by way of paralepsis. Seemingly based on the assumption of readers familiarity with the world of hard rock, *But I Like It* instead offers readers the tools to familiarize themselves with the subtle intricacies of that world. What Sacco achieves then, is a representation of a 'boutique' of popular culture (the world of rock n roll) as a functional element of the mainstream of society.

While Sacco produces a 'high-art' form of comics by producing a kind of literary gestalt of rock 'n roll, this blow is softened by an educational paralepsis, and the episodic structure which returns *But I Like It* to the realm of the cultural mainstream. The individual cartoons, 'A Teenage Bore' and 'Who Sleeps with Whom in the Music Business' both illustrate Sacco's (2006:67 and

77) notion of a comics that is 'high art', yet 'mainstream'.

SHE CAME OUT OF NOWHERE AND SUDDENLY SHE WAS EVERYWHERE! HER FACE WAS ON THE COVER OF EVERY ROCK MAGAZINE! EVERYONE TALKED ABOUT HER! EVERYONE WANTED TO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT HER, EVEN HER SHOE SIZE. DON'T ASK ME WHY, I THINK SHE'S...

a teenage bore

by Joe Sacco ©1992



Who Sleeps with Whom in the Music Business

by Joe Esacco © 1993



In "Comics: MAD Vestibule to TV" McLuhan (1997:164 - 169) argues that it is not comics rather society itself has changed over the course of decades. Whatever turns in

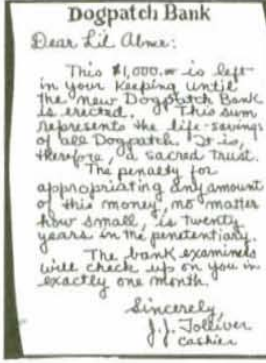
content have occurred, have reflected this change in society. What has not changed in the least, is the cultural logic that produces comics as a certain, specific cultural product, in a certain and specific cultural space, with a certain and specific cultural affect¹⁵. McLuhan's argument nullifies the 'schism'. 'Mainstream' or 'boutique', low-art or high, comics remains are always comics.

To substantiate, McLuhan analyzes Al Capp's daily comicstrip *Li'l Abner* (which he classifies as the genre of suspense comics) and the more recent *MAD* which offers 'humor in a jugular vein'. *Li'l Abner*, appearing in the 1930s, and *MAD* appearing in the early 1950s, are from two different generations. Their content and themes differ radically from one generation to the next, yet as McLuhan demonstrates, they occupy the same cultural space, and are produced by the same cultural machineries. The following examples of *Li'l Abner*, from the Winter of 1941 (August 15 through to August 25) appear as reprinted in Will Eisner's *Graphic Storytelling* (1996:157 - 158).

¹⁵ 'Affect' is a term coined by poststructuralist thinker, Gilles Deleuze. Here it is used in the same sense he conventionally does. The term and its use is discussed at length in the following chapter.

LIL' ABNER

The Voice of Experience!



LIL' ABNER

In Yokum They Trust



LIL' ABNER

A Fortunate Quincidence!



LIL' ABNER

His First False Step!



By Al Capp

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L'I'L ABNER

A Hopeless Minority



By Al Capp



L'I'L ABNER

Clothes Make the Counsellor



By Al Capp



L'I'L ABNER

Girl Meets Boy!



By Al Capp



L'I'L ABNER

Gallantry, Dogpatch Style



By Al Capp



L'I'L ABNER

Eating Up the Profits



By Al Capp



In *Li'l Abner*, Capp confronts readers with a malleable comicstrip form that stands in contradistinction to the segregated, segmented regularity seen in Milt Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates* or Chet Gould's *Dick Tracy*. Fluctuating between two and four panels per strip, Capp's story averages three and one-third panels daily for the nine strips shown in the above example, compared with Caniff's average of four panels per strip for *Terry and the Pirates*, and Gould's four panels per strip for *Dick Tracy*. Moreover, as seen in 'The Voice of Experience' (strip #1), 'A Hopeless Minority' (strip #5) and 'Clothes Make the Counsellor' (strip #6), Capp uses text-boxes to advance the narrative, effectively shaping these as panels in themselves.

This malleable form of the comicstrip is perhaps the most eloquent to enunciate the dramatic irony that laces the panels of *Li'l Abner*. McLuhan (1997:165 - 166):

The biggest casualty of the TV impact was Al Capp's "Li'l Abner." For eighteen years Al Capp had kept Li'l Abner on the verge of matrimony. The sophisticated formula used with his characters was the reverse of that employed by the French novelist Stendhal, who said, "I simply involve my people in the consequences of their own stupidity and then give them brains so they can suffer." Al Capp, in effect, said, "I simply involve my people in the consequences of their own stupidity and then *take away* their brains so that they can do nothing about it." Their inability to help themselves created a sort of parody of all the other suspense comics. Al Capp pushed suspense into absurdity. But readers have long enjoyed the fact that the Dogpatch predicament of helpless ineptitude was a paradigm of the human situation, in general.

McLuhan (1997:165 - 166)

For McLuhan, *MAD* continues that tradition of psychological exteriority, where the writers are able to sever the reader from the familiar world, satirizing it as ludicrous. *MAD* constructs satire as a specific statement of comics, commenting on at least three distinct areas; at least two of which pertain to mass media at large, and one which pertains directly to comics. In the 50th Anniversary Edition of *The Mad Reader*, volume 1 (Price, 2002:26-39)¹⁶, "the Usual Gang of Idiots"¹⁷ comment on newspapers and advertising as a way of mapping the shift of comics from 'mainstream' to 'boutique' cultural article. Ultimately these comics latch onto the themes that will emerge a generation later in comics scholarship.

¹⁶ The first edition of which was published 1952, the 50th Anniversary Edition I am using was published 2002 by iBooks.

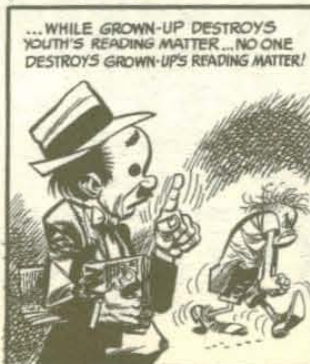
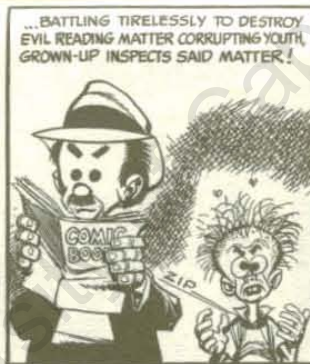
¹⁷ Harvey Kurtzman, as Editor, performs all the writing duties. Art duties are executed by Jack Davis, Wally Wood and Bill Elder.

In the piece 'Newspapers', "the Usual Gang of Idiots" show how 'boutique' comics do not emerge from places of specialized care. Instead, these find their content in the day-to-day of the everyday mainstream. The once widely-accepted, once-popular wisdom of juvenile delinquency arising from trashy literature is undermined by 'exposing' newspapers as a cultural artifact no less lurid than comics. The difference of course, is that newspapers formally belong to the world of 'grownups', while comics arise from the world of 'kids'. It is a simple, but crudely effective deconstruction.

University of Cape Town

Youth! Even as we speak, grown-ups of America battle tirelessly to destroy evil reading matter that is corrupting youth! . . . However, behind their backs looms unchallenged evil reading matter that is corrupting Grown-ups! . . . Youth! . . . Save our Grown-ups! . . . SAVE THEM FROM THE BAD INFLUENCES OF . . .

NEWSPAPERS!



Killer Admits Using Meat Grinder



...you skip page 2 and 3 which merely have important news...to the best part...page 4!

(POOP foto by Jack Devlin)

Googie Divorces Zazie for Boobie

By Smedley Dirtigger
DAILY POOP News Bureau

Yesterday, the most earth-shaking event in the history of our times took place when Googie Smidley, after a quick divorce from the Baroness Zazie Ley Smed, got secretly married to Boobie Van Smoodley at a modest little ceremony at the Taj Mahal.

After the wedding, a modest little reception was held at the Hollywood Bowl. The happy couple had this to say when quizzed by this reporter. "This time, Smedley, it's for keeps. This romance is the real thing and this time this is IT and for keeps this time and it's the real thing." This was Boobie's 12th marriage and Googie's 27th.

While Boobie is the wealthy heiress to the Van Smoodley Timber, Steel and Uranium fortune, Googie is the son of an illiterate, filthy, peasant skunk-farmer.

As to their future plans, Googie said that the honeymoon would have to be delayed since there are matters of grave concern and import to attend to... matters that cannot wait. Like for instance, the construction of a special polo-mallet being hand-fashioned for Googie Boobie, meanwhile, will vacation.

As Googie packed his money-bags and prepared to depart in his platinum jet-plane (by



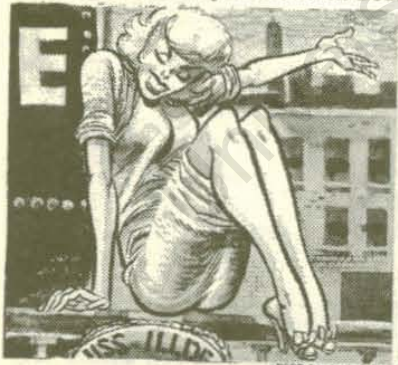
(POOP foto by J. Devlin)
Googie and Boobie as they said that this was it.

his last marriage), this reporter was told, emphatically, "Smedley, this time it's the real furahugginer thing."

Full Details on Most Nauseating Crime Ever

Today, Sturdley Hockblock publicly confessed to the mostest sickeningest crime ever, in this city of Smerdley, and we have all the details down to the last gruesome little details.

Very Important People Arrive on Boat



The most importantest people ever, arrived on the S.S. Sturdley today. Above is Miss Baha Bam waving helio from rail of ship. Not that Miss Baha Bam had anything to do with arrivals... she was just passing by docks at time.

Police Chief Smedley Smerdley of Smerdley had this to say:

"Echhhh!"
The body was discovered yesterday by 172 witnesses all over the city. This was because the body was in 172 packages all over the city. But you ain't heard nothing yet.

Hockblock was immediately apprehended through the efficiency of a mammoth police dragnet, a diligent manhunt by the organized citizenry, an announcement on "Gangbusters," and mainly, Hockblock gave himself up.

But now we come to main enjoyable part where Hockblock describes in detail how he committed murder like for instance what kind of butcher's cleaver he used, what type blood the victim had, what color blood, with closeups of the blood and like that.

Now all the teeny details the way Hockblock went about the murder was this. First he grabbed his victim and then he

(continued on pg. 780)

Googie With Foofoo While Boobie Vacations

By Dirtley Smedigger

The Bahamas--The most drooly incident ever witnessed by civilization took place this morning when Googie Smidley landed here on his own private platinum landing strip (by his eleventh marriage), for a rendezvous with Foofoo Smed Lee.

Meanwhile, Boobie said she and Googie could not make a go of married life and she was instituting a divorce. Foofoo Smed Lee, wealthy heiress to Smed Lee Gold and Diamond fortune, announced modest little wedding, only 10,000 close friends to attend. When queried, Googie said, "Dirtley, this time it is positively IT, as he left, in his platinum diesel train.

Googie is Mine Says Selma

By D. Irt

Selma Strudley, this evening, confirmed the devastating rumor that she and Googie Smidley will soon be married. Meanwhile, Foofoo Smed Lee told reporters that her romance with Googie, after a long period of incessant bickering, has gone on the rocks. Foofoo is the wealthy heiress to several large countries all over the world, and as she stood hand in hand with Googie at the entrance to Foofoo's modest little city, Googie informed this reporter that this was it! Outside, on Foofoo's private lake, on the deck of her private flat-top, Googie's platinum jet Constellation was warming up for a business trip.



(POOP foto by Jack Devlin)
Googie and Foofoo tell world that this is it.

Broadway

...300 pages later,
you come back
to more regular
printing...the features!

Well, I don't have plenty of dirt culled from Broadway for you today. Last night, this reporter picked up some mighty interesting items down along that glamorous avenue of theatres, clubs, and the neon night-life. And here are some of the items, some of the dirt that this Broadway reporter picked up. Some of the items and dirt were: a hardly smoked cigar butt, a indian penny, a comic book with cover torn off, ½ pound silver paper from cigarette packages, 10 Planter's Peanuts wrappers I can send away for free stamps.

AND NOW, around the nightclubs with Smurdley Yeldrums: At the Stark Club I saw Zaza Zam chatting in a very chummy manner with producer, Sam Urdley. At the Twentythousand Four Eight Club, Ludamey Zam, husband of the beautiful Zaza Zam, was seen sitting alone and this reporter chatted with him for a moment. At the Moco-bumbo, Sam Urdley, producer, was seen being punched in the nose while chatting with Ludamey Zam. At the Coq Roach, Zaza Zam seen also punched in the nose while chatting with Ludamey Zam. At the Chez Pigalle, this reporter seen punched in the nose by Zaza Zam.

AND NOW, the hottest item of the week: What T.V. actress has been frequently seen with what international playboys at what restaurant at what time? What is going on



WHAT ACTRESS?

The Kwestioning Kameraman
by MURDLEY S.
THE POOP will pay \$10 for every intelligent, thoughtful, important question submitted and used by this column.

QUESTION
...you ever get punched inna nose?

LOCATION
Down in the subway in various locations...on the platforms, in the trains, and on the tracks.

ANSWERS

Punchy Knucklehead, sandwich sign carrier: Nobody ever punched me. I don't give 'em the chance. I punch 'em first. When guys pass me an'

I don't like 'eir looks PUNCH! I let 'em have it. Head knuckle Punched, process server:

Yes, people always punch me in the nose. My job makes people mad. Sometimes people

punch me for no reason. The other day some sandwich-sign carrier came up and punched

me in the nose. Knucklepunch Head, potrzebie

Maybe One day, I went to the top of the Statue of Liberty and was accosted there by a thief who gave me a

punch in the belly. We were standing in the Statue of Liberty's nose, so although I was punched in the belly, I was punched in the nose.

Headpunch Knuckle, malcontented dish washer: Has one the right to be punched in the nose is the core of this question. Don't let "big interests" talk you into not getting punched in the nose. I hope that answers your question.

Bobo Bom, stenographer: Quit following me or I'll give YOU a punch inna nose!

in city-hall that are decaying and corrupting our city till gradually, it is going to the dogs. There is a small band of dirty no-good self-seeking money-hungry political bums who alone are responsible for letting the city go to the dogs. And there is only one thing left to stop these dirty bunch of no good bums from letting this city go to the dogs. I say we must take them out and shoot them like dogs. We take out all the dogs every single dog. and shoot them like dogs. That way, this city cannot go to the dogs.

GREATLY DISGUSTED

GRIND UP
Your newspaper is the worst rag on the market. It is the most terrible bunch of junk I have ever seen. It isn't fit for lining the trash can. It isn't even fit to grind up and make into other paper again. It isn't even fit for thinking of grinding up and making into other paper. It isn't even fit for making into paper for thinking of grinding up and making into other paper. I'll bet you don't print this.

REALLY DISGUSTED

CRUMS
What a bunch of crums you are. I'll bet you don't print this.

MUCH DISGUSTED

BUMS
Bums! I'll bet you don't print this.

PLENTY DISGUSTED

FILL
I'll bet you don't print this.

GOOD AND DISGUSTED

STUPID
I read the letter yesterday by reader, "MOST DIS-

gusted" and I want to voice my disagreement to this letter attacking some of the basic ideas of our political structure. I want to say to "MOST DISGUSTED," men like you are the fundamental trouble with our whole social and political ideology. In other words, in answer to your statement: "Women are stupid!" I say, men are stupid!

DISGUSTED GIRL

STUPID
I just want to second reader "MOST DISGUSTED"'s letter. If anyone has the simplest grasp of life, has the merest ability to comprehend the complex philosophy we live by, they would realize instantly why we have wars, why we have sickness and disease. They would realize in a sentence like "MOST DISGUSTED," that women are stupid!

DISGUSTED BOY

STUPID
In answer to the vital argument "MOST DISGUSTED"'s letter has touched off, I think the truth of the matter is men and women are stupid!

DISGUSTED THING

KILL
I think that the solution to our problems is to kill all the Democrats.

DISGUSTED REPUBLICAN

KILL
I think the solution to our problems is to kill all the Republicans.

DISGUSTED DEMOCRAT

KILL
I think the solution to our problems is to kill everybody.

PLAIN DISGUSTED



POOP PEOPLE'S LETTERS

Please give name and address and name of your lawyer with your letter

SHOOT
This city is going to the dogs! There are no good bums

DISGUSTED
and I want to voice my disagreement to this letter attacking some of the

between these two and what will Broadway actors have to say? What will his agent have to say and what will his comedian do about what? In fact, what do all these goings on what, let me know what because I'd like to know myself!

AND NOW, an open letter to Bopley Smurd: Dear Bopley, I am sending you this open letter because of the recent encounter you had with your public the other night when you got angry at your fans and refused to sign their autograph books. I am writing you this open letter to remind you that it was the fans who put you where you are today. It was the fans who gave you your first break as a singer. Remember you used to be an electrician and you were fixing the electric fans at the Stark Club and the night club owners heard you singing while you were fixing those electric fans? Remember? Hah, you bum, remember? That was your first break. I am writing you this letter just to remind you what those fans did for you. So last night, when your kicking screaming fans tore the sleeve from your coat, the leg from your pants, the hair from your head, there was no reason for you to get mad...no reason to start to strangle that little girl. She just wanted your socks for a souvenir. And mainly I am writing this open letter...because a closed letter would cost three cents postage and it's cheaper this way.

AND NOW, goings on about town. Pat Mike is about to sue Sam Tom! A.E. will double-cross C.D. in the morning! and E.F. is going to punch G.H. in the nose tomorrow! L.S. signed that contract with M.F.T. and it's rumored that Q.X. will O.K. that deal with O.K. How-

ever, although Q.X. will O.K. O.K., O.K. will not O.K. deal. Does Q.X. think O.K. is O.K.? If so, how can Q.X. O.K. if O.K. is not O.K. that is, if O.K. is Q.X. and not O.K.. I mean O.K. rather than O.K.. er, the first O.K. rather than O.K. as used the second time Shall we get on to the next item!

AND NOW, this is your Broadway Gunk reporter, Smurdley Yeldrums closing with the final statement of wisdom that I pass along to you out there in order to give you something to think about today and that final wise word is anybody want to buy silver-paper? I have ½ a pound which I will sell cheap.

SILVER PAPER

ever, although Q.X. will O.K. O.K., O.K. will not O.K. deal. Does Q.X. think O.K. is O.K.? If so, how can Q.X. O.K. if O.K. is not O.K. that is, if O.K. is Q.X. and not O.K.. I mean O.K. rather than O.K.. er, the first O.K. rather than O.K. as used the second time Shall we get on to the next item!

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★★★★
LATE LATE
LATE LATE

DAILY POOP

PICTURE NEWSPAPER...PLENTY PICTURES

4¢
A POUND

4,000 Pages Copr. 1954 Poop Syndicate Co. Inc. Someday, October, 1954* 4¢ IN CITY LIMITS 5¢ COUNTRY LIMITS 6¢ ABROAD LIMITS

10 PAGES OF BLOODY FIGHT PICS

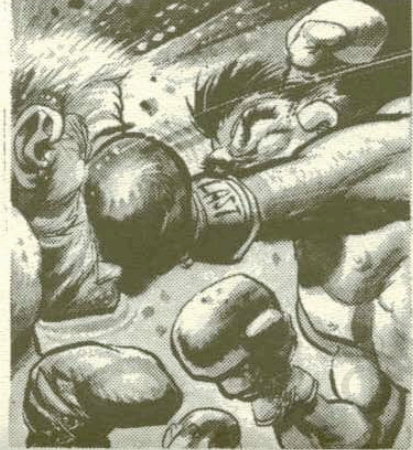
...finally the back page which is a shame to civilization sometimes!

Full Nauseating Story on Page 980

Messiest Fight Ever

Here are the Daily Poop's exclusive fight pics of the Kid Smadoodley-Punchy Melvin bout. The Poop has spared no expense to give you complete photo coverage of best and bloodiest parts of fight with photos of hardest blows, taken from many different angles. Candid shot on left (←) catches face of Punchy Melvin as it contorts from Smadoodley's left to the head. Next candid shot (←) catches Kid's contorted face pressed unbelievably flat for an instant by Punchy's glove. Below, left (←), Punchy's face contorted... ear is where eye should be. Last shot (←) Kid's whole face is in space eyebrows should be.

—Lots more, p. 50-60



(POOP foto by Jack Davis)

(POOP foto by Jack Davis)



(POOP foto by Jack Davis)

(POOP foto by Jack Davis)

(POOP foto by Jack POTZREBBI)

Man Fined For Bashing Son

reporters how while reading newspaper today, he noticed youth looking at evil reading matter. Suddenly, grown-up's mind felt so strangely corrupted, he jumped up and spanked youth (→). Youth (→) points (→) to wrench (←) grownup (↑) used to (↓) spank.

This photo (→) shows grown-up accused of severely spanking youthful son (→). Grown-up told reporters how while reading newspaper today, he noticed youth looking at evil reading matter. Suddenly, grown-up's mind felt so strangely corrupted, he jumped up and spanked youth (→). Youth (→) points (→) to wrench (←) grownup (↑) used to (↓) spank.

WELL, YOUTH... THAT'S WHAT THEY'RE READING! THAT'S WHAT MONEY-HUNGRY PUBLISHERS ARE FEEDING TO OUR OWN GROWN-UPS!... YOU CAN ACT!... FORM CLUBS, ORGANIZATIONS!... SEE TO IT THAT OUR GROWN-UPS BUY CLEAN WHOLESOME READING MATTER! SEE TO IT THAT OUR GROWN-UPS ARE NOT CORRUPTED BY NEWSPAPERS!

A similarly crude but articulate deconstruction is effected on the genre of advertising. The world of elegance and sophistication is undermined by exposing the effects of the beer being advertised. This MAD spoof (Price, 2002:26-39) suggests the intoxicating and addictive effects of the product being 'advertised'.



Beer as beer should taste!

Yes... Potgold beer is refreshing — never filling! Potgold's extra dryness lets you taste the clean, clear, beer flavor. Potgold beer is beer as beer should taste! Yes sir, we guarantee Potgold tastes just like beer!



REGULAR

KING-SIZE



In his 'Vital Message' Price (2002: xviii - ix) states:

Many Wrong Thinkers look upon the Comics Book as a substitute for Good Reading - whatever that is. Not so. The Comic Book offers a format to the writer-artist that is unique and will eventually take its place as a legitimate art form with the novel, television, films and phenobarbitol [sic]. True, there are effects you can get in a novel that you can't get in a Comic Book. But there are points that can only be made in a Comic Book. For instance, the DRAGGED NET piece in this volume couldn't possibly be done as a dramatic sketch with actors. Neither could it be told in prose. It is an example of pure MAD.

(Price, 2002: xviii - ix)

While Price ostensibly makes an argument in the form of an apologist's plea for the scholarship of comics, he effectively undermines the propriety of the novel and film by equating it with a barbiturate sedative.

McLuhan (1997:167) argues in picaresque fashion how 'mainstream' comics and 'boutique' comics may be viewed as a single cultural product, that of comics itself. In his first fencing stroke, he offers an intuitive connection that summons up the resources of both Picasso's project, and the cultural product of the Clown. He (McLuhan, 1997:167) writes,

Picasso has long been a fan of American comics. The highbrow, from Joyce to Picasso, has long been devoted to American popular art because he finds in it an authentic imaginative reaction to official action. Genteel art, on the other hand, tends merely to evade and disapprove of the blatant modes of action in a powerful high definition, or "square" society. Genteel art is a kind of repeat of the specialized acrobatic feats of an industrialized world. Popular art is the clown reminding us of all the life and faculty that we have omitted from our daily routines. He ventures to perform the specialized routines of the society, acting as integral man. But integral man is quite inept in a specialist situation. This, at least, is one way to get at the art of the comics, and the art of the clown.

(McLuhan, 1997:167)

The idea that early comics, like Gould's *Dick Tracy* or Capp's *Li'l Abner*, (what McLuhan himself terms 'suspense comics') is inextricably linked to the day-to-day proves to be a false association. McLuhan asserts this point by presenting comics as a unique set of semioideological machineries and affects, and by offering a broader narrative of change. It is not comics that has changed, argues McLuhan (1997:168), but society.

The first comic books appeared in 1935, Not [sic] having anything connected or literary about them, and being as difficult to decipher as the *Book of Kells*, they caught on with the young. The elders of the tribe, who had never noticed the ordinary newspaper was as frantic as a surrealist art exhibition, could hardly be expected to notice that the comic books were as exotic as eighth-century illuminations. So, having noticed nothing about the *form*, they could discern nothing of the *contents*¹⁸, either. The mayhem and violence were all they noted. Therefore, with naïve literary logic, they waited for violence to flood the world.¹⁹ Or, alternatively, they attributed existing crime to the comics. The dimmest-witted convict learned to moan, "It wuz comic books done this to me."

¹⁸ cf. previous chapter, notion of comics as minor literature

¹⁹ cf. introduction, the Vican notion of reversibility, particularly here, the reversibility of SF and politics/history that leads to SF as System of Flows.

Meantime, the violence of an industrial and mechanical environment had to be lived and given meaning and motive in the nerves and viscera of the young. To live and experience anything is to translate its direct impact into many indirect forms of awareness. We provided the young with a shrill and raucous asphalt jungle, beside which any tropical animal jungle was as quiet and tame as a rabbit hutch. We called this normal. We paid people to keep it at the highest pitch of intensity because it paid well. When the entertainment industries tried to provide a reasonable facsimile of the ordinary city vehemence, eyebrows were raised.

(McLuhan, 1997:168)

Elsewhere in the essay he (McLuhan, 1997:168) suggests,

Thus, all electric appliances, far from being labor-saving devices, are new forms of work, decentralized and made available to everybody. Such is, also, the world of the telephone and the TV image that demands so much more of its users than does radio or movie. As a simple consequence of this participational and do-it-yourself aspect of the electric technology, every kind of entertainment in the TV age favors the same kind of personal involvement. Hence, the paradox that, in the TV age, Johnny can't read because reading, as customarily taught, is too superficial and consumerlike an activity. Therefore the highbrow paperback, because of its depth character, may appeal to youngsters who spurn ordinary narrative offerings. Teachers today frequently find that students who can't read a page of history are becoming experts in code and linguistic analysis. The problem, therefore, is not that Johnny can't read, but that, in an age of depth involvement, Johnny can't visualize distant goals.

(McLuhan, 1997:168)

McLuhan (1997:167) thus offers a comics that succeeds from one generation to the next. Rather than the false notion of a single world connecting two disparate forms of comics (comics as 'mainstream', and later, comics as 'boutique'), McLuhan (1997:168) shows that what is truly needed is a way of conceiving of two worlds for which comics acts as a unifying discourse. McLuhan's image of the electric appliance aptly demonstrates this shift from one "world" to another. What is constructed is comics as that counter-narrative. For McLuhan comics is not subject to narrative; as a unique medium, comics must necessarily construct narratives for situations, for "worlds":

Depth involvement encourages everyone to take himself much more seriously than before. As TV cooled off the American audience, giving it new preferences and new orientation of sight and sound and touch and taste, Al Capp's wonderful brew also had to be toned down. There was no more need to kid Dick Tracy or the suspense routines. As *MAD* magazine discovered, the new audience found the scenes and themes of ordinary life as funny as anything in remote Dogpatch. *MAD* magazine simply transferred the world of ads into the comic book, and it did this just when the TV image was beginning to eliminate the comic book by direct rivalry.

(McLuhan, 1997:168)

McLuhan thus explodes the structuralist schism that, by convention, has established an allotropy of four comics. For McLuhan (1997:168), comics exposes the changes of a sociocultural system that is grounded in, and vociferously defends, its unchanging nature. It is not comics that has changed, argues McLuhan, but society itself.

McLuhan (1997:168) demonstrates that comics, by its very nature, defeats any system of classification that seeks to articulate it as a cultural by-product of broader politico-economic forces, even if the system of classification is as culturally sophisticated as the 'schism'. Comics always reverts to itself, and in so doing always produces itself as singular. Comics, a fixed cultural process, thus appears as a measure of a changing society (McLuhan, 1997:168).

cogito sum

Perhaps the clearest example of a comics that simply transgresses the classifications of the 'schism' is the comicbook *Fell*²⁰. Written by Warren Ellis with art by Ben Templesmith, *Fell* (Ellis & Templesmith, 2005 - 2008) is a police procedural not unlike *Dick Tracy*. Similar to the comicbooks described by Joe Kubert, each issue of *Fell* is a standalone, self-contained story. But each issue also features in the architecture of the broader story of disgraced Detective Richard Fell now forced to work in the 'feral city' of Snowtown. *Fell* easily breaches the schism between the 'mainstream' of everyday life and the 'boutique' of pop culture. Just as easily, in ways suggested by McLuhan (1997:168), it blurs distinction between low art and high.

Each issue contains sixteen pages of 'dense' storytelling, and four pages of 'Backmatter' for comparatively inexpensive price of \$1.99 (US). With *Fell*, Ellis presents the comics industry with an entirely new format, later dubbed the 'slimline'. This format, like DVDs with 'bonus features', not only incorporates a complete story, but also additional material in the form of production notes, fan mail, pictures, scene analyses and research data incorporated in each issue's Backmatter.

In the first issue's Backmatter, Ellis (2005:17) presents a rationale for breaching the conventions of the comicbook as cultural product of the mainstream:

²⁰ Published by Image since September 2005, this comicbook does not appear monthly. To date 9 issues have appeared, the most recent marked January 2008.

I have a near-eidetic memory for pop culture detritus, and so I remember it with disturbing clarity. The fanzine was called ARKEN SWORD, and the piece in question was an interview with Alan Moore, conducted via letter by Paul Duncan... Alan was talking about comics, singles. And in talking about what was good about comics, what he said was that you could walk into a comics shop with pocket change and come out with "a real slab of culture."

Of course comics were a lot cheaper back then. But it was the Eighties, and none of us had any bloody money, so it probably all balanced out.

So there I was at the start of 2005, thinking about this. Now if you're buying superhero comics, the prices start at around \$2.25 in American pesos. If you want anything in any other genre, you're usually starting at \$2.99. And I just got to thinking -- back when I was poor(er), the difference between 2 and 3 was often the difference between walking out of a shop with a slab of new culture and buying a meal.

...So I sat there and thought how can I do a piece of contemporary fiction for something closer to pocket change? And I came up with this. Fewer pages than an ordinary comic single, but dense, with a complete story told every time. And a text section at the back, expanding on the background and other elements of the book, commentary and production art, extending the reading experience. So that, for at least a dollar less than most comics of its type, you got a complete experience that hopefully took at least as long to read, on first play, as a "regular" comic.

A buck ninety-nine, or local equivalent, still just about qualifies as pocket change. For the loose metal in your pocket, you can walk out with this book, and you don't need another book to understand the story, and you've not been cheated into buying the next episode to understand the story. I wanted you to be able to get the whole thing for a handful of loose coins.

(Ellis, 2005:17)

Arguably, Ellis is at his most incisive when he constructs his ideal reader of *Fell* (and of comics) as one who is temporarily poor. He describes his situation as "...back when I was poor(er)..." implying an improvement in financial situation, but without necessarily attaining financial freedom. Yet he recalls a time when "...none of us had any bloody money..." and when "...the difference between 2 and 3 [US dollars] was often the difference between walking out of a shop with a slab of new culture and buying a meal" (Ellis, 2005:17).

For Ellis, the modern comics reader is a complex cultural construct. In his view Ellis (2005:17) acknowledges the "junk culture" roots of comics, while simultaneously acknowledging the social mobility of its readers. Moreover Ellis (2005:17) implicitly acknowledges the move of his ideal comics reader from browser to specialist, as it is important for the modern comics reader to acquire a 'slab of culture'. Yet Ellis's model implicitly acknowledges that readers do not browse perpetually. To

substantiate, Ellis offers himself as example, and gives his poverty a specific and limited expression as a single decade ("But it was the Eighties and none of us had any bloody money..." (Ellis, 2005:17)). Ellis's conflation of himself with his ideal reader speaks of a time when the ideal reader begins to approximate the present-day Ellis of 2005. For the ideal reader, just as it was for Ellis, poverty is simply a temporary situation which is reversed over the course of decades.

But if Ellis (2005:17) is astute in describing the ascent of an ideal reader of comics, then he is equally astute in constructing a comics fiction for that reader. "Astute", in that, with *Fell*, he presents readers with an opportunity to conform to his vision of the ideal reader. *Fell* itself seems to breach conventions laid in place by the schism, offering a polyvalent work that is both mainstream and a "boutique" of popular culture, simultaneously low and high art.

The introduction of the 'Backmatter', and the discussion of how horror stories from the nightly news (like Cambodian 'smoke children' and whisky enemas and child abuse by the injection of fecal matter (Ellis, 2005 - 2008)) adduced as cases in the comicbook *Fell*, demonstrate how easily Ellis transgresses the boundary between mainstream and a pop cultural "boutique".

Fell's transgressive nature is evident in its ability to construct a simultaneous high art-low art through the form of comics. Artist Templesmith's (Ellis, 2005 - 2008) "cartoony" artwork points to the immediate emptiness of character and location that needs to be "animated" by the reader²¹. But the construction of each *Fell* story-page on a 9-panel grid points to the construction of a 'high-art' of comics.

In the Backmatter to issue 2, Ellis (2005:18-20) writes²²:

After that, the tools. To make 16 pages worth buying, I needed to crunch things down and make them dense. I started out in British comics, writing stories in installments of six pages a month. So it was back to the old tools, to an extent.

(...)I started out with the Wall of Sound -- the 16-panel grid. That's how I think of it. As I say below, it's an immense presence of information.

²¹ This is the so-called 'masking effect' where greater detail and a more realistic style of drawing means the drawing itself can describe fewer and fewer people. A more "cartoony" style means the drawing is psychologically more accessible to more readers.

²² Ellipses appearing between parenthesis are of my own insertion, all others appear in Ellis's original text.

(...)It was killing the dialogue, and turning into a zoetrope of talking heads. I was starting from a crime-fiction basis, and all the naturalism was leaking out of it. Drove me bloody mad. Nine-panel grid is kind of unforgiving and inflexible, in terms of my personal sense of timing, but sixteen panels a page... there was no give in it at all.

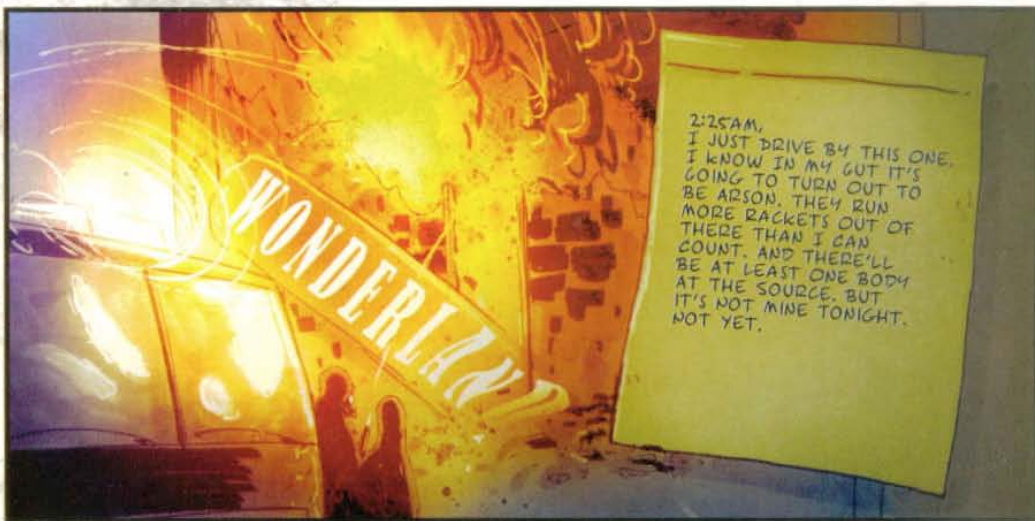
I found a partial solution, as I find so much, in the work of Bryan Talbot. Go find a copy of THE TALE OF ONE BAD RAT and then come back. Have a flip through that. I saw it in its pencilled version on a long train journey with Bryan, and he explained the process to me.

It's built on a nine-panel-grid for accessibility. But he didn't want to nail the grid on, the you'd find it in WATCHMEN or FROM HELL. However, he didn't want to play loose with it the way people did it in the Sixties -- he wanted the formal effect, but he wanted to teach it some new moves. He measured out the dimensions of the panels and the gutters, and produced the thing in fractions and ratios of 9-grid. Which sounds slightly crazy and OCD, yes. But it changes the timing. Comedians will talk about beats and half-beats in the pacing of a gag. Bryan'll do a panel that's exactly half of a single panel in 9-grid, and that's a half-beat -- or exactly a panel and a half, or a panel plus the gutter. All of a sudden the page is very flexible, while maintaining the feel and flow and accessibility of a nine-panel-grid. Because for all its horrors, it's still the easiest way to read a comic. And I want FELL to communicate to you easily, without you feeling like you have to learn a whole new language to understand it.

