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Special Thematic Issue

Graphic Engagement: The Politics of Comics and Animation

Edited by

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Contents

目　　录

Introduction to "Graphic Engagement: The Politics of Comics and Animation"

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When most people think of politics and illustrations, their first thoughts usually run to the kind found in political cartoons and caricatures. These are the comics that populate the editorial pages of most newspapers and feature a satirical view of current events, those generated in the United States by such artists as Tom Toles, Mike Luckovich, Ann Telnaes, and Walt Handelsman. Or, the mention of politics and cartoons will bring to mind comic strips such as Walt Kelly's *Pogo*, Garry Trudeau's *Doonesbury*, and Berkeley Breathed's *Bloom County*. Yet, while these examples of illustrative art certainly engage with social interactions, state affairs, and the permutations of power, they are by far not the only kinds that reveal the political dynamics of our cultures. As the various contributions to this special issue of *Forum for World Literature Studies* demonstrate, the combination of politics and art can take a variety of forms, engaging in narratives that expose the underpinnings of our civilization and lay out the passions that define us as a people.

What follows is a collection of essays that illustrate—literally—the politics of our lives as only the best literature can, yet they do so though media forms that have traditionally stood in the shadows of the classical genres of fiction, poetry, and drama. Indeed, comics and film animation are potent media that can have an effect far different from that of more tradition forms of literature. They are composite texts whose mixtures of image, word, and sound offer a more immediate exchange between author (s) and audience, where the visuals directly confront us and demand a reader response in ways that prose narrative does not. The resulting effects can have profound ideological consequences. Either in the form of a comics memoir, a Disney adaptation, a superhero saga, a manga text, or a single-panel cartoon, graphic narratives shape the way we frame ourselves in terms of gender, race, religion, class, and

nationhood.

The reader will find that our understanding of political, as we apply it to the various essays in this special issue, is broad in scope, relating not only to affairs of state, but the praxis of graphic narrative and the ways it impacts individual identity and community dynamics. The focus of these individual contributions is broad, covering such topics as gender in contemporary Japanese culture, myths of the American West as seen through the eyes of Europe, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, representations of war in Korean popular culture, the crossroads of political oppression and personal memoir, popular conceptions of globalization, and the ethical implications of bio-medical culture. In all, they highlight what is possible within the hybrid narrative arts, the kind of literary impact that occurs at the crossroads of text and image.

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"Later, Buddy": The Politics of Loss and Trauma Representation in *Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann*

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Abstract The anime *Gurren Lagann*, known for its comedy, depicts a genuine sense of trauma following the combat death of Kamina. The contradictory messages encapsulated in imagery and dialogue simulate the loss of psychological integrity inherent to traumatic experience. In my article I focus on the protagonist Simon's false assertion of recovery and self-validation through dialogue and the depiction of authentic posttraumatic experience through imagery. Ultimately, the series attests to the persistence and permanence of posttrauma and reconfigures the trauma paradigm to exclude combat loss.

Key words *Gurren Lagann*; mecha anime; trauma; posttraumatic experience; assumptive world

Although chiefly a comedy action series, the 27-episode mecha anime *Gurren Lagann* presents viewers with a complex politics of loss through its depiction of peritraumatic and posttraumatic experience. Mecha anime, characterized by its use of giant, piloted robots or mecha, ranges from comedic to dramatic but always features fantastical, large-scale battle sequences. The genre's reliance on the visual spectacle suggests an avoidance of peritrauma, or trauma experienced in the immediate wake of a catastrophe, as well as posttrauma, or the lingering effects of the individual's damaged psyche. *Gurren Lagann*'s predominant characteristics are highly charged, unrelenting action, mecha called Gunmen, and excessive slapstick and innuendo. However, following the central traumatic event of Kamina's combat death, the protagonist, Simon, embodies major diagnostic symptoms of trauma, shown by the hermeneutic divergence of visual and verbal representations. At first, the imagery and dialogue collude to convey positive messages about self-validation, human resilience, and the ability to overcome traumatic experience. These qualities constitute Kamina's core beliefs and ultimately the belief system of Kamina, the remainder of Team Dai-Gurren, and viewers. This assumptive world—defined as the primary belief system whereby an individual orients and defines himself in relation to others and the world—is ultimately shattered by Kamina's death. Afterward, Simon's acute grief response and premature abreaction are seen in visual-verbal combinations in which the most explicit ele-

ment expresses positivity while secondary elements imply that trauma cannot be wholly overcome (Herman 12). Simon's dialogue recalls Kamina's pre-trauma assumptive world, but the cumulative meaning of reflexive imagery attest that the assumptive world, once violated, cannot be rebuilt. The resulting interdependent combinations, where the collaborative meaning is one neither element could independently convey (McCloud 155), adopt a conflicted stance toward premature abreaction of combat trauma, which the series ultimately presents as enduring and insurmountable.

Gurren Lagann is fundamentally a war narrative chronicling the conflict between Spiral beings, namely humans, whose tenacity allows them to evolve infinitely, and Anti-Spirals, who suppressed these abilities out of fear they would annihilate the universe. The series opens with timid fourteen-year-old Simon, an expert driller in an underground community where humans have been forced to live by their oppressor, Lordgenome. Simon discovers a drill that channels his Spiral power, or willpower and fighting spirit, and later finds the mecha it operates: the miniature but powerful Gunmen Lagann. Simon, his charismatic, eighteen-year-old mentor Kamina, and sharpshooter Yoko use Lagann to reach the surface, where Kamina steals the Gunmen Gurren. Due to Lagann's ability to assimilate other Gunmen, Gurren and Lagann can combine to form the Gunmen *Gurren Lagann*. *Gurren Lagann*'s exploits renew humanity's hope, and the resistance force, Team Dai-Gurren, amasses under Kamina's command. The team becomes renowned for their gung-ho attitude and refusal to retreat in the face of overwhelming odds, illustrated by Kamina's illogical yet revolutionary creed, "reject common sense to make the impossible possible" (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 1), that nevertheless unfailingly results in victory (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 1). Kamina's catastrophic death, however, shatters the assumptive world he established for Team Dai-Gurren. Simon is crippled by grief and recovers only after meeting Nia, the Anti-Spirals' biologically engineered emissary, with whom he falls in love. Only then is he able to replace Kamina as leader and defeat Lordgenome.

Seven years later, however, war resumes as the Anti-Spirals' Human Extermination Program is activated by the rising human population. Simon, who is now similar to Kamina in manner and appearance and who possesses the same assumptive world, defeats the Anti-Spirals, but most of his comrades die in battle and Nia ceases to exist after the Anti-Spirals are destroyed. Simon erects her memorial near Kamina's grave, renounces his command, and spends the rest of his life wandering the world alone.

The trauma paradigm espoused by *Gurren Lagann* derives largely from the catastrophic circumstances of Kamina's death in combat and the consequent destruction of his assumptive world, which the series originally constructs as inviolable. As an individual's assumptions about himself and his environment, the assumptive world often includes the belief in a meaningful world, a worthwhile life, self-validation, and personal invulnerability, common core assumptions pre-reflectively formulated through interactions with loved ones and an unthreatening environment (Attig 55 – 57). The subjective truth of these assumptions is substantiated through trial-and-error experience, and they are instinctively maintained as long as they are not inordinately challenged or experientially invalidated (Attig 55).

Kamina's core assumptions—the strength of human willpower, resilience, and personal invulnerability—are proclaimed through complementary visual-verbal combinations where viewers are led to view Kamina and all he embodies as heroic, and then encouraged to view him as ridiculous. These portrayals are steeped in expressions of positivity, which collude additively, using visual-verbal juxtapositions to amplify meaning, or duo-specifically, using words and images to convey the same message (McCloud 153 – 54). Kamina is introduced as an idealistic, ambitious youth-in-revolt possessing boundless ebullience, self-confidence, and machismo, replete with visual signifiers of subculture cool: distinctive triangular red-orange sunglasses, tattoos, bare torso, nodachi, and red cloak. These signifiers initially mitigate his apparent lack of common sense. For instance, he confronts a Gunmen on foot, declaring, "You've got guts, plowing into my village with this big ugly mug of yours," but the over-the-top dialogue is juxtaposed with heroic imagery: bared teeth, glinting shades, triumphantly billowing cape, and gleaming nodachi, suggesting his bravado is warranted (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 1).

However, these duo-specific combinations swiftly become parodic. Instead of delivering the anticipated stirring speech, Kamina shouts, "Oi, oi, oi, oi, oi!" and the frame zooms in on his flying spittle (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 1). Viewers' incredulity is compounded by the following frame, where visual elements contrast the gigantic Gunmen with the cartoonishly rendered Kamina, his hip thrust forward in macho posturing exaggerated to the point of effeminacy. This incongruity alone imparts the full ridiculousness of Kamina's situation, and so viewers register Kamina's rousing self-introduction as comic grandstanding. Rather than being indifferent to danger, Kamina is blissfully oblivious and presumably survives due to good luck and others' intervention. Duo-specific combinations gradually correlate Team Dai-Gurren's successes to Kamina's brash stupidity, as he thrusts himself into peril with the same oblivious self-confidence despite the rising stakes but emerges unscathed, all while maintaining his signature stance of pointing to the heavens. The anxiety-relieving function of humor underpins viewers' security in his improbable survival, and, by proxy, in the inviolability of his assumptive world. In this way, comic relief facilitates viewers' belief in his personal invulnerability and advances our faith in his other core assumptions.