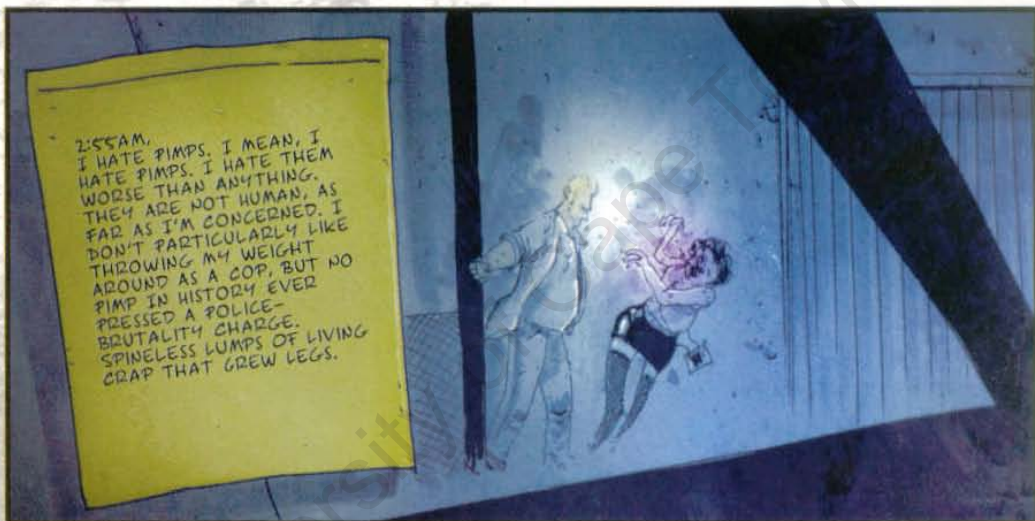
(Ellis 2005:18-20)

Fell is simultaneously mainstream and "boutique" in that it blends together the brutal realism of the evening news with the culturally seceding form of the comicbook. Yet *Fell* transgresses "low" art and "high" in the 9-grid of Templesmith's iconic art. Moreover, each individual page of *Fell* operates as a self-contained episode sixteen pages long each month.

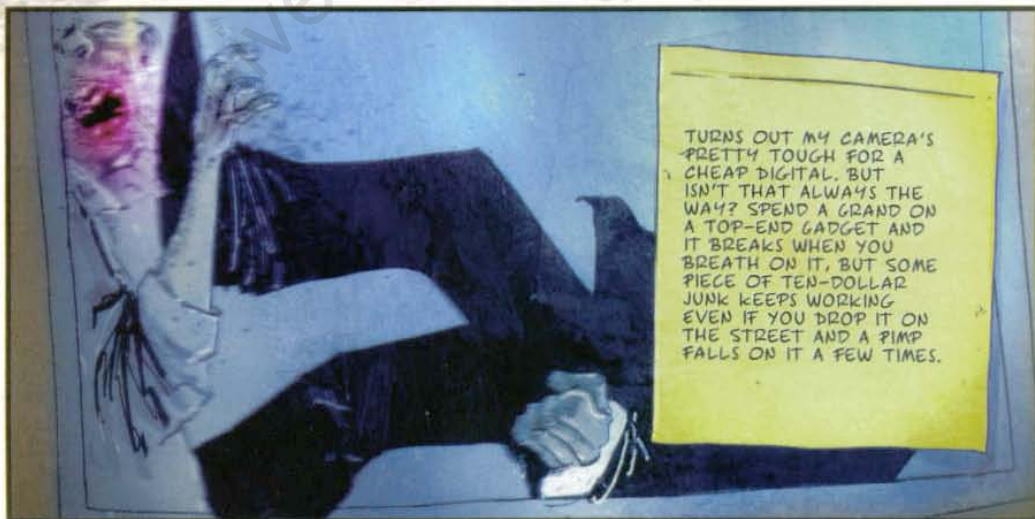




2:25AM,
I JUST DRIVE BY THIS ONE.
I KNOW IN MY GUT IT'S
GOING TO TURN OUT TO
BE ARSON. THEY RUN
MORE RACKETS OUT OF
THERE THAN I CAN
COUNT. AND THERE'LL
BE AT LEAST ONE BODY
AT THE SOURCE. BUT
IT'S NOT MINE TONIGHT.
NOT YET.



2:55AM,
I HATE PIMPS. I MEAN, I
HATE PIMPS. I HATE THEM
WORSE THAN ANYTHING.
THEY ARE NOT HUMAN. AS
FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, I
DON'T PARTICULARLY LIKE
THROWING MY WEIGHT
AROUND AS A COP, BUT NO
PIMP IN HISTORY EVER
PRESSED A POLICE-
BRUTALITY CHARGE.
SPINELESS LUMPS OF LIVING
CRAP THAT GREW LEGS.



Turns out my camera's
pretty tough for a
cheap digital. But
isn't that always the
way? Spend a grand on
a top-end gadget and
it breaks when you
breathe on it, but some
piece of ten-dollar
junk keeps working
even if you drop it on
the street and a pimp
falls on it a few times.



The question that remains however, is why the schism proves so seductive as a conceptual and methodological tool? As McLuhan (1997) suggests, the answer lies not so much within comics themselves, but within the society that gave rise to comics as a cultural process. It is possible to conceive of a world wherein Eisner (2001), Seuling (Eisner, 2001), McCloud (1993), Kubert (Eisner, 2001), Gaiman (1997) and others have also fallen prey to the notion of the schism. The schism provides a stable and seemingly natural basis for the society generated by and around it. The schism can be seen to be grounded in Dualism, the notion the mind and the body are of two very different, perhaps even wholly segregate orders. Smythies and Beloff (1989: vii) state of Dualism:

Dualism, if one is to understand by that the idea that the mind and the body are distinct entities, so that, in principle, one can conceive of the one without the other, has been the traditional view of the mind-body relationship. One has only to recall that in virtually every society on record, we find some notion of an afterlife, that is to say, a belief that there is some essence or soul in a living person that will survive the dissolution of that person's body at death. According to Karl Popper, "All thinkers of whom we know enough to say anything definite on their position, up to and including Descartes, were dualist interactionists" (*The Self and Its Brain* [New York: Springer, 1977], 152). It was Descartes, however, who first formulated the distinction in a precise way and in doing so set the terms of the mind-body controversy as it has figured in Western philosophy ever since. His distinction, as everyone knows, seizes on the fact that matter occupies space whereas it is of the essence of mind to think or, in the most general terms, to be conscious. And thoughts and conscious experiences are not, he maintained, located in, or extended in, space.

(Smythies & Beloff, 1989: vii)

In *Mind*, authors Kukla and Walmsley (2006:8-9) explain the interactionism of Descartes as described by Popper in the preceding quote:

Interactionism is the dualist view that mental events can cause physical events, and that physical events can cause mental events. An example of a mental event causing a physical event is you willing yourself to get up from your chair causing your getting up from your chair. An example of a physical event causing a mental event is your retina being bombarded by electromagnetic radiation of a certain frequency causing you to have the visual experience of blue. Interactionism is Descartes' brand of dualism.

(Kukla and Walmsley 2006:8-9)

The schism then can be seen to stem from the ubiquity of Dualism as formalized by Descartes. The schism is a "natural" response to a world riddled with Dualism. By cleaving comics in two (mainstream and boutique) and art in two (low and high), the schism mirrors the operations of Dualism. Speaking of the famous banner to Descartes'

interactionist Dualism "cogito ergo sum", Katz in his Introduction to *Cogitations* (1986:3) writes,

The *cogito* is unique. No argument in the history of philosophy approaches its combination of importance for subsequent thought, contraversiality, difficulty in comprehension, and utter simplicity of form. This unique combination poses the question addressed in the present study: how is it that so simple and important an argument has caused such difficulty in comprehension and such philosophical controversy?

(Katz, 1986:3)

Just as Katz (1986:3) points to the ubiquity of both Dualism and the Cogito, so too should it be recognized that the *cogito* itself mirrors Descartes struggles with Dualism as interactionism. 'I think' (cogito) and 'I am' (sum) come to represent the two orders of mind and body, but 'therefore' (ergo) answers to Descartes' struggles with interactionism. Ideologically and semantically, 'ergo' describes a point of contact between two segregate orders. Within the formalization of the cogito though, the 'ergo' has a residual and wholly unanticipated effect; it constructs a narrative frame where one is unnecessary. As Southwell (2008:10) explains:

This chapter is intended to provide a clear and easy-to-understand overview of the *Meditations*, argument by argument. I think it is important to get a feeling for the *Meditations* as almost a type of story... Just as stories have a narrative or sense of logical progression and connection, so the *Meditations* can be viewed as a sort of journey.

(Southwell, 2008:10)

Southwell (2008:10) thus describes an intrinsic formulation of Cartesian thought as narrative. Descartes' inclination towards narrative however, evidences itself not only between the arguments of the Mediations, but within the *cogito* itself. This reception of Descartes' thinking can thus be traced back to the presence of 'ergo', a point of contact between two distinct orders, that offers contact as the sublimation of both orders into a grander, overarching narrative.

Understanding 'ergo' as an element of the *cogito* that constructs a uniformity through narrative, comes to explain how it is that thinkers like Eisner (2001), McCloud (1993) and others could have mistaken comics as fragmentary and society as unified. The *cogito's* 'ergo' constructs and actively promotes a sense of the necessity for a unified narrative. This necessity for a unified narrative arises since the *cogito* cannot conceive of a formulation for reality without an 'ergo'. Given this need for unity, the perception arises that it is society that is stable and comics fragmented, a perception wholly discredited by McLuhan (1997:167). What comics offers coincides with McLuhan's (1997:168) reasoning -- a *cogito*

sum (I think I am). It is a formulation that mimics Descartes' fabled system of doubt, but unlike the *cogito*, it is a formulation that allows for a changing context. With *cogito sum*, society grows and develops as a result of its tools, comics being one such tool.

Without the necessity for a unified narrative (and the correspondent attempts to manufacture unification), Descartes' reliance on narrative to underwrite his pursuit of interactionism becomes suspect.

For the superhero genre (especially the so-called Silver Age of DC, and the first publication in the 60s of Timely's 'Marvels') the origin story was traditionally espoused later than the first issue. The origin story would often meditate on a superhero's current predicament. The superhero's origin story would in such cases construct a paradigm of association between two functional orders (as dualism would have) but without resorting to having the artifice of narrative conjoin them. An origin story recalled to another character or simply to the superhero themselves, would appear as if constructed around the concept of comics themselves; two panels separated by a gutter. Such origin stories seem to construct a *cogito sum*, without needing to resort to the resurrection of an *ergo* to answer for the considerations of interactionism.

The construction of a *cogito sum* form of origin story is something that writer of *Hellblazer*, Andy Diggle (Diggle & Manco, 2008) exploits to full effect in *Joyride*. Returning to his 'place of origin' John Constantine, the story's titular *Hellblazer*, finds that Ravenscar Asylum is now a luxurious hotel and casino. Decades earlier, Constantine had been incarcerated in Ravenscar after (what he claimed as) a failed exorcism. Due to the comicbook's ambivalent view on magic, it is entirely possible that Constantine had simply suffered a psychotic break and that no exorcism had indeed been performed. More of a confidence artist than magician, Constantine hypnotizes the staff into believing that he broke the bank at roulette, and consequently becomes title-holder to the Ravenscar property. For Constantine, clearing out the resort and dismissing the staff is means of creating an empty stage for the coming catharsis. For Constantine, an empty Ravenscar is nothing more than a way of plumbing the depths of his origin.



TWO YEARS THEY HAD ME LOCKED UP HERE, OFF AND ON.

SO HOW IS HE?

THE PUNK ROCKER?

NASTY PIECE OF WORK.

BACK BEFORE THATCHER SOLD IT OFF TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND BLAIR TURNED IT INTO A SUPER-CASINO.



AGGRESSIVE?

ONLY TOWARDS HIMSELF. WE'VE HAD TO JACKET HIM.

HE WAS CUTTING HIMSELF, DISRUPTING HIS ROOM. SAID THE WALLS WERE TOO THIN, SOMETHING MIGHT GET IN.



HE'S IN A SOFT CELL. WHAT IS THERE TO DISRUPT?



AFTER ALL, WHY TREAT THE MENTALLY ILL WHEN YOU CAN FLEECE 'EM FOR EVERY PENNY THEY'VE GOT?

YOU'LL SEE.

THOUGHT YOU'D WANT TO TAKE A LOOK BEFORE WE SCRUB IT DOWN.

I'D LIE AWAKE MOST NIGHTS, UNABLE TO SLEEP FOR THE NOISE...



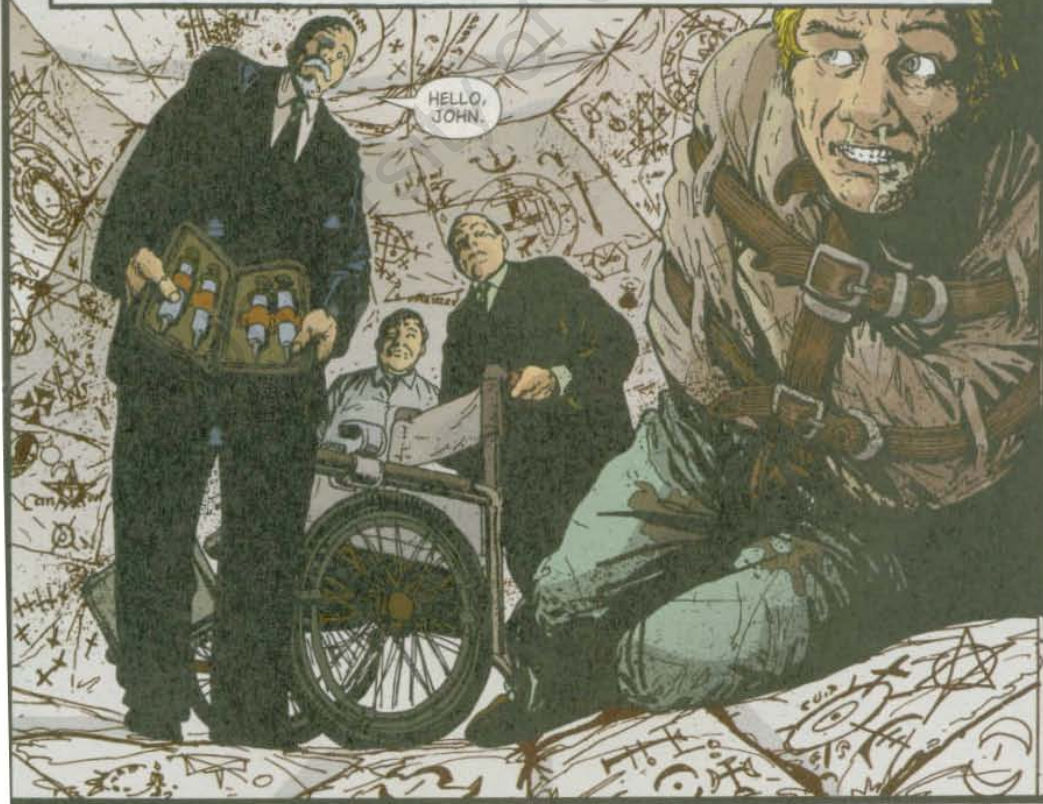
HE'D BIT OPEN HIS FINGERS.

I ASKED HIM WHY HE DID IT, AND D'YOU KNOW WHAT HE TOLD ME...?

"ART MATERIALS."

...THE MOANING AND THE WAILING, THE SOBBING AND THE GIGGLING AND THE SCREAMING.







WHY, JOHN...?

WHY DID YOU SEND ME TO HELL...?



IT'S NOT HER--

IT'S NOT ASTRA LOGUE--

--THE LITTLE GIRL I DAMNED WHILE TRYING TO SAVE.



IT'S JUST MY OWN GUILT--

MY MADNESS--

AN INSANITY-THING, TORN FROM ME BY DALTON-BREWER'S CRUDE MAGIC ALL THOSE YEARS AGO--

--AND NOW MADE FLESH BY MY OWN.



SHE'S TINY. HARMLESS.

BUT WHATEVER IT WAS THAT I CHASED DOWN HERE...



AAAH--!

...IT WAS BIGGER.



AND IN THAT SUDDEN SPIKE OF PURE AND PERFECT TERROR--

--I KNOW I'VE MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE.



HOPELESS--

IT'S TOO BIG--

I CAN'T FIGHT IT--

I'M WORTHLESS--

DAD ALWAYS KNEW IT--
HE KNEW I SHOULD
NEVER HAVE BEEN BORN--

ALMOST SAW TO IT
THAT I WASN'T, WITH A
BOTTLE OF GIN AND A
BENT COAT-HANGER--

IT SHOULD HAVE
BEEN ME--

IT SHOULD HAVE
BEEN ME--

NO.

THIS IS BULLSHIT.
IT'S ALL IN
MY HEAD--

IT'S FEEDING OFF MY
OWN WEAKNESS AND
SELF-LOATHING--

FUCK
OFF OUT
OF IT!



THIS WHOLE PLAY--PEARLY, THE ROULETTE WHEEL, THE MIRROR-CAGE--ALL OF IT WAS PLANNED TO GET ME TO EXACTLY THIS POINT.

TO RECONCILE MYSELF WITH WHATEVER PART OF ME I'D LEFT BEHIND HERE.

THE PART THAT'S BEEN FEEDING OFF ME EVER SINCE.

MAKING ME WEAK.



FUNNY HOW SMALL IT LOOKS NOW IN THE COLD LIGHT OF DAY.

HARMLESS, REALLY. ALMOST LAUGHABLE.



ALL THE FEAR AND GUILT AND SELF-HATRED THAT CONSUMED ME AFTER THE BOTCHED EXORCISM IN NEWCASTLE...



...ALL BOILED DOWN INTO ONE TINY, HELPLESS LITTLE FORM.



By the end of *Blitz*, Johns (Johns & Kolins, 2004) offers a different formulation of the *cogito sum* origin story.

The Flash, long since publicly unmasked as Wally West, struggles to defend his family against the ongoing threats posed by the paparazzi, who might lead supervillains to his door.

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After Wally's final conflict with Professor Zoom, the Reverse Flash, Wally is prepared to quit as the Flash to protect his family. It is this decision that forces

Wally's mentor, and previous Flash, Barry Allen, to return from his retirement in the distant future.









I DON'T HESITATE. ALL I CAN THINK OF IS ONE THING--

--LINDA AND I WILL HAVE OUR LIVES BACK.



YOU'RE WELL ON YOUR WAY, HAL.



WELL ON MY WAY? TO WHAT?



LIKE HAL, WE'LL HAVE OUR SECOND CHANCE. WITHOUT INTERFERENCE.

WITHOUT THE THREATS OR THE WORRY.

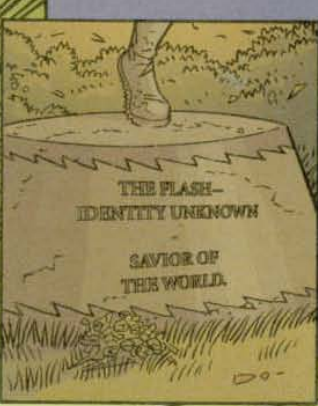
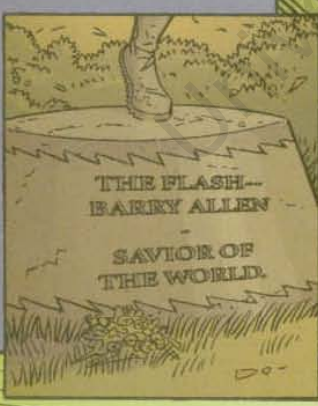
WE CAN BE NORMAL PEOPLE AGAIN.

I CAN BE NORMAL AGAIN.

I CAN BE WALLY WEST.

AND AT THE SAME TIME I CAN STILL BE THE FASTEST MAN ALIVE.

I CAN BE THE--



NO ONE WILL REMEMBER. NOT EVEN...



In the short epilogue to *Blitz*, Johns not only cedes an introduction to new regular artist Alberto Dose (Johns &

Kolins:220), but, also constructs a visual metaphor for McLuhan's idea of a single comics but a changing society.

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In his 1953 novel *Childhood's End*, Clarke (2001) manages to unite the literary genre of the extraterrestrial encounter with the emerging scientific discipline of xenosociology. The use of scientific fact, paired with literary fiction (so-called 'hard' science-fiction) is by no means unique. This particular pairing however does pose the question as to whether Clarke's conjoining of these specific genre was by chance, or whether he responded to some essential connection. Clarke's opening for the novel remains memorable to this day. Just prior to the first historical launch into space (Sputnik would be launched in October of 1957), Clarke's fictive American and Soviet space program heads, attempt to calculate technological advantage that the other might possess. Each scientist is convinced that they have lost the race, perhaps by years. Before calculations can be completed however, alien ships appear in the sky. Humanity, the Russian observes, has not lost the space race by years or even decades, but by millennia.

Not the expeditionary forces of a colonizing, warlike species, Clarke's aliens, the 'Overlords', instead usher in a new era of peace and prosperity. Various social ailments are all neutralized by the technology and social engineering of the benevolent aliens. But Clarke emphasizes this act as a conquest of humankind in that eventually the notions of competition and achievement begin to disappear. But there is to be no direct confrontation between humans and aliens. For slightly more than a century, the aliens remain secluded aboard their spacecraft, communicating through voice alone.

As the novel progresses, the aliens' true purpose is finally discovered. The Overlords have arrived to usher in the next evolutionary leap, a successor species born of humans that will ultimately come to replace their ancestors. These Children of Humanity (as they are dubbed) while still nascent, face the threat of destruction at the hands of humanity. Falsely perceived as genetic mutations and gifted with astonishing telepathic and telekinetic abilities, the Children of Humanity might become the target of human evolutionary drives to destroy a competitor species. The aliens have arrived to prevent such a evolutionary-driven destruction of the new species. However, the Overlords also bear grim news for humanity. With the arrival of the Children, humans will lose their procreative capacities. Homo sapiens sapiens was nothing but the prolonged childhood

of the Children. The current generation of humans will be the final. With the coming changes to Earth's biosphere (made by the Children to sustain their new physical form), humans face a global climate catastrophe. Given the grim reality of the human situation, and as a final act of mercy, the Overlords permit humanity to decide its own fate. Humanity agrees to a species-wide suicide, effected through the detonation of a series of nuclear bomb blasts. Hence the title of the novel, *Childhood's End*, refers to the mass suicide event of the human race.

Clarke (2001) thus presents an outlandish schema. His first proposition is that childhood necessarily ends in suicide. His second is that suicide is always technologically imbricated. His third proposition is that for children to survive suicide (as his Children do), an alien influence must appear (as with his Overlords). By posing key questions, this chapter interrogates Clarke's (2001) schema as to its validity. Is Clarke wholly unique in making these three propositions, or have they been suggested elsewhere before? Seeking to define both childhood and suicide, this chapter proceeds to their relation to each other, and the latter's relation to technology.

where are they?!

The sheer size and age of the universe leads to a very strong mathematical probability for the existence of extraterrestrial life. Yet thus far in human history, alien species have yet to be encountered. In 1950, Nobel Laureate Enrico Fermi summed up this paradox with a statement at once exclamatory and interrogative, 'Where are they?!' (Jakosky, 1998:286). This statement is popularly taken to inaugurate the field of xenosociology.

Expounding on the mathematics of this paradox, Jakosky (1998:285-6) writes,

[Fermi's] argument followed this logic: If intelligent life exists, it rapidly (over perhaps only thousands of years) would develop the technology that would allow it to travel between the stars. Even at speeds much less than the speed of light, speeds that we can imagine are achievable, travel between the stars is feasible. It might take many generations for a spacecraft to reach another star, but it would not be impossible. It is hard for many to believe that a civilization would not want to travel between stars if it could do so. Supposes a civilization sent spacecraft out to the nearest several stars. The trip would take only hundreds or perhaps a thousand years at speeds of 1-10% of the speed of light. Once there, if a planet existed that could be colonized, it would take less than 1000 years (only 30-100 generations for humans) to build up a new civilization and again develop the ability to send spacecraft to the nearest stars. At relatively short intervals, then, a civilization could expand out into the

galaxy, colonizing all of the planets that were found to be habitable.

At a travel speed of 1% of the speed of light, and allowing a suitable time on each planet before going on to the next, 1000 years for example, a civilization would overrun the galaxy in less than a few tens of millions of years. This is such a short time compared with the age of the galaxy, or even the age of the Earth, that Fermi wondered, where are they? Why have we seen no evidence that our planet has been visited by such a civilization? It would be extremely unlikely that Earth is the first civilization to appear in the galaxy. Therefore there must be no other intelligent life in the galaxy. This logical argument is known as Fermi's paradox.

(Jakosky, 1998:285-286)

More than simply searching for intelligent alien life, xenosociology attempts to map out what such intelligent life might look like (biologically as well as sociologically) and how it might possibly have come into existence.

Rather than presenting a properly rigorous scientific discipline, xenosociology is in truth a linguistic or semiotic project. As required by Saussure (1983:181), xenosociology is properly composed of three elements; a sign naming itself and simultaneously isolating itself from other signs in the language-state, a syntagmatic (or synchronic or horizontal) movement allowing it to be conjoined with other signs in sequence, and a vertical (or diachronic or paradigmatic) movement that allows for various substitutions or transformations of words over time.

On the importance of synchrony and diachrony, Saussure (1983:181) writes:

In discourse, on the one hand, words acquire relations based on the linear nature of language because they are chained together. This rules out the possibility of pronouncing two elements simultaneously. The elements are arranged in sequence on the chain of speaking. Combinations supported by linearity are *syntagms*. The syntagm is always composed of two or more consecutive units... In the syntagm a term acquires its value because it stands in opposition to everything that precedes or follows it, or both.

Outside discourse, on the other hand, words acquire relations of a different kind. Those that have something in common are associated in the memory, resulting in groups marked by diverse relations.

...We see that the co-ordinations formed outside discourse differ strikingly from those formed inside discourse. Those formed outside discourse are not supported by linearity. Their seat is in the brain; they take part of an inner storehouse that makes up the language of each speaker. They are *associative relations*.

...From the associative and syntagmatic viewpoint a linguistic unit is like a fixed part of a building, e.g. a column. On the one

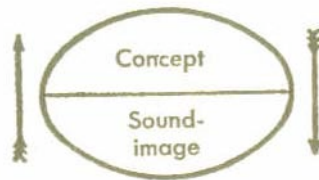
hand, the column has a certain relation to the architrave that it supports; the arrangement of the two units in space suggests the syntagmatic relation. On the other hand, if the column is Doric, it suggests a mental comparison of this style with others (Ionic, Corinthian, etc.) although none of these elements is present in space: the relation is associative.

(Saussure, 1983:181)

Earlier in the same study, Saussure (1983:172) offers the following tract on signs:

The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image. The latter is not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on our senses.

...The linguistic sign is then a two-sided psychological entity that can be represented by the drawing:



The two elements are intimately united, and each recalls the other. Whether we try to find the meaning of the Latin word *arbor* or the word that Latin uses to designate the concept "tree," it is clear that only the associations sanctioned by that language appear to us to conform to reality, and we disregard whatever others might be imagined.

(Saussure, 1983:172)

What Saussure renders then, is a properly named structure that is segregate from, but able to conjoin with others in a linear fashion. Simultaneously this structure is subject to a vertical or associative relation that would allow one term to be substituted for another. Fermi's Paradox conforms to exactly this structure. 'Where are they', has its own internally horizontal sequence. The sheer scale of the universe, inexorably leads to the probability of the existence of alien life. Yet, paradoxically, this syntagm enters into an associative relationship (a paradigm) with a lack of evidence. This semiotic model, recurs time and again, throughout the twentieth century.

childhoods end

Where do childhoods end?

Clarke's (2001) novel offers a secondary philosophical inquiry in his reflections on human evolution. Clarke implicitly argues for subsequent evolutions to *homo sapiens sapiens*. Clarke envisions transgressive

evolutions that ultimately shed material existence. Clarke's theorizing begs the question of processes by which humankind might effect such evolutionary leaps. In the novel, the Overlord Karellen offers a very clear image of the situation in which early-stage humans (the parent generation), still alive in New Athens, now find themselves.

In his final address to humanity the Overlord says, 'It would be simplest, perhaps, and most merciful, to destroy you - as you yourselves would destroy a mortally wounded pet you loved. But this I cannot do. Your future will be your own to choose in the years that are left to you.' Clarke offers a strong intimation that, in the wake of this address, the remaining humans participate in a technology-assisted mass suicide. This plot device brings into question the role of suicide in both species evolution and the psychological development of the individual. Moreover, the use of this plot device raises a question around the connection between Clarke's project of a binaried deconstruction (2001), the semantic project that underpins the field of xenosociology, and the aforementioned role of suicide.

Clarke details a complex scope of suicide, offering various readings of the novel's mass suicide event. He presents this mass suicide as a 'humanizing' response to an impending evolutionary tyranny of the Children of Humankind. Clarke also posits the suicide as response to a lapse of purpose. Finally, Clarke suggests the suicide as humanity's possible revenge on their alien captors and on the planet through use of world-damaging technology. Clarke's threefold schema prefigures the work of Chidester on suicide.

Chidester (1988) presents a topology for the critical reception of suicide. The mass suicide of Jim Jones and the People's Temple in Guyana, in November of 1978 is extrapolated into a fourfold genealogy. Chidester concludes that this mass suicide event was intuitively understood by its participants as: a purification ritual, the active pursuit of a promise of release from suffering, revenge against a United States government that provoked them, an act of revolution aimed at undoing the false classifications imposed by a hostile, dehumanizing society. Clarke's schema defending the mass suicide event of his novel (2001) is thus congruent with Chidester's critical genealogy on the subject.

Alvarez (1972) argues that suicide in the twentieth century was a result of the rapid spread and uptake of technology. The central image of his book (Alvarez, 1972), *the Savage God* is derived directly from the *Autobiographies* of William Butler Yeats (Alvarez, 1972:

viii). Quoted in the frontispiece of his book (Alvarez, 1972: viii), Yeats writes: 'after us the Savage God'. At once, Yeats points to a condition of both pursuit and succession, playing on the inherent double meaning in the phrase 'after us'. Alvarez (1972:75) expands the quotation of Yeats' imagery: 'After Stéphane Mallarmé, after Paul Verlaine, after Gustav Moreau, after Puvis de Chavannes, after my own verse, after all our subtle colour and nervous rhythm, after the faint mixed tints of Conder, what more is possible? After us the Savage God.' Alvarez (1972:75) explains his use of Yeats illustrating how art in the twentieth century had become imbricated with the practice of suicide. The Savage God, Alvarez argues, demands a blood-tithe from its followers. In the twentieth century, artists of all descriptions, have succumbed to this demand.

In the closing chapter, Alvarez (1972:206) proffers a final explanation of his use of Yeats' image. For Alvarez (1972:206), this God is a two-headed beast. Alvarez speaks of the Savage God having its roots in two movements that he identifies as crucial to twentieth century. The first movement was the general social disruption that came with the disintegration of traditionally established relationships. The second was the rapid spread of industrialization, which ended, in the early part of that century, with the industrialization of war. Only after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as Alvarez (1972:206) points out, did humankind come to terms with the direct industrialization of death. The processes of industrialism that were at the outset aimed towards assisting the acts of human living now presented humankind with the 'lunatic spin-off' (Alvarez:206) of creating kinds of death that were no longer determined by natural rhythms. It was between these two forces, the decay of a the established social fabric of the nineteenth century, and the industrialization of death, that the Savage God of Alvarez arose.

Cannadine's (1998) critical reception of the theme of suicide, presents a cursory topology of suicide. Reviewing Anderson's (1987) *Suicide in Victorian and Edwardian England*, Cannadine suggests that academically the problem of suicide has always been treated as either a problem of psychoanalysis, or one that is sociologically rooted. The cause of the problem thus lies either with the individual, or with society at large. Cannadine (1998:128) contends that this striation is doubly problematic. While the psychoanalytic approach produces highly personal encounters with suicide, it remains myopic in its scope, never outlining the effects on broader society. Alternatively, the sociological

approach, in assessing the problem of suicide from the level of society, fails to address individual needs during the causative phase of the suicide itself. The simple marriage of the two approaches fails to map sufficiently the changes in notion of suicide itself. Anderson (1987) presents an exegesis of instances of suicide through a study of the society that produced these acts. Connecting with Alvarez's view on the connection between suicide and technology, Cannadine (1998:128) highlights the importance Anderson places on technology. Suicide, Anderson (Cannadine, 1998:128) argues, is a function of available technologies of the era. Fewer railways and hospitals in the countryside equate to fewer suicides, but also equate to fewer suicide survivors.

Anderson's (Cannadine, 1998:126) study of suicide shows contiguity from social to the personal. Moreover her study demonstrates how the changing ideological and semiotic landscapes of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in England begin to bear down on and alter the notion of suicide itself. A suicide in the 1816 countryside, Anderson (Cannadine, 1998:128) contends, is not the same as a suicide in London in 1903. This remains true for both the individual and society.

What Cannadine reads in Anderson is a rote by which the association between suicide and technology can be studied. Cannadine thus reconstructs Anderson's 'scholarly accomplishments' (Cannadine, 1998:126) as technologies in their own right. Cannadine's (1998) reading of Anderson thus produces a paradigmatic relation between suicide, technology and the scholarship of suicide. While in her own scholarship Anderson (1987) establishes a syntagmatic relation between suicide in a particular historical context and technological progression in that same era. Thus suicide is in the strict Saussurean (1983) sense a linguistic sign and the product of a semiotic model.

Clarke's (2001:88) association of mass suicide with technology thus appears non-incidental. Alvarez (1972), Cannadine (1998) and Anderson (1987) affirm this connection. But the relation between suicide and technology is one in a series of relations presented by Clarke's schema (itself underpinned by Saussure's semantic project). The central relation of Clarke's schema, the relation between childhood's end and suicide, remains to be discussed.

The semantic project first suggest by Saussure (1983) evidences itself again in Freud (Rickman, 1957). The deathdrive, or *Thanatos* appropriates a conceptual mapping similar to Saussure's linguistic sign. The deathdrive is

described in three papers from 1914 until 1920, 'Instincts and their Vicissitudes' (1915), 'On Narcissism: an Introduction' (1914) and 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (1920)²³. Moreover the semiotic model developed by Freud conforms to the semantic project of Saussure (1983). With each subsequent paper, Freud (Rickman, 1957) offers a different view on the construction and functioning of the deathdrive. Hence a paradigmatic order of substitution exists between the constituting elements of the deathdrive. Yet with each subsequent paper's expanding on the essential notion of the deathdrive, and each paper's associating the deathdrive with various psychical processes, Freud (Rickman, 1957) establishes a syntagmatic value for the deathdrive.

Freud's papers 'On Narcissism' (1914) and 'Instincts and their Vicissitudes' (1915) lay the groundwork for his later 1920 theoretical model of the deathdrive. In these papers Freud (Rickman, 1957:124) proposes a dichotomy between the ego and libidinal instincts. With the concept of narcissism introduced in the earlier paper, Freud (Rickman, 1957:123) hypothesizes that libidinal forces of attachment, usually directed outward towards a love object, are now directed inwards, towards the ego. This hypothesis effectively nullifies Freud's proposed dichotomy. This breakdown of the dichotomy model becomes more apparent in the following year with Freud's (Rickman, 1957:146) paper dealing directly with instinct.

In trying to explain the incidence of masochism, Freud (Rickman, 1957:147) finds neither the ego nor libidinal instincts can fully explain the desire for self-injury. Since masochism is directed towards neither sustaining the ego nor towards organ-pleasure (the role constructed earlier for libidinal forces), a conceptual understanding must be sought. To produce this new schema, Freud (Rickman, 1957:144) makes a closer appraisal of the hypothesis of instincts. In 1915, Freud (Rickman, 1957:145) presents a revised hypothesis of instinct which suggests at least three properties; repression, sublimation and self-reversal. Freud (Rickman, 1957:120 - 149) acknowledges that both the 1914 and 1915 models prove insufficient when attempting to explain masochism.

After case-studies with veterans of the Great War, and an analogy made with childhood games, Freud (Rickman, 1957:173) hypothesizes that masochism is a form of self-mastery of trauma. According to this model traumatic experiences become the content of repetition disorders simply because such experiences must be mastered for

²³ These three papers all appear in *A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud*, edited by J. Rickman.

their inherent anxiety to be nullified. Veterans are given to repetition disorders, just as children are in their gameplay (Freud's (Rickman, 1957:175) Fort-Da principle). The repetitions of both veterans and children can be explained by the same underlying cause; that of dealing with and mastering trauma. Of fundamental interest to Freud is the invariable self-mastery that comes from masochism.

This new syntagmatic, mastery-from-masochism, or either of its constituent parts, is what now opposes the Eros in paradigmatic tension. And as befitting a proper semiotic schema, this model is named, given the proper linguistic sign of 'deathdrive'. Freud theorizes that the deathdrive grows more powerful than and eventually overcomes the Eros. Thus not at all outlandish, Clarke's (2001) original schema attempts to explain why childhood clearly does not end in suicide. For Clarke (2001) the argument is clear that to prevent childhood ending in suicide, an alien influence must appear. 'Childhood', however is not a universal concept, and is subject to historical and sociocultural forces.

Ariès (1960) observes that as late as the Middle Ages, the concept of childhood was wholly absent from the European imagination. In these times the word 'child' was not culturally indicative of undeveloped capacity, but simply described a younger human being. Childhood, as a conceptual distinction, did not exist. Thus it was not uncommon that the medieval mind observe a secret life of children replete with roles, conventions and politics as intricate as the world of adults (Ariès, 1960:132). During the Renaissance, particularly during the sixteenth century, Ariès (1960:128) observes a shift in this tradition. During this period a sociological construction of the concept childhood begins to emerge. During this period children become viewed as a source of joy and amusement, free from the constraints of adult life (Ariès 1960:128). Citing Argan's *La Malade Imaginaire*²⁴, Ariès (1960:128) describes how Argan's daughter (Louison) attempts to enter her father's world by amusing her father's guests either with her antics, or a fable she's learnt. For Ariès, this demonstrates how the world of childhood has receded from adult life. He posits (Ariès, 1960:128) that this withdrawal is due to the growing political complexity of the adult world.

This scene is contrasted sharply with a subsequent one, played out between Argan and his brother wherein Argan's brother in dispensing advice is dismissive of Louison. The brother suggests that Argan should deal with his sole daughter, 'for I do not count the little one (Louison)'

²⁴ Cited in Ariès Conclusion to *Centuries of Childhood*

(Ariès, 1960:128). The world of the sixteenth century, presented by Ariès, is one in which only adults may be legitimated as 'daughter' or 'son'. Ariès cites these scenes from Argan's *La Malade Imaginaire*²⁵ to argue for the production of a distinct concept for childhood emerging during the sixteenth century.

Ariès (1960:128) thus notes that the first 'age' of childhood, the sociological shifts of the sixteenth century, arose from within the family. This concept of childhood was tied to the specialization of certain domestic attendants as child-minders. Underpinning this phenomenon itself was the establishment of an urban middle class. Over the course of the seventeenth century, this new model of childhood (by this time firmly established as distinguishable from adult life) undergoes a radical transformation (Ariès, 1960:131). Rather than being shaped by and remaining within the family, the notion of childhood during the seventeenth century impacts on society in general. During the seventeenth century the notion of children as a source of pleasure for adults itself came under a form of social rebuke. Families who publicly adored their children, now became the subject of social criticism. Ariès (1960:131) argues 'that it was no longer desirable that children should mingle with adults, especially at table; no doubt because if they did they were "spoiled" and became ill-mannered'. Ariès (1960:131):

Thus the austere Fleury, in his treatise on studies, speaks very much like Montaigne: 'When little children are caught in a trap, when they say something foolish, drawing a correct inference from an irrelevant principle which has been given to them, people burst out laughing, rejoice at having tricked them, or kiss and caress them as if they had worked out the correct answer. It is as if the poor children had been made only to amuse the adults, like little dogs or little monkeys.'

(Ariès, 1960:131)

Effectively over the course of the seventeenth century, the concept of childhood shifted from merely a social function within the family, to becoming a distinctive and functional stratum within society. This stratum would be subject to the moralist discourses and social restructuring popular during that century. The seventeenth century thus begins to build a psychic interiority for childhood. In his conclusion, 'The Two Concepts of Childhood' Ariès (1960:132) outlines the evolution of childhood over the centuries:

The first concept of childhood - characterized by 'coddling' - had made its appearance in the family circle, in the company of little children. The second, on the contrary, sprang from a source outside the family: churchmen or gentlemen of the

²⁵ Cited in Ariès Conclusion to *Centuries of Childhood*

robe, few in number before the sixteenth century, and a far greater number of moralists in the seventeenth century, eager to ensure disciplined, rational manners. They too had become alive to the formerly neglected phenomenon of childhood, but they were unwilling to regard children as charming toys, for they saw them as fragile creatures of God who needed to be both safeguarded and reformed. This concept in its turn passed into family life.

In the eighteenth century, we find those two elements in the family, together with a new element: concern about hygiene and physical health.

(Ariès, 1960:132)

As with Freud, Ariès argues for childhood to be connected with both repetition and artifice.

history of suicide

Both King (2000:129) and Clarke (2001:1) present an alternate reading of the deathdrive, one that contradicts the implications of Freud's (Rickman, 1957:174) original model where the deathdrive overwhelms the child and childhood ends in suicide. King and Clarke both agree that for childhood to be successfully mastered, and the influence of the deathdrive to be limited, an external agency must appear. In Clarke (2001:1) this external agency takes the form of the alien armada appearing on the horizon. King (2001:64, 129) reads the battle-cruiser in Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (King, 2001:64, 129) as that external agency. Once this external agency appears, childhood ends, but also escapes the trap of suicide as presupposed by the deathdrive. King (2000) and Clarke (2001) thus present a subtle rereading of Freud's (Rickman, 1957) deathdrive, and an explanation as to why life continues after childhood.

But King (2000:129), perceives an even subtler critique of his own rereading of the deathdrive. 'The boys on the island were rescued by the crew of a battle-cruiser... but who would rescue the crew', Bobby wondered (King, 2000:129). Bobby (King, 2000:129) muses further,

What if there were no grownups? Suppose the whole idea of grownups was an illusion? What if their money was really just playground marbles, their business deals no more than baseball-card trades, their wars only games of guns in the park?... Christ, that couldn't be, could it? It was too horrible to think about.

(King, 2000:129)

King suggests the deathdrive as self-perpetuating, raising the possibility that the original trauma causing repetitive behavior is never fully reduced to zero. Rather than present an end to the entanglement of childhood and the deathdrive (and a means to obviate the act of suicide), King (2000) and Clarke (2001) present a series of childhoods that simply forestall an inevitable

suicide. As external agencies appear forcing the deathdrive to remit, they are consumed by the present childhood entangled with its deathdrive until other external agencies must appear to again force the abeyance of that deathdrive. Thus according to King (2000), childhood is interminable, consuming each of its rescuers in succession.

The extension of the deathdrive from the level of childhood to society must again contend with a contradiction by established fact. Just as it is the case that childhood does not by necessity end in suicide, so too does the fact of society being self-sustaining contradict King (2000) and Clarke's (2001) suggestion of a series of childhoods perpetually forestalling an invariable suicide. In this way, Freud's (Rickman, 1957:174) model is exhausted and ultimately proves insufficient for explaining Clarke's (2001) association of childhood with suicide. But the model described by Freud (Rickman, 1957:174) rests upon the binaried semiotic model of the linguistic sign developed by Saussure (1983:172). If Freud's (Rickman, 1957) model, the deathdrive, proves insufficient for explaining the relation between childhood and suicide, then Saussure's (1983) model must also be brought into question.

Discussing the cinema, Deleuze (1995) identifies difficulties that arise when uncritically importing alien discourses. Deleuze (1995:58 - 59) reproves of the use of psychoanalysis or linguistics to describe the cinema.

The concepts philosophy introduces to deal with cinema must be specific, must relate specifically to cinema. You can of course link framing to castration, or close-ups to partial objects, but I don't see what this tells us about cinema. It's questionable whether the notion of the "imaginary," even, has any bearing on cinema; cinema produces reality.

...It's the same with linguistics: it also provides only concepts applicable to cinema from outside, the "syntagm" for instance. But that immediately reduces the cinematic image to an utterance, and its essential characteristic, its motion, is left out of consideration.

(Deleuze, 1995:58-59)

Therefore, just as the philosophical concepts used to interrogate the cinema must arise from the cinema itself, so too must the concepts used to interrogate the relation between suicide and childhood arise from that relation itself.

The project to philosophically interrogate the relation between childhood and suicide must therefore follow a similar pattern to Deleuze's (1995) project of interrogating the cinema. Deleuze (1995) offers a clear distinction between the role of "natural" and

"historical" histories in his own body of work.²⁶ Deleuze describes how signs in the cinema are produced by auteurs, yet any history of auteurism has failed to produce a notion of how these cinematic signs are developed. The appreciation of these signs, and how they interlock with major philosophical movements, is most properly the domain of the philosopher, Deleuze (1995) argues. What the philosopher of cinema produces is not similar to the material produced by the historian of cinema. While the historian studies the socioeconomic and geopolitical forces of production of the filmmaker and their work, the philosopher presents a reading of the works of the auteurs within the broader context of the major philosophical movements. Hence, the philosopher's work is not counter-historical, but ahistorical in the sense that it connects more readily with a kind of natural history, the history that specifies various types flora and fauna.

Deleuze produces a specific and rigorous description of what such a natural history of the cinema might entail. In keeping with his view that a philosophy of an object must be grounded in the practices of that object, Deleuze identifies this new philosophy of cinema by a set of images this cinema is able to render. Deleuze (1995:46) says of his project:

It aims to classify types of images and the corresponding signs, as one classifies animals. The main genres, the western, crime, period films, comedy, and so on, tell us nothing about the different types of images or their intrinsic characteristics. The different sorts of shot, on the other hand - close-up, long shot, and so on - do amount to different types of image, but there are lots of other factors, lighting, sound, time, which come in too. If I consider the field of cinema as a whole, it's because it's all built upon the movement-image. That's how it's able to reveal or create a maximum of different images, and above all to combine them with one another through *montage*. There are perception-images, action-images, affection-images, along with many other types. And in each case there are internal signs that characterize these images, from both genetic and compositional viewpoints. They're not linguistic signs, even when they're aural or even vocal. The significance of a logician like Peirce is to have worked out an extremely rich classification of signs, relatively independent of the linguistic model. It was particularly tempting to see whether the moving matter introduced by cinema was going to require a new understanding of images and signs. In this sense I've tried to produce a book on logic, a logic of cinema.

(Deleuze, 1995:46)

²⁶ This interview is reprinted in the semi-autobiographical *Negotiations*, which collects Deleuze's letters and writings circa 1972 until 1990.

Deleuze identifies a key transition that discerns his natural history of the cinema from other philosophical projects on the cinema. This transition (Deleuze, 1995:53) is the movement from a cinematic sign's visibility to its legibility. Deleuze (1995:53) states:

This [move away from the kind of semiotic schema created by the importing of linguistic analysis] corresponds to a transition from visibility to legibility. The legibility of images relates to the independence of their parameters and the divergence of series. There's another aspect, too, which takes us back to an earlier remark. It's the question of verticality. Our visual world's determined in part by our vertical posture...

...Maybe in cinema the screen retains only a purely nominal verticality and functions like a horizontal or tilting plane. Michael Snow has seriously questioned the dominance of verticality and has even constructed special equipment to explore the question. Cinema's great *auteurs* work like Varèse in music: they have to work with what they've got, but they call forth new equipment, new instruments. These instruments produce nothing in the hands of second-rate *auteurs*, providing only a substitute for ideas. It's the ideas of great *auteurs*, rather, that call them forth.

(Deleuze, 1995:53)

In this natural history of the cinema, Deleuze (1995:52) presents a new kind of image; the time-image which is composed of 'crystals of time' (Deleuze, 1995:52). The shift from visibility to legibility (underpinned by the shift from verticality to horizontality) (Deleuze, 1995:53) prepares for the time which can depict both time and thought (Deleuze, 1995:52). Deleuze (1995:52) explains the emergence of the time-image thus:

Instead of linear development, we get a circuit in which the two images (the affection-image and the perception-image) are constantly chasing one another round a point where real and imaginary become indistinguishable. The actual image and its virtual image crystallize, so to speak. It's a crystal-image, always double or duplicated, which we already find in Renoir, but in Ophüls too, and which reappears in a different form in Fellini. There are many ways images can crystallize, and many crystalline signs. But you always see something in the crystal. In the first place, you see Time, layers of time, a direct time-image... Second, the image bears a new relation to its optical and aural elements: you might say that in its visionary aspect it becomes more "legible" than visible. So a whole pedagogy of the image, like Godard's, becomes possible. Finally, image becomes thought, is able to catch mechanisms of thought, while the camera takes on various functions strictly comparable to propositional functions.

(Deleuze, 1995:52)

Deleuze (2005:67) gives a more detailed explanation of the time-image in *Cinema 2*. He (Deleuze, 2005:67) begins this explanation by describing the difference between 'confusion' (a mental state of the viewer) and 'indiscernibility' (a relation between two images or

concepts). Indiscernibility constructs a cyclical relation between the virtual and the actual. Deleuze (2005:67) explains as follows:

The crystal-image, or crystalline-description, has two definite sides which are not to be confused. For the confusion of the real and the imaginary is a simple error of fact, and does not affect their discernibility: the confusion is produced solely 'in someone's head'. But indiscernibility constitutes an objective illusion; it does not suppress the distinction between the two sides, but makes it unattributable, each side taking the other's role in a relation we must describe as reciprocal presupposition or reversibility. In fact there is no virtual which does not become actual in relation to the actual, the latter becoming virtual through the same relation: it is a place and its obverse which are totally reversible. These are 'mutual images' as Bachelard puts it, where an exchange is carried out. The indiscernibility of the real and the imaginary, or of the present and the past, of the actual and the virtual, is definitely not produced in the head or the mind, it is the objective characteristic of certain existing images which are by nature double.

(Deleuze, 2005:67)

Following his description of the conceptual difference between confusion and indiscernibility, Deleuze (2005:68) proceeds to present an example of the time-image. The time-image, Deleuze (2005:68) argues, always presents itself as a circuit; the 'actual' enters into a self-perpetuating exchange with the 'virtual'. Deleuze (2005:58) states:

The most familiar case is the mirror. Oblique mirrors, concave and convex mirrors and Venetian mirrors are inseparable from a circuit, as can be seen throughout Ophüls's work, and in Losey, especially in *Eve* and *The Servant*. This circuit itself is an exchange: the mirror-image is virtual in relation to the actual character that the mirror catches, but it is actual in the mirror which now leaves the character with only a virtuality and pushes him back out-of-field. The exchange is all the more active when the circuit refers to a polygon with a growing number of sides: as in a face reflected in the facets of a ring, an actor seen in an infinity of twins...

...The actual image and its virtual image thus constitute the smallest internal circuit, ultimately a peak or point, but a physical point which has distinct elements (a bit like the epicurean atom). Distinct, but indiscernible, such are the actual and the virtual which are in continual exchange.

(Deleuze, 2005:58)

The concept of the time-image (a crystalline time in which the virtual and the actual perpetually exchange, thereby creating an objective illusion) appears in Clarke's *Childhood's End* (2001). According to the narrative the aliens, after their armada first appears on the horizon, refuse direct interaction with the humans. More than a century passes before an alien is even seen by human eyes. At this point, the aliens have become a

permanent fixture of the human experience. Whole generations have grown to adulthood never knowing a world without the alien armada hanging in the sky. When the aliens finally appear before human media, making their physical form known, humans reel; the benevolent Overlords (as humans have dubbed the aliens) who rescued human society from the brink of self-destruction physically resemble the traditional image of devils.

After the Overlords' final speech to humanity, Roderick, a human scientist, hypothesizes that humans and Overlords must have encountered each other millennia ago in human prehistory. Such an encounter would explain the uniform image of devils across human cultures. The Overlord commander corrects the basic premise of this hypothesis; humans and Overlords have not encountered each other prior to the incident which opened the novel. The Overlord commander hypothesizes that the resulting fear, anguish and grief associated with the aliens as 'causing' the end of humanity must have resulted in a psychic shockwave being sent back in time. This psychic wave allowed all human cultures to perceive the Overlord image prior to the two species meeting. Moreover this image would be associated with pain, suffering and hatred.

This psychic foreshadowing the aliens, prior to meeting, is a form of crystalline time. In it the virtual (the foreshadowed psychic image) and the actual (the media-shy, benevolent aliens) perpetually exchange. Devils as agents of despair and destruction (the virtual) intertwine with Overlords as providers of a world of material bliss (the actual). Readers are positioned by Clarke to interrogate the 'evil' of classical devils, while simultaneously to question the value of a materially harmonious world. Ultimately the traditional image of devils becomes a legible sign that must be read, rather than simply viewed. In this way, Clarke presents readers with a rudimentary time-image.

made me do it

In summary, the time-image is produced when an image is doubled, and an objective illusion between the actual and the virtual image occurs. This objective illusion (an indiscernibility) takes the form of a perpetual exchange between the two poles of virtual and actual. Often this perpetual exchange is marked by a shift from a vertical arrangement of the sign, to a horizontal one. In this way, the sign shifts from being simply visible to become legible, requiring a reader's critical engagement before it can be understood.

As a possible means of explaining his original schema, Clarke (2001) presents an elementary form of the time-image. The end of childhood in suicide, and the

prevention of that end by the appearance of an alien factor (external agency), is rendered as a crystalline time wherein the alien presence is psychically foreshadowed.

Crystalline time is common practice in comics, particularly in the superhero genre. The time-image of comics however, directly challenges the Freudian-Saussurean logic that childhood is invariably overwhelmed by the deathdrive. Similarly the comics time-image ascribes a different role to both the traumatized (the child) and the external agency that appears as rescuer.

A better example of comics' crystalline time is the Daredevil of Miller (Miller, 2001; McKenzie & Miller 2002). In these volumes, Miller (2001) uses crystalline time to depict the superhero as he moves both across the page and through time. Miller's (2001) experiments with depicting time evolves the view of the Daredevil character. Not only is Daredevil a risk-taker, but he becomes a force that impels action; a Devil who Dares himself and those around him to take action (Miller, 2001). This provides for a new relationship between traumatized and alien rescuer.

Miller (Miller, 2001; McKenzie & Miller 2002) presents two tropes of time-image; the slide from verticality to horizontality, and pure crystals of time. In the following example, the battle between Daredevil and his adversary Bullseye shifts from a standing position (verticality) in an unseen earlier panel to a prostrate position (horizontality). This horizontality is extended even further in the subsequent panel when Daredevil's fall (verticality) is depicted as on horizontal plane with the use of an overhead viewing angle. Miller (2001, N. pag.) illustrates the fight thus:



Miller's (Miller, 2001: N. pag.) second time-image trope is the depiction of Deleuzian crystals of time (Deleuze, 2005:67 - 68). In the example below (Miller, 2001: N. pag.) afterimages of Daredevil's movement appearing in the same panel as the character constitute an 'objective illusion' (Deleuze, 2005:67) between the actual (full-color) and virtual (the muted-palette afterimages) presence of the superhero at a single moment in time (i. e. the moment framed by one panel).

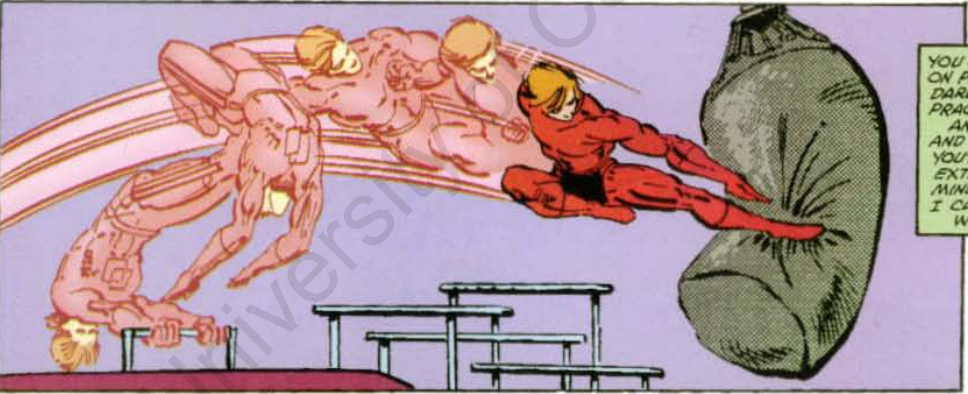
University of Cape Town



YOU'RE PROBABLY WORKING OUT RIGHT NOW, IN SOME PRIVATE GYM, SOMEWHERE WHERE YOU DON'T HAVE HEADACHES AND YOU DON'T HAVE TO LISTEN TO SNOTTY GUARDS OR BLEEDING HEART PAROLE OFFICERS.



PROBABLY PRACTICING THAT CRAZY, ECLECTIC FIGHTING STYLE OF YOURS... POLISHING UP EVERY KARATE BLOW YOU'VE USED ON ME.



YOU JUST KEEP ON PRACTICING, DAREDEVIL. YOU PRACTICE LONG AND HARD AND MAYBE YOU'LL LAST AN EXTRA TEN MINUTES WHEN I CATCH UP WITH YOU.



BUT YOU'LL DIE JUST THE SAME.

JUST WAIT...

With the above examples Miller (2001) thus constructs a legibility for his images. To be properly understood, the former image (Miller, 2001: N. pag.) must be read as a horizontal interpretation of vertical space. The perpetual exchange between the actual vertical space and the virtual horizontal space constitutes a Deleuzian objective illusion (Deleuze, 2005:67). In the latter image by Miller (2001: N. pag.) the actual image of Daredevil perpetually exchanges with the virtual afterimages of the character in the same panel (i. e. at the same moment in time). In both examples the images are no longer simple depictions of single moments in time, they become legible, requiring interpretation by the reader for the production of a linear narrative. The reader's immersion in a temporal multiplicity, and their activity required to successfully produce a single narrative from that multiplicity, is thus akin to the depicted superhero's success within the narrative.

Crystalline time appears also between creative teams of writer and artist and across decades, as it does within a single panel. Presenting their moment of trauma and revelation for Daredevil (pictured in the hospital bed) Bendis and Maleev (2004: N. pag.) recall Miller's (McKenzie & Miller, 2002: N. pag.) original 1980 moment of catharsis. Bendis and Maleev (2004: N. pag.) illustrate their moment thus:



There's *no* connection between Karen's sudden, violent death and the state you're in?

None?
You don't grant my "premise"?

I say: What does it *look like* when a man who dresses up like the *devil* has a nervous breakdown--

What does it *look* like?



If I had to close my eyes and *imagine* it? Bet it would look a lot like this.

It would look a lot like you taking the mantle of your greatest enemy...

Getting married behind everyone's back...

Blowing off your peers... ticking off the Feds...

Punishing your best friend by making him clean up your messes.



And then there's me...

...who you *disavowed* last year. Put me *out* of your life.

You *say* to keep me safe.

But I think *now*, I think that you subconsciously *wanted* me to come back into your life with fresh eyes--

So someone could look around and say, "What the hell is going on around here?"



I think you wanted me to figure this out.

I think you're screaming for help.

You're telling me that this woman, who you loved pretty much your entire adult life, is brutally murdered in front of you...

And ever since your life has spiraled out of control...



...and there's no connection.

This image sequence recalls Miller's (McKenzie & Miller, 2002: N. pag.) original depiction of a moment of simultaneous trauma and revelation:



Crystalline time presents a direct challenge to the Freudian-Saussurean model described in Clarke's original schema. As with the Freudian-Saussurean model the child experiences trauma which must be reduced to zero through the rehearsal of action. As with Clarke's schema, the appearance of an alien influence signals a potential reversal of the deathdrive overtaking the Eros. Yet King's (2000:129) hesitation still appends; that the alien influence providing rescue, is potentially consumed by the childhood's deathdrive. Unlike the former model, Deleuzian crystalline time inverts the relation between the victim and the rescuer, producing the child as rescuer rather than victim.

In that crystalline time must be decoded, it provides readers traumatized by the ostensible lack of a linear narrative, with an opportunity to produce that narrative for themselves. Moreover, the physical action of moving the eye across the page and the conceptual action of constructing the linear narrative relates closely to the superhero 'moving' across the page. The traumatized thus become their own means of rescue, required by crystalline time to discern and properly orient the objective illusion for themselves.

chapter five: lawlessness

lawless

Miller (2006: N. pag.²⁷), poses an ethical paradox for superheroes: "'Sure we're criminals,' you said. 'We've always been criminals.' 'We have to be criminals'". In prevailing upon his audience to actively answer their own ideals of justice, truth and fairness, Miller argues for the exemption of superheroes from the laws they serve. Thus painting superheroes, in contradiction to the prevailing norms, as lawless.

These words come not from Batman the eponymous Dark Knight but are uttered by Superman, the final villain of the piece. This monologue sets the stage for the graphic novel's final conflict between an aged Batman and a still-youthful Superman, and prepares readers for the presentation of Superman as the novel's final villain.

The premise for the graphic novel is simple. A generation later, in a world gone awry (because of social concerns like pervasive media scrutiny and permissive parenting), Batman returns from retirement to set the world to rights. Older but no less fierce, the Batman tackles villains from his own time, like the "therapeutically rehabilitated" Two-Face and Joker. Batman also faces threats from the newer, harsher world like the cannibalistic Mutants teenage-gang. The ultimate, villain in Miller's brave new world proves to be Superman, a friend and former ally to Batman.

In this garish, nightmare-vision of the future world of DC superheroes where Ronald Reagan maintains a virtual presidency through television, two titans come to blows. Superman (now loyal servant of an authoritarian state) contends against Batman (the pinnacle of human intellectual and physical achievement). Batman's re-donning of his superhero cowl has created a challenge to the power of the Reagan administration. In turn, the administration has sent in its most powerful weapon, a tamed superhuman, in Superman. In the quoted monologue Superman recalls Batman's response to various congressional subcommittees. In coloring the debate in these precise terms the stage is set for both the conflict between Batman and Superman and the ethical

²⁷ As a conceit of its "collector edition" branding the "Absolute" Edition printed in 2006, has unnumbered pages. The quote may be found on the thirtieth story page of the original comicbook *Dark Knight Returns pt.3 - Hunt the Dark Knight*. Punctuation within the quotation are as appear in the original.

ramifications thereof. Miller exposes a fundamental distinction in the nature of the two superheroes. Superman, appears as an agent of State power, while Batman answers to inhumanly high standards, near-unattainable ideals.

The distinction itself might prove nothing more than an intellectual curiosity, a creative attempt at reinvigorating old genre²⁸. However in the novel-length discussion *Eisner/Miller* Miller's (Brownstein, 2005:119) own comments would seem to detract from such a reading. In conversation around censorship in the American comics industry, Miller (Brownstein, 2005:119) suggests:

It's interesting that there have been a few times that there's been an overall movement in comics, and it's always coincided with them getting in a little bit of trouble. Look at the fifties and then look at the sixties when the undergrounds came out. They were the cause of much consternation because they were vulgar, they were obscene, they were sold in head shops. In both cases, they were creative triumphs precisely because they were outrageous and daring, which is what I think comics is made to be. I think there's something outlaw about the medium that's gotta be who we are, and the worst thing we've ever done is sanitize ourselves.

(Brownstein, 2005:119)

Miller (Brownstein, 2005:119) does not simply echo his earlier sentiment first expressed fictively eight years prior. Instead he offers a subtler, and textually far richer view of the connection between creativity, the comics medium, lawlessness, and diversity. "Vulgar" and "obscene" elements, the cause "of much consternation", tread an unsure path ending as "creative triumphs". All the while these elements (and indeed this creative path) prove "outrageous", "daring" and ultimately, "outlaw".

Miller's (Brownstein, 2005:119) view, far from creating a market economy of nostalgia and memorabilia, speaks directly to a vital and recurring creative impulse that is intimately connected with the comics medium. Comics themselves stem from a kind of lawlessness, Miller (Brownstein, 2005:119) intimates. Miller's (Brownstein, 2005:119) view of the medium is not unlike a recent schism emerging in the philosophical quantification of two rational sciences, physics and biology.

Kauffman (2008) cogently argues for the conceptual opposition between physics and biology. Quoting physicist Murray Gell-Mann, Kauffman (2008:5) states that a physical law is "a compact description beforehand of the regularities of a process". In the process of producing such compact descriptions, physics is wholly reliant on

²⁸ By 1985 both Superman and Batman would both have seen sixty years of uninterrupted publication before the decade ended

the philosophical model of reductionism. Reductionism is the mode of seeking to understand a constituted whole by understanding the form and function of its constituent elements²⁹.

Comics as described by Miller, and biology as rendered through the lens offered by Kauffman share something in common. Both focus upon the concept of emergence. Moreover, both produce emergence as a nexus for creativity and 'lawlessness'. In biology, 'lawless' is conceived of as unknowable through law. For Kauffman (2008:115) it is the idea that, unlike physics, "compact descriptions" of the "regularities of a process" cannot be delivered "beforehand". This refutes Gell-Mann's definition of 'law'. For Miller comics is 'outlaw', similarly beyond the law, and similarly this 'lawlessness' ends in 'creative triumphs'.

The connection between comics and biology (through emergent creativity and lawlessness) may appear arbitrary one, based on nothing more than semantic wordplay. But the connection is one that relies on both the aesthetic mechanics of comics and the rationalism of evolution. The basis for this deeper and more substantive connection can be found in how biology and comics both respond to the rationalism of David Hume, particularly the Naturalistic Fallacy. This Fallacy is commonly popularized as "Hume's Guillotine". Hume's Guillotine is a philosophical exhortation that prohibits the segueing from "is-statements" to "ought-statements".

²⁹ Physics could therefore be described as a "top-down" science, in that it seeks ever smaller particles and their interactions to explain the workings of the universe. Biology by contrast, Kauffman argues, could be labeled a "bottom-up" science. In studying the transmutations and evolutions of simple into more complex forms, biology is effectively the science of Emergence, Kauffman contends. Emergence is the scientific concept that describes how complex organisms structure ever-increasing complexity by becoming elemental particles in these more complex systems. An eye, for example, is the end-product of thousands of generations of evolution. By itself an eye is a work of singular complexity. But once evolved, the eye is simply a building block for predatory relations between species.

Emergence is the scientific and philosophical concept that complex systems arise from the interactions of comparatively simple systems. Hearts arising after thousands of years of evolution from the interaction of blood and muscle would be an example of evolutionary emergence. Biology therefore appears as the science of emergence in that it predicates itself upon observing the evolution of new species. But there is a deeper connotative sense to the concept of emergence. Emergence is connected with the idea of increasing complexity. Just as simple systems interact to produce more complex single elements, so too do these emergent elements interact to form more complex systems. It is not a case of hearts simply developing in isolation, but of hearts presupposing the evolution of an intricate system of blood vessels, arteries and veins which in turn cause capillarity to be emergent.

production, values

Scottish philosopher David Hume first proposed the Naturalistic Fallacy in the 1739 publication of his *Treatise on Human Reason* (2003:306),

In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary ways of reasoning, and established the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when all of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is and is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought, or and ought not. This change is imperceptible; but is however of the last consequence. For as this ought or ought not, that expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it should be observed and explained; and at the same time that a reason should be given; for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it.

(Hume, 2003:306)

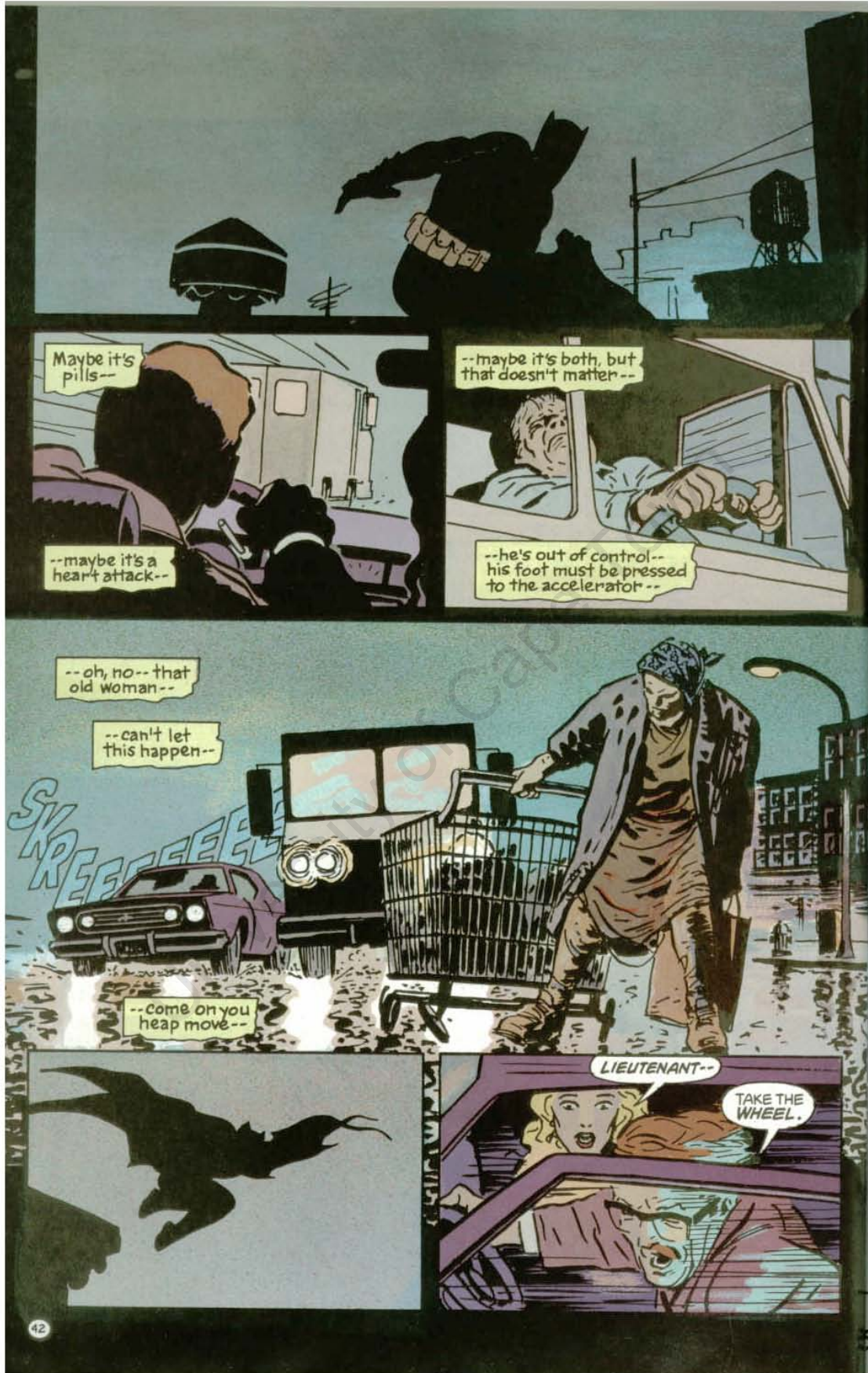
Hume's Guillotine (the Naturalistic Fallacy) is not simply a categorical distinction between prescriptive statements (so-called ought-statements) and descriptive statements (is-statements), but contains within it an ideological favoring of descriptive statements. Often reduced to a simple maxim prohibiting prescriptive statements, Hume's original text demonstrates a far subtler and richer context to the Naturalistic Fallacy. Hume does not simply exclude the possibility of prescriptive statements. He instead laments the lack of critical rigor in shuttling between descriptive and prescriptive statements. Hume makes a plea for a deeper, more-evolved, and far more critical awareness of the mechanics for deducing prescriptive statements from descriptive ones.

The comics medium too wrestles with the Naturalistic Fallacy. It produces superheroes as statements of what ought to be, prescriptive statements of justice and morality. In the earlier quotation from *The Dark Knight Returns*, Batman's derisive stance towards governmental oversight of superheroes emphasizes this point. But in *The Dark Knight Returns* Miller articulates this problem only fictively, within the confines of the book's narrative. Miller, in collaboration with artist David Mazzucchelli, in their later work *Batman: Year One* (1988:43), pose the problem textually.



With the final panel Miller (1988:43) offers a powerful statement about the role of superheroes. Superheroes, he argues visually, are the prescriptive statements of law enforcement. While Lt. James Gordon attempts to prevent crime, Batman saves lives. But this is an argument that Miller and Mazzucchelli do not make simply in a single panel, instead they rely fully on the medium of comics itself. Over pages forty-two and -three, the *Batman: Year One* creative team trace the paths of both Batman, and Lt. Gordon. On the final panel of page forty-one, a delivery truck has just sped across a red traffic light, nearly crashing into Gordon's car. Both Gordon and Batman leap into action.

[continued on following page]



Maybe it's pills--

--maybe it's a heart attack--

--maybe it's both, but that doesn't matter--

--he's out of control-- his foot must be pressed to the accelerator--

--oh, no-- that old woman--

--can't let this happen--

SKREEEEEE

--come on you heap move--

LIEUTENANT--

TAKE THE WHEEL.