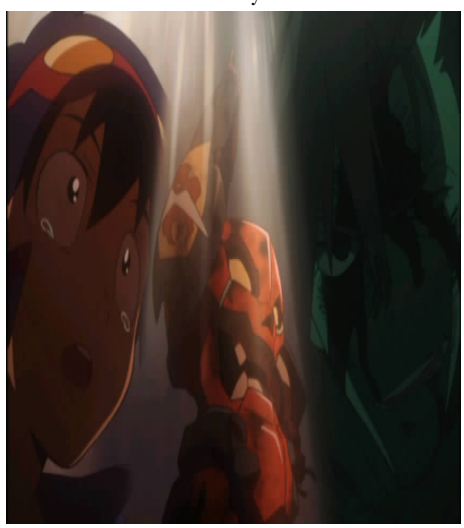
However, the true resilience of the assumptive world derives from its ability to be sustained through genuine psychodynamic struggle. As long as Kamina's assumptive world remains insufficiently challenged, the extent of its authenticity cannot be determined. Kamina's confrontation with mortality, which transpires when he commandeers Gurren, constitutes the first substantial challenge to his assumptive world. First, visual-verbal collusions portray Kamina's bravado: he poses on a rock, chin high, arms crossed self-assuredly as Gunmen wreak havoc nearby, and impulsively declares he's going to steal Gurren because he "likes [its] face" (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 2). Our expectation is that this hijacking attempt will be treated like his previous comical endeavors, but comedy is suspended when Gurren rejects Kamina as a suitable pilot. Its viewing monitors flash red as his shades, his omnipresent signifier of cool, are flung to the ground, revealing his vulnerability. The viewing screen clears to reveal a half-buried human skull, the universal symbol of mortality.

Kamina's ensuing confrontation with mortality, typical to the trauma of armed confrontation, is represented through wordlessness and sensory imagery evocative of combat physioneurosis (Herman 37 – 38). Kamina's panicked breathing and pulse is juxtaposed with close-ups of his wide eyes and shrunken pupils, his body and skeleton fluorescing as the cockpit is swallowed by blackness. Rapid intercuts between Kamina's terrified eyes, the flashing red light, and the skull's empty eyes further stress the severity of Kamina's trauma. Despite this authenticating struggle, the use of reflexive imagery—such as the red light that recalls the sunset glare when Kamina's father abandoned him, and the parallel between the half-buried skull and his father's skull charm bracelet—magnifies our sense that Kamina's assumptive world is inauthentic. Thus far, it has been predicated on what Heidegger terms the "they-self," whose choices are modified by external influence. The possibility of death, however, nullifies other possibilities, compelling the individual to reassess and choose based on the authenticity of the I-self, unaffected by outside pressures. As such, the experience of "Angst vor Dasein" ("anxiety in the face of existence") generated by recognizing mortality impels Kamina to reevaluate his core assumptions and relinquish the inauthentic values of the they-self, retaining only the genuine, personally significant assumptions of the I-self (Heidegger 57-58). His final decision is that his assumptive world remains authentic. Out of all the possibilities available to him, he chooses to retain his assumptive world despite the fatal risks it poses. Consequently, our lingering impression of Kamina becomes one of strength, courage, and resoluteness, not of exaggerated stupidity or bravado. When he pronounces the series' signature phrase, "Who the hell do you think I am?!," we register it as the authentic assertion of resilient selfhood, as his assumptive world emerged intact from his experience of Angst (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 2). By securing and reinforcing our belief in this way, complementary visual-verbal combinations validate Kamina's assumptive world as unassailable, authentic, and resolute. Thus, when Kamina's catastrophic death in Episode 8 overturns these parameters and shatters the assumptive world, our posttraumatic experience parallels that of the characters he left behind.

Following Kamina's death, which occurs because Simon fails to properly commandeer Lordgenome's gunship, Simon's trauma is simulated through additive, duospecific, and picture-specific verbal-visual combinations that reinforce the destruction of the assumptive world and numbing, constrictive elements of trauma. The unbearable unspeakability of Kamina's fatal injury is depicted through the lack of dialogue and frozen, intrusive quality of the imagery. For the first time, expressions of positivity are disrupted or elided. The moment of his death is frozen, wordless, and intrusive, as we are shown four quick still images of the fatal attack, drawn in thick, smudged lines that speak to the moment's unbearable unspeakability. When Gurren is impaled, visual elements simplify and disintegrate, the lines of Kamina's body smearing into blotches of blood. He screams as Gurren partially explodes, unlike his usual show of defiance when Gurren takes damage. The killing blow pierces even the animation frame itself, thick, dark red fountains cascading on either side of the enemy's spearhead. The frame pulls back to reveal the gray, smoky desolation of the battlefield, the prostrate Gurren, and the stunned, horrified faces of Team Dai-Gurren.

The frame zooms in on Simon's eyes as we see the first instance of the visual signifier of peritraumatic dissociation. His eyes dissolve to three trembling concentric bands in shades of gray encircling a black pupil before all color drains away, leaving only the iris outline and the pupil itself. This illustrates what combat survivors colloquially term the "two-thousand-year-stare[:] the anesthetized look, the wide hollow eyes of a man who no longer cares" (qtd. in Herman 43).

The intense pain of this moment invalidates positive imagery prior to Kamina's death, such as the severely damaged Gurren posed in Kamina's signature heaven-pointing stance, in addition to shattering the assumptive world that gave rise to such positivity. Even so, due to cognitive conservatism—the resistance to change fundamental core assumptions such as personal invulnerability—we latch onto hope as Simon does when Kamina revives himself in time to defeat the enemy.

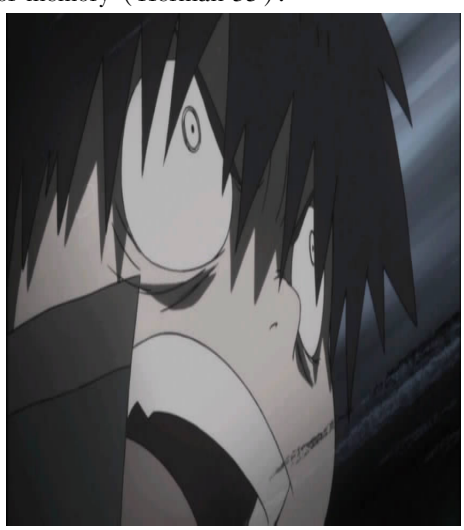


He resiliently invents the unnamed multi-drill attack that prefigures Simon's later, inadequate Giga Drill Maximum attack, and the Giga Drill Break, which leads to victory and becomes an enduring signifier of Kamina and his core assumptions. However, our renewed belief in Kamina is subverted as the triumphant overture is punctured by silence and Kamina becomes a pencil sketch on a white background, literally drained of vitality, eyes closing, head and mouth slowly going slack as he whispers, "Later, buddy" (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 8). This recursive use of his father's final words to him is significant because it is the first time a signifier of trauma is not successfully integrated and made positive. This also marks the first hermeneutic divergence, as the words juxtapose with Simon's happy, illuminated face, the light swiftly fading as comprehension dawns on him and he utters, "Bro?," after which the frame cuts to blackness (Ep. 8).

The next three episodes depict Simon's peritraumatic experience, where genuine, recurring posttraumatic symptoms are found in imagery while the invalidated pre-trauma core assumptions he is unable to relinquish persist in dialogue. This sets up Simon's survivor guilt, a key feature of combat trauma. Psychiatrist Judith Herman divides trauma into three major symptom categories: physical hyperarousal, the intrusion of traumatic memory or the present, and the numbing response of constriction (Herman 35-43). All three are depicted during Kamina's death and recur and accumulate meaning through reflexive use around Simon's peritraumatic and posttraumatic experience.

The assumptive world violation results in the proportional disruption of Simon's selfhood, which is based largely on his mentor Kamina's self-concept. Because of

Kamina's exhortations, Simon believes in himself, human willpower, resilience, and the possibility of victory. As such, Simon's identity is the they-self, predicated on Kamina's life; accordingly, Kamina's death causes him to exhibit conspicuous visual signifiers of peritraumatic distress. This depiction entails accurate trauma symptoms, such as intense grief, aggressive outbursts and hostility, self-isolation, dissociation, and helplessness (Herman 42 – 46). Simon's ordinarily bright clothing is portrayed in grayscale. He demonstrates hyperarousal, or permanent psychological and physiological alertness (35 – 36), in the constant, defensive tension in his stance. He evinces combat physioneurosis through frequent eye ticks, fixed postures, and unresponsiveness. Lastly, he is surrounded by imagery that evokes constriction, or powerlessness, numbness, paralysis, and total surrender to circumstance (42): for example, his dissociated stare and the frequent barrel distortion of the frame represent his shattered assumptive world and consequently distorted view of reality (35 – 36). Even previously positive images are overwhelmed by trauma, such as the green glow of Spiral power, which Lagann emits as explosive vomit in an externalization of Simon's emotional state. Additionally, Simon takes savage pleasure in taunting the most polite and well-meaning team member, Rossiu, without provocation, seen in progressive close-ups of his furrowed brow and quivering, colorless stare (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 9). In fact, Simon's irises are a central visual signifier of trauma and mirror their appearance when Kamina was fatally attacked: three trembling concentric circles. The imagery's overall effect is to show Simon's surrender, as his stare is perpetually unfocused, detached, and numb to the events it ostensibly observes, focused inward instead of on the unbearable events of memory (Herman 35).