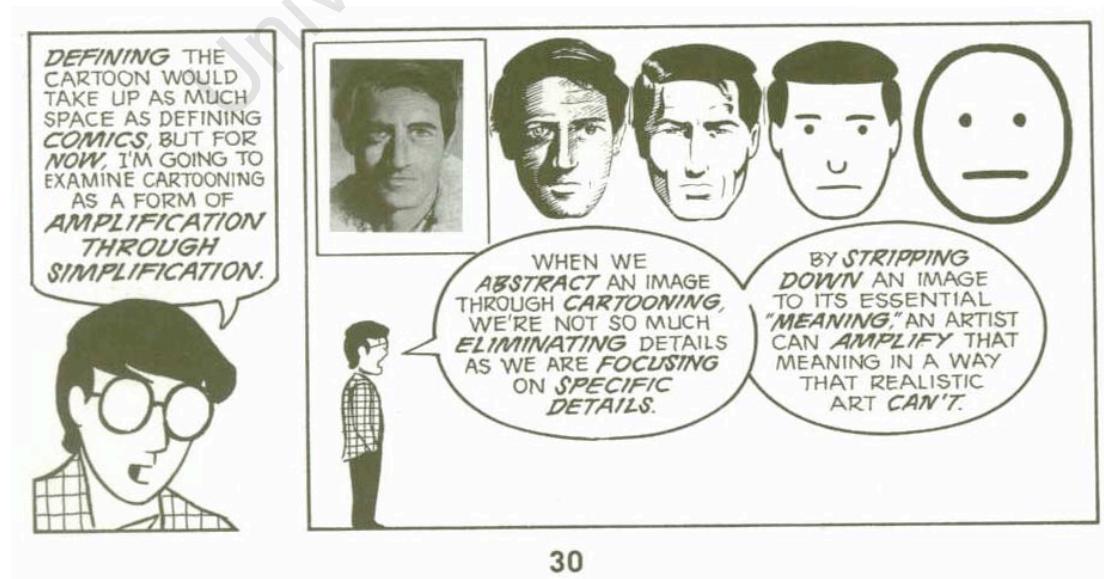


Comics, in deriving prescriptive statements from descriptive ones, rely on two technologies unique to the medium itself. For comics, the mechanics lamented by Hume for their absence, the mechanics for deriving prescriptive propositions from descriptive ones, can be found in comics with the juxtaposition of two techniques of the medium, the reading line and the masking effect.

lawless seeing

Comics does not simply offer the reader an alternative medium for engaging with narrative, comics offers a profound shift in consciousness, which may be termed apophenia. Specifically apophenia is the recognition and superimposition of an imagined pattern on a real world. Rather than a mental disorder, apophenia arises from reading comics as a creative act that fosters the emotional imbrication of the viewer within the world. Apophenia bridges the gap between the biological and the textual, in that it promotes a kind of "lawless" seeing. This is a way of seeing that precludes the possibility of knowing beforehand, and regularizing this knowing within a system of laws. Apophenia is a compound effect produced by the juxtaposition of two comics techniques; the masking effect and the reading line.

The masking effect relies on comics graphics depicting two categories of visual constructs: one kind of construct (usually characters) fosters the emotional involvement of the reader with the construct, the other (usually objects) creates emotional distance, objectifying the construct. The emotional involvement of the reader in the cartoon is articulated in the concept of the cartoon itself. McCloud (1993:30-31, 36, 40-44) explains the cartoon and the masking effect as follows:



THE ABILITY OF CARTOONS TO *FOCUS* OUR ATTENTION ON AN IDEA IS, I THINK, AN IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR SPECIAL POWER, BOTH IN COMICS AND IN DRAWING GENERALLY.



ONE A FEW THOUSANDS MILLIONS (NEARLY) ALL

ANOTHER IS THE *UNIVERSALITY* OF CARTOON IMAGERY. THE MORE CARTOONY A FACE IS, FOR INSTANCE, THE MORE PEOPLE IT COULD BE SAID TO *DESCRIBE*.

THIS, WHEN YOU LOOK AT A PHOTO OR REALISTIC DRAWING OF A FACE--




--YOU SEE IT AS THE FACE OF **ANOTHER**.

BUT WHEN YOU ENTER THE WORLD OF THE **CARTOON**--




--YOU SEE **YOURSELF**.

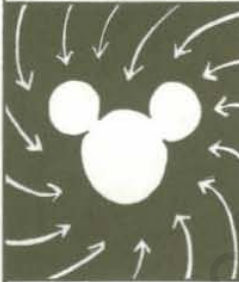
I BELIEVE THIS IS THE **PRIMARY CAUSE** OF OUR CHILDHOOD FASCINATION WITH **CARTOONS** THOUGH OTHER FACTORS SUCH AS **UNIVERSAL IDENTIFICATION, SIMPLICITY** AND THE **CHILDLIKE FEATURES** OF MANY CARTOON CHARACTERS ALSO PLAY A PART.



THE CARTOON IS A **VACUUM** INTO WHICH OUR **IDENTITY** AND **AWAWARENESS** ARE **PULLED**...



...AN **EMPTY SHELL** THAT WE INHABIT WHICH **ENABLES** US TO TRAVEL IN **ANOTHER REALM**.



WE DON'T JUST **OBSERVE** THE CARTOON, WE **BECOME** IT!

THAT'S WHY I DECIDED TO **DRAW** MYSELF IN SUCH A SIMPLE **STYLE**.




WOULD YOU HAVE **LISTENED** TO ME IF I LOOKED LIKE **THIS**??



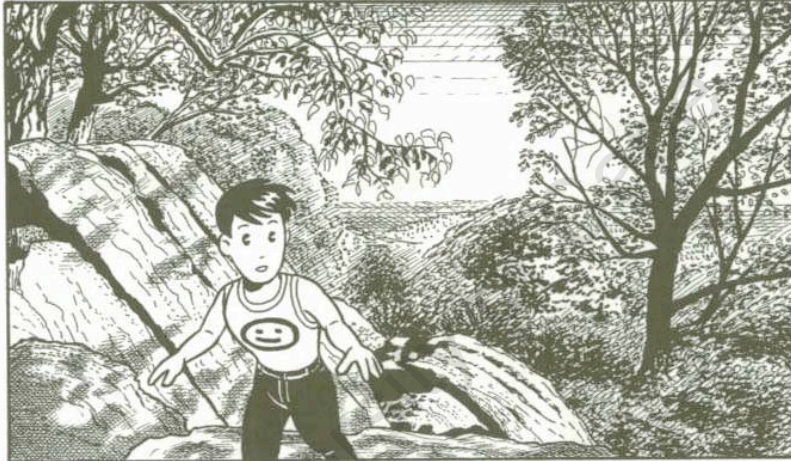
STORYTELLERS IN **ALL MEDIA** KNOW THAT A SURE INDICATOR OF **AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT**--

--IS THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE AUDIENCE **IDENTIFIES** WITH A STORY'S **CHARACTERS**.



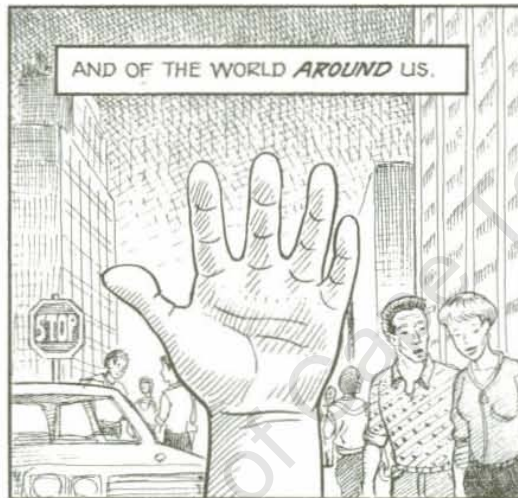


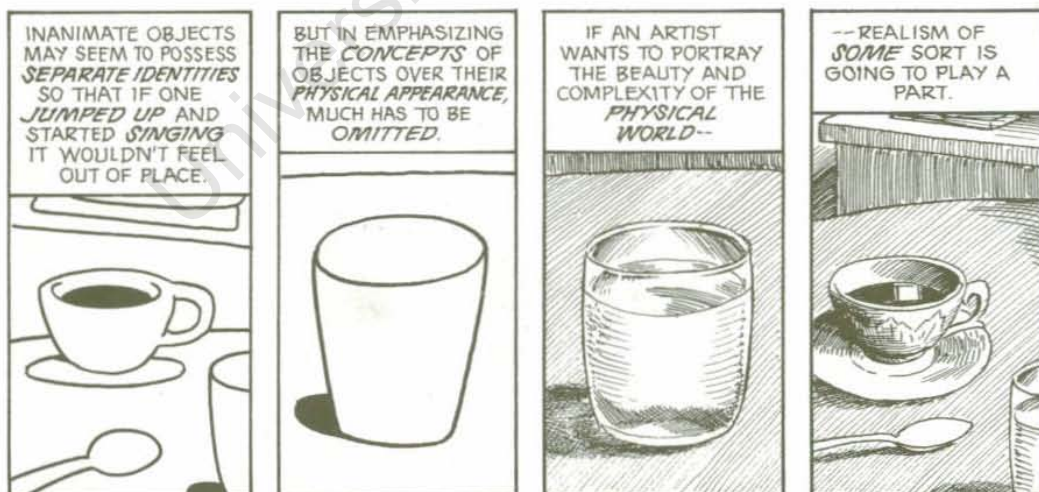
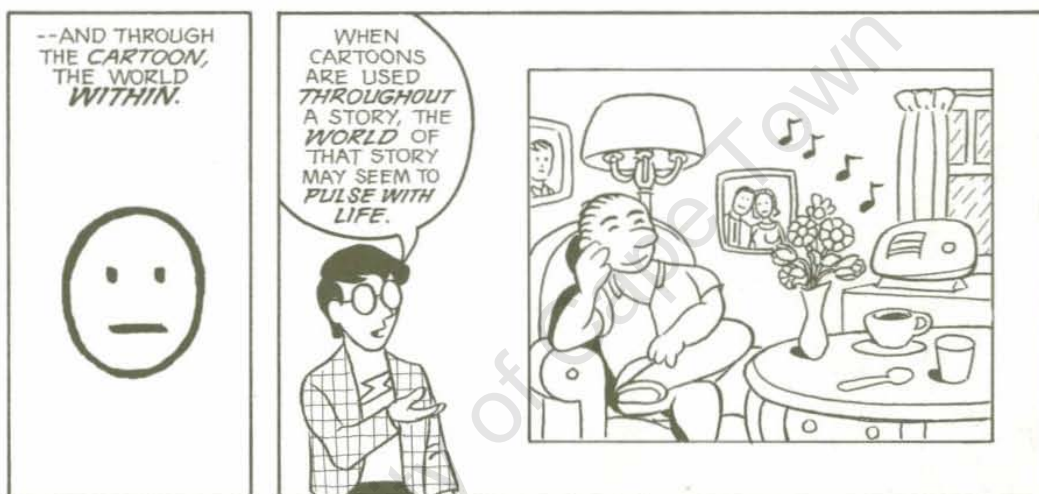
THIS COMBINATION ALLOWS READERS TO *MASK* THEMSELVES IN A CHARACTER AND SAFELY ENTER A SENSUALLY STIMULATING WORLD.





For McCloud (1993:40), the masking effect is rooted within the psychological construction which segregates person from object. Far from suggesting a categorical boundary preventing exchange between person and object, McCloud offers the person-object distinction as a liminal space across which both persons and objects freely traverse. This capacity of cartoons to "animate" inanimate objects promotes the emotional involvement of readers.



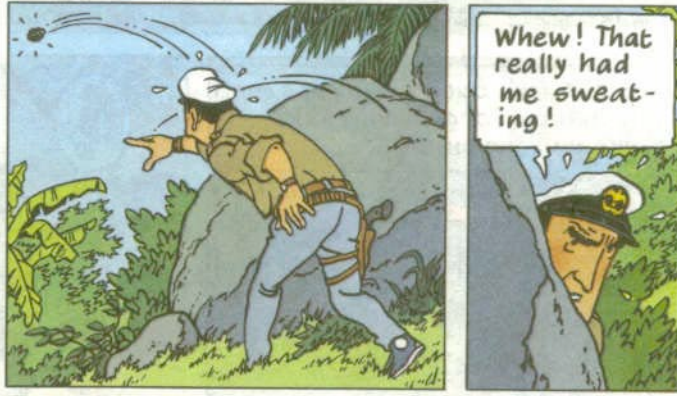


In *Flight 714*, an adventure story featuring his own creation, Tintin, Belgian cartoonist Hergé (1982:40) convincingly illustrates the conceptual frame of the masking effect. With the masking effect, the subtraction of detail means greater emotional involvement with a depicted character or object. In the panel below, the character Allan attempts to toss a hand grenade. Like the

palm leaves in the background, the hand grenade is subject to extensive detail. The hand grenade and palm leaves both however, stand in stark contrast to the iconic, "cartoony" style of Allan himself. Momentarily perplexed, attempting to decide in an instant if tossing the grenade is the correct course, Allan is the emotional center of the panel. Even Allan's wristband, an essential detail in communicating Allan's character as a hardy adventurer, is distinct from the registry of objects in the panel. Unlike the palm leaves or hand grenade, Allan's wristband, an extension of Allan himself, appears as a cartoon, something which fosters the reader's emotional imbrication.



In the subsequent panel, after Allan has decided to hurl the grenade, the emotional center shifts. The reader is no longer emotionally involved in Allan's drama of whether or not to toss the hand grenade. The emotional core of this subsequent panel now rests with the grenade itself. Readers become invested in what will happen as the grenade sails through the air. The grenade may fall short and injure Allan. Or perhaps it may be exposed as a dud and offer no resolution to Allan's current predicament. Hence, Allan is objectified. Allan is illustrated with more detailed line-art than the cartoon grenade arcing through the air. In the panel following on from this, where Allan peeks out from behind a rock, the drama of the unexploded grenade is protracted. Once again Allan is the emotional center of the panel. His comments and his visualization both frame the tense moment of the preceding panel.



The reading line is the regulating feature of the comics page. It advances the narrative by organizing the reader's attentions around a specific sequence of moments³⁰. Eisner (1995:40) describes the reading line as a measure of control the cartoonist exercises over the reader,

In sequential art the artist must, from the outset, secure control of the reader's attention and dictate the sequence in which the reader will follow the narrative. The limitations inherent in the technology are both obstacle and asset in the attempt to accomplish this. The most important obstacle to surmount is the tendency of the reader's eye to wander. One any given page, for example, there is no way in which the artist can prevent the reading of the last panel before the first. The turning of the page does mechanically enforce some control, but hardly as absolutely as in film.

(Eisner, 1995:40)

But Eisner (1995:40-41) continues to emphasize the collaborative nature (between cartoonist and reader) of this mode of control,

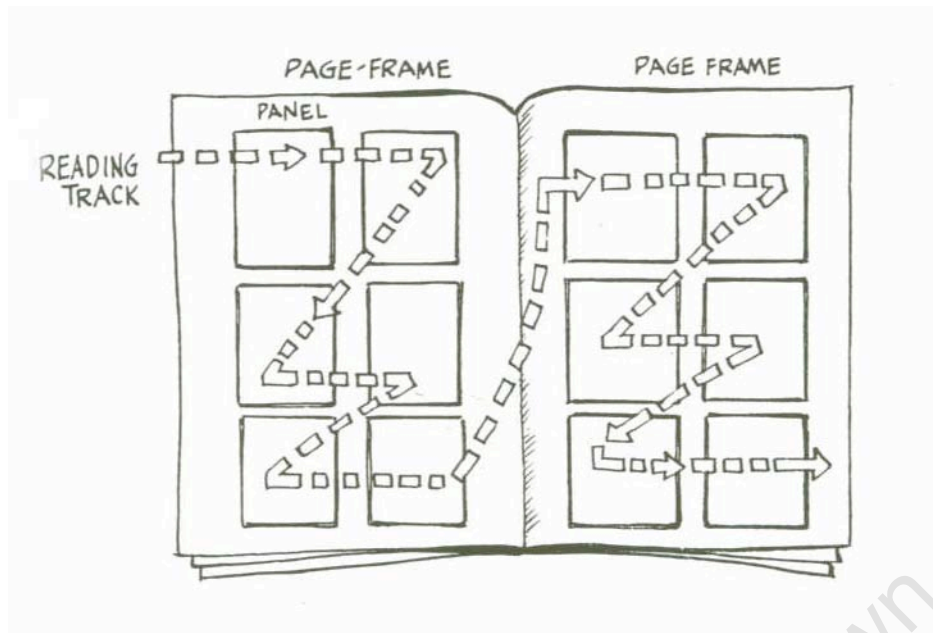
Without these technical advantages there is left to the sequential artist only the tacit cooperation of the reader. This is limited to the convention of reading (left to right, top to bottom, etc.) and the common cognitive disciplines. Indeed, it is this very voluntary cooperation, so unique to comics, that underlies the contract between artist and audience.

In comics, there are actually two 'frames' in this sense: the total page, on which there are any number of panels, and the panel itself, within which the narrative action unfolds.

(Eisner, 1995:40-41)

Eisner (1995:41) offers the following graphic to illustrate the eye movements involved in following the reading line (termed 'reading track' by Eisner).

³⁰ In the Closing Meditation, I explore the idea that the reading line is not a single narrative continuity, but the regulating feature for a system of fractionated flows.



The reading line therefore tracks the passage of the reader's eye from one moment of emotional imbrication to the next. Paradoxically, the reader's eye lingers on those elements presented with the least detail. It is precisely those under-detailed elements that provide the reader an opportunity for emotional purchase.

Furthermore the reading line, is not an elementary tool for redacting narrative time, and thus producing a linear passage to the chronological experience. Rather, the reading line is a complex conceptual technology that operates independently of any reference to time. The complex nature of the reading line's relation to time is ably illustrated on the opening page of Ed Brubaker's (2007:1) *Lawless*.



Arising from the juxtaposition of the masking effect and the reading line is the notion of a medium-specific apophenia, an apophenia that arises as a practice through reading comics. By no means a form of mental disorder,

this comics-specific apophenia (strictly, the recognition of pattern not present in the world³¹) relies on the same mechanism that allows for the analysis of the patient using the Rorschach inkblots. During such Rorschach tests, apopheniatic recontextualization of a random inkblot resurrects from the subject's mind a moment of unresolved crisis. Seeing a long shadow cast towards the sun (a physical contradiction) in a random pattern of ink for example, provides the analyst with a suitable point to begin their therapy of the subject.

Similar to the Rorschach tests an apophenia arises from the act of reading comics. With comics-originating apophenia an imaginative pattern is superimposed on the natural world. Rather than a uniform, unmediated space, the natural world becomes striated by a viewer's emotional imbrication. Certain objects become more "real" through the act of viewing. An extended visual engagement equates to a reduced emotional involvement. Morrison (2000:199-201) comments on this process of apophenia³²,

"It was all lies."

I remember looking at the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia when I was a little kid.

That's what I love about illusions; they're right up there in front of you but somehow you don't see them... ..until suddenly, you do... ..and I saw that I lived in a world where the symbol was more important than the reality. Where the menu was supposed to taste better than the meal.

The America I thought I lived in was a trick; I'd only ever really seen it on TV, in comic books and records and movies... Especially movies.

The Rosicrucians who built this country would know where they were if you brought them here, would they?

Not until you showed them "Independence Day"...

...the more I looked, the less real America became. And the less real it became, the stronger it got.

Planet Hollywood.

(Morrison, 2000:199-201)

In *The Doktor Sleepless Manual*, Ellis establishes apophenia both as the originary theme and the motivating principle of the story's protagonist. At the opening of the story Ellis (2008:1) writes:

I stop being real today.

³¹ Apophenia would, by way of example, be recognizing a specific rock on the Irish Giant's Causeway as the shoe of giant Finn McCall. Or an array of paint flakes against a wall as an image of the Madonna and Child.

³² Ellipses appearing within the paragraphs are reproduced from the original text. Ellipses appearing at the beginning or ends of paragraphs indicated a lapse in the text redacted for the purpose of quotation.

No-one's going to listen to a boy genius. No-one's going to listen to a philosopher or a traveller. No-one cares about an orphan, or a rich man, or some grown-up grinder kid from Heavenside. All these things I've been, no-one's ever been interested.

Weird little Johnny came from the big house on Scartop; who ever really gave a shit?

People like listening to characters. Characters are safe because they're not real. So today I become a character. John Reinhardt and all the things he's seen: he's a bit too real. The things he wants are a bit too obvious. But if you cover his eyes, you can't see that he hasn't slept for a year.

But Doktor Sleepless. He's something else entirely. Who's afraid of a cartoon mad scientist?

Who's afraid of Doktor Sleepless?

(Ellis, 2008:1)

For both Morrison and Ellis, apophenia becomes a powerful conceptual tool used in their fiction. Not only are the characters themselves emotively constructed by the reader's emotional engagement, but these characters reconstruct a drama of the comics medium as a narrative theme.

Apophenia is not simply a way of reading the text, it is a way of behaving in response to the text. As a behavior, apophenia continues beyond the text and into the so-called 'real world'. The continuing nature of apophenia, its power to promote emotional involvement with or distance from objects in the real world (regulated by the length of time spent viewing such objects), is suggested by Eisner in *Comics and Sequential Art*. Eisner (1995:40) imposes the imaginative pattern of comics to interpret the media of film and theater,

The viewer of a film is prevented from seeing the next frame before the creator permits it because these frames, printed on strips of transparent film, are shown one at a time. So film, which is an extension of comic strips, enjoys absolute control of its reading -- an advantage shared with live theater. In a closed theater the proscenium arch and the wings of the stage can form but one single panel, while the audience sits in a fixed position from which they view the action contained therein.

(Eisner, 1995:40)

The phenomenological psychologist van den Berg (1986:103-105) offers an insight into the psychopathology of apophenia. For van den Berg, apophenia is a natural part of the everyday human psychology. The mental illness arising from apophenia is argued to stem from isolation and the attendant alienation of the subject from control of the mechanisms of apophenia:

At the beginning of this book the patient's complaints were brought together in terms of categories... There were four

categories: complaints about objects, that is, about the material surroundings of the world, as defined in phenomenological publications; complaints about the body; complaints about relations with others; and complaints about the past and the future, the complaints about time. For each of these categories, there seemed to exist a word to elucidate these complaints: projection, conversion, transference and memory distortion... These four terms are distinct and practical insofar as their theory is concerned, they comply with the philosophical belief that man's existence is the existence of a subject with no history, living out his existence in an alien body, which in its turn is being surrounded by strange objects, in the middle of which objects other subjects can be encountered, equally enclosed in alien bodies, equally lacking a history.

...With the use of these four terms, the distinction between healthy and mentally ill persons is entirely lost. For, if we want to continue using these four terms, then we are correct in saying that every single human being, including the very healthy one, projects, converts, transfers and distorts his memories; for no human being lives in the midst of nameless objects, with a body that is anonymous, surrounded by puppets and equipped with a past that is recorded in *engrammata* and that has no history. On the contrary, everyone lives an existence that is structured, incarnate, interpersonal and historical... All mentally ill people are also human beings. The only difference which using these four words, that would remain between the healthy and the sick person is that projections, conversions, transferences, and memory distortions are not conspicuous in the healthy person but are very much so in the mentally ill. The reason for this is that the healthy person will discover in his healthy fellowmen the selfsame, or more or less the same, conversions, projections transferences and distortions of memory as he himself has, whereas the mentally ill person is alone with his mental mechanisms.

(van den Berg, 1986:103-105)

But identifying apophenia as the natural state of human perception (van den Berg, 1986:104), only underpins the utility that is necessarily derived from apophenia. The use-value of apophenia lies in what its use can produce in the natural world. To understand the use-value of apophenia, a conceptual frame connecting the act of viewing with the process of commodification and commerce must be constructed. Berger (1972) offers exactly such a conceptual frame.

For Berger, oil paintings from the period approximately 1500 until approximately 1900, present the viewer with a spectacle of wealth. They are themselves property. For Berger this is a new way of seeing the world, a way of seeing that originated in the seventeenth century and was articulated through property and commercial exchange. This way of seeing could only have found expression visually, and only in oil painting. Oil painting revolutionized appearances through a process of

commodification. With oil painting, objects could effectively be measured by their materiality.

Apophenia therefore becomes the bridge between the biological and the textual. Apophenia ties together the human mind's capacity to tap internal resources of creativity (a reading offered by van den Berg), with questions of property and possession and position in the natural world (a reading suggested by Berger). But apophenia, and as a consequence comics itself, is not foremost in suggesting the connection between property, the psychology of creativity, and the human in relation to the natural world. The philosophical exploration of this conceptual circuit forms the core of the oeuvre of nineteenth century political philosopher, Karl Marx.

laborless production

Marx (2003:8) offers a seductively simple formulation around human labor:

A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement.

(Marx, 2003:8)

This quote generates labor as mediating between human imagination and the fabricated world (production):

Imagination → Labor → Fabricated World (Production)

For Marx, labor is the natural heritage of the human being, the "Gattungswesen" of the human. Labor is the only means of ennobling the human spirit. Through labor the human transcends the natural world, supplanting it with his own construction. Specifically, this is a construction that is uniquely human, residing in the human mind *a priori*.

Marx offers a theory of "Entfremdung" to catalog the distortions and debasements that arise from forced labor (which for Marx is a distinctive feature of the capitalist economy). But the very fact of the litany of perversions of labor that Marx suggests (forced labor is nevertheless labor) evidences a counterargument against labor being the quintessence of Gattungswesen.

UK-based Marxist thinker Judy Cox³³ meditates on the work of I. I. Rubin, to suggest that the true essence of human

³³ Cox, J *An introduction to Marx's theory of alienation*, Socialist Review Index, UK, accessed from <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/isj79/cox.htm> on May 25, 2009.

nature can be found not in labor, but in the internal resources of creativity that must be tapped by the act of labor:

Marx argued that the alienation of the worker from what he produces is intensified because the products of labour actually begin to dominate the labourer. In his brilliant *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*, I. I. Rubin outlines a quantitative and a qualitative aspect to the production of commodities. Firstly, the worker is paid less than the value he creates. A proportion of what he produces is appropriated by his boss; the worker is, therefore, exploited. Qualitatively, he also puts creative labour into the object he produces, but he cannot be given creative labour to replace it. As Rubin explains, 'In exchange for his creative power the worker receives a wage or a salary, namely a sum of money, and in exchange for this money he can purchase products of labour, but he cannot purchase creative power. In exchange for his creative power, the worker gets things'³⁴. This creativity is lost to the worker forever, which is why under capitalism work does not stimulate or invigorate us and 'open the door to unconquered territory', but rather burns up our energies and leaves us feeling exhausted.

(<http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/isj79/cox.htm>, May 25 2009)

Cox therefore reads not labor, but creativity as the true heritage of the human species. However, in emphasizing labor, the process of creativity, rather than the internal resources and self-reliance tapped by the use of creativity itself, Marx necessarily offers his arguments as a series of compact descriptions before the fact.

Faced with the reality of the labor process, Marx is forced into the gambit of explaining labor's "natural" position as human nature, how the "natural" position of labor is corrupted by capitalism to produce forced labor (Marx's own term), and the process of remedying "natural" labor from forced labor. In attempting the remediation of forced labor in particular and capitalism in general, Marx offers a series of prescriptive statements. But in emphasizing the process of labor as human species heritage (over the internal resources of creativity), Marx is forced into the description of laws explicating "natural" labor, forced labor, and capitalism.

At the opening of the Paris Manuscripts of 1844, Marx³⁵ himself suggests, that he is involved in a process of regularizing the laws laid down by the exchange of property. He writes,

³⁴ Preserved footnote: I Rubin, *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value* (Black Rose Books, 1975), p. xxv.

³⁵ Marx K, *Estranged Labour, 1844*, Marxists (dot) Org, accessed from <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>, on May 25 2009.

Political economy proceeds from the fact of private property. It does not explain it. It grasps the *material* process of private property, the process through which it actually passes, in general and abstract formulae which it then takes as *laws*. It does not *comprehend* these laws – i.e., it does not show how they arise from the nature of private property.

(<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>, May 25 2009)

And later in the text,

We now have to grasp the essential connection between private property, greed, the separation of labour, capital and landed property, exchange and competition, value and the devaluation of man, monopoly, and competition, etc. – the connection between this entire system of estrangement and the *money* system.

We must avoid repeating the mistake of the political economist, who bases his explanations on some imaginary primordial condition. Such a primordial condition explains nothing. It simply pushes the question into the grey and nebulous distance. It assumes as facts and events what it is supposed to deduce – namely, the necessary relationships between two things, between, for example, the division of labour and exchange. Similarly, theology explains the origin of evil by the fall of Man – i.e., it assumes as a fact in the form of history what it should explain.

(<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>, May 25 2009)

Marx's task is thus twofold. In the first instance he hopes to disrupt the system of informal practices that has become regularized as the law of property. In the second instance, he attempts to formulate and regularize a new set of laws that will restore "natural" labor, replacing forced labor and ultimately replacing the capitalist system that enshrines such unjust labor. What Marx offers therefore, is a set of prescriptive statements deduced from a system of laws.

Marx's explications that follow, *The Communist Manifesto* and his magnum opus, *Capital*, therefore fail in philosophical rigor, in that they fall prey to the Hume's Guillotine. What Marx offers ultimately, is a set of prescriptive statements no longer connected to descriptive ones. The process of regularizing the descriptive statements, of formulating these statements and formalizing them as laws, is also the act of abolishing any connection between these descriptive statements and successive prescriptive ones. In this regard, it could be argued that Hume's Guillotine, the famous call for an exact explication of prescriptive statements from descriptive ones, is ultimately always a call for the lawlessness and creativity glimpsed at by Frank Miller in his "outlaw" comment.

By emphasizing labor over creativity as the primary and universal human experience, Marx emphasizes a "lawful" prescription and ultimately one uprooted from any connection to description. Apophenia, the conceptual machinery of comics, however is able to posit a "laborless" production, one that emphasizes the internal resources of creativity, self-reliance and imaginative fabrication of the world. With apophenia, the natural world is not uniform, as Marx posits. Apophenia, the kind of apophenia arising as a practice from reading comics, is the creative process of selecting from the natural world those elements which can be engaged with emotively and separating such elements from others that must be engaged with objectively. Just as the subtraction of detail on the comics page means a greater emotive imbrication, so too can objects in the natural world become an emotional extension of the human mind. By contrast, people who are closely observed can become infinitely distant from the observer.

Far from the triumphalist positivism of Marx which requires an abstract (and ultimately alien) application of human imagination to a natural world, the apophenia arising from the practice of reading comics (a kind of "lawless" seeing of the world) remains grounded in the reality it perceives. Recontextualized by human imagination, these objects and persons in the natural world become the intrinsic elements in founding a new way of being in the world. Yet, there remains a vital and continuing connection between the apopheniatic recontextualization of these elements (a prescriptive statement) and the elements themselves (the descriptive statements from which the prescriptives arise). After apophenia, a chair is no more or less real as an object, nor is another human more or less of a subject. But the emotional imbrication in subjects and the physical contiguity with objects, and the resultant production of the individual psychology within the world is itself a kind of production. Unlike Marx's example of the heroic, mythological architect who imposes his imagination on the natural world, apophenia offers an immaterial production. Apopheniatic production is nothing more than new way of being in the world, the kind of prescriptive statement that Marx himself ultimately sought with *The Communist Manifesto* and *Capital*. But in offering laborless production, apophenia remains true to the Marxist ideal of the elevation of the human spirit by a reliance on a continuous creativity.

closing meditation: the rescue of wallace wood

the nostalgia hypothesis

Scott McCloud (1993:139) proposes comics a fragmentary medium. McCloud (1993:139) implies comics as a medium that combines image and text.



Moreover, through this fragmentary nature comics is able to act as exchange-medium with the prelapsarian. Specifically this is a moment that emerges during childhood and one that is universally-shared experience.

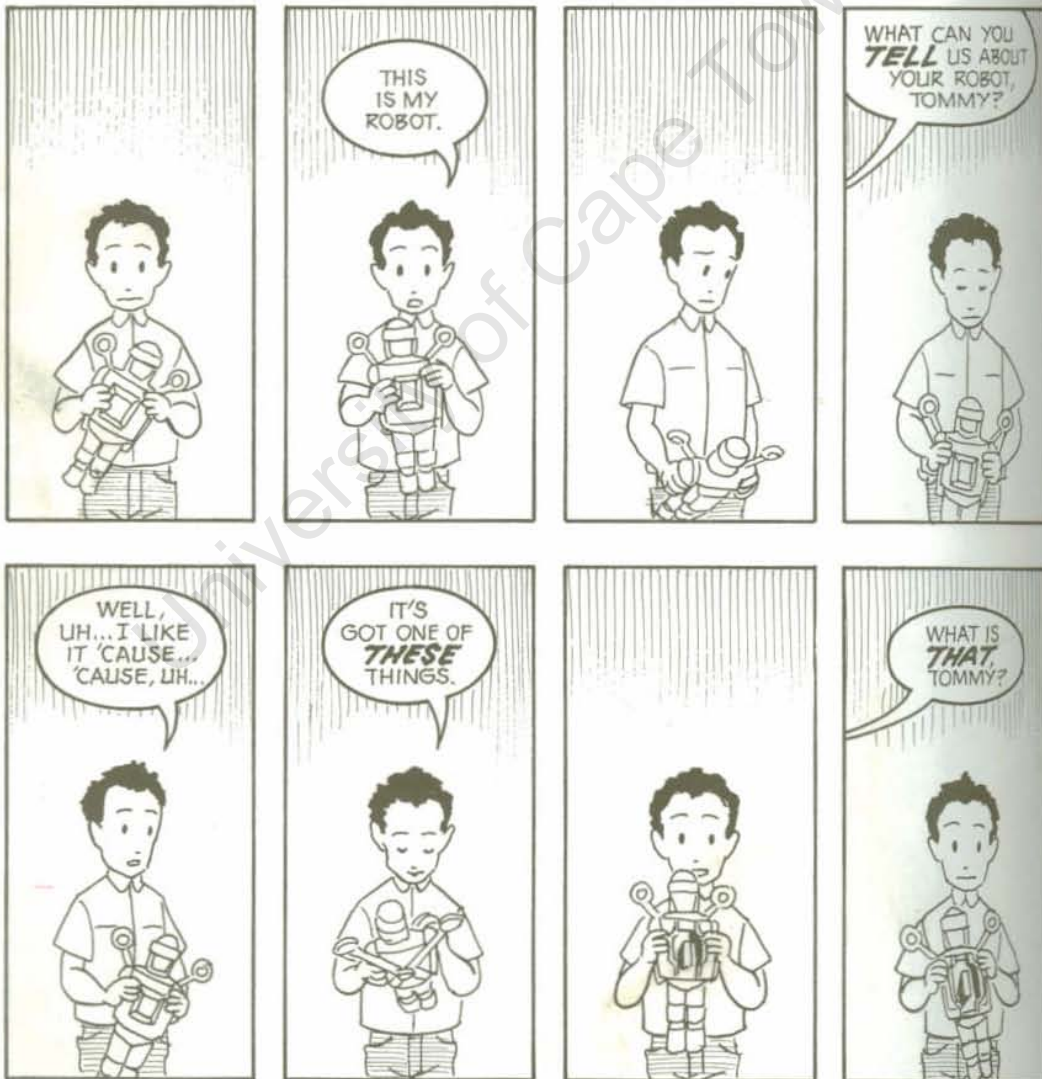
This prelapsarian moment, lost to during adulthood, is the moment when words and pictures are used interchangeably. Since comics is a combination of words and pictures, comics can recapture this moment of interchangeability, McCloud argues. He (McCloud, 1993:138-9) explains in the following way:

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CHAPTER SIX

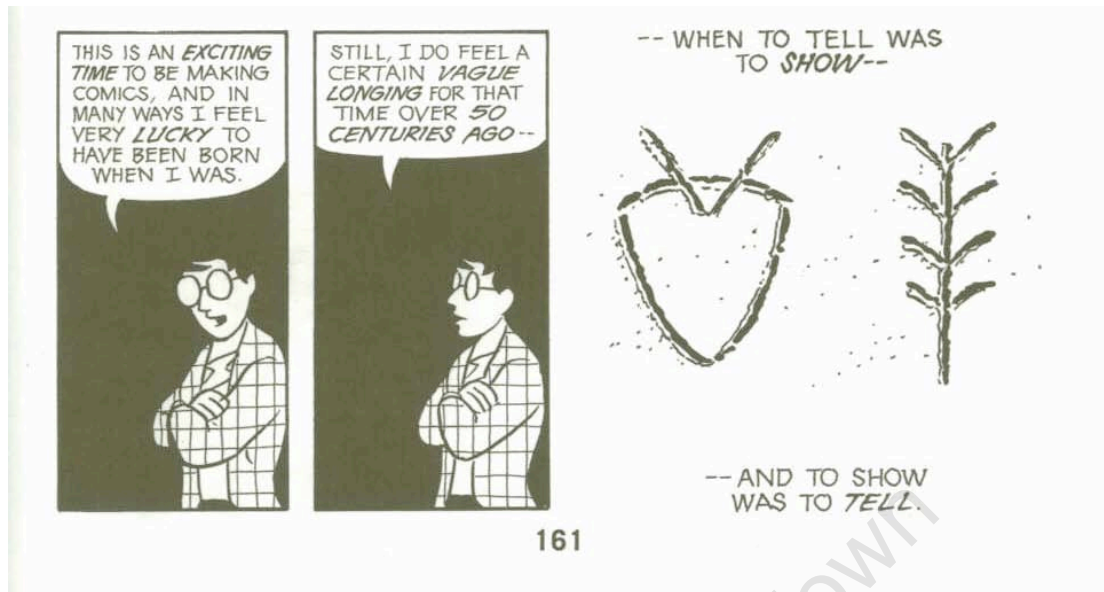
SHOW AND TELL.





But beyond the personal, McCloud (1993:161) constructs the prelapsarian moment in human history: the moment of interchangeability between word and image not only occurs

at the level of the personal, but at the civilizational level also:



In this way McCloud proposes a nostalgia hypothesis of comics. The nostalgia hypothesis is founded on certain tenets. The first tenet requires comics to be viewed as the confluence of two media; text and image. The second tenet makes the assumption of a single, unified narrative that can be communicated interchangeably through either medium (text or image). The third tenet constructs a reflexivity between the personal narrative and the civilizational. As corollary to this third tenet, there is the assumption that civilizations are subject to the same historico-social forces as persons, hence are autonomous subjects in the same way.

used to represent the future

Brubaker (2007: N. pag.) refutes McCloud's nostalgia hypothesis. In voiceover captioning, Brubaker (2007: N. pag.) tells the story of a guilt-ridden, yet remorseful Daredevil. With the first glimpse of the lead character, Daredevil confesses:

I did this.

I left them for too long.

Danny Rand did what he could filling in, but with me in jail and then missing...

I left too much doubt hanging in the air...

...about whose streets these really were.

(Brubaker, 2007:N. pag.)

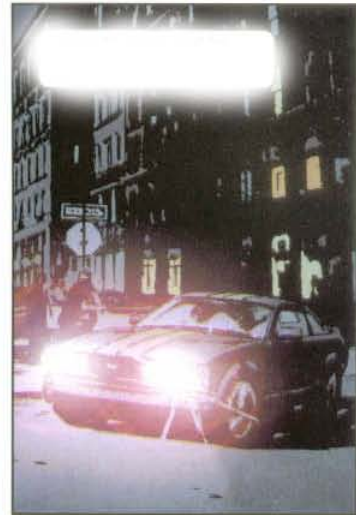
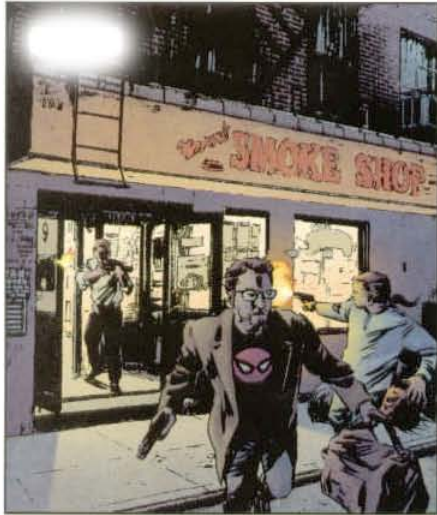
Through the stark, terse language, Brubaker communicates an almost pure sense of regret and the weight of culpability. Brubaker's Daredevil is a Daredevil in the throes of self-reproach and uncertainty.

Elsewhere in *Hell To Pay*, Brubaker (2007:N. pag.) offers a very different vision of Daredevil. In this more traditional view, readers encounter a Daredevil who laughs as he launches himself into danger, a Daredevil who fights crime by leaping through the air.³⁶ This is the customary image of the confident superhero, fearless in his war on crime.

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³⁶ In the quoted image, the text has been redacted to place emphasis on the narrative flow of the image sequence. A paragraph hence, a second scan shows the text originally associated with this image sequence.

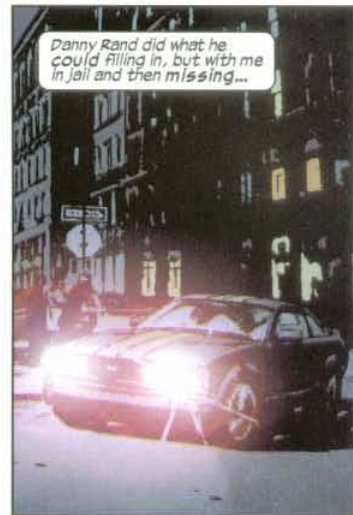


The two images of Daredevil, both equally powerful visions of the superhero, contest each other for

relevance. Immediately the reader is catapulted into a dilemma about which vision should supercede the other: is Daredevil ultimately penitent, or inhumanly confident? But the contestation of these narratives is complicated by them both appearing on the same page.

[continued on following page]

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Thus Brubaker makes an argument for comics as fractionated moment.

For Brubaker (2007), Daredevil can only be captured through two narrative flows; one of supreme self-assuredness, consigned to the flow of images, and one of extreme self-reproach consigned to a flow of text. But neither narrative flow by itself can adequately apprehend Daredevil. These multiple narratives must be regulated by the reader; perhaps Daredevil uses supreme confidence to mask self-recrimination. This unfractionated moment emerges only after all narrative flows have been fully engaged with, considered and assembled.

Brubaker reminds readers that comics is wholly immersive. Because the eye can focus on only one element of a single narrative flow in any given moment, readers recall that sense of immersion, of being in the presence of other narrative flows. Moreover, the fractionated moment prefigures a time of defractionation, a moment of 'not-yet-but-soon', when narrative flows can be reconstructed. This moment would adequately balance the conceits of all narrative flows. Far from being a currency with which to recapture the past, as McCloud's nostalgia hypothesis suggests, comics is used to represent the future. Reading comics in a sense, is a perpetual engagement with foreshadowing. This foreshadowing of the medium (not its fictions) predicts the moment of defractionation, a moment when meaning will be fully constructed through the reader's own actions.

Miller (2001:31-32) uses the concept of the fractionated moment when he introduces objectivist superhero, The Question. In this sequence, Miller constructs The Question as a resistance figure who wages a shadow-war against tyranny. But engaging in surveillance of the unseen enemy and minor skirmishes proves to be insufficient as The Question soon realizes. Leaping from rooftop to rooftop, he envisions a time when a proper, ideological opposition with tyranny might appear. At such a time his manifesto, the one currently being written, will prove indispensable to a future superhero who will provide the answer to the problem of tyranny. In this way, Miller uses The Question to mimic the defractionation desired by the reader, creating a fictive theme that mirrors the drama of the medium.



THAT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH. HE NEEDS A WHOLE NEW PROGRAM.

REFORMAT THE PRESIDENT--AND WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, SPIKE UP HIS COMPASSION LEVELS. HE'S COMING ACROSS A LITTLE COLD. NOW GET OUT OF MY SIGHT.

SIR-- WHAT ABOUT OLSEN?

WE'VE GOT HIM ON A FELONY.



RELEASE HIM.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH IS A WONDERFUL THING-- SO LONG AS NOBODY'S LISTENING.



--SO LONG AS NOBODY'S LISTENING.

The world spins MAD.



The PEOPLE are so INTOXICATED by LUXURY they have FORGOTTEN everything that makes us more than HOUSE PETS.

REASON. TRUTH. JUSTICE.

FREEDOM.



The HUMAN SPIRIT is a shattered pane of GLASS-- wrapped in soft VELVET and soaked in sugary POISON.

EVIL has SEDUCED mankind. And MANKIND has shown all the CHASTITY of a three-dollar WHORE.



Yet I will not YIELD. I will not BEND.

I will not ACCEPT the corrupt new WAY of things.

Nor will I be MARTYRED.

I will gather EVIDENCE-- DOCUMENT every foul LIE. I will FORGE my MANIFESTO. My CHALLENGE to any FREE MIND that may find it.

Like a NOTE in a BOTTLE. Cast into the OCEAN.

It will be TYPED.



It MUST be TYPED.
COMPUTERS can't
be TRUSTED.

They're all TIED IN now,
connected to the POWERS.
To the TYRANTS.

Once your THOUGHTS are
committed to DISK, the
tyrants have them.

The Abyss stares back.

The mind of man must be
RECLAIMED--if not by THIS
generation or by the NEXT,
then SOME day. Some DECADE.



It is not in MY power
to EFFECT the change.
I haven't the MIGHT.

I am not the ANSWER.



I am only the
QUESTION.

said & done

In contrast to the "show and tell" of the nostalgia hypothesis, Horrocks (2001:203), in *Hicksville*, presents and alternate formulation.

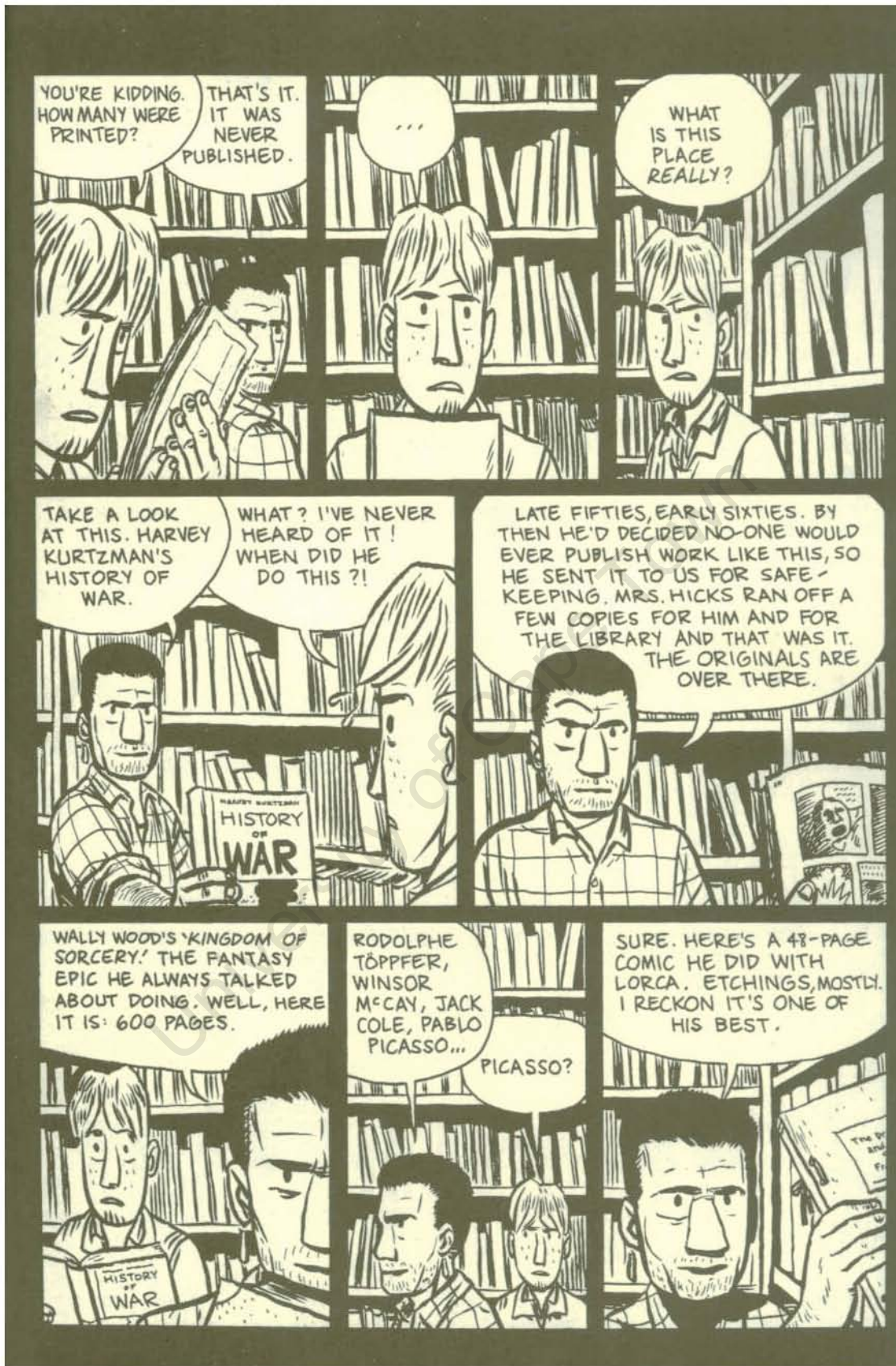


From Horrocks' tale of non-fictional cartoonist Wally Wood, "said and done" is proposed as a syntactical marker of achievement. Historically Wood spent years speaking of his magnum opus, one which he failed to complete. Horrocks' *Hicksville* tells the tale of a secret publication of Wood's *Kingdom of Sorcery*. Horrocks' formulation "said and done" is thus effective in capturing the concept of the fractionated moment. "Said and done" which ends in achievement, mirrors the defractionation which readers themselves effect in a moment of competence that appears after all narrative flows have been assembled.

With "said and done" Horrocks allows for perceiving the history of comics publication itself as a fractionated moment. In *Hicksville*, Horrocks (2001:201-204) tells the story thus:

[continued on following page]





YOU'RE KIDDING. HOW MANY WERE PRINTED?

THAT'S IT. IT WAS NEVER PUBLISHED.

...

WHAT IS THIS PLACE REALLY?

TAKE A LOOK AT THIS. HARVEY KURTZMAN'S HISTORY OF WAR.

WHAT? I'VE NEVER HEARD OF IT! WHEN DID HE DO THIS?!

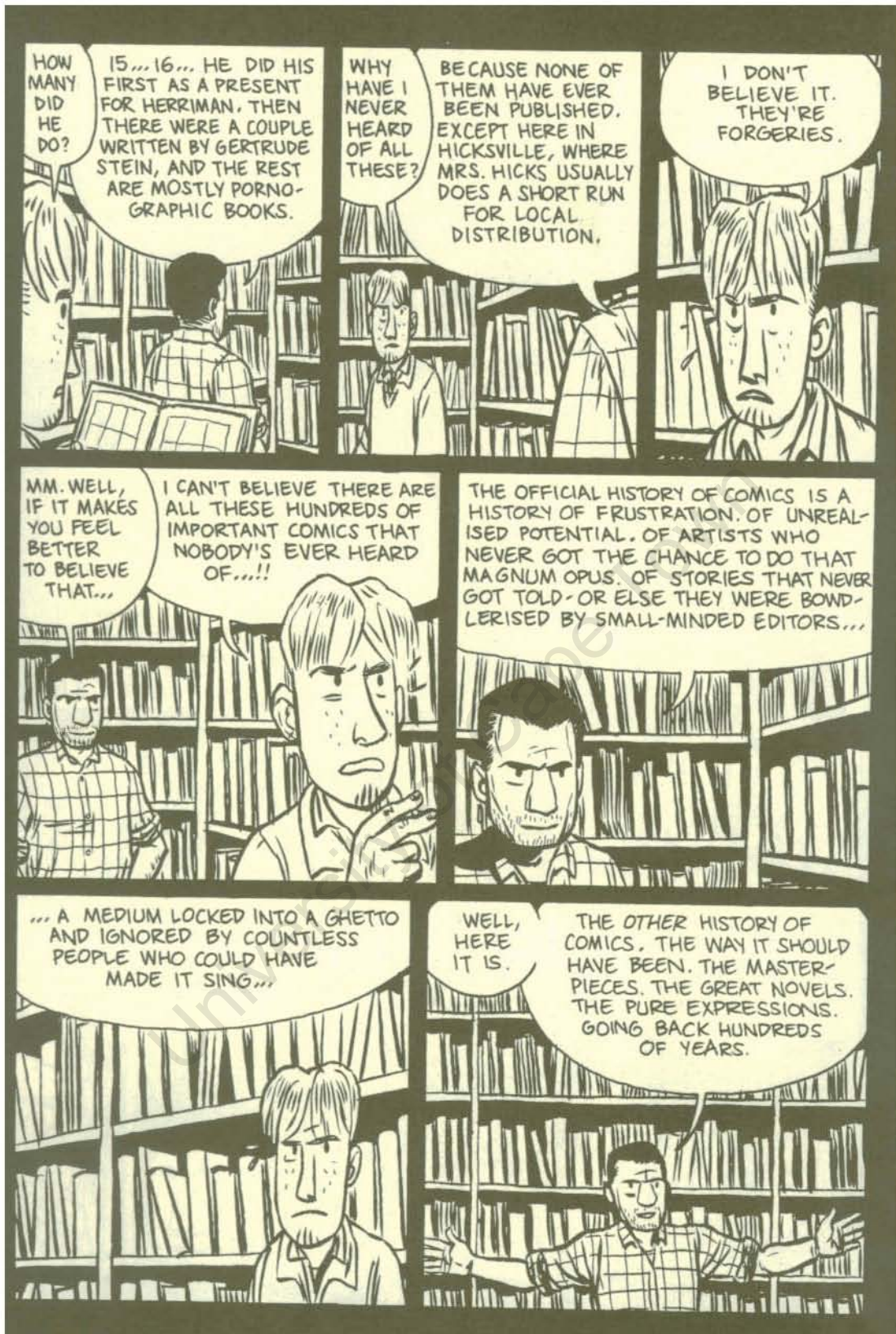
LATE FIFTIES, EARLY SIXTIES. BY THEN HE'D DECIDED NO-ONE WOULD EVER PUBLISH WORK LIKE THIS, SO HE SENT IT TO US FOR SAFE-KEEPING. MRS. HICKS RAN OFF A FEW COPIES FOR HIM AND FOR THE LIBRARY AND THAT WAS IT. THE ORIGINALS ARE OVER THERE.

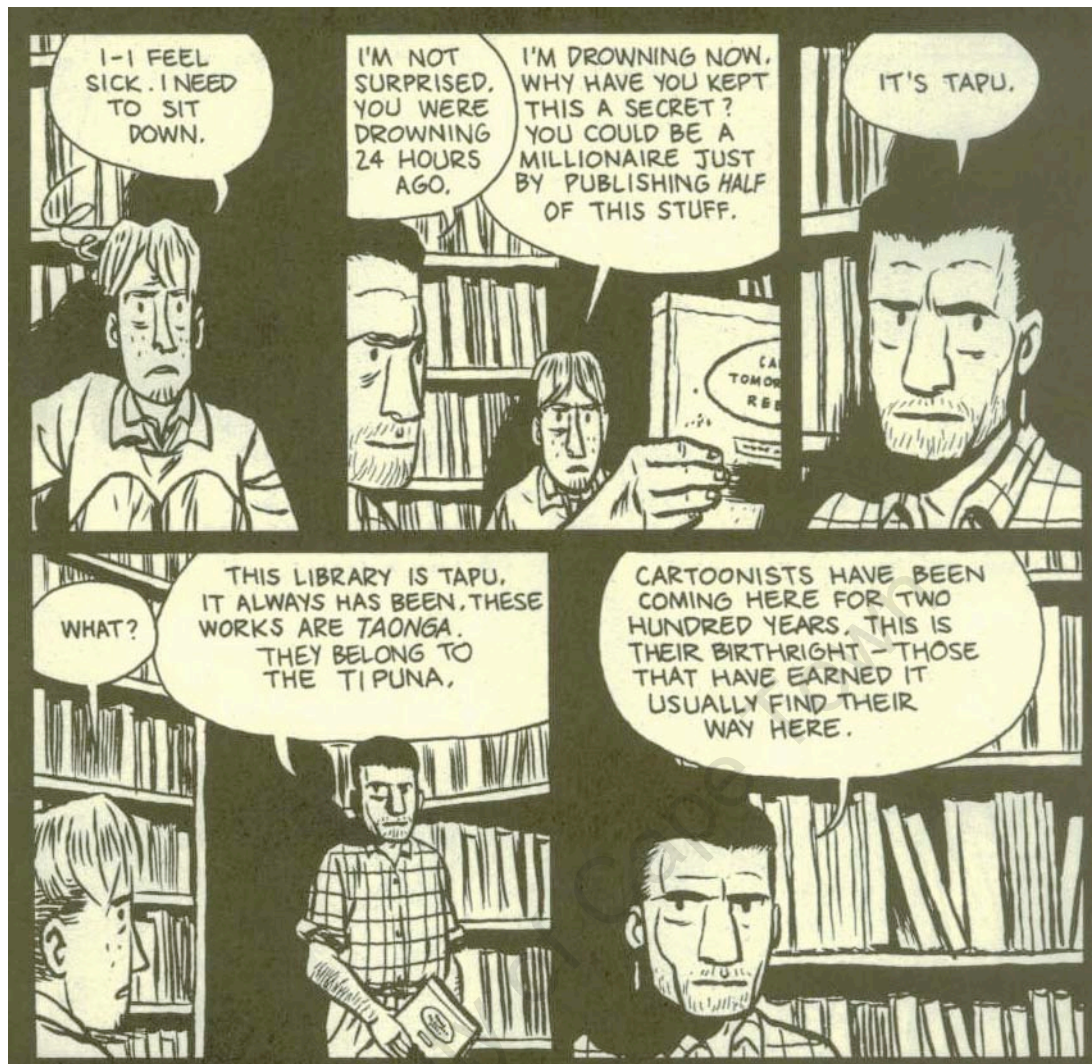
WALLY WOOD'S 'KINGDOM OF SORCERY.' THE FANTASY EPIC HE ALWAYS TALKED ABOUT DOING. WELL, HERE IT IS: 600 PAGES.

RODOLPHE TÖPPFER, WINSOR M'CAY, JACK COLE, PABLO PICASSO...

PICASSO?

SURE. HERE'S A 48-PAGE COMIC HE DID WITH LORCA. ETCHINGS, MOSTLY. I RECKON IT'S ONE OF HIS BEST.





[From the *Hicksville* glossary: "Tapu" is "holy, sacred; under ritual restriction or prohibition", "Taonga" is "treasure, possession", "Tipuna" is "ancestors". These words are Maori in origin.]

For Horrocks, the history of the comics medium is itself fractionated. Only once the official history of comics has been reconciled with the Other History can defractionation be said to have been achieved. But Horrocks uses a very specific comics to articulate this drama. For Horrocks, *Hicksville's* perception of the history of comics publication as itself a fractionated experience, is an opportunity to make a series of formal comics statements.

22 panels that always work

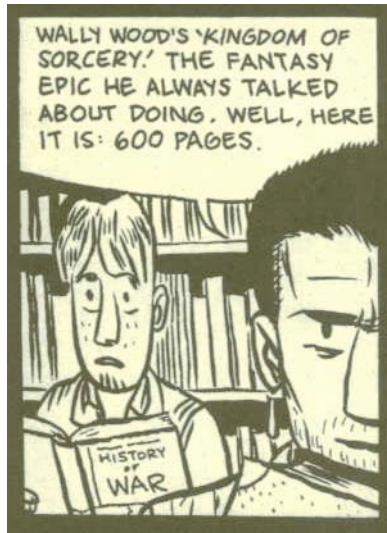
In *Hicksville*, Horrocks (2001:201-204) presents a formal problem in comics; the ghettoization of the medium.

THE OFFICIAL HISTORY OF COMICS IS A HISTORY OF FRUSTRATION. OF UNREALISED POTENTIAL. OF ARTISTS WHO NEVER GOT THE CHANCE TO DO THAT MAGNUM OPUS. OF STORIES THAT NEVER GOT TOLD - OR ELSE THEY WERE BOWD-LERISED BY SMALL-MINDED EDITORS...





But in articulating this problem, Horrocks relies on comics-technology invented by cartoonist Wally Wood. For Horrocks, presenting "said and done" as a resolution to the problem necessarily means acclaiming the cartoonist (subjectively) most maligned by history. For Horrocks, "said and done" comes with a rescue of Wally Wood.



Horrocks constructs the panel by conforming to a comics technology devised by Wally Wood himself, the "22 Panels That Always Work". In the above *Hicksville* panel recounting Wally Wood, Horrocks provides an innovation on one of the 22 Panels:

(continued on following page)



In his blog³⁷, Joel Johnson (the present owner of the original folio of the 22 Panels) cites the website Gotham City Art in explaining the importance of Wood's 22 Panels:

Ask any working comic book artist who has been in the business for more than ten years about "Wally Wood's 22 Panels That Always Work", and they know of it like it was the bible. ...Once shrouded in secrecy, Wally Wood would selectively give assistants and those close to him three 8x10 photocopies of comic panels that bore the absolute essence of drawing comic book panels. 22 images in total, they held the secret to a comic book illustrator's success, and those who learned from them benefited from the master's wisdom. The panels were gold, but were not packaged in such a way that was easily disseminated.

Years later as an Editor at Marvel, Wood's former assistant, Larry Hama, needed a tool to give direction to his would-be artists. He had two copies of the three sheets. With the help of another ex-assistant of Wally Wood's (whom he recalls may have been Paul Kirchner), Hama reassembled the "Tri-Force" of Wally Wood sheets. On the back of a Marvel art Bristol board, Hama wrote the now-famous caption "Wally Wood's 22 Panels That Always Work", and had Robbie Carosella and Elliot Brown stat down the sheets. He ran off 50 copies from the board, and handed them out to potential pencilers. Pretty soon, other editors were sending pencilers and even some old pros down the hall to get copies from him. Eventually, he had more master copies statted and gave them to other editors so they could make their own copies to pass out. The original paste-up, with Hama's original hand-lettering, was eventually tucked into an envelope and put in the back of a flatfile, where it stayed for more than a decade. Second, third, fourth, tenth and twentieth generation copies continue to be made and handed down. The artwork pictured here is the original pasteup, as well as the three 8x10 copies that were statted down to make the board. Some of the panels, which were lost through use, were restated to the original board over the years.³⁸

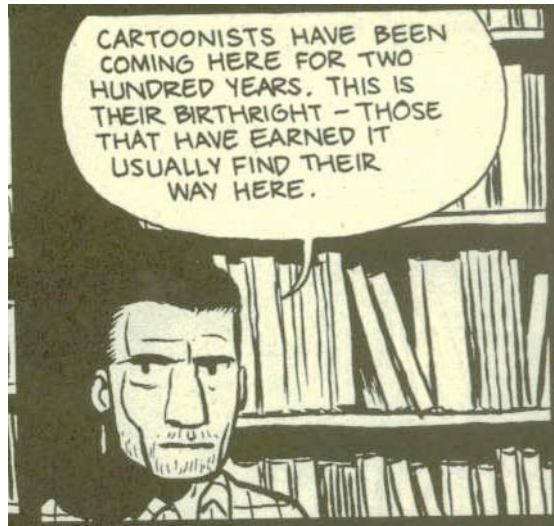
(http://joeljohnson.com/archives/2006/08/wally_woods_22.html, July 29 2008)

The panel recalling Wood is not alone in paying homage to the 22 panels. Horrocks uses the 22 panels time and again in *Hicksville*.

³⁷ Johnson's Blog URL is

http://joeljohnson.com/archives/2006/08/wally_woods_22.html, and has last been accessed on July 29, 2008 at 10.18am. Exemplars from the 22 Panels are sourced at this URL also.

³⁸ Hyperlinks originally appearing on Johnson's website have not been preserved in this quotation.



To explain the library's origins, Horrocks uses:



The "big head" panel to expresses Leonard's incredulity at a library that cannot possibly exist.



the empty spaceship

In using the "22 Panels" to articulate the problem of the bowdlerizing of comics, together with evidence (albeit fictive) of publication of Wood's magnum opus, Horrocks provides a small but not insignificant retrieval of the

cartoonist. Horrocks' portrayal of Wood as the central tragic figure in mainstream comics is not happenstance. Wood is celebrated as both artistically gifted and tragically hobbled by major publishers. Gravett identifies Wood as a "unique and complex maverick"³⁹:

Wood repeatedly rebelled against the exploitation and shortsightedness of many editors and publishers in the comics industry, as well as the stifling constraints of the Comics Code Authority. For example, years before young superstars like Jim Steranko and Barry Windsor Smith first rejected the poor conditions and nonexistent royalties and rights available to mainstream comic book creators in the early seventies, Wood had walked away from Stan Lee's Marvel Comics in 1965 after his short but brilliant revitalisation and redesign of *Daredevil*.

(http://www.paulgravett.com/index.php/articles/article/wallace_wood/, July 29 2008)

But as commendable as Wood's stance on creative rights remains, his biography includes the rampant effect of his personal demons on his art. In his review of *The Compleat Canon*⁴⁰ Gravett suggests Wood as a "recluse, a workaholic, an alcoholic, a husband in three failed marriages, self-destructive, and in the end suicidal". Not insensitive to Wood's artistic talent Gravett bemoans;

We can only imagine what wonders Wood might have created for the House of Ideas [comics publishing giant, Marvel], had he been allowed more credit and stayed on. Instead, Wood soon came to have no illusions about either Marvel or DC, damning them both as "fascist states. I use them when I need them, but they have no power over me."

(http://www.paulgravett.com/index.php/articles/article/wallace_wood/, July 29 2008)

In equal measures, a tormented, gifted and driven artist, Wood is the subject of conversation between award-winning cartoonists Eisner and Miller. Eisner and Miller both (Brownstein, 2005:243-244) offer appreciation for Wood's artistic giftedness;

EISNER: ...Wally was a genius. In 1950, he did spaceship interiors that were valid in 1980! I mean, thirty years ahead of his time!

MILLER: I really, really adore Wood's work. I think if I tried to distill what I love most about it ... more than any other comic book artist I can think of, he was able to find the glamour in every subject. Whether it was a woman's ankle or a piece of dog crap, he made it look *beautiful!*⁴¹

(Brownstein, 2005:243-244)

³⁹ http://www.paulgravett.com/index.php/articles/article/wallace_wood/ accessed on July 29, 2008

⁴⁰ http://www.paulgravett.com/index.php/articles/article/wallace_wood/ accessed on July 29, 2008

⁴¹ Miller's emphatic "beautiful!" is italicized as per the original text.

Wood himself offers a strange riposte to Eisner's professional compliment on his spaceship interiors. The conclusion to a *MAD Magazine* parody drawn by Wood, provides an ampersand connecting the personal rescue of Wally Wood with the desired defractionation that makes comics forward-seeking rather than nostalgic.

Wood (2002:86-89) offers an ending to his Flash Gordon parody that wholly subverts the generic conventions of science fiction. The scene is set as Flesh (the Flash Gordon analog) bribes the Imperial Guard in a final attempt to escape the planet Ming and return to Earth.



However when the rocketship on Earth, Wood presents readers with an ending that slides into bathos.



In subsequent panels readers discover that, upon realizing he was unemployable on Earth (since there were no monsters to fight), Flesh chose to remain on Ming. It

was there that he could lead the courtly life of an imperially-sponsored hero.

Refusing to draw the rocketship's interior, Wood frustrates a moment to illustrate his visionary skill at comics. But the empty rocketship transcends the personal vindication of Wood by his own hand. The empty rocketship transcends even Wood's creative subversion of generic conventions. Instead the theme of rescue becomes emblematic of the comics medium itself. Comics stories gravitate around rescue. Rescue is a founding convention of the superhero genre. The recurring thematic of the rescue, is the reemphasizes the comics medium itself as a fractionated moment.

the rescue of wally wood

The rescue of Wally Wood is not the redemption of his career from the frustrations of either his own limitations. It is the rescue of the comics medium and the reemphasis of the fractionated moment. The appearance of rescue as a recurring motif is conceptually espoused by Wood's "22 Panels".

The fractionated moment defeats McCloud's nostalgia hypothesis by immersing the reader in the immediacy of comics. In reading any particular caption, or speech bubble, or thought balloon, or single image, the reader is aware of being temporally located (according to narrative time) at a single moment within a single narrative flow. Unlike stage or screen or the novel, readers are aware that comics is spatially arranged as a system of multiple narrative flows. Located immediately adjacent to any single narrative flow, is another such flow. The fractionated moment arises when readers experience simultaneity and incompleteness; a sense that meaning cannot yet be constructed, yet in proximity is another narrative flow that will assist. Moreover, the fractionated moment points to the instant of defractionation that will always occur. Defractionation, the process of compiling multiple narrative flows, is also an active process for the reader. Defractionation occurs solely in the mind of the individual reader. Thus comics is more participatory than other media, since readers articulate the final narrative for themselves. But it is also through defractionation that readers become predisposed to grand narratives of self-reliance. The active, creative principles enshrined in the superhero become the perfect vehicle for expressing the creative process experienced by each reader when compiling a super-narrative flow which coordinates all other narrative flows.

It is this moment of competence, this act of producing a super-narrative that resonates with the theme of the

rescue. Rescue offers a conceptual alternative to nostalgia. Rather than yearn for a halcyon moment, rescue operates by building a perfected future moment, from an incomplete present. The rescue thematic is therefore resonant with the fictive thematic of the fractionated moment. The fractionated moment is an insufficient moment fully immersed in the promise of perfection. What the rescue illustrates fictively, defractionation conveys textually at the level of the medium. Thematically rescue conveys the self-reliance of the superhero, an ability to marshal inner resources and produce a superior future from an inferior present. Defractionation produces a similar effect for the comics reader. It is by readers' own actions that they themselves can produce a super-narrative flow.

As a storytelling convention used by the medium, the "22 Panels" reiterate the same conceptual underpinnings as the rescue thematic and the defractionation process. Wood himself remains keenly aware of this fact. At the opening of *Odkin, Son of Odkin*, Wood (2007:6) offers a reminder of the role of defractionation, and the germinal features of comics panels,

Know then, that it is not the function of prophecy to delineate coming events. The existence of prophecy is in itself a catalyst in shaping the future; specifically in causing men to take steps to implement or to thwart its realization. Therefore, no prophecy can literally come true, for as soon as it is uttered, it has altered the course of events.

(Wood, 2007:6)

Germinal in their outlook, the "22 Panels" reorganize comics around a moment that must necessarily arrive as the product of work. The "22 Panels" do not point to a longed-for prelapsarian moment: they redouble focus on activities associated with building that moment in the future. But the very fact of the Panels themselves means that this is not a vague, dreamed-of future, but one that can be built using the simple heuristic of panels themselves. Comics marks the rise of materialism.

Similarly the rescue thematic provides a spine for the themes touched on in this dissertation. Chapter Two posits comics as the product of a rescue, a technology redeemed from a cultural conflict that itself no longer carries cultural significance. Chapter Three demonstrates the rescue of popular culture from a schism fabricated through a quirk of Cartesian Rationalism, Descartes own obsession with interactionism. Chapter Four shows a rescue from a self-terminating, enclosed linguistic system by inversion of verticality and horizontality. Chapter Five demonstrates a rescue by way of formal prescriptive statements effected by the comics medium.

In confronting Galileo, Descartes and Hume at the horizon of modern thinking, in confronting Marx and Freud at the horizon of the twentieth century, and in confronting Barthes, Foucault and Deleuze at the dawn of the twenty-first, this dissertation has sought to illuminate the philosophical breadth and depth offered by comics. As a medium, comics wrestles with the themes and strictures, modes and concepts that arise perennially within Western philosophy. But comics offers more; the theme of the rescue means recasting the debates as opportunities for dissemination. Rather than archiving its texts, comics is a literature of immediacy; both as a magazine publication meant to be abandoned after reading and its unmediated engagement of the reader. Moreover, the process of defractionation engenders a future literature of continuous fictions. In this way, comics reaffirms the promise of Gutenberg's printing press for the perpetuation of knowledge and the popularization of learning.

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the fictive element

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antematter 2: famous, last, words

I originally conceived of introducing the second and final element in this dissertation (the piece of creative fiction) in as brusque a way as possible,

WHAT FOLLOWS IS A WORK OF FICTION, DELIVERED IN PART COMPLETION OF THE EXAMINATION FOR DOCTORAL DEGREE. IN IT, FRIENDS HAVE GATHERED TO CELEBRATE A LIFE, THAT OF A FRIEND WHO PASSED BEFORE HIS TIME. THE CHARACTER BEING POSTHUMOUSLY HONORED AND THE AUTHOR OF THE WORK SHARE THE SAME NAME.

-sQ

This technique now proves ineffective.

While the work it alludes to remains unchanged, the erstwhile introduction fails to capture the fictional world it encompasses as a dark and twisted mirror of our own. Moreover, the proposed introduction fails to explain that the world of its fiction is one in which two revolutions in the popular culture have simply been invalidated, or perhaps never occurred.

"Time is out of joint," Shakespeare's suggestion speaks directly to this fictional world, but the 'how' must be explained.

The first of these revolutions is the social reorganization that accompanied the invention of the printing press. In the imagined world of the creative piece's fictional setting, it is entirely possible that Johannes Gutenberg never existed. Or if indeed he had, and had gone on to invent a printing press based around movable type, that this invention went largely unnoticed.

This fictional world argues implicitly for Gutenberg and his invention being far from immanent. Without the printing press's invention (or Gutenberg's intervention) the revolutionary popularization of learning might never have taken place. Medieval values, around power and learning, might have lingered on, contesting what we would come to know as the Renaissance. Contesting these new values perhaps so effectively that the Renaissance might be said to not have come to be at all.

Without the printing press, the ways in which society organizes itself, particularly with respect to its notions of historicity, authenticity and technology might have come to be completely reversed.

The second revolution is the waning of the social system of patronage used to support, and in subtle ways

undermine, Renaissance art. It is entirely possible that the crumbling of patronage might have (ostensibly, 'in a single night and day') have come to be replaced by capitalism.

In the fictional work before you, *Life in Print*, volume 4: *the Miscellanies*, this new world (in many ways antithetical to our own) is given shape.

It is visibly not our own world in the smallest of ways.

A dearth of imagination has rendered the primary internet search engine as the more descriptive 'Googol', rather than the inventive 'Google' or our own world. Enlightenment capitalism, marked by Dutch commercialism of the 17th and 18th centuries in our count, reaches as far afield as the Seattle of the 21st century. And, directly for the purposes of this dissertation, popular culture goes mostly unnoticed. The true horror of the fictional world before you is that the personal has been erased from historicity. People go uncelebrated, and events are simply recorded without measuring their effect on society.

In this fictional reality, the idea that society has only ever been one thing resisting ravage upon ravage, is given far more credence than in our own.

The fiction before you marries together the two failed revolutions (the failure of the popularization of learning and the failure of the cessation of patronage) in the literal death of the author. While a popular image in postmodern thought, the death of the author in *Life in Print*, comes to represent a rejuvenation of spirit.

This is, for all intents, a world taking its first steps into honoring itself by honoring its popular culture. And it is only through remembering the personal can such a revolution come about.

shathley Q, capetown

August 2008.

'fallen son': introduction to this volume

This is the final volume of *Life in Print*.

This is our testament to our lifetime, to how we did things differently. But we were always doing things differently. We had our freedoms. And we paid the price.

Life in Print honors our Fallen Son, shathley Q.

Without him, conceivably, there would be no reason honor other legends from the past. Ritchie, Vladimir, Humboldt, Norman, Haggard, Saint-Blaze, Nolan and Hardy, Wing. The list does not end. But without shathley Q, there would be no list. As was always the case, we would have retreated from popular culture, and would not have been able to offer any history. Nor would any of the great masters of comics art have been remembered.