Furthermore, Simon displays reenactment or repetition compulsion, an involuntary, death-drive behavior resistant to change, adaptivity, and conscious intent (Herman 41). Reenactment is the impulse to "re-create the moment of terror, either in literal or in disguised form. Sometimes people reenact the traumatic moment with a fantasy of changing the outcome of the dangerous encounter. In their attempts to undo the traumatic moment, survivors may even put themselves at risk of further harm" (39). Following Kamina's death, Simon chants that he must become tough enough for both himself and Kamina, as though attempting to retroactively save Kamina's life. He obsessively seeks out enemies in an empty show of Kamina's exuberant recklessness, futilely striving to replace his violated self-concept by assuming Kamina's identity.

The imagery further attests to repetition compulsion, such as when Simon numbly prepares to face a Gunmen on foot to protect Nia. The reflexive image underscores the

radical difference between Simon and Kamina and the folly of adopting another's identity to bypass traumatic stress. While viewers accepted Kamina's immunity to harm in such a situation, we recognize that Simon will die in this confrontation. Similarly, when Nia is captured by another Gunmen, Simon views her as both impetus to become Kamina and the opportunity to revise Kamina's death: that is, rescuing Nia is equivalent to retroactively saving Kamina.

Nia herself facilitates this reenactment through substitution fantasy, as Simon's love for her obscures Kamina's absence. She catalyzes Simon's abreactive process, her cheerful, naive dialogue restoring normalcy to his dissociated gaze, her bright coloration the only quality able to penetrate the gray haze of Simon's fugue state. However, imagery suggests that substitution fantasy is an inadequate coping mechanism by depicting Nia's influence as temporary. Simon's eyes reacquire their traumatized appearance whenever mention or memory of Kamina intrudes. When he tells her, "I can never be like Kamina," the juxtaposition of this dialogue with the shadowy room and gray statues of Kamina emphasize his desolation, which is unaffected by Nia's suggestion that Simon is not Kamina and instead should just be himself (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 11). Nia and Team Dai-Gurren are captured immediately after this, and the frame cuts to the shattered face of a Kamina statue lying beside Simon's abandoned drill, which Kamina conflated with Simon's soul. This image illustrates the extent of Simon's fragmented emotional state and the impossibility of reconstructing the pre-trauma assumptive world.

Even when Nia's affirmations are incongruously juxtaposed with Simon's unrelenting grief, she provides the impulse for cathartic revision of the assumptive world. She recognizes that it must be authentically based on the I-self, as she verbally affirms Simon's unique individual self, insisting he "must not keep dwelling on a dead man" (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 10). In short, in order to recover, Simon must relinquish the core assumptions and interpretive frameworks invalidated by Kamina's death. According to Herman, the honest and detailed articulation of emotional response, traumatic imagery, and bodily sensations engendered by the event is imperative to trauma recovery, as is the revision of the self-narrative to reflect post-trauma circumstances (177). Simon, however, resists this. After Kamina's death, he narrates, "This is the tale of a man who continues to fight against fate. This man lived a life of desire, loyalty, and extravagance, he loved his companions, and he strove for freedom. And then, abruptly, he died. But even so, Simon lives on. He must go on living" (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 9; emphasis mine). Speaking of himself in the third person suggests Simon must maintain affective distance between himself and the traumatic memory. Notably, although images of Kamina explicitly show that "this man" is Kamina, Simon does not verbally confirm this, implying that doing so is still too painful. Also, his use of the present-tense "continues" attests to his need to preserve the illusion of Kamina's continued presence, even as the grainy, washed-out montage of Kamina's life and death recedes into blackness, the ultimate message being that Kamina is dead and Simon must accept this.

The closest Simon comes to acknowledging this is with Nia, but the fact that he only does so while drilling numerous Kamina statues further suggests he can only con-

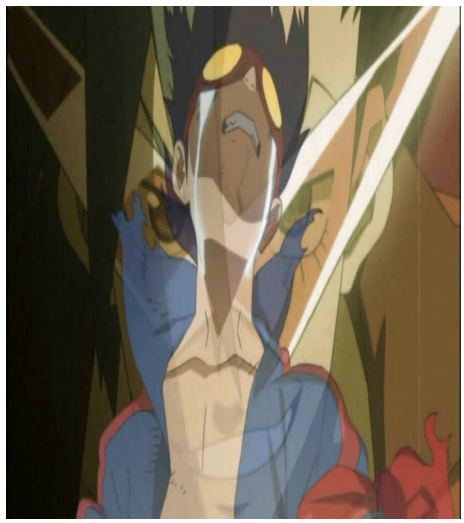
front the memory under the illusion of Kamina's presence. Moreover, he remains emotionally reticent even at 41 years old, when the memory is still so painful that he cannot even verbalize it. Instead, he constrains his emotional expression to the wordless, constrictive image of convoluted tunnels traveling into darkness, eventually converging on fourteen-year-old Simon, haggard, colored in white, bundled in a blanket on a dark, distorted floor (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 11). The disjuncture between verbal and visual elements in Simon's narration of traumatic events twenty-seven years later shows that he has not become desensitized to the memory by properly processing and integrating it, and therefore he has not recovered (Herman 40 – 41, 174). The affective distance he maintains precludes full disclosure of emotion, without which trauma cannot be genuinely resolved.

Simon's peritraumatic experience is depicted as the entirety of posttraumatic experience, one that culminates in a straightforward, conclusive recovery. As such, the series constructs Simon's recovery process as prematurely abreactive and false, born solely of his desire to save Nia. However, since we do not witness his coping and integration process, his self-assertions ring false. After rescuing Nia, Simon acknowledges Kamina's death and proclaims his integration of the traumatic event in all the trappings of defiant self-validation: "My Bro is dead. He's gone. But he's on my back! In my heart! He lives on as a part of me!" (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 11). This indicates he has taken steps toward recovery, also implied by the renewed brightness of his coloration. However, the entire sequence is couched in reflexive imagery associated with Kamina and his assumptive world. The triptych frame recalls two similar frames before it: one centering on Kamina, the other on Gurren.

Subsequently, a montage of reflexive imagery of Kamina's life and death intrudes on and overwhelms Simon's present reality.

Simon pulls down his goggles in a gesture coopting the culture of cool associated with Kamina donning his shades. He then appropriates Kamina's declaration of authentic selfhood following Angst vor Dasein, "Who the hell do you think I am?!" (Ep. 11). Thus, Simon's new identity is constructed again as a substitute Kamina. His verbal claims of recovery are not supported by the revision of his self-narrative or shattered assumptive world.

According to Herman, once the assumptive world and psychological structures of selfhood are ruptured by traumatic loss, reconciliation with the memory and selfhood is critical to renewing indestructible inner life (188). Identity determinants are simultaneously violated with the assumptive world, particularly the self-narrative, which



constitutes the continuous development of the individual's "life story." The self-narrative organizes and interprets emotionally relevant experiences and beliefs. When the adequacy of the pre-trauma self-narrative is challenged by profound traumatic loss, the individual struggles to integrate intrusive trauma memories with the pre-trauma self-narrative. Since the two are radically incompatible, the posttraumatic identity predominates the individual's interpretive framework. Until the pre-trauma self-narrative is revised to reflect post-trauma circumstances, the individual will not recover (Neimeyer and Tschudi 167 – 69). Therefore, Simon's attempts to maintain Kamina's shattered assumptive world through reenactment prevent his genuine recovery.

After the seven-year time skip, the series emphasizes that time has only deepened Simon's wounds. Verbal components remain firmly positive while visual elements increasingly point to deep-seated posttraumatic grief as Simon appropriates more and more of Kamina's identity and invalidated core assumptions but, unlike Kamina, rarely succeeds. This hermeneutic divergence results in Orwellian doublethink, a post-trauma characteristic typified by the conscious and subconscious process of "holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them" (Herman 87). Doublethink attests that Simon's traumatic memory has only been suppressed. For instance, when the Anti-Spirals first attack, Simon recklessly engages them with Kamina's gung-ho aggression, but when he Giga Drill Breaks the mecha, it fragments into explosives that destroy the city sector below, whereupon Simon's eyes revert to the "two-thousand-year-stare" of combat trauma (Herman 43). Similarly, his multi-drill Giga Drill Maximum attack, an evolved version of an attack Kamina invented and successfully used, also fails to stop the enemy (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 19). Viewers are bluntly reminded that, much as Simon clings to Kamina's shattered assumptive world, parts of it are irreparably defunct.

In the rare instance Simon's reenactment succeeds, it is grounded in signifiers of Kamina. For instance, Simon thwarts Rossiu's suicide attempt by punching him in the face, a reflexive image of Kamina punching Simon after Simon's failure to commandeer the gunship in Episode 8. Simon shouts, "Grit your teeth!," Kamina's words to him, before reassuring Rossiu (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 23). Here, Simon grasps at a genuine emotional truth about the moment Kamina punched him, recognizing the detriment of self-punishment, which typified his peritraumatic experience. Notably, however, that he is unable to assert his reassurance as fact, qualifying it with "probably" and "I think," and cannot name Kamina as the one who punched him (Ep. 23). This implies that he is aware that mentioning Kamina's name will trigger the intrusive traumatic memory. When Simon concludes his reassurance with a version of

"believe in the [me] that believes in [you]," a philosophy that originated with Kamina, viewers understand that Simon is simply appropriating another core assumption without properly integrating traumatic memory (Ep. 23).

Finally, the series values the severity of combat trauma while downplaying noncombat trauma. Simon witnesses several potentially equally traumatizing events: the Anti-Spirals' possession of Nia, the combat-related sacrifices of six Team Dai-Gurren members, and the self-sacrifice of Kittan, a mirror-figure to Kamina whose death is saturated in visual signifiers of Kamina. Kittan dies performing a Giga Drill Break in a kamikaze attack, just after conflating the drill he carries with Kamina's, Simon's, and his own soul (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 25). Because he is so similar to Kamina, viewers assume Simon will suffer another peritraumatic experience. However, Simon neither grieves nor attempts to reenact any of these traumatic losses, and his assumptive world remains undisrupted by them, and he does not waver in his expressions of positivity. Significantly, while most of these deaths occur during battle, they are noncombat casualties, as Kittan and the others sacrifice themselves to save the rest of the team, and Nia dies after the war. Rather than verbalize grief, Simon expresses gratitude, renewed willpower, and acceptance, erecting memorials to his friends near Kamina's grave (Ep. 27).

Furthermore, the series describes noncombat, non-theater catastrophes as having little emotional impact. In Episode 1, viewers are shown four quick, still images depicting Simon's parents being crushed to death in an earthquake, as Simon helplessly watches them die (*Gurren Lagann*). Similarly, it is heavily implied that Rossiu, whose poverty-stricken village practiced lottery sacrifice, witnessed his mother's certain-death exile (Ep. 5). Catastrophic parental death is extremely traumatic for children and gives rise to mourning syndrome, assumptive world violation, and loss of trust in caregivers and their sense of security in their environment. Children who lack experience in defending or revising the assumptive world are vulnerable to trauma, since they do not possess tested coping skills (Rando 182-87). However, although Simon's flashback depicts trauma symptoms such as constriction and numbness, the memory is hardly intrusive, and he fully recovers in Episode 2. Also, Rossiu never experiences intrusion and speaks of his mother's death casually, demonstrating his full integration and resolution of the traumatic event. Therefore, the first traumatic event the series treats seriously is Kamina's confrontation with mortality, which occurs during combat. Kamina's combat death is the sole traumatic event illustrated as persistent and insurmountable.

Unaffected as he is by noncombat losses, Simon remains visibly hypersensitive to the mention or memory of Kamina in any context. When angry citizens tear down the Kamina monument, which Simon singlehandedly constructed, he watches in flickery slow-motion as though it is too unbearable to process in real-time. His haggard gaze, accented by linear hatching, further recalls his peritraumatic dissociation (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 19). Additionally, when Rossiu remarks that Kamina's death propelled Team Dai-Gurren forward, Simon experiences intrusion and numbing constriction, as unspeakable blackness overwhelms his present reality. Thus, *Gurren Lagann* operates on a complex trauma paradigm that distinguishes between death directly caused by en-

emy action and death indirectly resulting from combat.

The series' final attempt to convince us of Simon's recovery appears in the inclusion of wish-fulfillment alternate universes in which Simon encounters two Kaminas. The Kamina that Simon imagines, who appears first, is a weak-willed, groveling thief, antithetical to the true Kamina. Later, the true Kamina—the genuine idealistic leader, Simon's mentor—confronts Simon to help him authenticate his selfhood. This Kamina is pivotal to freeing Simon and Team Dai-Gurren from the Anti-Spirals' multidimensional labyrinth. Before the true Kamina appears, Simon displays defining peritraumatic symptoms, but afterward, the images and dialogue collude to formulate a positive sense of overcoming. Simon is forced to face the pain of Kamina's death and affirm his own identity, his dissociated eyes returning to normal. After Kamina reassures him, Simon finally proclaims, "My drill is the drill that will pierce the heavens! My drill is my soul!" (*Gurren Lagann*, Ep. 26). This self-affirming declaration pierces the gray postwar landscape with light, but the dialogue, taken almost verbatim from Kamina's core assumptions, undermines Simon's moment of alleged self-reclamation. Kamina does not ask Simon to choose a possibility out of all the possibilities available to him, but out of the two Kaminas that present themselves in the multidimensional labyrinth. Thus, when Simon distills his possibilities to the invalid assumptive world he continues to rely on, we see that his total potentiality has been determined not by the I-self, but by the they-self, influenced by Kamina's prompting. Consequently, nothing has changed in Simon's formulation of identity. While he appropriates Kamina's dying words, saying, "Let's go, buddy!," it ultimately represents his lingering attachment to Kamina, not his true processing of his traumatic memory (Ep. 26).

Kamina is an ideological symbol for his comrades, and his death leaves a vacuum that overshadows all other losses. It is inarguably the central catastrophic loss that triggers the most enduring peritraumatic and posttraumatic symptoms and constitutes the sole combat-related, in-theater death in the series. While noncombat deaths are resolved neatly and permanently, combat death leaves a lasting mark. Although resolution of traumatic experience is never final and recovery is never complete, regardless of type, *Gurren Lagann* reconfigures trauma dialectic to exclude noncombat loss. By emphasizing combat death, the series redefines the conventional trauma paradigm as one that is hierarchical, persistent, and inescapable.

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"A Great Artist Can Come from Anywhere": Globalization in the Pixar Animated Feature

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Abstract This essay considers the historically changing meanings of nationalism in the American animated cartoon. Images of globalization in recent Disney/Pixar films imply a centrifugal (outward looking) approach to the world, in contrast to centripetal (inward looking) Hollywood Disney cartoons. *Pinocchio* (1940) cannibalizes European civilization for the purposes of the American movie-making machine. However, in recent Pixar films, the world draws out the Americans, giving testament to a very different world half a century later. *Ratatouille* (2007) concerns a rat named Remy who learns how to achieve his dream of running a restaurant, inspired by his idol Gusteau's book, *Anyone Can Cook*. The film's villain is Anton Ego, who at first laments Gusteau's populism, but is eventually won over by the relationship between the rat's cooking and his own mother's. Thus, Remy wins over the villainous critic, striking a blow not only for the accessibility of French cuisine, but also for popular cinema as an art form that transcends the tedium of angry (French) film critics. If *Ratatouille* is a centrifugal film about globalization, then it assaults not just the centripetal nature of Walt Disney, but Classical Hollywood Cinema more generally. *Ratatouille* articulates itself as a critic-proof film by reworking the shibboleth of great American cinema itself, *Citizen Kane* (1941). The television commercial that begins the animated film serves as a biographical obituary of Gusteau, whose death motivates the plot of the film. The reporter Thompson's quest for the truth about Charles Foster Kane results from the inadequacy of the opening newsreel. Conversely, Remy's quest to prove Gusteau correct in Ego's eyes, that anyone, from anywhere (a rat colony or the United States), can cook, results from profoundly transformed historical circumstances. Kane collects the artifacts of an almost dead Europe in his Xanadu, dying amidst its ruins. Remy thrives in a disinterred Europe, liberated by Gusteau's charisma, finally capable of reigniting the passion of the cadaverous Ego.
Key words Animation; Pixar Studios; Walt Disney; Globalization

Pixar's *Finding Nemo* (Andrew Stanton, 2003)—like much post-9/11 American cinema—is a film about the restoration of a traditional, active masculinity. Somewhere in the South Pacific, the shark villains chase Marlin (voiced by Albert Brooks), our fatherly fishy protagonist, through a minefield and a destroyed World War II submarine. The imagery here intertextually returns to two important American texts. The

first is a film: in the middle of Jaws (Steven Spielberg, 1975), fisherman and veteran Quint (Robert Shaw) explains why he will never put on a life preserver again. In a bravura ten-minute scene sequence, while waiting out the night before their assault on the killer shark can resume, he tells the story of having served on the U. S. S. Indianapolis, a World War II U. S. navy vessel that was sunk by a Japanese submarine shortly after delivering the atomic bomb to its top-secret airbase in the South Pacific. Jaws presents itself as a post-Vietnam recuperation film, in which Chief Brody (Roy Schieder) blows up the shark after it has castrated Quint.

American audience members in the summer of 1975 were adrenalized into cheering as the shark sank, as if in retaliation for the long-delayed sinking of the Asian submarine, or in vengeance for never having had similar closure in Vietnam. *Finding Nemo* shifts the political allegory of Jaws in the direction of identity politics, particularly fatherhood and masculinity. Marlin's detour through the remnants of a similarly destroyed submarine threatens to end his quest to find his captive son. However, the sharks are engaged in a twelve-step program to stop eating fish—"fish are friends not food"—thus ensuring the successful reunion of father and son, and disposing of any hint of conflict, either political or interspecies.

Because humans are presented as the vicious enemy, *Finding Nemo* is able to dovetail equally well with a literary intertext, Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851), a novel also about American masculinity, particularly as it pertains to Ahab's mad quest to avenge his castration. In both novel and cartoon, the fish win. Yet for Melville, this involves the white whale sinking the ship of state. For *Finding Nemo*, on the other hand, the fish unite together under the leadership of father and son to swim against the weight of a human trawler's boom, breaking it with their patriarchal will. The American fish in *Finding Nemo* do not fail to salvage their family; in *Moby-Dick*, nature enacts a terrible price upon the overreaching American Ahab, who long since abandoned both family and nation for personal vengeance.

This essay asserts that the globalized nexus of *Finding Nemo*—the United States, Japan, Vietnam, Australia, the South Pacific—is one of the principal markers of Pixar's difference from classical Disney films. In the foundational classical Hollywood animated features—*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and *Pinocchio* (1940)—European civilization is cannibalized by the American movie-making machine. Hollywood's adaptational grasp drags in the Old World cultural material to recast it in an American idiom. However, in the mid-period Pixar films—such as *Finding Nemo* and *Ratatouille* (Brad Bird, 2007), the world draws out the Americans, giving testament to a very different half century after the World War II-era Disney cartoons than what

came before.