For those on the outside, it would always seem that we were one group. Moving our way through Indicia, and then on to Wonder. We became the little guys taking on the corporate giant that was NC. But this was not the case to those on the inside. Bill Hull, shathley Q, Andrew Donaldson and myself. What we did, we did to honor our ancestors, the greats of our art, from the generations before our own. But it was uniquely shathley's vision that changed what we were doing, and that gave it its full scope. It was the vision of shathley Q that changed the world into what it is today, and gave us a way to remember popular culture.

This is our testament to him.

This fourth volume is called *the Miscellanies*, it is a collection of the aberrant in SQ's work. It is his voice at its strongest. It is him speaking for himself, across the gap of years.

He is gone now, we miss him greatly, and you should too.

Nora Vollmer, Seattle.

'fast friends': introduction to setting sun

Like shathley Q, I cheated.

Editors are supposed to edit, but I did no such thing. The script as you read it here is the original script. It was handed to me one Thursday morning, on a shooting range. My life with shathley Q, the years, have been an incredibly long and exciting rollercoaster ride. And now, they have come to an end.

I cheated in more ways than one.

In honoring shathley Q with this collection, group editor Bill Hull made the decision to give light to his unique contribution to not only the culture of comics publishing, but also his unique contribution to the process of the comics he wrote. Bill Hull, supported by the editors he chose for this volume and the prior volumes of *Life in Print*, chose to publish the scripts of projects that have already been published.

Just as editors edit, writers write. And shathley Q wrote this in one sitting, at his laptop, on a firing range one Thursday morning. He deleted all copies on his hard-drive and handed me the flash-disk with the only copy on. The only copy in the world.

And now, years later, I cheated, because I published in this august series, honoring the life of a close, dear friend, something that has never before been published. It is here, and only here, in this closing volume of *Life in Print*, that *Setting Sun* appears. It was meant to be our project, with his writing and my art. "This would be our *Destiny*", I remember him saying, puffing at a cigar. And it could have been. It should have been. And I believe you would enjoy it also. Won't you read it, please?

Setting Sun is a complicated story, a folded story as SQ might have called it. It occurs at the interstitial spaces, the moments, hidden from sight, that have been folded between other moments. On the absolute surface of it, it is the story of time's interminable march to Millennium. Structurally it is a story that builds to a climax that never comes. I half anticipated machinery to appear at the end, or a god to come and heal everything, except there is no healing, nothing is made better. I recall my friend saying, "In a world which is a perfect lotus blossom, such as this one, even our suffering is held to the ideals of perfection".

The story of *Setting Sun* seems as a perfectly simple one. It is the story of a friendship, tying together six friends. Their friendship has been forged over the course of years, years in which they have schooled together. And with the end of high-school, they are for the first time faced with the possibility of no longer being a part of each other, and being in each other's lives. One of the friends comes up with a radical idea, and along with a radical new way of thinking, one that will plunge the friends and the friendship itself into decades of turbulent adventures. But safe and far away from the past, we see these friends' history and the history of their friendship play out over the course of a single night, recapitulated in memory, on the eve of the Millennium. The friends have gathered in a house which they are to explore. Through conversation and memory, the past is exposed, laid bare.

But more than anything else, there is a very visual sense to sQ's writing. With every memory there is a visual marker. The first recollection, a confession, ends with one of the characters recalling the moment he watched poker on television for the first time. The story itself ends with a single image, water filling a puddle. This is an image of longing, but it is also an image that tells a wholly different story.

The image does not have its origin in the life and work of sQ, but in another highly creative thinker of the early twenty-first century, in the work of David Gelernter. Water trapped in a puddle on a beach is the same visual image from Gelernter's *Second Coming, a Manifesto*.

Gelernter writes, "Miniaturization was the big theme in the first age of computers: rising power, falling prices, computers for everybody. Theme of the Second Age now approaching: computing transcends computers. Information travels through a sea of anonymous, interchangeable computers like a breeze through tall grass. A desktop computer is a scooped-out hole in the beach where information from the Cybersphere wells up like seawater."

Gelernter was of course the man most directly responsible for lifestreams and for the Cybersphere. In the late twentieth century he was personally targeted for assassination by Theodore Kosincki, the so-called Unabomber. Gelernter survived the attack and went on to reinvent the world in which we all live. And, perhaps not to my amazement, but certainly extracting a great deal of my respect, Gelernter's most powerful piece becomes the stage for one of the most personal stories written by sQ. Personal, in the sense that it speaks directly to the

person reading it, rather than personal in the sense of being captured by personal events in sQ's life.

I believe my point is that *Setting Sun*, in the final analysis, must be marked down as one of the most enduringly complex comics stories ever. It runs twenty-four pages, no more or no less than an average monthly comicbook. But it feels expansive. There are twenty-four years of memories, and twenty-four minutes until midnight on the Millennium. Each minute recaptures the memory of a different year, as told from one friend to another. The friends rove through the house, finding each other in the strangest of places, evoking the strangest of moments.

This story probably says very little about shathley Q. But when I read it, I feel as if it were being read over a conversation. Without sounding too misty-eyed, this story is alive with him. In the smallest most personal of ways, and at times when I read it, I feel that space itself has grown smaller.

I suspect I am the only person to have met sQ twice for the first time. Once was in a downtown Seattle coffee-shop one of those rare ones that were not operated by a major franchise-holder. The coffee-shop was called *the Devil Loves Pipesmoke*, an allusion I didn't quite get. I was in Seattle for a job interview at Wonder. I asked the owner about the shop's name but all she could offer was her own story, that she had only recently bought the store after it had been foreclosed on by the First Seattle Trust Bank. The name came along with the store as a package-deal.

It was at this point that a kindly patron offered me the legend behind the name. I was told the legend of Van Hunks (something for you to Googol if you know nothing about it, as sQ would say). The kindly patron was of course the famous shathley Q. About an hour later, I arrived at Wonder for my interview. And I was introduced to sQ for the second time. He was part of the panel that interviewed me. And, I must have done well. I was offered the job of artist on *the Cancer Ballad*.

That morning I was on the shooting range (I learnt my love of gunfire from sQ himself) I was there for practice. sQ was teaching a class. Would I take it for him, he asked, and the next one also? He had just had a really great idea. Four hours later, I ambled by the range-keeper's office and there he was, sitting at his laptop, writing the final story (which only ran four of the twenty-four pages). He wanted to know what I thought. I read it quickly a first time, and took longer the second time. The third time I read it, the sun was low in the sky. I could not resist the story, and there was no will in me to resist.

It was a magnificent story, and still is.
Penny James, Mexico, DF.

University of Cape Town

setting sun
by shathley Q
© shathley Q

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[page one]

[panel one] the Upstairs study, sidelong view. In a long shot we can see Barron and Ray seated at a table on balcony in a library. Nearby is a spiral stair, a second-level door leading out of the room, and a second-level double door (replete with curtains, billowing) that leads to an outdoor balcony. Julia is entering by the upstairs door.

[locator cap(tion)]

24 minutes to go

[ray]

...and we remained in each others' lives these last 24 years. begging my question. was it fate? were we *meant* to be?

[barron]

and you still set aside the possibility of planning?

[panel two] a younger Barron frozen in a moment. Spellbound, he stands at a convenience store, staring into the television above the checkout. The TV's black and white, but we can clearly make out the World Series Of Poker (WSOP) being televised.

[panel three] same as panel one. Julia's closer now. Carrie's just about to ascend the spiral stair.

[barron]

julia, excellent! just who we need. we were considering luck and fate, and our friendship. ray believes...

[title cap]

the high life of crime, pt. 1

1976: american history lesson

[panel four] same. Carrie is now at the top of the stair.

[carrie]

...and that's what makes him so good at what he does, isn't that it, ray?

[ray]

carrie. very sneaky of you.

[panel five] first in a series of two. Barron's head + shoulder frames a man holding a gun to the head of the checkout girl.

[panel six] second in a series of two. Blood splatter on the television screen in a thin red line that contrasts starkly with the black and white.

[panel seven] all four around the table.

[barron]

i don't know. i should confess i suppose. it was me. i kept us together over the years. the idea of it came to me in a moment of bloodshed.

'76 was the spirit of the revolution. the big 200, and all i remember is poker on tv and dime-store crime. and the birth of the idea of keeping us together for years to come.

i needed us.

[panel eight] view is changed radically as the four look over the railing into the library below. There's Quinn, and Liv, and a bottle of champagne.

[quinn]

and just because you planned it fate couldn't have played a hand?

[barron]

quinn! Liv! everyone's here, now! you lot should be exploring the house.

it's the last evening of the millennium. who knows if the house will still be here tomorrow.

[page two]

[panel one] POV from inside the cupboard. Julia pulls out a bag of biscuits.

[julia]

you know he makes these appearances. suddenly, as if by magic. you know what he's called in japan?

[ray]

who? quinn?

[locator cap]

13 minutes to go

[panel two] wide angle on the kitchen where Ray and Julia are fiddling about.

[ray]

ok i'll bite. what's he called? quinn?

[julia]

hah! no. 'the one who hides in courage'

[ray]

weird... still it's a perfect fit for a guy who sells software for a living.

[panel three] close on Julia.

[julia]

sells software for a living? do you realize that without him we wouldn't live in this world where computers lurk at every corner?

do you know what he went through to build this world?

[title cap]

the high life of crime pt. 2

1977: lessons from the dark age of toymaking

[panel four] overhead view, both Ray and Julia work around opposite ends of the middle workspace cabinet in the center of the kitchen.

[panel five] close on her hands. Julia lays out biscuits on a plate.

[panel six] close on Ray's hands preparing cocoa.

[panel seven] POV Quinn looking over his hand (Clubs Jack and Hearts Queen), across the table with four cards open (pair of Jacks, Spades and Hearts, the Hearts King and the Clubs Queen), straight into the eyes of the meanest-looking bearded fat guy you've ever seen.

[mean-looking bearded fat guy]

bet is to you, sir.

[cap: julia]

he was just a kid, but that moment from the poker game, the year before still haunted him.

he bluffed everything and lost. and now, the best of one year later he was in the driver's seat, ready to bluff again.

just imagine if he hadn't bluffed then. that moment, one year later?

there would have been no 'mangles the serpent', no 'antithesis software corporation', no 'computer on every street-corner by the year 2000'.

[panel eight] Close on Carrie.

[carrie]

in other words, nothing of the world we know today would exist, if our very good friend had not bluffed when he did, nearly 23 years AGO.

[panel nine] Carrie has entered the kitchen, standing on the far side, while on the near side (to panel left), Julia and Ray are defended by the cocoa and the biscuits.

[carrie]

quinn's been asking for you, jules. i think he's in the dining hall.

[page three]

[panel one] POV, male hands deal out a game of solitaire on a rickety table. Ahead of us, is a small color television. Around us, (although, admittedly, there is not much to be seen, as vision tunnels towards the television) is a the decorations of cheap hotel room, somehow made to seem lavish. The WSOP is being screened.

[title cap]

ROME, 1978: all roads lead

the high life of crime, pt. 3

[television]

[something in italian → will enter later]

[panel two] Carrie (to panel left) and Barron (panel right) are foregrounded. While in the background we see Liv and Ray. Barron is grinning like he knows something he isn't telling.

[carrie]

you have no idea where that grin takes me back to. or how it's helped me over the years.

just recalling it now, i know that i will always know that things will get better.

and recalling our one poker game together. and how that haunted me.

not everything gets damaged, does it?

[locator cap]

7 minutes to go

[panel three] same as panel one, but the center of the view has shifted to the doorway near the television, in which Carrie is standing. 'our hand' holds a half-dozen or so cards.

[carrie]

bill and the other senior agents are heading down to sicily with judge andrea. the rest of us are staying in rome.

...we were going out for pizza. did you want any?

...um, what's that you're watching.

[unseen card player]

world series of poker.

University of Cape Town

[page four]

[panel one] same view as panel one on page one, but the four around the table are now Liv, Carrie, Quinn and Barron. Ray enters by the interior door on the upper level.

[ray]

Julie just told me this story and it reminded me of something...

[locator cap]

22 minutes to go

[panel two] Long, lonely, dirt road in the heart of Mexico. It's a clean, well-lighted scene, like the kind Hemingway used to write about. A lone table out in the dirt, guys playing poker under the veranda of an otherwise darkened, isolated structure. There is a cactus nearby.

[panel three] the same. But one guy wanders off to the side of the building.

[panel four] the same. The guy is now peeing against the side of the building.

[panel five] close on some roadkill, a coyote with its head busted open.

[title cap]

the coyote, 1979

the high life of crime, pt. 4

[panel six] same, but Ray's face, right where the roadkill's head should be has replaced the head.

[panel seven] same. Ray, our urinating protagonist, is now standing at the card table once more.

[ray]

get those CHOLAS loaded up. we need to make the border soon. before dawn.

carrago!

[Cap: ray]

the high life of crime, i guess, but something inside me snapped. i was wondering about what was still to come. about my death. i had become a coyote, carrying the undocumented across the border, and there was a dead coyote before me. and of course, that poker game got me thinking about my first poker game 3 years prior.

[panel eight] same as first panel, but now Ray has left the room.

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[page five]

[panel one] same as panel one on page one. All actors are on the upper floor. With Barron still seated at the table, and Carrie nearby. Ray is headed for the interior door, Julia is following him.

[locator cap]

23 minutes to go

[ray]

guess i'd better get exploring then...

[julia]

hang on, i'm coming along...

[panel two] in the corridor outside the room, Ray's a little ahead, while Julia's exiting the door. We see them in long shot, down the full sweep of the corridor.

[julia]

you know, barron talking about planning. it's brad you know... when mount st. helen's erupted, quinn called me.

he was worried about brad being in washington. i guess he wanted to know if i was ok, so he asked if there was any news.

i was reading kafka, "prometheus", for my finals. and quinn said, Brad was the kind of guy who always made a plan.

him saying that put me into some kind of spin, you know? i remember my words so clearly.

[title cap]

the high life of crime, pt. 5

1980, we other prometheans

[panel three] first in a series. fixed angle POV, slight birds-eye, on the table where the 1976 game of poker was played. Brad, Julia's older brother and his buddies are gathered around a map of Viet Nam.

[title cap]

1974

[brad]

then we'd have to move in from the west, like this...

[asshole]

brad, this is a great place man, but i miss your folks' place. julia... your sister man, she was hot...

[brad]

shut up, asshole.

[panel four] second in a series. Same. But now the friends are playing poker at the table. The Asshole from the previous panel and Quinn can clearly be seen.

[asshole]

what's your play kid, you gonna take the bet or you don't got the chops or what?

[title cap]

1976

[panel five] third in a series. Same. But now it's weapons and the blueprints for a bank. It's Brad and his buddies again.

[brad]

we move in from the back alley once we get the 'clear' signal'...

[asshole]

brad, i think your wife's water's breaking...

[title cap]

1977

[panel six] close on Julia on the phone.

[julia]

planning, quinn? do you know what kind of planning's been happening in brad's apartment? at that table?

that table's like the caucasus from the story, and we're are like prometheans othered by the crimes planned there.

[panel seven] same as panel two. But the two have traded places so that Ray is nearest the door, opening it.

[ray]

prometheans, huh? just give me a second.

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[page six]

[panel one] in the Drawing Room, the characters (Barron, Carrie and Liv) are oriented similarly to their appearance on page three. Our angles are different though. Barron and Liv are foregrounded, to panel left and right. Carrie appears in the middle-distance backdrop, somewhere between these two. Ray, although present in the room, remains unseen.

[locator cap]

6 minutes to go

[liv]

you know that poker game was important to me too, barron. direct cause of my first sexual experience with another woman.

[panel two] thumbnail. A Chinese fortune coin spins in midair, after being tossed.

[panel three] close on the handle of pistol, embossed with the same coin pattern. A woman's hand grips the gun.

[s/fx: from gun]

boom

[panel three] Liv, in the thinnest profile. Over her shoulder to panel right, is a desert background wherein a serpent hangs dangerously close to him.

[panel four] the full picture, big panel. A woman has tossed the coin, distracting Liv so that she may shoot the serpent threatening him.

[woman]

i needed to distract you, that rattler was awful close. sorry about tossing the coin.

[LIV]

it did distract me. i've only ever seen that coin once before. at a poker game, six years ago.

[title cap]

the high life of crime, pt. 6

1981, lessons from the art of juggling.

[page seven]

[panel one] we're back in the Upstairs Study. It's just Barron, who's standing by the door to the outside balcony, Liv, whose near him, and Quinn who's some ways off, fiddling with some books.

[locator cap]

18 minutes to go

[barron]

ok, enough with the maudlin. it's a beautiful starlit night.

and if i owe you anything liv, i owe you the story of the years you were missing.

[title cap]

the astronaut, pt. 1

1982, her journal

[panel two] text only, long column. First of four in this tier.

[cap: barron]

julia mailed me her journal before she had herself committed. the most stirring parts remain the opening, as she arrived, before we knew about you.

[cap: julia's journal]

i feel, as if stepping into the past, i am stepping into a time of hope.

after nearly 6 miles of steep climb, you finally reach the final outpost of the village. it is here where the warriors would keep a silent vigil against expansionist threats from the jungles.

only a select few would ever make it this far out.

all the graves, even the tombs of their kings, are far below. it is a breathtaking view, but it is only the beginning of our voyage.

from here, from the farthest, outmost point, from here, it is another 3 miles before we find her.

[panel three] second in a series of four. view of a stony Andean pathway leading up from through the jungle.

[panel four] third in a sequences of four. a mummy, frontal view, clearly female, in a blanket that forms both a burial shroud, and the hood over her head. She's in a cave.

[panel five] text only, box.

[cap: julia's journal]

she began her visionquest here, a quest to see worlds to come.

she seems to have kept a journal, painted onto the cave walls, and it tells us that she gazed at the stars.

most of the language is highly ritualized and would need to be translated into vulgate incan, before we can attempt the english.

but there is something here that i cannot explain. and this is why we call her 'the astronaut'.

[panel six] close on the Astronaut's cave-wall journal. And among the Incan letters appears the Latin: 'Ad astra per aspera'.

[cap: julia's journal]

it is the latin that adorns the plaque that memorializes the astronauts lost to the apollo 1 fire. 'by a rough road, the stars'.

[page eight]

[panel one] close on Barron's hand decanting whiskey into a tumbler from a bottle. The tumbler's resting on a wrought-iron table, and near to it is an ice bucket.

[locator cap]

17 minutes to go

[panel two] big panel. long shot on, frontal on, Barron is foregrounded. He's outside on the balcony, taking in the night. Behind him, in the background, we see the double door, in it, Liv is standing. The curtains are billowing now.

[barron]

i don't think i've ever heard a human being howl. but i did the following year.

i don't think you could ever hear a human being howl and not feel suffering, or even feel the howl inside yourself, or want the suffering to end. or want the howl to end.

it was nearly a year since she left for peru. she hadn't been home since.

and, of course, by this time you had already been kidnapped. but none of us knew yet. to us you had simply vanished.

[title cap]

the astronaut, pt. 2

1983: the postcard

[panel three] same, closer in on Barron.

[barron]

your postcard was the start of the investigation into your disappearance. it was how we knew where to look for you. your postcard that said you'd be joining her in peru, shortly.

but i cannot put it out of my mind. the sound of human suffering. julia having her breakdown over the telephone. the howling.

[page nine]

[panel one] close on Carrie, Barron, Quinn and Liv standing in stunned silence around the table in the Upstairs Study. Ray's just left and his last story has shocked them all.

[panel two] same, but closer in on Carrie.

[carrie]

imagine that... a visionquest in the middle of the sonoran desert. who would have thought?

not the only time we brushed against the mythological was it?

do you know i still remember the drinks we had when you were missing, liv?

and of course, you weren't there either quinn. was it the non-rational that scared you off? or were you too busy building your empire?

[panel three] close on Quinn, he is angry.

[locator cap]

21 minutes to go

[title cap]

the astronaut, pt. 3

1984, the suneater

[panel four] vertically narrow panel, fills half the short tier. Clouds eclipse half the sun, which still shines brightly in the right of the panel. The clouds appear in some form, one we can't quite make out.

[panel five] directly adjacent to previous, same dimensions. An Incan stone frieze, depicting half a sun, to panel left, connecting with the real sun in the previous panel, and a monster assaulting the sun to panel right.

[panel six] big panel, establishing Barron entering a restaurant where Carrie and Ray are already seated, having drinks.

[carrie]

but why do you think she'd have herself admitted? does she blame herself for liv's kidnapping?

barron!

[panel seven] first in a series. Barron puts his coat over the chair. We can't see his face just before he sits down.

[panel eight] second in a series, Barron's seated.

[barron]

some dark skies out there... got me thinking about this suneater myth in julie's journals.

[panel nine] Barron turns his head and signals to an unseen waiter. Third in a series.

[panel ten] fourth and final in a series, same as panel eight.

[barron]

it's because that shaman mummified herself. she sat still for nearly six days and just waited for her death.

[page ten]

[panel one] Barron and Liv, at the edge of the balcony, leaning slightly, looking down. We have a birds-eye on them and the ocean and shoreline spread out below them.

[locator cap]

16 minutes to go

[panel two] same smaller panel.

[barron]

do you know she went back? julia went back to that cave, to that mummy?

[title cap]

the astronaut, pt. 4

1985, "why does my family suffer?"

[panel three] big panel. The mummy to panel left, Julia to panel right. They're mirror images of each other, closer than touching distance, seated in exactly the same position.

[panel four] same as two, but more of the actors' bodies are cropped, and we see slightly more ocean.

[barron]

she had one question on her mind. and she returned to perform one last ritual. to discover how to restore our good fortunes, and with that how to restore you to our world.

[panel five] same as second panel. But we see almost nothing of the ocean, and almost the full sweep of the balcony. Quinn has now entered, and is approaching the railing where Barron and Liv are.

[quinn]

and nobody liked the answer she got. least of all me.

[page eleven]

[panel one] Quinn's seated a wrought-iron chair, that's part of the same set as the table. The bottle of whiskey's still on the table, as is the ice bucket. Quinn's set a book down beside the ice bucket. He appears in the background, between Barron and Liv, both of whom are standing and foregrounded, but Liv's a little closer to him.

[Quinn]

it's not what Carrie suggested. it wasn't the romance of the mythological. and it wasn't that i was building an empire.

it was something else entirely.

[title cap]

the astronaut, pt. 5

1986, Leaving under bad stars

[panel two] Quinn and Julia standing in the seedy neon light of a cheap motel. They're outside in the parking lot. They're both smoking.

[cap: quinn]

i think i more than any of us appreciated the power of the ritual.

[quinn]

so what if the price we pay with this ritual, is too high, Julie? what if bringing her back to us is more than we can bear?

[panels three a thru d] against a continuous background, Quinn's head and shoulders frame a scene where a couple fight by their car and then head for the well-lit check-in office of the motel.

[panel four] same as first panel.

[quinn]

it was a particularly powerful ritual. one that had to be performed in a specific place. that's why we were all checked into the same sleazy motel near the Apollo One Memorial.

and it had to be performed on two very specific days. which two days you ask?

[locator cap]

15 minutes to go

[page twelve]

[panel one] close on Quinn, still seated as per the last page.

[quinn]

it was the evening of january 27. the night after the anniversary of the apollo fire. and the day before challenger.

[locator cap]

14 minutes to go

[panels two thru six] one panel at a time shows the 73 seconds of Challenger's flight. Small box-sized thumbnails. The final panel is a flicker, as when a cathode-ray tube closes its picture down.

[images]

...has been one year to the day since the 73 seconds that shocked the world. we hold in our hearts the high price paid by those brave souls who were lost to a HORRIFIC disaster...

[panel seven] Quinn crouching by a TV set. He's staring blankly into it.

[liv: off-panel]

barron's got the cake ready, quinn. you coming?

[panel eight] a crouching Quinn is foregrounded, while over the sofa, in the backdrop we can see a returned Liv. She's looking good.

[panel nine] close on Liv, she's smiling.

[liv]

what? is there something on my face?

[panel ten] sidelong on Quinn frowning.

[quinn]

i'm there in a second.

[panel eleven] close on Quinn's cheek. A tear rolls down.

[title cap]

1987, by another rough road

the astronaut, epilogue

University of Cape Town

[page thirteen]

[panel one] Barron and Ray in a Corridor.

[Barron]

look, what you said, back there in the room a few minutes ago. our search for immunity did end there. it ended a year later.

[ray]

for you maybe. for us it ended with the kid's graduation.

but we both agree where it began, right?

[panel two] close on Barron.

[barron]

yeah. i remember.

[locator cap]

3 minutes to go

[panel three] Barron's working at a table in a tent. To his side, the tent's one wall is swung open, allowing us to see the outside, something of an encampment.

[title cap]

immunity pt.1

1988, why we came here

[panel four] same, but slightly changed so that we can see Julia standing in an area of the tent we haven't seen in the earlier panel.

[julia]

barron, your aimee, she's wonderful. everybody's outside basking in her.

[barron]

and the rwandan sun i take it?

[julia]

hah, and that too. does she know you're going to propose?

[barron]

how'd you figure that one out?

[julia]

com'n why would you invite us all here? to show off you flash new cdc job?

[panel five] back to the corridor. Ray and Barron.

[barron]

how quickly did they move through the camp? a silently. they caught everyone there completely off guard.

[panel six] the Warlord is surrounded militiamen, all their guns are pointed at our POV.

[Warlord]

calm doctor barron. we came here for immunity. i understand you are here seeking immunity of a different kind.

whereas your immunity might prove elusive, mine can be purchased with your group held hostage in front of american television cameras.

[page fourteen]

[panel one] close on Quinn, sidelong.

[panel two] expand the shot to reveal Quinn, Barron and Liv in the Upstairs study.

[quinn]

mythologies... carrie know she remembers the suneater, i remember the serpent.

we'd been held hostage for nearly a year in rwanda.

[locator cap]

20 minutes to go

[title cap]

immunity pt. 2

1989, remember the year of the serpent

[panel three] Rwanda, at the camp, outside shot. It's a busy panel with a lot of folks moving around, and particularly visible are the USMC liberators.

[panel four] close Quinn talking with a Marine Colonel.

[quinn]

the berlin wall and student resistance in china? you mean the nightmare's over?

[panel five] close on Quinn who is almost purely happy.

[panel six] shift in angle on previous panel so that we see Julia behind Quinn.

[panel seven] close on Julia.

[julia]

quinn. i was talking with the staff SERGEANT. he was stationed in okinawa earlier this year.

i'm sorry but the god of manga died in february.

[page fifteen]

[panel one] in the Upstairs Study, Barron has sunken into a chair and shadows gather around him, Quinn and Liv are still standing at the table.

[barron]

what i remember from that time is my friends standing with me through one of my darkest times.

[locator cap]

19 minutes to go

[panel two] Barron's sitting on his porch, drinking a beer. Quinn, also with a beer, approaches from inside the house. Quinn's also carry a gift-wrapped book, which the wrapping still conceals.

[barron]

so it takes five of you to make dinner for me?

[quinn]

yeah, i guess. we can none of us cook for shit.

[title cap]

immunity pt. 3

1990, american love letters

[panel three] Quinn's now seated next to Barron. He's handing him the book.

[quinn]

here. i wanted you to have this.

[panel four] Barron unwraps his gift.

[panel five] POV Barron as he looks on a copy of 'American Love Letters'

[panel six] same as panel three, without Quinn handing over the book. Just two guys drinking beer.

[quinn]

it's a book about the romances of famous literary personalities that began or ended or wound through other countries.

she's not going to marry you, barron. but the search for a cure for hiv? that's important enough.

eyes on the prize, boy.

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[page sixteen]

[panel one] Liv and Carrie in the Drawing Room. Both relaxed. Carrie has her shoes kicked off, and both feet on the sofa.

[liv]

shouldn't we go after them?

[carrie]

relax... there's plenty of time. but what about that graduation story of ray's, huh?

[locator cap]

4 minutes to go

[panel two] sidelong close on Liv.

[liv]

yeah. it reminds me of that phone call you made when magubi got granted EU asylum. switzerland, right?

remember how distraught you were?

[panel three] Liv on the telephone.

[liv]

carrie, calm down... yes i know, it happened to me too, remember?

carrie... bad things will happen. that can't be what defines us. it's what we do because of what happened.

[title cap]

immunity pt. 4

1991, the warlord's retirement party.

[page seventeen]

[panel one] Ray and Quinn, at ease in the Dining Room.

[barron]

coupla minutes ago i mentioned that dinner party you guys threw me back in 1990?

that wasn't the last time aimee came up. two years later she was in my life again. in all our lives.

[quinn]

yeah, how so?

[locator cap]

10 minutes to go

[panel two] The United Colors of Benetton ad with the HIV/AIDS sufferer dying.

[panel three] The United Colors of Benetton ad with the African mercenary holding the human femur.

[panel four] sidelong on Barron, seated, looking up towards an unseen Quinn.

[barron]

she was the genius mind behind the benetton ad campaign. with the african mercenary and the aids patient dying.

i was so incensed. how could she just make commercial use of suffering, like that?

it just got worse, suddenly, just like that. the three horrors of the nineties, aids, rwanda and benetton.

i ended up calling ray, just to complain, and just leaving it at that.

[panel five] Julia enters the room to find Barron seated and Quinn standing nearby.

[page eighteen]

[panel one] big panel, close on Carrie grinning.

[locator cap]

11 minutes to go

[panel two] same, but pull out, so that we see Carrie seated on a settee in the Drawing Room and we suggest Ray to one side of the panel.

[panel three] same as one, but a smaller panel.

[carrie]

secondly... no! that wasn't the first time. i'd say first time was four years earlier than that.

in tanzania.

do you remember arusha?

[title cap]

immunity pt. 6

1993, last night in arusha

[panel four] Ray and Carrie in an African hotel, the part of the bar that extends into the sidewalk. It's early evening. The two are raising a toast.

[ray]

stirring speech to close the talks, carrie. state department should make you the next secretary, or something.

here's to peace in our time, in rwanda.

[panel five] close Carrie.

[panel six] same.

[carrie]

why are you in tanzania, ray?

[panel seven] back to Ray in the Drawing Room of 1999.

[carrie: Off]

you give yourself away to easily, ray. you believe that people are without context, but they're not.

you said to me, "liv told me about the phone call, carrie. you weren't the only who promised to rid rwanda of this bastard. just the only one who voiced it."
and that's when i knew the truth about you.

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[page nineteen]

[panel one] Liv's reflection on the glass face of a grandfather clock. We can just make out five before midnight.

[Liv]

we should be together for this. we were together at the end of high school, we should be together for the beginning of the millennium.

where're julie and quinn?

[panel two] wide angle on the Drawing Room. We see Liv, by the clock, Ray, Barron and Carrie.

[panel three] white writing centered on a black backdrop.

[title cap/ locator]

1994, graduation day

immunity pt. 7

5 minutes to go

[panel four] medium close on Ray.

[liv: off]

we really should be together

[carrie: off]

liv's right. you boys should go fetch them.

[ray]

relax. i always get there on time. remember graduation day back in 94?

[Barron: Off]

who doesn't? it was may second. the day after the formula one grand prix.

[panel five] it's 1995. Close on Quinn and Julia staring deeply into each others' eyes.

[panel six] pull out and we see Barron standing nearby. it's a graduation scene all around.

[barron]

...you're his aunt julia. brad might still be in jail but it's his time now, and we're going to have to teach him how to hold the world the way we did.

[panel seven] medium on Ray, waving.

[ray]

yo! guys!

[panel eight] big panel of the four friends. With Julia facing Ray.

[julia]

you made it ray, i thought you wouldn't make it.

[ray]

yeah. i made it. caught the end of the principal's speech. and the capping.

barron, did you catch the races yesterday?

[barron]

no, what happened?

[ray]

senna died in a crash. benetton won at imola.

[panel nine] close on Ray in the 1999 Drawing Room.

[ray]

and that's the end of our search for immunity.

any idea where quinn and julie are?

[barron]

i was with them minutes ago. they were heading for the pirate's chapel?

that's not the end of the story.

[ray]

the cave?

[barron]

yeah. that's not how that ended, ray.

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[page twenty]

[panel one] close on Julia and Quinn, their backs to us, sitting side-by-side on the shoreline, staring out at the ocean.

[panel two] zoom out and we see Ray and Barron approaching, from behind. The Boys are foregrounded, while in the middle distance between them, Quinn and Julia sit, their backs to us.

[barron]

it ended the next year, ray. in amsterdam. that's where immunity ended.

[locator cap]

2 minutes to go

[panel three] Barron standing over a woman in an ICU bed. There's life-support machinery draped all over the scene. The captions appear in an email-style.

[email cap]

from: c.stevenson@dos.gov.org

to: barron76@rocketweb.com

subject: funeral blues...

barron,

i've found that poem you saw in that movie. it's called 'funeral blues' or sometimes 'stop all the clocks'. by a brit called auden, a contemporary of eliot and spender. the poem's a tribute to the cabaret singer, hedli anderson, on their death.

i'm including the full text as an attachment. the poem reminded me a little of going home. i'm happy we're done with africa now. and i'm sorry they won.

[panel four] Ray and Barron have now been noticed by Quinn and Julia.

[quinn]

hey... you guys kind of snuck up on us.

[ray]

yeah? have you seen the time?

[julia]

lord... it's in another 2 minutes.

[barron]

it was liv's idea. we should all be together for millennium. come back to the house with us.

[panel five] long shot on the four on the shore.

[quinn]

yeah? well we'll never make it back now.

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[page twenty-one]

[panel one] full-wide, sidelong on, medium on, Barron and Liv sitting opposite each other in a diner's booth. They're passing something between them, like a Heinz or something.

[locator cap]

new york, 1996

[title cap]

"nothing up my sleeve", going for a swim, pt. 1

[panel two] same postures, orientation and panel size + shape as previous panel, Liv and Barron meet each other in the hallway in 1999. They're both about to enter the Drawing Room. They're passing an envelope between them.

[locator cap]

8 minutes to go

[panel three] close on Liv smiling, she's now holding the envelope.

[liv]

what's this?

[barron: off]

eighteen dollars, sixty-nine cents. and a one dollar thirty-one tip.

didn't want the millennium to end before i paid you back for breakfast. and for losing that bet.

[panel four] Barron in the same orientation as Liv in the previous panel. He's holding the Heinz or whatever.

[barron]

levitation without wires. i'm sure it had to be wires.

but this is what we've come to? magicians wandering the streets, like muggers, but with tv crews.

david blaine! who's david blaine, anyway?

[liv: off]

barron, you lost the bet, and you're going for a swim on this one.

so... breakfast is on me.

eat up. this is how television will be from now on. real life.

warhol must be laughing in his grave.

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[page twenty-two]

[panel one] the empty drawing room, we can see the door by which people will enter, and most of the expanse of the room.

[locator cap]

9 minutes to go

[panel two] same, Carrie enters with a cup of cocoa.

[panel three] same, Ray enters with a cup of cocoa.

[panel four] a touring-boat on the river Seine.

[locator cap]

paris, 1997

[title cap]

"ascend in paris", going for a swim, pt. 2

[panel five] interior of the same boat. It's really bustling, and Ray and Carrie are seated, compacted, really.

[ray]

carrie, things are going for a swim.

if i can get you out tonight, then i can wipe any trace of you still being in paris.

we can cover you in milan since monday.

[ray: cap]

and that's when you got the fright of your life. on that barge. the first time you realized who i was really working for.

[panel six] close on Carrie, back in the Drawing Room.

[Carrie]

two things, ray. firstly. did you know 'princess diana' is an anagram for 'ascend in paris'

[panel seven] sidelong close on Ray staring downwards into his cocoa, his head draped in shadow.

[ray]

there's no need to joke about that, carrie.

we both did what we had to.

[locator cap]

12 minutes to go

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[page twenty-three]

[panel one] Kyoto skyline. Wide angle, exterior.

[locator cap]

kyoto, 1998

[panel two] close on a TV, with a Japanese newsreader. Speech is in triangular brackets, translated from Japanese.

[newsreader]

...minister has spoken out against unwarranted aggression from the justice system, since the cult is now bankrupt, and no longer actively seeking members.

[panel three] same, in tighter on TV.

[newsreader]

...leaves only the lives of sixteen citizens claimed during the subway terror attacks in tokyo three years ago. the minister further stated...

[panel four] same. But now a remote in a male hand is being pointed at the TV. The TV is now going dead, as the cathode ray tube is shutting down.

[panel five] sidelong on Quinn, lying in bed, pointing the remote ahead of him. A robed female walks towards him, framing the panel. She remains unidentified. Late afternoon sunlight floods the room.

[panel six] close on Julia, the robed woman.

[quinn: off]

where you headed?

[julia]

down to the pool. going for a swim. come join me.

[quinn: off]

nah... i think i'm actually picking up functional japanese. don't be too long, ok?
the whole point is to see the phoenix clock at the specific hour.

[locator cap]

kyoto, 1998

[title cap]

pilgrimage to the dream factory's timekeeper

[panel seven] it's 1999, in the Dining Room. Same details as page seventeen, panel five. Julia, Barron and Quinn.

[panel eight] in tighter on Quinn and Julia.

[quinn]

you know what we should do... how much time is left?... we should head down to the pirate's chapel. that old cave.

[locator cap]

9 minutes to go

[panel nine] same.