The significance of this difference is the topic of this essay, which builds toward an understanding of these films as globalization allegories. Clearly the animated cartoon, invented as feature-length cinema by Walt Disney and whose legacy carries through to Pixar's eleven contemporary films, represents one of the most lucrative and artistically-compelling forms of modernity within global film distribution. In critical theory, the study of globalization as an aspect of modernity is most productively studied by Arjun Appadurai, whose concept of "global flows" extends beyond the traditional formulation of the diaspora to explain much of the social and cultural interchange occurring around the world, such as Pixar's and Disney's global film distribution. This essay poses the possibility that more than fish and references to *Jaws* and *Moby-Dick* are flowing in the Pacific currents represented in *Finding Nemo*. In what follows, I will analyze in depth a few specific mediascapes, as defined by Appadurai, as witnessed in Pixar's production of feature-length animated films as they allegorize globalization.

Pixar's film plots are overwritten by their thematic material, one important example of which is the film industry's role in global culture formation. For example, *Ratatouille* concerns a rat, Remy (voiced by Patton Oswalt), who learns how to achieve his dream of running a restaurant, inspired by his idol Gusteau's (voiced by Brad Garrett) book, *Anyone Can Cook*. The film's villain is Anton Ego (voiced by Peter O'toole), who at first laments Gusteau's populism, but is eventually won over by the relationship between the rat's cooking and his own mother's. Thus, Remy strikes a blow not only for the accessibility of French cuisine, but also for popular cinema as an art form that transcends the tedium of angry (French) film critics.

In post-colonial theory, particularly the work of Homi Bhabha, the hybrid subject is central to understanding the conflicted space of the Third World, caught between traditions and the modern West. In a post-colonial sense, Remy is an interspecies allegory for the hybrid subject. He is not at home in the rat colony, longing for contact with human cooking. However, once Remy gets to Gusteau's kitchen, he learns of his need for contact with the thriving community that he has left behind. This aggressive allegorical reading connecting post-colonial studies to popular Hollywood cinema is indeed part of the landscape of critical theory. In his wonderful study of *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939), Salman Rushdie forges a similar allegorical reading of that classical Hollywood film, seeing himself in Dorothy as she neither finds life in Kansas nor in Oz all that rewarding, replicating Rushdie's similarly conflicted feelings about living in India and London.

As a theoretical encounter, of course, I understand all too well that my approach to globalization via Pixar films is susceptible to critiques of cultural imperialism. Pixar authors its animated fairy tales from fecund Northern California, which then arrive in the Third World via global film distribution, doing great fiscal damage to local film production. Furthermore, I am not unaware of the symbolic material that undergirds the Pixar films. Linking Remy to Rushdie, it is of considerable significance that Remy is a rat, whose community of vermin eats garbage, metaphors not all that far afield from how the British imagined India in the nineteenth century. I do not offer this

analysis of Pixar and globalization as an apologist for Hollywood cinema. Pixar films are on the surface clearly nostalgic and conservative. And yet, they are simultaneously more complex than those labels indicate. Appadurai opens up space for a wider understanding of this issue: "Globalization does not necessarily or even frequently imply homogenization or Americanization, and to the extent that different societies appropriate the materials of modernity differently, there is still ample room for the deep study of specific geographies, histories, and languages" (17).

Furthermore, Appadurai argues that the global flows of culture consist of intricate relationships among politics and communication technologies. In Appadurai's terms, Pixar films are part of one specific "mediascape" among many, which produce their own intricate political effects, what he calls "ideoscapes" (35). Appadurai proposes that mediascapes "provide (especially in their television, film, and cassette forms) large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscapes to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed" (35). All is not rosy in Pixar's globalization mediascape. Appadurai critiques what he calls "the fetishism of the consumer" in contemporary culture, arguing that "the consumer has been transformed through commodity flows (and the mediascapes, especially of advertising, that accompany them) into a sign... in the sense of a mask for the real seat of agency, which is not the consumer but the producer and the many forces that constitute production" (35). Pixar's *Toy Story 2* (John Lasseter, 1999) participates in this logic, demonstrating that the global demand for commodities threatens our intrepid toy heroes. When Al (Wayne Knight), a corporate toy mogul, seeks Woody (Tom Hanks) to complete his set of vintage 1950s Western toys, he sells them at great profit to a Japanese businessman.

The other 1950s cowboy toys find their loyalties divided. Some see the benefit of remaining toys in the United States while others, as in the case of Stinky Pete (voiced by Kelsey Grammer), want to go to Japan to be admired in a toy museum rather than be abandoned by aging kids who will no longer play with them. The film ends with a climactic sequence in the belly of an international jetliner, as Woody and his friends attempt to return home, and not end up in a Japanese toy museum. In short, *Toy Story 2* engages Appadurai's ideoscape of the fetishism of the consumer wherein the characters debate the logic of themselves as commodity signs in a global economy. Clearly, like many Pixar films, *Toy Story 2* ends with a nostalgia for small-town American life, as Woody returns home to his child owner's bedroom. However, by invoking the possibility of other ways of being in the world, even the conservative mediascape of *Toy Story 2* offers contact with other ideoscapes.

Unlike *Toy Story 2*, Ratatouille defines a mediascape which is complexly internationalist from the onset. The first image of *Ratatouille* is of a television floating in the black void of space. On the screen is an image of the Earth, the beginning of a documentary about Gusteau's restaurant in Paris. The images of globalization that subtend *Ratatouille* offer a case study for the historically changing meanings of nationalism in the American animated cartoon. I will compare and contrast the centripetal aspects of national identity in classical Hollywood Disney cartoons with their centrifu-

gal counterparts in the Pixar films. The relationship between television and cooking dominates the first half of the film. In the forty-second teaser sequence before the opening credits, the documentary introduces us to Chef Gusteau's position in international cuisine. In voice-over, the television announcer enthuses, "Although each of the world's countries would like to dispute this fact, we French know the truth. The best food in the world is made in France. The best food in France is made in Paris. And the best food in Paris, some say, is made by Chef August Gusteau" (Ratatouille).

Imagistically, the television documentary is even more stunning in its global representations than its verbal rhetoric. Out of a black image after the Walt Disney castle and Pixar lamp logos, over which plays the tune to "La Marseillaise," an antiquated television with analog knobs and rabbit ear antennae appears floating in black space. On the television screen is a rotating globe floating incongruously in front of clouds and blue sky. In an odd rejoinder of the trip to the moon in Georges Melies' 1902 film, the television screen gets closer to us, eventually coming to fill up the image. As the Earth rotates, it reveals a huge version of the Eifel Tower standing atop a globe otherwise devoid of relief. This image is, of course, a parody of the RKO logo that began many classical Hollywood films about globalization, such as *King Kong* (1933)—about ripping happy apes away from their Third World homes and bringing them to New York City—and *Citizen Kane* (1941), a film about globalization in the sense that it ironically grapples with the foolishness of American isolationism, set on the precipice of the United States' entry into World War II. Whereas the RKO radio tower broadcast American film around the world, the Eifel Tower at the beginning of Ratatouille broadcasts the superiority of French cuisine.

The next image we see is Gusteau's restaurant in Paris. Its location seems to pastiche the Flat Iron Building in old New York City, a triangular building sitting in front of a busy intersection through which jot peppy little French Renaults. Next, we see a pile of cooking magazines featuring Gusteau on their covers. Oddly, these are not French magazines, but American ones, written in English, the last of which is *Bon Appétit*, which despite its French title, is an American magazine, published by Condé Nast, whose headquarters are in New York City and is famous for the urban cultural style of *The New Yorker* and its more general lifestyle magazine marketing strategy. For that matter, the announcer speaks to us in English, albeit with a French accent, but given the French government's attempts to preserve its native language, a significant detail in assessing Ratatouille's status as an American text.

While the film's language conveys a similarity with the centripetal nature of *Pinocchio*, *other details indicate Ratatouille*'s centrifugal difference from classical Walt Disney films. Later in the film, Remy grabs Linguini's hair and controls him like a puppet as he cooks. In a montage sequence, they practice cooking together. The figure of the puppet of course conjures *Ratatouille*'s relationship to *Pinocchio*. In the classic Disney film, the puppet works hard to become a real boy. In *Ratatouille*, the rat dreams of becoming a chef, whether a human one or not does not matter to him. *Pinocchio* represents the classical Disney take on globalization. Carlos Collodi's grim 1883 European tale—Pinocchio stomps to death the moralizing cricket about a third of the way into the novel—is imported into American culture for Disney's war-time purposes without concern for its original nineteenth century Italian context.

In these terms, the most significant passage in the film is when Lampwick takes Pinocchio to Pleasure Island. While there, they visit a model suburban home that is being systematically destroyed by the children. Inside, Lampwick lights a match across the face of DaVinci's famous painting, the Mona Lisa. Shortly afterward, Lampwick and Pinocchio are horrifyingly transformed into donkeys. After the process is completed, a worker rounds up the animals for work in the salt mines. "You've had your fun, now pay for it," is the gruff delivery of the moral by the jailer, cause enough for the haunting of many childhood dreams.

The depositing of the *Mona Lisa* in an American suburban home is of profound significance for tracing the World War II context of both *Pinocchio* and its live action doppelganger, *Citizen Kane*, *Bildungsroman* both. In these films, European civilization's destruction across the Atlantic is elided. Instead, the United States becomes a repository of its art, piled up and ill-treated. In Welles' film, Kane has collected European artwork, which remains boxed up at Xanadu. At film's end, we are privy to the second destruction of Europe. First came the Nazi plunder, from which Kane has apparently spared the artworks. Then comes the death of Kane, resulting in his possessions being burned in a giant oven, not dissimilar to the smoldering Europe that the film elides, with the exception of the remarkably ironic section featuring Kane's declaration that there will be no war in Europe because he has spoken directly to Hitler and Mussolini.

For its part, *Pinocchio* is less pessimistic about the future of civilization. By moralizing rather than ironizing as does *Citizen Kane*, Disney's film demonstrates that with the proper scolding, it might be possible to convert amoral puppets into "real" boys who grow up to be law abiding citizens, who might deserve their Disney-designed suburban model homes, in which they could have DaVinci paintings that would not serve as striking posts for matches.

Ratatouille conceives of Europe in very different terms than *Citizen Kane* and *Pinocchio*. Despite representing Paris in distinctly American terms, the film's ending proposes the projection of the rat (voiced by an American comedian) into the center of Parisian social life. When Ego is converted from foe to friend—he calls the rat, "the finest chef in France"—Remy is able to establish his idyllic French restaurant, La Ratatouille, an elegant bistro. The film ends with the American firmly ensconced in a now thriving contemporary Europe.

The question is, Why does Ratatouille begin with such an obsessive conflation between television and cooking? I believe the answer lies in the culture at Pixar. Like Orson Welles, the wunderkinds who have created the Pixar films, the most aesthetically and narratively accomplished animated feature-films since Walt Disney's in the 1930s, these are exceptionally young film artists. John Lasseter (director of the early Pixar features) and Brad Bird (director of *Ratatouille* and 2004's *The Incredibles*) are both 53 years old, whereas Andrew Stanton (director of 2003's *Finding Nemo* and 2008's *Wall-e*) is 45. Pete Docter, on the other hand, the director of 2001's *Monsters, Inc.* and 2009's *Up*, was born in 1968, making him an astonishingly young 42 years old. These are young men in the Hollywood film industry, in which it typically takes twenty-five years to build a successful career. Such career paths recall Disney himself, whose creation of the American feature-length animated film in 1937 was accomplished at age 36. Thus, when the biographical announcer at the beginning of *Ratatouille* announces Gusteau's upstart status, "He's the youngest chef ever to achieve a five star rating," this invokes Ratatouille's allegory of creativity. For *Ratatouille* is not only about art, the cooking of food, it is also about its reception. The critic Anton Ego is the most remarkable character in the film. On the one hand, it is an expected slap in the face to criticism. Many artists are annoyed by the frameworks critics use to dismantle their films. However, *Ratatouille*'s representation of the critic is worth mining for more than its anti-intellectualism. Ego's transformation into a defender of Remy's cooking gets at the kind of world Pixar believes it is creating with its films, a more humane one. And they just might be correct about that.

Ratatouille is a self-reflexive film, one in which cooking is a stand-in for the creation of personally meaningful systems of meaning. The Pixar creators are all cinephiles, but some of their characters stand out as interrogating cinephilia more than others. Most recently, Carl Fredrickson's love of Muntz the movie star becomes Up's central preoccupation, as he comes to divest himself of the image, as Muntz in real life in South America tries to drop to his death a young boy scout off the side of his zeppelin.

In *Ratatouille*, cinephilia is much less negatively depicted. Remy literally stops in his tracks as he watches Gusteau cook on television. Like little boys who dream of

making cartoon movies, the rat falls in love with the televised image of Gusteau at the beginning of the film. Eight minutes into it, Remy and his brother sneak into an old lady's kitchen to find spices for their morsels of food. Throughout the entire scene, the television plays in the background. When Remy notices Gusteau, he walks forward on the counter to watch his idol. Gusteau delivers works of encouragement to his young apprentice: "You must be imaginative, strong-hearted. Your only limit is your soul. Anyone can cook, but only the fearless can be great." "Pure poetry," Remy enthuses.

However, Remy learns that with a bad review from Ego, the broken-hearted Gusteau has died. The restaurant has fallen from a rating of five starts to three, a system that also pertains to how films get evaluated in American film criticism. Clearly Pixar is aiming to make the animated equivalents of *Citizen Kane*, seeking the five stars ratings, but because they are animated features, some critics dismiss them as three star efforts, good enough for what they are, but indistinguishable frothe work aimed at children and their parents tagging along, as in, for example, *Shrek* and *Ice Age*.

The centrality of television continues as Linguini takes Remy back to his apartment thirty minutes into the film. Although he has a beautiful, expansive view over the Parisian cityscape, centering the Eifel Tower out his huge windows, Linguini suggests that his tiny apartment is livable because he has a couch and a TV. What's more, Linguini sleeps with the television on, tuned to a French romance movie. A man and a woman hold each other. She asks, "Is this a dream?" and he replies with smoldering passion in his voice, "The best kind of dream, one we can share," as clear a statement on the construction of Pixar's brand of animated magic as appears in any of the films. Because Gusteau is not the star of the television for the first time in the movie, Remy is not watching it. Instead, he gazes out the window, longing to make something of his life which transcends life in the rat colony. It is a quintessential Disney moment, akin to the "When You Wish Upon a Star" romanticism in *Pinocchio*.

At the film's climax, Ego comes to the restaurant to review Linguini's cooking. Tired of reading all of the hype about the restaurant, he asks the waiter, "Do you know what I'm craving? Perspective. You provide the food, I'll provide the perspective." The ghost of Gusteau comes to visit Remy, trapped in a human cage. "So, we have given up. Awaiting a future in frozen food products." Discouraged, Remy declares, "I'm sick of pretending." Unlike Hamlet's father, Gusteau is a ghost who impels him, not to destruction, but to better himself. Remy runs to the restaurant to keep it from failing. Why do you care about mean humans, inquires his brother.

"Because I am a cook," declares Remy, transcending the logic of speciation which tends to separate live-action Hollywood cinema from its anthropomorphic animated brethren. When the human chefs are about to kill the prodigal rat, Linguini intervenes to protect his friend, his "little chef," in a typical Pixar bit of Freudian fantasy, invoking but not pursuing the psychosexual overtones of this formulation. Remy's family of rats comes to help him save the restaurant. As they work, Remy barks orders at them, "Compose the salad like you were painting a picture," is his artistic advice.

Remy prepares an unusual dish for Ego's review, ratatouille, which Colette dismisses as a peasant dish. However, when Ego takes a bite of Remy's concoction, he has an out-of-body experience, flashing back to his childhood, when his mother made the dish for him. He drops his pen and eats ravenously. Again, a Freudian fantasy drives the plot forward. Remy and Linguini overcome their species differences, Remy cures the critic, aptly named Ego, via a return to childhood which produces a mature subjectivity in both the cook and his critic.

Remy narrates the story of the appearance of Ego's review. We watch the critic compose his missive in a huge gothic cathedral like room, typed on an ancient typewriter. Ego's review is a remarkable meta-commentary on the nature of criticism, deliciously performed by Peter O'toole:

> In many ways, the work of a critic is easy. We risk very little, yet enjoy a position over those who offer up their work and their selves to our judgment… But, there are times when a critic truly risks something, and that is in the discovery and defense of the new… In the past, I have made no secret of my disdain for Chef Gusteau's famous motto, "Anyone can cook." But I realize, only now do I truly understand what he meant. Not everyone can become a great artist, but a great artist can come from anywhere. (Ratatouille)

Ego gives voice to some common assaults on criticism: it is petty, and far less creative than the worst of the artwork it engages. However, the missive also raises the positive function of criticism--its support for creativity--a sentiment that is rarely voiced by artists. Indeed, the ideas here are not radical, there is no claim that criticism is also an act of creativity that can be superior to the artworks engaged; nonetheless, the importance of criticism is at least entertained.

Furthermore, the passage allows us to shift attention from the animated film per se onto the very political history of cinema itself. For if *Ratatouille* is a centrifugal film about globalization, it assaults not just the centripetal nature of Walt Disney but

classical Hollywood and international art cinema as well. *Ratatouille* articulates itself as a critic-proof film by reworking the shibboleth of great American cinema itself, *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941). The television commercial that begins the film serves as a biographical obituary of Gusteau, whose death motivates the plot of the film. Thompson's quest for the truth about Kane results from the inadequacy of the opening newsreel. Conversely, Remy's quest to prove Gusteau correct in Ego's eyes, that anyone, from anywhere (a rat colony or the United States), can cook, results from profoundly transformed historical circumstances. Charles Foster Kane collects the artifacts of an almost dead Europe in his Xanadu, dying amidst its ruins. For his part, Remy inexplicably begins his life in a disinterred Europe, but is liberated by Gusteau's charisma, and finally capable of reigniting the passion of the cadaverous European Ego.

As in cooking, as in cinema: Pixar's film transcends the moribund French cinema with its failed Godards, instead producing a film which charms both adults and children alike in its astute understanding that at the center of centripetal force lies isolation, abandonment, and destruction, while the outward propulsion of ideas leads toward a thriving global community.

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Manga as Historical Medium: Depictions of Prince Shōtoku's Authorship of the *Sangyō-gisho* in Japanese Comic Books

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Abstract This article examines Japanese manga depicting the composition of the *Sangyō-gisho*, three canonical Buddhist texts traditionally attributed to Japan's Prince Shōtoku. It examines how those depictions of his authorship relate to both eighth century texts and modern scholarship, focusing on Shōtoku's relationship with Hyeja, his Buddhist teacher from the Korean peninsula. In so doing, this article shows how the manga, a particularly popular medium in Japan, differ with such scholarly works in the access they afford to these key Buddhist texts from early Japanese history.
Key words Prince Shōtoku; Shōtoku manga; Hyeja; *Sangyō-gisho*; *Nihon shoki*; Japanese Buddhism

This article examines Japanese *manga* depicting the composition of the *Sangyō-gisho*, three canonical Buddhist texts traditionally attributed to Japan's Prince Shōtoku (573? –622? CE). Shōtoku is remembered as both a clever politician and first patriarch of Japanese Buddhism, credited not only with constructing temples, collecting sūtras, and inviting masters from abroad, but also with spreading the new religion by lecturing at court on Buddhist teachings and composing the *Sangyō-gisho* based on his lectures. We will consider below how Japanese manga portray the prince's lectures and role in the composition of these texts in relation to early primary sources and to the modern scholarly interpreters of those sources. In our examination of these materials, we will focus on Shōtoku's relationship with the Korean Buddhist monk Hyeja (dates unknown), who is described as the prince's main Buddhist teacher.