[panel ten] same.

[barron]

nah... you two head down there. i'm going to find the others.

University of Cape Town

[page twenty-four]

[panel one] white writing against a black backdrop.

[title cap]

the end of 'setting sun' - down by the shore.

[cap]

with additional text by walt whitman

[panel two] long shot on Ray and Barron standing, and Quinn and Julia seated on the shoreline, as per the end of page twenty.

[quinn]

...never make it back now.

[locator cap]

one minute to go

[panel three] medium on Liv and Carrie.

[liv]

well it's a good thing we decided to come down here then.

[panel four] medium shot on the four standing in a group.

[cap]

"Now I face home again—very pleas'd and joyous"

[panels five through ten] each panel is a portrait of a single character.

[cap for barron]

"From Asia—from the north—from the God, the sage, and the hero"

[cap for liv]

"I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of maternity, the
land of migrations, look afar"

[cap for carrie]

"Long having wander'd since—round the earth having wander'd"

[cap for ray]

“Look off the shores of my Western Sea—the circle almost circled”

[cap for julia]

“Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound”

[cap for quinn]

“(But where is what I started for, so long ago?

And why is it yet unfound?)”

[panel eleven] seawater has gotten caught in a small ditch on the shore, and the stars and night sky are reflected therein.

University of Cape Town

[visualization footnote]



Penny, here's something I found on my laptop but I think it works properly as a visualization note for this comic. (If it's not Penny penciling, I apologize. I'm sure you're a good artist, but when I wrote this I meant it for Penny).

Look at how the panels themselves in the lower quadrants are thick and chunky, and eventually the history of what happened to Superman, image itself, comes to fill the panels on the right hand side of the page. This would be great if you could work in this folded time, this crystallized time where images occupy the gutters. This is what *Setting Sun* is "about". It's about the tyranny of memory.

back when: introduction to dead spiders comics

We never did get our first project off the ground, *Return Fire*, shathley Q and I, but I think we can be forgiven. After all, we were only eight years old at the time. Back When.

We lived maybe half a mile apart from each other, and I think he was a little younger than me. He literally showed up at my door one day and demanded to know why I had been making newspapers. I remember it clearly. I was taken by shock at this kid I barely knew, this kid I'd barely seen around the neighborhood, this kid who just appeared at the front door and began judging my life.

I wanted to fall into an explanation immediately, a defense. My older brother had been in his junior year of Film School and returned home to the neighborhood to shoot documentary as part of his final exam. He worked out of the back shed, where he setup a studio. But time and again he'd left *All The President's Men* in the DVD player. After school, on weekend's I remember wandering into the TV room and, after surfing for about an hour, I'd find the Redford movie in the player, I'd hit 'Resume Playing' and fall into a hard rhythm of watching.

I wanted to say to this kid, 'Listen, Kid, I don't know you. You got no right. No right to just show up at my door. And no right whatsoever to just judge me. But let me tell you about this dream. A long time ago there was this crook. This really bad-news guy and he crooked his way into the Presidency. The Presidency! And you know what? It's because of filmmakers like Redford that we know about this. And you know what? There's crazy things going down even in this neighborhood. And I'm going to tell people about it'. But I never got a chance to say the words.

Like he would do so many times over the years to come, he stood dead in front of me and beat me to the draw. 'Are you watching some kind of movie about newspapers?', he asked.

He didn't wait for an answer. He rolled right ahead. 'Movies are for lazy people. I want to show you comics. They make you work hard. They make you think.'

He practically took me by the hand down to the MAX-Mart. But we never made it in. About 500 yards we hit a police barricade. We didn't know it at the time, and wouldn't discover till years later, but there was some kind of hostage situation.

On edge, and probably a little psyched up, I wanted to head home. But he sat me down a little distance from the barricade. 'You want to be a reporter,' he said. So I sat down. He fished out a trade of *Safe Area Gorazde*, and launched into a tirade. Sacco was a reporter too, but he didn't need to travel around with a movie cameraman or even a camera. Just a sketch pad. And a pencil. *Gorazde* was for me. He pulled out a copy of *V for Vendetta* and promised me, that this was not for me. That I didn't yet know enough about comics to be able to read this. I was hacked off at being slotted into a world-order the way I clearly was being, but. But somehow the magic happened. As we sat there in the late summer, or was it the early fall, as I turned one page to the next, the sprawling linear madness of Sacco drew me in.

I remember he had launched into another discourse, when I stopped him short and asked how he knew about the newspaper I'd been doing for my family. He told me about his brother and my sister. He thought my sister had fallen in love with his brother, and she'd told him about my newspaper. His brother had been poking fun at the idea with his friends. At the idea of being a reporter. I'd become a punchline.

My brother's a crotch, he said. And we're the little guys. And we got to stick together.

I can't remember if I wanted to say something or not. I like to think of it now, that I realized there was a need I recognized to say something. But events played out differently. I guess a generation back they might have said, fate had other plans.

I do remember the red and blue lights glowing in the backlighting of the evening sky. Right in front of us, I remember one cop turning to another. Were they making a joke? Did he offer the other guy coffee? Did he make some wisecrack about pulling the late shift. But less than a heartbeat later. He dropped like a sack. Blood poured out across the street. I looked up, shifted my line of sight into the distance and some bad guy came running towards the barricade. We were both frozen, me and Shathley Q. but somehow the other cops had gotten their weapons drawn. They fired on the bad guy. He sank too.

Shathley Q grabbed my shoulder. I was still in shock, staring at the scene in front of me. We got to do a comicbook about this, he said, gripping my shoulder ever firmer. Yeah, I said. And it's got to be called *Return Fire*.

I felt his grip loosen, and without looking, I knew he'd sank.

Cops came rushing round us. The kid had been hit, they were shouting.

An ambulance ride and a day later, we discovered it wasn't a shrapnel fragment that had hit Shathley. It was asphalt ricocheting after been hit by shrapnel. Shathley would be fine. And I would be fine. And although you didn't know it at the time, you would be fine too. Because you would have read *Clockwise*, *The Silent Killer*, *Dropship*, *Immortality*, *Questing*, *Last Harvest* or even the scripts collected in the six fine volumes that make up this series of *Collected Works*.

Dead Spiders Comics would prove to be our first professional collaboration. Nearly three decades into our respective careers, it came at a time when we had both established ourselves. And it was a strange twist of fate. I suppose they would have said that a generation back now.

'Dead Famous' was of course where Shathley Q began. And at that point, *Iconographies* had already been critically acclaimed and commercially deemed a runaway success. *Dead Spiders Comics* was meant to be the first in Wonder's 'Masterworks' series -- a way to honor our living legends who had contributed to the company for at least a quarter of a century. While the series never got beyond the first book, *Dead Spiders Comics*, I still think, in the long-run, we did ok.

The idea was that we should reprint the first Wonder story that each of our living legends had done. And our legends would extend it with any number of backup stories to carry the page-count to 64. Just so long as they kept the setting of the original stories. In typical Shathley Q fashion, he pointed out that since Wonder now owned Indicia Imprints, we should publish his first story, rather than his first Wonder story.

We did exactly that of course, and in typical Shathley Q fashion, he gave us all the surprise ending of the century by linking his first story with his greatest commercial success. 'High Stakes Birthday', the "sequel" to 'Dead Famous' not only plays out a generation in the story's past, but shocked everyone when by the turn of the last page we all realized that SQ had effectively provided something we'd all never seen in nearly six years of *Iconographies* -- a beginning.

Dead Spiders Comics would, gratefully, not be our final collaboration. Over the two years following, I would act as editor on *the End of Iconographies*, the series that tied together the fallout of *Dead Spiders Comics* and at the same time concluded *Iconographies*.

If you haven't read either yet, I'll say this. I envy you, the world you're entering. For near on six years SQ kept us in suspense as to who The Enemy was, always lurking, ever-present, in the history of the world he created. *Dead Spiders Comics* showed us that SQ had given us his end, in his beginning.

Back When.

Unceremoniously a paramedic ushered me into the back of the ambulance. You can call you friend's folks from the hospital, she said.

About 5 minutes into it, and I realized that Shathley Q was my friend. Maybe the strangest most dangerous friend I ever would have, but he was my friend. And I realized he would probably be dead by the time we got to the hospital. Another minute and I did maybe the bravest thing I'd ever done. I mustered up enough courage to confess my sure knowledge of his impending doom. I would ask if there was anything I could do for him.

But again, he beat me to it.

Stop looking so worried, he said. I know you can't draw, but we'll find an artist for *Return Fire*. I want to go meet this other kid, Nora, but she's a girl.

Bill Hull, Wonder House Retreat, Tokyo

dead spiders comics
[feat. dead famous + high stakes birthday]
story: shathley Q
art: andrew donaldson
(art for original project by nolan + hardy)

[Bill,

These are mostly the same scripts for the original six 'episodes' published fortnightly in *Ultimatum* magazine (March II until June I, 2001) all those many, long years ago. Since Wonder now owns what's left of Indicia Imprints (erstwhile owners of *Ultimatum*), I'm assuming I won't have to redraft scripts for Andrew. Also, as per your suggestion, I'm including 'cover' concepts for the introduction to each of the original 'episodes' to bring the page count up to 64. -sQ]

[page one]

[concept for 'cover'] I keep getting haunted by this idea of members of the intelligence community sitting through a briefing in a darkened room, with one of them standing up front by a data projector, but instead of photos or data of any other sort, there's comics being projected onto the screen. All I really want is to depict a clandestine war that looks very much like peacetime.

--title cap(tion)--

dead famous

episode one: dead without him

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page two]

[panel one] narrow panel, about an eighth of the panel's width, bleeds top and bottom. Let's call this a sliver-bleed. The sliver-bleed is a single element culled from the previous panel, and elongated, and it appears in the second (from the left) eighth of the page. Text appears in a left-aligned triangle, in the lower right hand corner of the page, on the wide side of the sliver-bleed. Usually this is kept for the 'previously', but this being the first episode, I've come up with a snappy one-liner. For the original *Ultimatum* episodes, Frank Candy, the original series editor, did these 'previously' segments, but I'm cheating a little and doing these myself.

--cap--

someone must have been spreading lies about shathley q...

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page three]

[panel one] this whole page is sepia-washed, and the captions are segregated from the art, appearing either above or below the pics. POV on a cartoonist illustrating an elevator opening. In the cartoon he's drawing we see the elevator doors appear in two separate panels, with his hands in the gutter, forcing the panels open.

--cap--

the reason we live in the shadow of comics is because of one man -- famous.

the story began when he was young with the single worst day of his life.

betrayed by a mentor, deserted by a beloved, cut off from funding for his filmmaking project, he ran away. and found a new medium -- comics.

[panel two] the DEAD SPIDERS TRILOGY, a collected comicbook.

--cap--

famous made a fiction of his worst day, and another day, some months later, one where he had begun to put his life back together, using the power of comics. and finally, with the original story he meant to publish, famous made his first comicbook trilogy.

the trilogy changed the world.

[page continues]

[page cont'd]

[panel three] rustic view, through the trees of a small village, the village of Dead Spiders.

--cap--

but the trilogy did not change the world by itself. first, there was a lifetime.

famous spent a lifetime shifting human consciousness away from filmmaking and towards comics. in those days filmmaking was very respected.

and he could do this because he came from a very special place -- the town of *dead spiders*.

[panel four] the panel is subdivided into 2 parts, one for a moviereel, the other for comics.

--cap--

for generations, dead spiders produced a single peerless force, each generation. a dreamer, a dream-maker. and for generations in dead spiders these dreamers were filmmakers.

if not for that single day, famous, too, would have been a filmmaker.

[page continues]

[page cont'd]

[panel five] the comics side on the previous panel comes to dominate the entire panel.

--cap--

but there were forces vested in the idea of filmmaking, forces within dead spiders itself, and within the government that developed out of generations upon generations of dead spiders dream-makers.

but famous continued to make fictions his entire life, sometimes exactly of the shadow-war of surveillance between the comics dream-makers and government intelligence forces.

and by the end of his life, the world changed, and comics had won. and filmmaking had all but disappeared.

[panel six] a fade from sepia-wash of the previous panel to an establishing shot of Katey Royale seated in a booth in a diner.

--cap--

and on the day we buried him, one generation ago, to the day, we were all born into a stronger more loving world.

and on the day we buried him, i was born, not 3 miles from where i sit.

my name is katey royale and i came to dead spiders to praise him.

[page ends]

[page four]

[panel one] Katey in her booth frames two old guys sharing a breakfast at the bar. The diner's pretty well-frequented at this hour, without being crowded. There's a younger guy behind the counter, serving folks their breakfast. The two guys and the diner's owner, the younger guy, should appear at the margin of the panel.

[panel two] close on the two guys mentioned earlier. Old Guy No.1 gesticulates wildly.

--old guy no.1--

at that very booth. that's what i'm saying. that very booth.

[panel three] a pointing finger frames Katey at her booth. She looks puzzled.

--old guy no.2/off--

why you saying that booth, marius? you know this diner's been renovated over the years. how do you know it's that booth?

[panel four] the three guys, again.

--old guy no.1--

but they reused the booths. and i got the sight. it's gift.

a gift of memory. i remember famous from when i was a kid, and he drew *thousandfold* right there. him and the 56.

--owner--

what, all 57 of them at that one booth, marius?

[page continues]

[page cont'd]

[panel five] close on Old Guy No.1, from the Owner's POV, with the Old Guy No.2 suggested.

--old guy no.1--

hey! don't you two mock me. i was 3 years old, but i was there. i saw him.

--owner--

yeah ok, don't sweat it marius. frank told me your mom used to bring you here every day.

[panel six] the three keep their heads low, observing a moment of silence.

--old guy no.2--

yeah, frank was a saint.

--cap--

old-timers. i try not to chuckle. but they're not wrong. not by any means.

thousandfold was the single largest impact crater on human consciousness since galileo.

[page ends]

[page five]

[panel one] return to our comicbook-within-a-panel theme.

--cap--

some call it his magnum opus, his major work.

thousandfold ran in excess of 6,000 pages. and it told the story of a friendship that changed a world.

[panel two] one of the two friends, in sidelong, bowing his head, holding his hands together.

--cap--

two friends who wrote a story that became so loved that it kept growing. from pulp novels through radio shows, through tv shows and finally into comics.

[panel three] montage Einstein in a walker, being handed pills by a surly matron, Amelia Earhart in a doctor's uniform, standing by a medical helicopter. Galileo in a church, in the background there is a chandelier pendulum-swinging. Galileo utters the Lord's Prayer, in Latin.

--cap--

thousandfold began by depicting how terrible a world our protagonists lived in, one in which science failed to dream.

but because of their story, also called "thousandfold", they gave their world better dreams.

[page continues]

[page cont'd]

[panel four] the two friends at a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Horizonus Institute.

--cap--

according to their story, their story's success allowed them build an institute dedicated to the science of imagineering.

a science that built the dreams they wrote about.

later they even managed to avoid a global and infinite war by launching the human species into outer space.

but the story ends on a dark note when, after decades of discovery voyages, one of the friends returns to earth to seek revenge against a humankind he believed betrayed the ideals he gave.

the two friends come into conflict when one leads an alien invasion, and the other defends humankind. the story ends in détente after the earth is decimated.

[page continues]

[page cont'd]

[panel five] big panel showing Dead Spiders as a bustling metropolis. There are sky-cars everywhere, towers, space-ports, it's a real City of Tomorrow.

--cap--

and of course in the real world, there was imagineering too.

famous built his own horizonus institute two years after *thousandfold*.

and within the next decades there were hardlight drives, j.e.n.n.i.f.e.r. stations, the n-web, sunshine forests, neocortical nines, hitmen-histories, gunforgers, multigrids, shadowsizing, FIG.-shutters, kents, grazing vortices, able mills...

sara sabrina, newly appointed as the substance director for the right-wing site, livingfornothingnow.org suggests famous as the 'tomorrow engineer' because, and i'm quoting, he made the impossible seem inevitable.

[page ends]

[page six]

[panel one] foregrounded, and worm's eye on, legs walking towards, frame a view of Katey at her booth.

[panel two] Katey in her booth looks up at the stranger who just walked up to her. We can see him clearly now. This is Ed Keter.

--ed--

you'll have to forgive them, they're all glory-bound for days gone by. they're always like that.

[page continues]

University of Cape Town

[page cont'd]

[panel three] from POV Ed looking down (slight bird's-eye on) Katey looking at her menu.

--katey--

yeah. whole world's like that now.

--ed--

i know who you are, right? you're katey royale?

--katey--

sure.

--ed--

but i think i know why you're here. to find out why famous killed himself. right?

--cap--

he was right of course. about a month ago news began to leak about Famous's last journals. and it seems he arranged his suicide. not everybody knows yet. but i need to know why.

so i'm here to discover why a man who built the world with his hands, would take his own life.

and what would become of his world, when the rest of the world found out.

[page ends]

[page seven]

[panel one] cover to episode two. Simple concept really, a classical samurai, and a female James Bond clone, let's call her Jamey Bond, they're making out like ferrets in heat.

--title cap--

dead famous

episode two: 100% dark romance stories

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page eight]

[panel one] sliver-bleed of previous. Same layout as page 2.

--cap--

in a world where the fairybook ending came for comics, because of one man, katey royale, born on the very day of his death, returns to dead spiders to investigate his ostensible suicide.

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page nine]

[panel one] sidelong, oblique close on Katey balancing a whiskey shot-glass on the tip of her nose.

--cap--

my name is katey royale, and i am bored out of my skull.

[panel two] caption only.

--cap--

i arrived in dead spiders for answers. why would famous, the man who invented this world of comics and comicbook technology take his own life?

his last few remaining friends might have answers, the last of the so-called 56. and the 8 of them would all gather here, for their omega weekend, the weekend immediately after the anniversary of his death.

his death was one generation ago, to the day. it was the day i was born. not to many people know that he might have taken his own life, but i know. and ed Keter over there, he also knows.

so for right now, to kill time, i'm with him. he's working on a documentary called "100% true romance stories".

[page continues]

[page cont'd]

[panel three] Ed sits on a couch with an elderly Japanese man, Shinji Nagasse.

--Keter--

and after détente between obscura publishing, Famous's company, and government, what happened then?

--Shinji--

well, i still had my secrecy, my mask remained. i thought of myself as free, freed. i could now lead a life of quiet obscurity.

but that was not the course things took.

[panel four] close on Shinji.

--Shinji--

for all my thundering about security, i was lonely. i knew Nora was the counter-agent sent in to discover my identity.

it was a very close race, that lasted nearly a decade, and she nearly had me, but i proved more wily. about 6 months before détente i discovered her identity.

so after détente, when it no longer mattered, i was so lonely, i called her up and unmasked myself. i said we should trade the dossiers we had on each other.

[page continues]

[page cont'd]

[panel five] close on Shinji, head lowered.

[panel six] same, Shinji looking up, smiling.

--Shinji--

and this proved to be the path to our lasting romance.

--title cap--

"the quiet samurai hours" -- an ed Keter production

[page ends]

[page ten]

[panel one] Katey sitting alone in the middle of a double-seater sofa, in front of her is a coffee table. She stares down at the whiskey shot-glass from earlier, somehow suspicious of it. wide panel.

[panel two] same, narrow, on the same tier as the previous.

[panel three] same panel, even narrow.

--off/off--

are doing ok there, honey?

[panel four] wide on the scene, we see Nora Dietz approaching Katey's sofa.

--Nora--

or are you a little bored? i know i would be, i can hear those two talking it up, even in this room. heavens know!

--cap--

great, now the woman's talking to me.

[page continues]

[page cont'd]

[panel five] same as one, but now Nora's seated herself next to Katey.

--Nora--

you know, i thought about asking you to help with dinner, but you didn't look like that type of girl to me. far from it.

and that young man of yours... he is going to ask me about the most important romance in my life...

...and mine's a little different to Shinji's. mine happened in my childhood and lasted a whole summer long.

[panel six] close on Nora with sickly sweet smile.

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page eleven]

[panel one] big panel, sunrise (bleeds up, left and right and occupies the entire tier). Two young girls, barefoot, dressed in denim shorts and checkered shirts, the sleeves of which have been torn off. Swinging on an old truck tire, turned into a makeshift swing, there is just a pure joy of life that comes from that point in life. And of course the terror, the terror's there too.

[panel two] text only.

--cap--

it was me and jenny crush. the two of us that whole summer.

the summer we fell in love with Chase Bordeaux.

[panel three] worm's eye a preteen Nora dwarfed by the super-imposing magazine rack.

--title cap--

the summer we fell in love with Chase Bordeaux

--cap--

we were treated to five new Chase Bordeaux stories each week.

she was the heroine of a popular comicbook. she was a spy. she was the most glamorous person we knew.

[panel four] sepia-washed. Sidelong on Chase Bordeaux, in an elegant evening-dress she holds a pistol to her pursed lips and blows away the smoke from the barrel.

[page continues]

[page cont'd]

[panel five] Nora, in her later years, seated on the sofa, telling this story.

--Nora--

later in life, i used the memory of what happened to jenny at the end of that summer to gain my start in the intelligence community.

i felt terrible about it for the rest of my life.

[panel six] close on Katey, bewildered, aghast.

--katey--

listen, i'm going to head out for dinner. i'll come back for eddy later.

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page twelve]

[panel one] sunrise panel, bird's eye on. A murder scene outside a suburban house. Police cars have cordoned off the top end of the street. Uniforms are crawling. All over the lawn and the street, everywhere. There're two corpses, one male, one female. There're pools of blood. There're detectives. A coroner's team. The works.

[panel two] close on one aspect, a uniform holding a the growing crowd at bay.

[panel three] close on another aspect. Detectives and a coroner crouched near and standing over the corpses of Shinji and Nora.

[panel four] another aspect, idling uniforms sipping at coffee.

[panel five] a detective interrogates Katey.

--detective--

listen lady, i don't care when you were born. right now your boyfriend's the prime suspect, and i'm the only one can help you here...

[panel six] closer on Katey.

--cap--

detective Jason more tells himself he's saving lives, everyday, more and more.

--title cap--

the romance of safety

[page ends]

[page thirteen]

[panel one] cover concept. Antagonistic, Emma points a longbow at the reader's POV.

--title cap--

dead famous

episode three: omega weekend

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page fourteen]

[panel one] sliver-bleed of previous. Same layout as page 2.

--cap--

Keter, Edward, is in the wind. and two bodies in his wake. katey royale gets down to the business of investigating the remaining friends, to establish for herself if famous took his own life, and if the world is coming to an end. the omega weekend draws to a close.

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page fifteen]

[panel one] close on Farthing.

[panel two] same, wider out on, he's standing on a pier overlooking a lake.

[panel three] with his back to the reader's POV, Farthing stands on the pier, surveying the landscape. All is still.

[panel four] similar to one, different angle.

--cap--

farthing was Famous's wartime consiglieri.

the mind behind the fencing strokes of the shadow-war of surveillance and intelligence.

and here he stands now, at the end of the omega weekend.

--cap--

there you've spoilt it now katey royale, the absolute silence of time that freezes the world in moment.

[panel five] a group of hikers emerge from the tree-line.

[panel six] close on Farthing, foregrounded, and Katey approaching in the backdrop.

[page ends]

[page sixteen]

[panel one] Farthing and Katey, side by side on the pier, the woods and the mountains for backdrops.

[panel two] closer on the same.

--farthing--

you know i used to live in the village? in new york. that was long ago.

i know nobody knows, but i've had the house under surveillance the entire weekend.

and here you are. now. looking for answers. is it a hoax? did famous off himself?

--cap--

of course he knows why i'm really here. he's who he is for a reason.

[panel three] sidelong close on Farthing.

--cap--

but how far are you willing to save the world he made for us.

[panel four] same.

[panel five] close on Katey, frontal.

[page ends]

[page seventeen]

[panel one] nightvision cam on the Janets, Todd and Riley, arriving in the hall.

--Todd--

no... riley here had food poisoning that whole weekend, remember?

--cap--

even before you arrived katey, Todd Janet gave me the first clue about how he and his sister spent that last weekend with famous.

[panel two] nightvision webcam again, Harvey holding a saber, examining the blade of the weapon.

--Harvey--

what is this, Prussian military? didn't famous used to have a set of models depicting the last Crimean battle?

--cap--

Harvey came next.

[panel three] webcam nightvision again. Emma, holding a drink, talking to Riley Janet. They're by a fireplace, both laughing.

--Emma--

and bracken pulls out this photo from his back-pocket and slaps it on the table, and spits and says, 'long pike lake back in '97. me and charley Whitney and nothing but woods and river for six days.'

[page continues]

[page cont'd]

[panel four] back to Farthing and Katey on the pier.

--farthing--

i mean alone, these mean nothing. absolutely nothing. you'd need a lifetime to understand for the clues they are.

but that's what i had. a lifetime.

we were sold out katey royale. betrayed. by our own.

i'm going back to the house now.

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page eighteen]

[panel one] from the back, Farthing heads up a well-lit stone/lumber trail, back towards the house, while, foregrounded and following behind him, Katey heads after him.

--katey--

farthing, wait! who was it? which one of the friends?

[panel two] sidelong close on Farthing, he's paused, his head is lowered.

[panel three] same, same orientation for Farthing, but he's turned back to holler at Katey.

--farthing--

what makes you think it's only one?

[panel four] sidelong close on Hansen, cupping his hand to his mouth to better call a long way.

--Hansen--

farthing! we've found your equipment...

[panel five] on Katey and Farthing, near a tree.

--farthing--

is that Hansen? what's he shouting about?

[panel six] same, with an arrow in the tree, missing one of the character's by inches.

--farthing--

never mind. i just figured it out.

[page ends]

[page nineteen]

[panel one] cover concept. In the middle of the track, we should see an empty rollercoaster.

--cap--

dead famous

episode four: steeplechase

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page twenty]

[panel one] sliver-bleed of previous, same layout as page 2.

--cap--

as our villains escape from the omega weekend, the remaining friends search for a way to limit the impact of their betrayal. but first they'll have to hunt them down.

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page twenty-one]

[panel one] a seventies muscle car power slides to panel left on a page-wide panel.

[panel two] interior on same car, with Starr McVeigh, a Naomi Campbell lookalike, driving. Daphne Soul, a Cameron Diaz lookalike is in the passenger seat.

--Daphne--

Emma and Harvey, who would have figured it be them to betray the dream?

[panel three] page-wide, sidelong on the car as it races by.

[panel four] close on Starr behind the wheel.

--star--

yeah. who'd of thought it be them?

[panel five] Emma and Harvey crouching on an overhang overlooking the road. There's a longbow lying nearby on the ground In the distance, we see headlights light up one section of the road. A car is approaching.

--Harvey--

take the shot as soon as you see them. we don't need to hit them, remember, just throw them off a little.

[panel six] frontal on Emma as she menaces the bow, with loaded arrow at the reader's POV.

[panel seven] sidelong on same as Emma prepares the shot.

[panel eight] sidelong on arrow in flight.

[panel nine] frontal on arrow in flight.

[panel ten] car swerves as the arrow misses.

[panel eleven] car in another power-slide similar to panel one, but another car has appeared in pursuit.

[page ends]

[page twenty-two]

[panel one] the arrow in flight, sidelong on.

[panel two] the swerving car.

[panel three] the second car appears.

[panel four] a male and female hand hold each other.

[panel five] captions only

--Harvey--

i want you to only send them off course, do you understand Emma?

--Emma--

yes Harvey.

[panel six] interior on car with Starr and Hutch.

--Hutchins--

who's that behind us?

[panel seven] close on Hutch.

[panel eight] pursuit vehicle slides in behind Hutch and Starr's car.

[panel nine] close on Todd and Riley Janet, sidelong on, their faces are lit by the light of the computer terminal.

--riley--

Todd, this can't possibly be right. we need farthing on this.

[page ends]

[page twenty-three]

[panel one] close on Katey, from the bottom, she is lit by firelight.

--katey--

why are we still here? why haven't we joined in the chase?

[panel two] wider on the same scene. We see farthing standing nearby, and Katey standing by the firelight. Both are holding whiskey.

--farthing--

we're looking for answers of course, katey.

we now know who betrayed us. and 'why' is a meaningless question. what we need to discover is 'how'.

how were we betrayed?

[panel three] same, in tighter on Katey.

[panel four] same as two, in tighter on Farthing.

[panel five] medium on Todd Janet, bursting into the room.

--Todd--

farthing, you've got to come quickly!

[panel six] full-wide. The pursuit car is ramming the chase car with Starr and Hutch in it. we see down the hoods of the two cars, into their interiors through the windscreens.

[panel seven] there's a fairly big window in the background, we're back in the room with Farthing, Katey, and Todd.

[panel eight] same. But bathed in a light from outside, possibly from a helo.

[page ends]

[page twenty-four]

[panel one] Todd Janet bursts into the room.

--Todd--

farthing!

[panel two] same as panel six on previous page.

[page three] sidelong on same, with the Pursuit vehicle pulling ahead slightly.

[panel four] from the cliff overhang Emma and Harvey watch the destruction they've wrought, as below them, on the road, the cars clash.

[panel five] close on Farthing in his armchair.

--farthing--

so that must mean a third force...

[panel six] same, but Farthing bathed in white light.

[panel seven] car crash, Starr attempts to crawl from the wreckage.

[panel eight] same, Hutch is now crawling out also.

[panel nine] wide area, birds-eye on same. The Friends' car has overturned, and they're crawling free. The Pursuit car is nearby, and a figure is running from there towards the over turned car.

[panel ten] medium on Ed Keter, in front of him, Starr and Hutch are crawling.

--Keter--

in the next few minutes a helicopter will show up. i'm your only way out of this.

you should come with me.

[panel eleven] Katey in the room, lit by white-lighting.

[panel twelve] same, but the helo has passed.

--katey--

farthing. i can get everyone out of this house if you come with me now.

[page ends]

[page twenty-five]

[panel one] cover concept. A green-display of the Radius Ex subterranean complex.

--title cap--

dead famous

episode five: radius ex

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page twenty-six]

[panel one] sliver-bleed of previous, same layout as page 2.

--cap--

the friends of famous are swept away to a subterranean facility of the birthday underground where revelations are forthcoming.

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page twenty-seven]

[panel one] Farthing seated at a table in a holding cell, awaiting interrogation.

[panel two] same, but as we draw back, we see Keter to panel left and Katey to panel right, viewing the relaxed Farthing through a one-way mirror.

[panel three] close on Katey.

--katey--

are you going to let them go anytime soon?

[panel four] close on Keter.

[panel five] same.

[panel six] same as one.

--cap--

there's more at stake now, katey. i'm beginning to question the wisdom in bringing them here to radius ex in the first place.

the birthday underground was founded to guard the dream of famous, but how do we explain this to his last living friends.

[page ends]

[page twenty-eight]

[panel one] Farthing in the interrogation cell, wide angle on.

[panel two] close on a small speaker mounted high on the wall, near the ceiling.

[panel three] close on another detail of the very sparse room, most likely the texture of the table itself.

[panel four] overhead view on Farthing seated at the table.

[panel five] same as panel one.

[panel six] same as panel two. the dialogue appears in the previous panel, but originates from the speaker in this panel.

--speaker--

doctor farthing, could you join us in the briefing room please.

[page ends]

[page twenty-nine]

[panel one] Keter and Katey walking down a corridor,
we're on the inside of an underground military base.

[panel two] sidelong on same.

--Keter--

they stole his dream, katey. can you understand that?

they stole his dream, and his friends conspired with them.

they declared détente, but the government simply went ahead and found ways to
oppress everyone by using comics instead of filmmaking.

they corrupted his dream.

birthday underground exists for no other reason than to reclaim his dream from
the oppressive state.

that's why we built complexes like radius ex. and that's why we perpetuated the
hoax of Famous's suicide.

to be able to take back his dream.

[page ends]

[page thirty]

[panel one] interior on the briefing room, a large panel. There's a boardroom table and pretty much display screens. Everyone's here. Keter, Katey, Farthing, the Janets, Starr and Hutch. There's also a reasonable presence of armed and uniformed guards.

[panel two] tighter in on same.

[panel three] close on one element of panel one.

[panel four] close on a different element of panel one.

[panel five] close on yet another element of panel one.

[panel six] medium close on Keter, seated.

--Keter--

let me explain why we're all here.

[page ends]

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[page thirty-one]

[panel one] cover concept. Worms-eye on, interior on, a witness, staring upwards in a church as armored troops fast-rope down.

--title cap--

dead famous

episode six: birthday, present

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page thirty-two]

[panel one] silver-bleed of previous. Same layout as page 2.

--cap--

the friends, now having joined forces with the birthday underground, prepare for the final assault.

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page thirty-three]

[panel one] big panel interior in Radius Ex, a wide open hangar bay. The Friends are, together with other soldiers in Birthday Underground, preparing for a raid. Armaments are being checked, armor is being checked, equipment is being checked.

[panel two] against the setting of the previous panel, Keter finds Katey and the Friends.

[panel three] close on Keter.

--Keter--

we should talk.

alone.

[panel four] sidelong on same.

[panel five] medium on the Friends, and Katey.

[panel six] birds-eye on panel one.

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page thirty-four]

[panel one] big panel. Emma and Harvey chained in a distress position.

[panel two] picture of the same as previous seen on an oversized display screen.

[panel three] wider out on previous to establish Keter, Katey and the Friends in the room, viewing the same.

[panel four] close on same as panel two.

--Keter--

katey and i will leave. but you should remain here.

farthing will be able to explain their full betrayal of his dream.

but suffice it to say without their cooperation, government would never have been able to take control of the world famous built for us all.

and as his friends you should decide their lives.

[page ends]

[page thirty-five]

[panel one] same as panel one in previous.

[panel two] panel bleeds left, sidelong on attack helos in flight.

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page thirty-six]

[panel one] medium on Katey and Keter walking through Radius Ex.

--katey--

i know you well enough, by now ed, to know you wanted to talk to me.

[panel two] close on Keter.

--Keter--

... ..

[panel three] sidelong on, the figures are silhouetted, medium close on, Keter hands Katey a tome.

--Keter--

you can't join in the assault, katey. you've got more important work.

famous built this world because of a single day. the worst day of his life.

but even as he began to build this better world for us, another person foresaw the world on a very different day.

[panel four] the tome open in Katey's hands.

--off/off--

that person was professor Haden lynch. and that day was your birthday.

one generation ago, to the day.

[page continues]

[page cont'd]

[panel five] close on Keter, silhouetted, looking towards the reader's POV.

--Keter--

we need you to begin reading your father's journals. because only you can --
they're genetically locked.

[panel six] overhead view of the Friends and other soldiers mounting up, boarding a huge carrier helo in one of the Radius Ex hangar bays.

[panel seven] same as panel four, but now the tome is closed. Its title reads 'Iconographies'.

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page thirty-seven]

[panel one] cover page. Gray outline against a black backdrop. All captioning is right-aligned. A poster against an anonymous wall promoting the Tiffanies, a girl-power band.

--cap--

iconographies volume zero: high stakes birthday

part one: at tiffanies

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page thirty-eight]

[panel one] close on a latex-gloved left hand pulling a latex glove onto a right hand.

[panel two] close on a medical tray with various medical tools, and a bowl of hot water.

[panel three] close on Haden Lynch, in scrubs, pulling on his gauze mask.

[panel four] close on Arlene, Angie's lover, battling with a camcorder.

[panel five] medium close on a female doctor barking orders to a team of medical staff.

[panel six] medium on Angie, sweat dripping from her face, and from her hair. Softly, but she's smiling.

--cap--

one generation ago, to this day.

[page ends]

[page thirty-nine]

[panel one] close on the same doctor from the previous page.

--doctor--

ready now... here we go...

[panel two] Angie's POV staring down her body at the doctor.

[panel two] same doctor bends down.

[panel three] same. Doctor returns, produces little Katey Royale.

[panel four] big panel, Angie holds Katey, she's smiling.

[panel five] close on Arlene smiling.

[panel six] close on Lynch, smiling.

[page ends]

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[page forty]

[panel one] Lynch removes an optical disc from its wrapping.

[panel two] he blows clean said optical disc.

[panel three] he slides said optical disc into a camcorder.

[panel four] he presses record.

[panel five] he gets an error message on the camcorder's display screen.

[panel six] he whips out his cellular telephone.

[panel seven] Arlene holds the camcorder.

--Arlene--

Haden, you should be with your child, and with her mother.

i'll take care of the camcorder.

[page ends]

[page forty-one]

[panel one] close on Katey.

[panel two] same, her head turns.

[panel three] same, notices a finger at the far edge of the panel

[panel four] close on Katey reaching to grab with her tiny hand, a single finger.

[panel five] close on Katey sucking on the finger seeking nourishment.

[panel six] big panel mother, child and father together, Katey still sucking on her father's finger.

--cap--

mother, father and child

[page ends]

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[page forty-two]

[panel one] medium on Angie smiling.

[panel two] medium on Lynch smiling.

--angle/off--

she's resilient, got to give her that.

[panel three] close on Lynch smiling. Something's shifted. He's in a darker mood.

[panel four] close on Angie, she's realized the shift in mood.

[panel five] the same.

--angle--

oh god... the way we handled this birth. it helps you doesn't it?

what did they offer you Haden?

[panel six] silhouetted, Angie sinks her head, sidelong on.

--angle--

you should take it Haden... for god's sake take it.

[page ends]

[page forty-three]

[panel one] establishing panel. Slight birds-eye on a nursery.