The authenticity of these records and their portrayal of the relationship between Shōtoku and Hyeja have been the focus of a great deal of modern scholarship, which has been guided by the search for the so-called "true record". That is, scholars have tried to determine what Shōtoku actually did and said, including whether he authored these texts. This search has produced two main academic positions: the true-composition-hypothesis, supported by a majority of scholars, and the false-composition-hypothesis. The former argues that Shōtoku is the rightful author of the *Sangyō-gisho*, and that his texts are profound works of a great thinker which capture the unique sensibilities of the Japanese mind. The other camp not only believes them to

be apocryphal texts written by a continental author and then falsely attributed to the prince, but also describes them as repetitive and unimaginative works, unworthy of their exalted canonical status. A few scholars advocate a third position, however, arguing that while Shōtoku may have played some role in their composition, he cannot be considered their sole author, nor even perhaps the main intellectual force behind their composition. Thus, the three texts should be understood as compositions co-authored by Shōtoku and one or more of his Buddhist teachers, possibly Hyeja.

Since scholars of all three camps view the *Sangyō-gisho* mainly as a body of ideas, they have generally been unconcerned with how these texts can appear and be used in other non-traditional forms that are unrelated to their content—for example, held in a temple's sanctuary as sacred material objects, copied as a means of merit making, or remembered as a crucial historical event signaling the local mastery of Buddhist teachings and the translocal Chinese language. Indeed, the composition of these three texts by a Japanese author soon after Buddhism arrived on the archipelago has been seen as a defining historical moment that led to the development of legitimate and independent forms of Japanese Buddhism. As such, their composition has been remembered again and again in premodern artwork, poetry, and ritual, as well as in the distinctly modern forms of television docudramas, Wikipedia entries, YouTube clips, and Japanese manga. Even so, modern scholarship has generally ignored how the manga and other such non-traditional materials have helped to insure that knowledge of the texts would endure into modern times, shaping the perceptions of those lacking the skills or interest to read the *Sangyō-gisho* or the highly technical interpretive works of modern scholars.

Manga as a "Medium of Historical Expression"

As a quintessentially consumerist medium, manga may seem an unusual subject for the study of serious religious texts. Even so, Tessa Morris-Suzuki argues that this medium has, in fact, "reached a huge audience and had a profound effect on the historical imagination of Japan's postwar generations," shaping the Japanese public's understanding of its history to the same degree as historical textbooks (Morris-Suzuki, 175). Indeed, in her work on media and memory, she argues that in our attempts to understand the events of the past, we must consider the logic and conventions of the "media of historical expression" by which we access, remember, and interpret those events, since our understanding will vary depending on whether we have used a historical novel, photograph, film, internet archive, or comic book.

She argues, moreover, that in this modern age of mass media, new conventions have emerged that are reshaping the ways in which we can engage the past, and so we must consider carefully how "varied representations of the same event enable us to understand the forces that shape the communication of historical knowledge" (28). But instead of searching for a single authoritative historical truth, one of the central goals of modern studies of Shōtoku's texts, she calls for us to think in terms of "historical truthfulness," which requires listening to multiple voices—the poetic and the artistic, the exegetical and even the comic. Each offers a distinct window into the past and possesses unique barriers to entry (temporal, monetary, linguistic, educa-

tional), capacities for communicating, and standards for verifying claims and conclusions.

For example, the Shōtoku manga, being simple, cheap, and disposable, keep barriers to entry low but have a potential for dispersion that is high. And unlike the work of Hanayama Shinshō, Tsuda Sōkichi, and the other scholars examined below, the manga can be read, or "consumed," quickly, and offer no reliable means to verify their claims nor a recognized forum for challenging historical misrepresentations.[1] These manga omit citations of source materials, commonly using the phrase "it is said," but failing to tell their audience by whom it was said and in what context. And while the manga often tell stories about the past in a straightforward, graphic format that clearly suggests the reader has entered a world created in the artist's imagination, they commonly include images associated with time and space beyond the imaginary realm of the manga, often by intercutting photographs of material objects associated with Shōtoku (temples, artwork, or manuscripts), or by offering specific historical dates for the composition of his texts.

As such, the manga represent a powerful medium for perpetuating received narratives and for transmitting the texts' value not simply because of their potential for dispersion but also because of their capacity to express, in just a few frames, the key markers cited by scholars to justify the texts' canonical status. For example, the *Sangyō-gisho* are described in the manga as the oldest extant written Buddhist works by a Japanese author, which were crucial to the founding of a uniquely Japanese form of Buddhism. Another key marker of value we find is the recognition accorded the texts' erudition by Hyeja, who is shown praising the texts and, in some manga, taking them back to the Korean peninsula as proof of the sophistication of the nascent Japanese Buddhist tradition. Indeed, these scenes of Shōtoku and Hyeja condense a long and complex pattern found throughout Buddhist history of transmission, apprenticeship, and mastery, whether we look to the northern traditions of China, Korea, Japan, and Tibet, or the southern traditions of Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand.

Shōtoku Manga and Early Accounts of the *Sangyō-gisho*

The *Nihon shoki*, compiled in 720, is one of the key early texts describing Shōtoku's Buddhist activities and appears to be an important source for the Shōtoku manga. Written in classical Chinese and modeled on the Chinese dynastic histories, the *Nihon shoki* seeks to legitimize the Japanese royal house by describing an unbroken lineage of sovereigns that begins with Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess, and tracing it through a line of human sovereigns, leading to Empress Suiko(554 – 628), Shōtoku's aunt. The text depicts Shōtoku as an adroit politician who, after being appointed regent by his aunt in 593, played a key role in the government. He is credited with composing the *Seventeen Article Constitution* and two historical texts, the *Tennōki* and the *Kokki*, and with promoting diplomatic and religious contacts with the continent.

Shōtoku is also credited with promoting the Buddhist faith that had only recently arrived from the Korean peninsula. Indeed, the prince is depicted as not only a generous patron and devout practitioner of the foreign religion, but also possessed of a keen intellect that quickly grasped the doctrines of the new faith. His study under

Hyeja's tutelage led to lectures at court before Empress Suiko and other notables on the Srīmālā-sūtra and *Lotus-sūtra*, and eventually to the composition of the three sūtra commentaries that make up the *Sangyō-gisho*.

The *Nihon shoki*'s account, which does not state directly that Shōtoku composed the *Sangyō-gisho*, is elaborated in subsequent texts, some of which provide greater detail on his lectures and connect them to the commentaries. These texts include the *Jōgū Shōtoku hōō teisetsu*, a biography of the prince whose author and dates of composition are unknown, although scholars believe it is roughly contemporaneous with the *Nihon shoki*. Like the *Nihon shoki*, the *Teisetsu* describes Shōtoku's studies with Hyeja and his rapid mastery of Buddhist teachings, but also notes his composition of the *Hokke-gisho*, one of the three commentaries, and "other texts," a reference assumed by scholars to point to the *Shōmangyō-gisho* and the *Yuimagyō-gisho*, the other two *Sangyō-gisho* texts.[2]

Manga Depicting Shōtoku in Japanese Buddhist History

The Shōtoku *manga* repeat key elements of these early accounts whether describing Shōtoku's place in Japanese Buddhist history more broadly or focusing on his political and religious activities.[3] As background to my study of Shōtoku manga, I was introduced to this genre and to the figure of Shōtoku over twenty years ago when I began studying Japanese in Tokyo in 1987. I purchased a few manga on Japanese Buddhism soon after starting intensive language classes after friends had recommended them as a good way to practice reading while learning the basics of Japanese Buddhism, which would later become my area of academic specialization. Within a year or so, I was able to make some sense of these manga addressing varied aspects of Japanese Buddhist history. Part of their appeal, and the reason I describe this experience here, is that manga generally offer a combination of drawings and simple text, often accompanied by diacritic markings called *furigana*, which give the pronunciations of difficult words and so are especially helpful for those learning the language—whether a child or a non-native speaker. As I wrote this article, I looked again at the three manga I still have from that period, which are now dog-eared, musty, and falling apart, each covered with my scribblings of the English equivalents of even the most basic Japanese words. One of the three, Itō Makoto's *Hannya Shingyō for Beginners*, offers an introduction to the *Heart Sūtra*, a short but important sūtra in Zen Buddhism. Like he does in many other manga that touch on aspects of Japanese Buddhist history, Prince Shōtoku appears as father of Japanese Buddhism. In this manga, he is drawn on a timeline depicting major events from the world's religious traditions, including an image of the Buddha in repose just before dying, a Christian cross, followed by Shōtoku's image in 607, the year of Hōryūji's construction. This image of Shōtoku was my introduction to the figure I would later study for my dissertation in the Buddhist Studies program at the University of Wisconsin.