[panel two] Lynch stands at the window through which he can observe his daughter among other newborns.

[panel three] worms-eye on same.

[panel four] long shot on same, down the corridor we see a shadow approach.

[panel five] same, a nurse enters.

[panel six] same, the nurse is close now.

--nurse--

sir, we're preparing to shut down the clinic.

i'm afraid you're out of time.

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page forty-four]

[panel one] establishing shot, an Ed Hopper, *Nighthawks*-style diner, in the bright daylight.

[panel two] medium on Arlene seated at the bar, and next to her, Lynch.

[panel three] tighter on Arlene.

--Arlene--

she spoke to me.

while we were shutting down...

--lynch/off--

yeah, i...

[panel four] close on Lynch, eating breakfast.

--lynch--

...wanted to ask you about that.

why the cloak and dagger around Katey's birth?

was it the media circus?

[panel five] medium on Arlene, she's stalled.

[panel six] same, but head turned.

--Arlene--

yeah. they've been circling waiting for him to die.

and they've been calling to find out when KATEY'D be born. circling.

listen. do you know about the tiffanies?

[page ends]

[page forty-five]

[panel one] close on Lynch's lower jaw, about to have a forkful of food pushed into it.

--lynch--

sure. who doesn't?

[panel two] close on, sidelong on, Arlene.

--Arlene--

i was thinking about what she said to me. while we were shutting the clinic down. and moving to where the circus could find us.

that they made you a government offer.

and that for the safety of us all, you should take it.

and i remember you telling me, what was this, about three months ago now, that he was going to die. and that he already built his better world, famous, and that it was now time to care for the self.

[panel three] sidelong close on Arlene, silhouetted. Her head hangs slightly.

[panel four] same as panel one.

--off/off--

but i was thinking, maybe you found a way to not make it an either/or

--lynch--

it never was either or, Arlene.

[page ends]

[page forty-six]

[panel one] cover page. Same as last panel on previous page, but the fork and speared tidbit of food has been replaced by a California Roll, held by a pair of chopsticks. Gray outline against a black backdrop.

--title cap--

part two: sushi

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page forty-seven]

[panel one] to panel right, Lynch walks away from a sushi food-wagon in the backdrop. This is a cowboy panel. He carries his food, heroically, caution-to-the-wind.

[panel two] sidelong on, Lynch as he wades through a food court.

[panel three] Lynch lights a cigarette as he sits down at a vacant table.

[panel four] same as panel one, but Jay looks clumsy, accident-prone, like a might topple sideways at any moment.

[panel five] same as panel two. Again we see the different characters between Lynch and Jay as Jay dances through the food court, in sidelong view, scared that he might drop his food.

[panel six] Jay wobbles into the seat opposite Lynch. Same as panel three.

[panel seven] at the table both men begin to eat.

[panel eight] overhead on same.

[panel nine] high-angle overhead on same. Wide angle. We see the full scope of the gigantic food court.

[page ends]

[page forty-eight]

[panel one] full-wide panel, slightly off-center to panel left, Jay sits with his back to the reader, slightly off-center to panel right, Lynch sits at the opposite end of the table, facing the reader.

--jay--

what do you make of this?

--lynch--

what `this'? this what we're eating, `this'?

it's shark.

--jay--

it's not shark? is it really shark?

--lynch--

sure it is. there's a test.

[panel two] close on Lynch.

--Jay/off--

there's a test for shark?

--lynch--

sure there's a test for shark. let me show you.

[panel three] close on Jay.

[panel four] same.

--jay--

nah, hang on. i didn't mean `this', what we're eating, `this'.

i meant this.

[panel five] Jay reaches into his coat pocket.

[page continues]

[page cont'd]

[panel six] close on the table as Jay places down a copy of an ancient scroll. There's a lot of hieroglyphic detail. But we can just about make out the first stirrings of sequential art.

--lynch/off--

oh that `this'.

that's a comicbook?

[page ends]

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[page forty-nine]

[panel one] big panel, but close on a quizzical, disbelieving Jay.

--jay--

so how do you know that?

--lynch/off--

nah, you don't mean that.

--jay--

no? what do i mean then?

--lynch/off--

yeah... you mean how *can* i know that.

--jay--

yeah.

i mean that.

how can you know that?

but how can you? i mean really.

how can you?

[panel two] close on Lynch.

[panel three] overhead of the table.

[panel four] same.

--lynch--

yeah.

it's got sequential art, jay. it's telling a story. see...

--jay--

yeah. now i do.

[page ends]

[page fifty]

[panel one] same as first panel on page forty-eight, with the positions reversed.

[panel two] wider out on same, somewhere in the crowd,
two girls approach the lunching professors.

[panel three] close on the two girls.

--girl--

professor lynch...

[panel four] close on Lynch, looking up.

--girl/off--

professor, i just wanted...

--lynch--

is it about work?

--girl/off--

yes professor, i...

--lynch--

yes. you'll have to see me during my office hours.

thank you.

[panel five] close on Jay keeping his head down, eating.

[page ends]

[page fifty-one]

[panel one] close on Jay.

--jay--

hey, you remember that dream you had?

--lynch/off--

about the cavern below the basement?

--jay--

yeah. the cavern. i wanted to tell you. maybe i was wrong...

maybe you don't want to kill your sister.

--lynch/off--

yeah. i didn't think that at the time. still don't.

--jay--

yeah, i was wrong i guess.

[panel two] close on Lynch. Looks as if he wants to say something.

[page continues]

[page cont'd]

[panel three] same.

--lynch--

what's that?

--jay/off--

what?

--lynch--

you say something?

--jay/off--

sure... about that student you sent me...

[panel four] tight on Jay.

[panel five] same, in tighter.

--lynch/off--

unsupervised.

--jay--

unsupervisable, i think.

well he's got his doctorate now.

[panel six] close on Lynch

--lynch--

so healing then. did he dream of a candle.

... ..

and we're good?

--jay/off--

yeah. we're good.

[page ends]

[page fifty-two]

[panel one] close on Lynch, penumbra-silhouetted.

--lynch--

Jay.

i don't need to take their deal.

[panel two] close on Jay.

[panel three] same.

[panel four] same. Jay looking away.

[panel five] same. Jay looks back to the reader's POV.

--jay--

so what's this about a test for sharks?

[panel six] overhead of the whole food court.

--lynch--

it's really simple. it's all about what you bring to it.

if you've never eaten raw shark before, the Soya sauce will tell you.

here like this.

--jay--

look it looks like a fern.

what. this can't be right. there's a raw shark test?

[page ends]

[page fifty-three]

[panel one] cover concept. Gray outline against black backdrop. Kimmy Lee in an eighties game-show, where there are no cards, but comics.

--title cap--

social engineering, an interlude

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page fifty-four]

[panel one] big sunrise panel. Freddy throwing his head back in manga super-villain laughter.

[panel two] POV from behind Simone's desk. To panel left, behind the desk, Lynch looks on to panel right. Off-center, slightly to panel right, foregrounded, Simone's chair is also turned to look to panel right. Freddy, standing, is just suggested to panel right.

[panel three] close on Freddy. He's stalled.

--Freddy--

yeah... ok... i got to go now.

[panel four] Freddy, his back to the reader, exits Simone's office. Near the door there is another guest chair.

[panel five] same as previous. But Freddy's gone.

[panel six] same as previous. Kimmy Lee in the corridor in the distance

--lynch/off--

i don't understand why he's also got to find the basest way of looking at everything.

[panel seven] Kimmy Lee in the doorway.

--Kimmy lee--

simony! famous just died! i've got to tell you about last Thursday!

[page ends]

[page fifty-five]

[panel one] big panel, close on Lynch. Emotive shadows fall all over him. It's later in the afternoon now.

[panel two] the sun low in the sky.

[panel three] close on Lynch cocking his head.

[panel four] reverse shot to Simone, raising her eyebrows.

[panel five] Kimmy Lee, oblivious.

--Kimmy lee--

and that's why they deserved all that attention.

beside, there must be someone to take the fall, someone to be responsible and hold us in check.

stupid filmmakers.

[panel six] same as panel one.

--lynch--

"someone to hold us in check?"

i'm sorry Kimmy lee, but you think that Famous's dream somehow means we have to answer personal responsibility with fascism?

[page ends]

[page fifty-six]

[panel one] cover concept. Gray outline against a black backdrop. A single hand upturns the corners or two playing cards.

--title cap--

part three: 35 kilolitres

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page fifty-seven]

[panel one] close on Bryan.

--Bryan--

i'm in.

[panel two] close Dave, but a little wider than previous panel.

--Dave--

um, ok. me too. i'm in too.

[panel three] little wider on Andrew.

--andrew--

this may not work out, but i am in.

[panel four] worms-eye on Jonathan. Opening two cards.

--Jonathan--

am i the only one drawing dead?

i'm out.

[panel five] big panel showing everyone seated around a poker table, with noticeably, one seat empty.

[panel six] Lynch arrives in the doorway.

--lynch--

i'm late, aren't i?

[page ends]

[page fifty-eight]

[panel one] Lynch still standing by the table. The rest look up blankly at him.

[panel two] close on Andrew, same blank look.

[panel three] same, Andrew grinning.

--andrew--

just barely, but do sit down, lynch.

[panel four] close on Bryan. Again with the heavy silhouettes.

--Bryan--

we should begin now we're all here.

[page ends]

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[page fifty-nine]

[panel one] big panel, sidelong close on Bryan. He pushes his reading glasses back on his nose, with the eraser at the end of his pencil.

--Bryan--

we're in the process of seeing a radical shift in the relation between government and the dreamers we know as famous and the obscura publishers.

and this also means a shift in our attentions, from filmmaking to the older more reliable medium of comics.

[panel two] Andrew fiddles with his wedding band.

--off/off--

more and more, we are seeing this shift in power, and now, with détente waiting in the wings, we'll see a natural shift.

but there must be an opposing intellectual stroke from government.

[panel three] close on Dave, looking interested.

--off/off--

these people who came to rule us, have not come to rule us, by accommodating themselves to every change they encounter.

[page continues]

[page cont'd]

[panel four] close on Bryan.

--Bryan--

they are, as we sit here, preparing to take control in subtle ways of the dream of the man who would free us.

[panel five] panel showing everyone at the table, but only suggesting Lynch.

[panel six] close on Dave.

--Dave--

yes, i actually wanted to talk about that.

[page ends]

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[page sixty]

[panel one] close on Dave, it's that 'an actor prepares' moment. The whole world draws a breath.

[panel two] same. But there's a determination to Dave now.

--Dave--

i think i can explain how it happens.

i think i can explain how government takes control of Famous's dream.

[panel three] looking around the room for the next couple of panels. Medium on Andrew.

[panel four] medium on Bryan.

[panel five] medium on Jonathan.

--Jonathan--

i...

when did it...

sorry, you should continue, Dave.

[panel six] medium on Dave, emotive shadowing.

--Dave--

ok. it looks something like this.

[page ends]

[page sixty-one]

[panel one] POV Dave looking down at his hands as he fiddles with his ring.

--Dave--

i think we all know Famous came to prominence.

[panel two] same. But longer panel, occupying the rest of the tier.

--Dave--

after all, the answer was easy.

[panel three] close on Dave.

--Dave--

he offered a different kind of critique of society.

and the kind of social engineering government proposed, and was acting on.

and in so doing, he announced a new social estate, beyond the four we already knew.

[panel four] sidelong on Dave.

--Dave--

but i think, in the days to come, government will be able to shape a paradigm of security, and this will allow people to collaborate with them.

ordinary citizens and technical professionals who understand comics.

[page ends]

[page sixty-two]

[panel one] close on Andrew.

[panel two] long-shot on same.

--andrew--

what are you saying, Dave?

that Famous's friends would collaborate with government, against the dream?

[panel three] medium on Dave, with Bryan, sidelong, foregrounded.

--Dave--

that's exactly right, andrew. that's exactly what i'm saying.

living in his dream means that we've successfully established a paradigm of security, we each member of society needs to be nurtured.

[panel four] close on Andrew, he's frozen.

[panel five] same.

--andrew--

i think i would object to...

[panel six] same, but just suggested in the foreground is Lynch in profile.

--lynch--

ok.

maybe we should vote now. we have enough information to make a decision.

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page sixty-three]

[panel one] medium on Andrew, sunrise.

--andrew--

yes, i think lynch is right. we should vote now.

--off/off--

sorry, andrew...

--andrew--

yes, sorry. go ahead Bryan.

[panel two] sidelong close on Bryan.

--Bryan--

no. nothing from my side, it's just, i believe Jonathan wanted to say something.

[panel three] medium on Jonathan. Shadow and light dance about the panel. His head is turned slightly.

--Jonathan--

sorry, when was this?

--off/off--

just before Dave spoke.

--Jonathan--

right.

[page continues]

[page cont'd]

[panel four] medium close on Jonathan.

--Jonathan--

i... i was just wondering. at what point did it become a question of security? of
parochial mundane, material acquisition?

when did it become '35 kilolitres of water'?

Famous's dream was supposed to address it all, how to be better human beings.

how everyone could live better.

[panel five] same as previous, same tier as previous.

[pane six] everyone seated at the poker table. This time
we see Lynch clearly.

[page ends]

University of Cape Town

[page sixty-four]

[panel one] same as last panel on the previous page.

--andrew--

we should vote.

[panel two] close on Andrew.

--andrew--

gentlemen, we are being offered a choice.

how to rescue the world from men and women who actively threaten it.

if we vote yes, to establish this birthday underground, secrecy must be our means.

how say you all.

[panel three] Bryan and Dave alongside each other.

--Bryan--

yes.

--Dave--

me too, yes.

[panel four] close on Andrew.

--andrew--

well i'm also in. yes.

and i take it from Jonathan's nod, he votes yes.

[page continues]

[page cont'd]

[panel five] close on Jonathan.

--Jonathan--

absolutely, but must you take everything from me, andrew?

professor lynch?

[panel six] close on Lynch.

--lynch--

professor grazer?

[panel seven] wider out on same. Lynch counts his chips.

[panel eight] same, Lynch stares off to one side.

--lynch--

yes.

who's next dealer?

[panel nine] wide on the table as folks prepare for the next hand of poker.

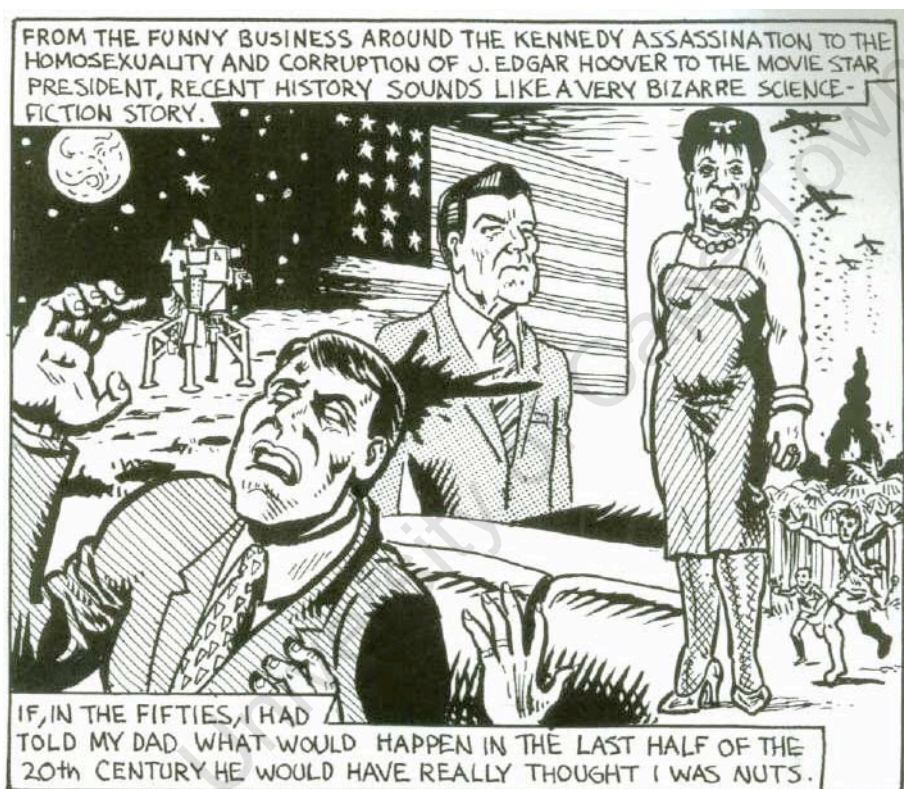
[page ends]

[book ends]

[visualization footnote]

Andrew, I'm including the following excerpt from a comic by Spain. 'Space Case' was published in 2001 in the Winter Special of *The Comics Journal*. This should be both a bit of inspiration and a visual methodology of how to shape scenes in this comic.

Particularly this would work well in the 'Steeplechase' episode of the original comic. Note the drama of textures that unfolds through Spain's use of both hatching and cross-hatching techniques to shade.



famous last words: magician interview with sQ

[interview with sQ originally published in *Magician* vol. 603, issue 9]

The original *Dead Famous* series of comics was first published in 2001, in *Ultimatum* magazine. There have been more than a few promotional interviews, prior to its launch in the March II issue of that fortnightly magazine, but only one appearing in the magazine itself. This was in the February I issue. In that interview you mention that the idea for *Dead Famous* began as a cyberpunk novel. This novel you claim "would of course never be published". Could you walk us through the similarities and differences between the comics and the proposed novel?

Yes, not exactly. I remember mentioning that many of the themes in the proposed novel were dealing with physical statements in the comics. I've yet to encounter a halfway decent cyberpunk novel that doesn't present itself as a series of episodes. I think this is an innate strength of the genre, its episodic structure. The comics and the novel 'tread the same ground', if you will. Originally I'd planned the novel around an untrustworthy narrator. The world was pretty much the same, with one man, called Famous, having created a world, having charted a course for scientific development for an entire world. The novel, written in the first-person, tricked readers because it established the narrator as point of access to the world, but also, implicitly, as a point of trust. Again the Famous of the novel was dead and again there would be the rumor of suicide, and again it would ultimately cause the world to break if it were true, and again it would have to be decided by a group of close friends who outlived him. Again there would have been a shadow-war between government of the day and Famous's faction. But ultimately, it would be the narrator, who all along posed as a biographer meeting with the friends, who would put the final nail in the coffin of the conspiracy against Famous. It would be the narrator who was exposed as a government agent, all along working against Famous and his friends, and the world Famous built. The novel didn't have any comics though, Famous never shifted from film to comics. The novel would have played out in two parts, both over the 'Omega Weekend'. The second part would have been similar to the closing act of *Samurai X*, 'the Cross-Shaped Wound'. Quite a bit

of physical violence, mixed in with two opponents voicing their conflicting world-views. The novel was supposed to be called *the Imagineer's Biographer*. Famous was both highly imaginative and an engineer, and from those two facts, came the major effects he had on his world.

The naming in your work is always pretty richly textured. 'Dead Spiders', the 'Imagineer', 'Omega Weekend'. Where do some of these names come from? What inspired you to formulate them?

Well the Imagineer was pretty simple. Dead Spiders is a simple image that I borrowed from another earlier, unpublished project. And Omega Weekend is borrowed from Robert Ludlum.

Could you go into some detail?

Well I'd be giving the game away, but... 'Dead Famous' was really the final chapter of a project I had in first year film school. Well at the time it wasn't written into the project. In many ways 'Dead Famous' was the sequel that concluded the story one generation after Famous's death. The original project was called *Dead Spiders* and it was my take on an Ingmar Bergman-style movie. In the movie, Roman and Karin move to a cabin outside a small town. Famous made a film about them, without knowing they were real people. Their lives continually miss a real-world encounter by slips of bad-timing; Famous would walk into the same butcher-shop two seconds after Roman left. Very early on it becomes clear that Famous's scripting is actually dictating the direction of the young couple's lives, while at night, in Famous's dreams, he meets with Roman and Karin, as old friends and they offer him direction for his waking life. Both Famous and the couple live their lives in a state of terror as a result of this, but both are unaware as to the origin. In the final closing sequence, Famous moves to the less 'creative' medium of comics Roman, a retired civil servant, arranges the arrest of Karin for her part in a confidence scheme. Famous never makes the movie. The name Dead Spiders comes from two points. It was the name of Famous's fictional hometown, and it is the one point in the movie where Famous and the couple appear together, but from opposite ends. In *Dead Spiders* there are flies everywhere, a kind of ongoing theme that no character is able to explain until the climax of the movie. At the high-point, a dead body is discovered, blocking the main water pipeline to the town. It's been going for so long that spiders have begun to nest and cannibalize each other, hence the preponderance of the flies. Famous, and the couple come at the now-disused pipeline from opposite ends, but never meet, as the dead body blocks their views of each other. The idea from Robert Ludlum was the same idea for his

novel, *the Osterman Weekend*. About a generation before the birth of Reality Television, Ludlum penned a novel about the encroachment of the media into the intelligence services (an vice versa) and the ramping up of surveillance of our day-to-day lives. A generation later we saw this strange mix of media, intelligence and surveillance enter the culture through the show *Big Brother*, where eight or nine or twenty people were forced to live together in a house, and one by one were voted off by the viewing public. Each weekend housemates would nominate each other to be voted off, the two highest votes were nominated for eviction and the viewing public would decide. On satellite, whole channels were dedicated to cameras throughout the house. Everything was visible. Every housemate could be seen, at anytime. It was like *Golding* but with movie cameras. The whole idea behind Ludlum's novel was that a group of old friends gathered together for a weekend away. Their lives have separated them, but they and their spouses now keep in contact in this way, by weekending away together. A CIA agent has contacted one of the friends, and convinced him to use his house as a venue, and have it bugged. This was a ruse to ferret out a spy, but of course there are twists in the plot. This gave me the idea for the *Omega Weekend*, that Famous's friends gather at every year on the anniversary of Famous's death. What *Dead Famous* exposes is the idea that ultimately the person bugging the house is one of the friends, doing it for entirely innocuous purposes. In fact he's doing it to try and prove there's a government conspiracy against Famous and one or more of the friends are traitors.

I'd like to talk about the second installment, 'The Summer We Fell In Love With Chase Bordeaux'. Of all this installments, this one seems the least like the others. But also this is the one that allows for closest identification with the characters. Was this installment the hardest to write, or the easiest? Did you intend for its textures to be so very different than the others?

The Chase Bordeaux episode was aimed at achieving a number of things. Now, years later, I think I would have done it differently with the skills I've learnt over the years. It was the kind of emotionally folded story we did quite often in *Parakeet* and in *Harvest Man Moon*. But structurally, the story is also interesting. There's quite a lot of spatial and temporal displacement. The story happens over many times, and time is used to navigate and coordinate different spaces, as is space used to register time. Ideally what we're looking at is the power of storytelling to rearrange space and time. Immediately after that, we flip a switch and find ourselves in a very specific genre. That of the crime

story, made clear from the crime scene right at the end. What I really wanted to show was how stories always find an exodus, a line of flight, and escape path. Just telling stories changes the environment the story is told in, but it also changes the lives that leave that environment. And as a consequence, that new environment outside the old one is changed, by people who have more or maybe only different options.

I'd just like to pick up on discussing the artwork between the two versions. Especially in episodes three and four, 'Omega Weekend' and 'Steeplechase' there is a marked difference between the artwork of Andrew Donaldson, in the Legendary Wonders Edition, and the original *Ultimatum* publication where Graeme Nolan and Ricky Hardy were responsible for the artwork. I think it is an observation that has been popularly made, but Donaldson's artwork seems crisper and clearer. I wouldn't want to cross the line by asking which artwork is closer to the script - you've already stated your refusal to comment on that aspect of the process; but I was wondering, which you prefer.

Let me answer it in this way. Once in every 5 comicbooks you work on, you find someone who you can actually get along with. Once in maybe, every 10, you'll find a lifelong friend. When I first met Andrew, we got along like a house on fire, more like accomplices than friends. I think almost the same is true for Graeme and Ricky. Speaking to one of them, I remember clearly, would usually end in the other finishing the sentence. Graeme was a big lanky guy, and Ricky was small and more than a little stubby, I recall immediately thinking of Bud Abbot and Lou Costello, two comedians from the nineteen forties I used to watch a lot of growing up. Ricky was this really soft kind of guy, or at least that's the impression he gave, and certainly the impression I got of him. He would end up apologizing quite often for Graeme. Graeme on the other hand, was a real take-charge kind of guy. I got the impression that he begun every sentence with 'Now see here...' or 'Look here, buddy...' or something in that vein. They were both pretty well established when they began working together, Graeme was the artist and Ricky was the colorist. I think Graeme had been working for a dozen years or so, and Ricky, a little less, maybe 8 or 9 but just less than 10 years. But they worked together on *Stuntman* first, way back in the nineties, and that was that, a legendary partnership was born. After the first 150 issues of the re-launch of *Stuntman* as a title in the 'Guildmaster' line (this is something that no other comicbook partnership achieved), Graeme and Ricky found their careers were made. Also by that time, they so accustomed to processing their own art through

the other's work-process, that I don't think either of them would have been any good without the other. One day, just after the 'Radius Ex' episode had been completed and just before we began work on the final episode, 'Birthday, Present', I was unceremoniously summoned. Ricky's wife had taken ill so he wasn't around much, and I guess Graeme was pretty maudlin. Joel Ritchie, who was the EIC of Indicia at the time (though somehow he still found the time to draw *the Lightspeed Man*) came into the bullpen (back then I was still working in the bullpen, even if I was a writer) and told me to go up to the fourth floor, where Graeme and Ricky's office was. Or else. 'Trust me, there's going to be blood if you don't', Joel said to me, 'Besides, you're the only one he likes'. So I found myself walking up those stairs, thinking that this was it. Graeme was in a foul mood and if the Editor-in-Chief, couldn't deal with him I'd surely get the short end. And that probably meant my getting fired, even in the new millennium, Graeme and Ricky had enough pull to get what they wanted at Indicia, and I was afraid that what Graeme would have wanted, before the end of that conversation, would be my head on a plate. But it didn't work out that way. Instead I found an incredibly vulnerable human being, and Graeme for his part, he didn't seem to have enough strength to put up the front-end of his usual BS. Almost immediately, he sat me down and went into a kind of teacher-mode. He began talking to me about the art, about the industry, began giving me advice. We ended up talking for maybe 8 hours, it took us well past closing time. I remember very clearly what a profound impact that conversation had on me. Without it, I probably wouldn't have been able to recognize Andrew for the friend he would eventually become. It's entirely possible that I would have seen Andrew as a jester, or Johnny-come-lately, and for that I owe Graeme more than he or I or anyone else can really even imagine. Strange isn't it. I was sent up there to talk him down, I wound up fearing for my job, and instead he had a profound impact on the rest of my life.

Dead Famous, and subsequently, ***Dead Spiders Comics*** must really have been milestone for you, in terms of both personal friendships and professional partnerships. You mentioned Graeme Nolan and Ricky Hardy's longstanding partnership, but theirs lasted only 329 individual issues. If you look at the professional relationship between yourself and Andrew Donaldson, Bill Hull and Nora Winters, it totals in excess of 900 individual issues. Did the relationships all begin with ***Dead Famous***? Were they cemented with ***Dead Spiders Comics***? I know you had nearly a lifelong friendship with Bill Hull, for example.

Wow, that's some research that must have gone into digging up those numbers. I'm really impressed. You must have been waiting all interview to drop those numbers. Sure. I knew Bill from Way Back When, all capitals. We grew up together in the same neighborhood. And Nora Winters didn't live too far from us either. When we were young we had a kind of a comicbook club going, I think it was really just a way for me to assert myself and the other 'nerds' in the face of bullying, especially from my older brother. But as the seasons changed and our lives changed, we drifted. We all got into different colleges. The way my story worked out, I was ready to enter the legal fraternity in the fast and glamorous world of corporate litigation. But this would prove not to be the case. After all those years, Nora had worked diligently in comics, she never let go of the dream and she found herself working as an artist at Indicia Imprints. She contacted me to write the story. I was just out of Law School and I was building my résumé before I could find placement with serious enough firm where I could prepare for my articles. At the time Nora contacted me I was working for the Public Prosecutor's office in a small county called Lawton. My caseload wasn't much at all, never much more than speeding tourists or vagrancy or drunk and disorderly charges. Each Wednesday night I'd play poker with the county judge and the sheriff and a deputy or two. That was pretty much the pace of my life then. But Nora gave me a call, and she said two words that are pretty much my Kryptonite, and that was that. She said 'You promised'. And of course she meant all those years ago when I first introduced her to comics, I made a promise all the way back then, I suppose. And what could I say to that? Lord only knows, I had the free time, and the pocket-money wouldn't hurt either. And there was that 'promise' thing. So I went ahead and I agreed. Indicia flew me out to Washington, to Seattle. I remember standing in the rain a lot, and drinking more coffee than I should have. Seattle was exactly the kind of place I thought it would be, the kind of place I heard it would be. I signed the contract with Warren Pearce, who was then the Publisher for Indicia. In the early days Nora did almost all the pushing for me to get onboard. But I think in the end of it all, I simply lucked out. On this one trip, I somehow found myself invited to a comicbook store launch in Spokane, I think Nora sweet-talked me an invitation. But I had an extra day to kill and I went along. To my surprise, both Warren Pearce and Neil Gerry, Indicia's business manager were attending the event. By some strange twist of fate I found myself traveling in the same car as both of them, back to Seattle. As was bound to happen, we found ourselves chatting, and eventually we turned to the subject of

their company and its publications. I made some frank observations and suggestions and what's more I found they were really open to what I had to say. About 10 miles outside Seattle it occurred to me the reason they were as open-minded as they were was because each assumed I was a friend of the other, one they had never met before. It honestly was the strangest job interview I ever had. All I wanted was a chance to convince these guys that I was the right guy to write a story for them, and all they wanted was to hear more about my views on Indicia Imprints, its publications, its staff, its distribution and whatever else I had to say about the rest of the comics industry in the late nineties. These were some pretty smart guys, but they let the wool get pulled over their eyes because they never took the time to ask the right questions. When I realized what was going on, it was almost too late, but I also didn't want to shoot my own campaign in the foot. So I just kind of slow-played my hand. I returned to Lawton honestly expecting them to have ferreted out what had happened and to that end, never to hear from Indicia Imprints again. But about a week back home and I got a letter from Seattle, won't I please come down to sign a contract. The letter was from Carl Perry, the EIC before Joel. About two weeks later I submitted the first draft for *Dead Famous*. And about a week after that I got the go-ahead, the Big Green Light. Bill's story was a little different. Around about this time, while things were happening to me Bill had gotten a job at the University of Minnesota Press. He was an editor working under Professor Jim Moriarty, who was man who possibly single-handedly made the largest contribution to the editorial field in the twentieth century. Moriarty took Bill under his wing and in turn, Bill learnt everything there was to know about editing. But of course this meant editing for scholarly books and academic journals. Not the kind of editing done at Indicia imprints, or anywhere else in the comicbook industry. After the first episode of *Dead Famous*, Joel took over as EIC at Indicia Imprints and he persuaded me to come live in Seattle and work out of the Indicia Imprints offices for the duration of the project. This proved to be a far more taxing experience than I first realized. It was something I really regret doing. About halfway through I was ready to quit but two things changed my mind. One was something Josie Flynn said to me, and the other was me bumping into Bill Hull in Seattle. Josie's basic advice was suck it up, it's better living in a city like Seattle if I wanted to build towards becoming the kind of lawyer I wanted to be. Bill at the time, on the other hand, was setting up the Seattle distribution venue of the University of Minnesota Press. It was good to catch up with Bill after all those

years. And even better to see the progress he made. More than a few times it ended up with me and him and Nora painting the two red. The old Three Amigos together again for a late-stage 'last hurrah'. Those were really great days. So I stayed in Seattle, and the nature of my work in Lawton was that I was able to shuttle between Seattle and Lawton, being in Seattle for 6 to 8 week stretches while I was writing projects for Indicia Imprints. Josie was right, being in Seattle I was able to establish a new set of contacts, which eventually landed me a job in the public defender's office. I mostly worked night court and the experience of dealing with the kinds of characters you meet at night court, and I mean on both sides of the law, that deserves a whole sitcom to itself. Anyhow, this experience prepared me for being able to write really good characters. And being in Seattle get me close to my friends. It was at one of Bill's parties that I met Mary, my first wife. She was being awarded a Pulitzer and we spent the night basically talking about sunglasses. Somewhere after making the move from Lawton to Seattle, after getting the job in the public defender's office, the work at Indicia Imprints become steady enough, it was still freelance though, but it became steady enough for me to think of myself as a comicbook writer, rather than a lawyer. A shift had occurred in my mind. At some point I realized I was eager to get to work, to go to court that is, because of the material it provided my comicbook writing. That's when I knew the shift occurred. Anyhow, after about a year, Joel sat me down and offered me a permanent appointment. It was quite a coup for me back then, and my first subsequent project would team me up with Andrew Donaldson. This was *Vented*. Andrew represented a very different kind of friendship that at the time was a very new kind of friendship. It was my first friendship that arose from a professional relationship. Andrew and I actually met, not the Monday morning at the boardroom meeting, but at the Friday evening at the launch for *Hartley*. We didn't exchange names at that point. I kind of barreled into Christine Taylor, an inker at Indicia Imprints who had done the inking on *Hartley* and Andrew was also in the group. I remember clearly saluting Andrew, by way of saying hello, and then beginning to tell him the origins of the salute, something he already knew. As time marched on at the *Hartley* launch, our group, Christine's and ours, somehow whittled down to just the three of us, Christine, Andrew and myself. That's when things really got going, I think there was a general feeling that this was the important part of the night for all of us. And there I was spending my time talking with a guy whose name I didn't even know. Looking back now, that was such a laugh. Come Monday morning though, that exact same energy that kept us

talking all Friday night, would also turn *Vented* into that breakaway hit that it became. I remember when I met Andrew, we got along like a house on fire. I had kind of fallen into a routine, my life had become humdrum in a kind of way. But Andrew brought out in me that childish, almost impish, intent just to tear everything down. To stir things up. And for my part, I think I brought out in him that will to do bad things, not for their own sake, but just to break the mold. It made for really good comics, but I was worried the friendship would flare and burn out. That was the kind of thing you saw a lot in Rock 'n Roll bands in the eighties, and earlier in the seventies. But strangely enough, the friendship never faltered. I think to a large extent, this was due to us not working together all the time. This makes me realize how truly special Graeme and Ricky's friendship must have been, for them to both nearly live each others lives, as they did. Many companies were interested in building teams in that way, close professional partnerships, but none of them succeeded to the degree or anywhere near the degree that Graeme and Ricky's did. That was truly a special friendship, and professional partnership.

In *Dead Spiders Comics* you really throw readers and fans alike a curve-ball. Your first comicbook story, *Dead Famous* which relatively few people even know about you manage to link to your most popular story, *Iconographies*. You really thrilled us with *Iconographies*, which you always explained as the biographies of icons. But *Iconographies* was also a very complex idea in a simple format, because it presented a wholly different take on culture than the one we see in the world today. Could you talk about the link between *Iconographies* and *Dead Famous*. Was it an intuitive link, were you dropping clues all the time, or was it something incredibly creative and of the moment, a particular moment, where you simply saw links between two very different kinds of works? In other words, was this the connecting of these two stories, the story of your life, or was it a very neat way to change the way in which we all enter the world of comicbook stories?

That was quite a play wasn't it? When I think about this question I think a lot about what Aaron, my older brother once said to me. How I was changing the way in which pop-culture was built. I suppose he'd gotten into another fight with Bill Hull's older sister whom he was married to, and that this was his way of blaming me for something that he didn't really understand. But he said it nevertheless, and at the time it really hurt. For the longest time I didn't want to think about it, but as is the way with these things, I found it bursting into my memory one day, for no real reason. After the longest

time remembering it, I realized he was right, but there wasn't really anything I could do about it. What's more, once I got to really thinking about it properly, why do we even live in the world the way we do? And once I formulated that things started getting better. Aaron was of course responding to something that was happening around me, the publicity I was generating in my work was becoming more than publicity. And I myself, for my own secret little part in all of it, I was ensuring that this publicity could be used for something. Something positive I hoped, but I think no-one before me ever thought to use their fame. But this was also a change in mindset in the generation of comicbook writers and comicbook artists that I was coming from. I suppose in the media I was closely associated with the shift in mindset, even to the point where it seemed as somehow I was the prime mover. I don't think this was the case, definitely not in my own mind, but it was very clearly the case that something was changing, and that my group of friends somehow had a hand in this change. It also wasn't the case that we all sat around one day in a secret clubhouse and used our secret handshake to get in and our secret decoder rings to leave messages to meet up and then decided how the world would change. Again I have to go back to my conversation with Graeme that day. What a completely important conversation that turned out to be, and neither of us would know it at the time. The big change that came out of my generation, which was perhaps the last of generations of comicbooks as they were, would be to honor the past. Of course up until that point, no one would have a real concept for keeping up with pop-culture. It was something that was there, you took it if you liked, you left it be if you didn't like it. But there was really no sense of history when it came to popular culture. Nobody remembered and nobody wanted to remember. I think after the first run of *Iconographies* more than a few people got into the idea of thinking about the images from their daily lives influencing what they did later in life. I think this provided more people with a kind of ongoing childhood's end. That childhood was both ongoing and would always be in a state of ending. That's what it's like to be a child, the pure joy and the sheer terror of childhood all come directly from that.