Although this manga on a particular Buddhist sūtra does not mention Shōtoku's lectures or texts, we can find such information in other manga that address Japanese Buddhist history. Indeed, one of the other manga I have kept is titled *Nihon no Bukkyō* (Japanese Buddhism), which devotes five out of some one hundred seventy-

five pages to Shōtoku's role in the spread of Buddhism. The first frame of this section shows Shōtoku playing chess against an unseen opponent, while a miniature version of Empress Suiko sits atop his shoulder, intimating to him: "By leaving everything to you [as regent], I am at peace" (Umehara 34). Shōtoku thinks to himself: "I will rule the country with Buddhism as the foundation. Now, what's my next move?" (34). This section also recounts other well-known events from Shōtoku's life found in these early sources, including his alleged deathbed utterance: "The world is illusory, only the Buddha is real." This manga also includes six illustrations of Shōtoku's face, each accompanied by a brief description: Shōtoku-the-scholar, politician, philosopher, and so on. Beneath these six faces is written "Founder of Japanese Buddhism." And next to Shōtoku-the-scholar we find three hand-drawn scrolls labeled "*Hokkekyō*," "*Yuimagyō*," and "*Shōmangyō*"—the titles of the three sūtras that serve as the interpretive objects of the *Sangyō-gisho*. Just below those scrolls is a speech bubble attached to Shōtoku-the-scholar in which he simply asserts, "I wrote the *Sangyō-gisho*" (37).

Another section states that Shōtoku "has been understood to" have composed the *Sangyō-gisho*, but does not mention any of the sometimes heated scholarly debates over the texts' authorship that are taken up below. And as is true of manga dedicated solely to Shōtoku's life, *Nihon no Bukkyō* contains short selections of more sophisticated narrative that give the reader the impression of moving back and forth between intellectual registers, or between distinct temporal and spatial lenses. For example, one passage that is clearly distinct from the story-line states Shōtoku lectured on the SSrīmālā- and the *Lotus-sūtras* for Empress Suiko, and that "it is said"—although the source remains unstated—that Shōtoku composed the three texts that constitute the *Sangyō-gisho*. This passage concludes by describing Shōtoku as a deeply devoted scholar. Another example reproduces a painting of a well-known pictorial biography depicting Shōtoku as he lectures on the *Srīmālā-sūtra*, thereby offering the reader a mix of time periods and media types that include text and hand-drawn images intercut with a photographic reproduction—in this case, a modern photograph of a medieval painting of a scene from the seventh-century.

Manga Dedicated to Shōtoku

Manga dedicated to Shōtoku's life naturally offer more detailed accounts of his Buddhist activities and so draw more heavily from the accounts found in the *Nihon shoki* and other early texts. For example, *Shōtoku Taishi: Nihon bukkyō no so* (Prince Shōtoku: The Founder of Japanese Buddhism) is divided into five chapters that take up major events from his study, practice, and patronage of Buddhism. One chapter describes his reverence for the Three Jewels of Buddhism, while another addresses the One-Vehicle of the Mahāyāna , a central teaching of the *Srīmālā-sūtra*. I have translated below two passages from the latter chapter that are part of a ten-page sequence depicting Shōtoku's lectures at court on the *Srīmālā-sūtra* and *Lotus-sūtra*. This passage is noteworthy not only because Hyeja is absent, but also because it is the only example from the manga I examined that offers even modest information on the ideas expressed in either Shōtoku's lectures or texts. But even this account simply

repeats basic ideas from the parables of the *Lotus-sūtra*. Indeed, this scene concludes by affirming the sentiments expressed in the *Nihon shoki* and the *Teisetsu* and that are repeated in all the other manga examined below: that is, Shōtoku's lectures at court and composition of the *Sangyō-gisho* are crucial events in the founding of Japanese Buddhism.

These two excerpts are taken from a section titled "Lectures on the Sūtras" (Sachiya, 90 – 99). The first selection reads:

Narrator: Prince [Shōtoku], despite being busy [with his administrative duties], lectured on the sūtras before Empress Suiko, high government officials, and court ladies.

Shōtoku: Shōman (Sanskrit, Srīmālā) of the *Shōmangyō* (Sanskrit, *Srīmālā-sūtra*) is the name of a princess from Ku? ala [in India] who married [a prince] from the land of Ayodhya. The sūtra [of which she is the protagonist] describes a path to enlightenment [that is also open to] women.

Empress Suiko: And so it says that even those possessing a woman's body, even a queen [like me] who does not renounce the world, can become a Buddha?

Shōtoku: It does.

Shōtoku: The foundation of the Buddha's teaching is that all humans are equal. He did not discriminate whether one was a man or woman, a monk or layperson.

Narrator: On another occasion, Prince [Shōtoku] lectured on the [*Lotus*]*-sūtra at* Okamoto Palace, his [primary] residence.

Man in audience: Those talks on the *Shōmangyō* were incredible, and it looks as if these [on the *Lotus-sūtra*] will be equally captivating.

Second man in audience: I'm really looking forward to them. The Prince's lectures on the *Shōmangyō* were very easy to understand, and, [having heard them], I felt as if I moved closer to the teachings of the Buddha.

The second selection reads:

Shōtoku: The sūtra known as *Hokkekyō* (Sanskrit, *Lotus-sūtra*), which contains the Buddha's ultimate teachings, describes seven parables, one of which is the story of the burning house. It tells of a wealthy man whose house goes up in flame while a number of children are playing inside. But the children are entranced by their games and don't notice the fire. No matter how many times [the wealthy man pleads] for them to run, they don't hear him. So he lines up carts pulled by a sheep, a deer, and a cow, and tells the children that he'll give them to those who come out of the house. Hearing this, the children come running out of the house with excitement. Pleased, the wealthy man says that later he'll give them an even better cart. So the wealthy man spared no expense and built a magnificent cart pulled by great white cows, and gave it to all of them. In this way, the wealthy man was able to save all of the children. In this parable of the burning house, the wealthy man represents the Buddha and the children are sentient beings, while the burning house points to the world in which we live. And the carts pulled by the sheep, deer, and cows are meant to represent the provisional teachings that lead to the ultimate truth of Mahāyāna Buddhism; it is the cart pulled by the great white cows that represents the truth of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Young man in audience: Oh, I see.

Shōtoku: In this way, the *Hokkekyō* has the power to save all sentient beings without exception, and it is known as the [text that teaches the] One-Vehicle.

Young man in audience: I see, and so even those of low standing like us can become buddhas.

Old man in audience: I'm very grateful. This is truly the teaching of the Buddha!

Young man in audience: I've made up my mind. From now on, I too will have faith in the Buddha.

Another man in audience: Me too!

Woman in audience: And me too!

Narrator: Based on these lectures that were given by Shōtoku with great conviction, the understanding of Buddhism of those in [Empress] Suiko's court deepened. And in due time, the faith of the people in Buddhism also increased. Soon thereafter, Hōryūji was built.

Modern Scholarship of the *Sangyō-gisho*

From among the accounts in the early texts that are repeated in the manga, modern scholars have been keenly interested in examining those related to the texts' authorship. Indeed, scholars have invested great intellectual effort, involving detailed study of the *Nihon shoki*, *Teisetsu*, and other texts, to recover the historical Shōtoku by proving whether particular achievements ascribed to him are credible. Those advocating the true-composition-hypothesis include Hanayama Shinshō, Kanaji Isamu, Nakamura Hajime, and other well-known Japanese scholars of Buddhism. Their studies include translations, critical editions, and interpretive works, many of which seek not only to confirm Shōtoku's authorship of the *Sangyō-gisho*, but also to reveal the historical significance of the texts, recover their original forms and meaning, and trace their intellectual antecedents to previous East Asian commentaries. By proving Shōtoku's authorship and revealing the indwelling profundity of his three commentaries, these scholars seek to validate their exalted status among the great religious scriptures of East Asia, including treatises by the Chinese monk Jizang(549 – 623), but also to defend them against the attacks of an increasing number of critics who argue that Shōtoku is not their rightful author.

To this end, Hanayama, Nakamura, and other scholars claim to have recovered Shōtoku's authentic voice and his intended meaning expressed in the *Sangyō-gisho*, texts that they believe reflect not only the author's genius but also the essence or spirit of the Japanese mind. For example, Hanayama, one of the most respected and prolific of this group of scholars, identifies qualities within the texts that he claims clearly exhibit the personality of Shōtoku and the characteristic way of thinking of the Japanese, thereby making skeptics' assertions of continental authorship untenable. And Nakamura describes Shōtoku as "one of the best and most benevolent of all the rulers of Japan and the real founder of Buddhism in Japan," claiming Shōtoku's spirit served as the foundation for the later development of "Japanese thought" (Nakamura, 3). He contends, moreover, that the *Sangyō-gisho* was of great importance for

Japanese Buddhism and the choice of the three texts was "entirely based on the Japanese way of thinking" (17). Thus, while these scholars do not deny Shōtoku studied under Hyeja and other continental Buddhist preceptors, they view the *Sangyō-gisho* as his work alone.

Although most studies of the *Sangyō-gisho* have sought to affirm Shōtoku's position as Buddhist author and sage, a small number of modern critics have attacked these images and attempted to disprove the historicity of particular accounts. The studies of this group first appeared in the more open intellectual environment of the post-World War II period as scholars were able to challenge ideas which had been held inviolate under imperial orthodoxy. Tsuda Sōkichi was instrumental in beginning a process of identifying inaccuracies in the early myth-histories, such as the *Kojiki* (compiled 712) and the *Nihon shoki*, challenging the veracity of a number of early descriptions of Shōtoku. He argues, for example, that the record of the prince's lectures at court was fabricated by pious Buddhists, and thus rejects Shōtoku's authorship of the texts alleged to be based on those lectures.

Tsuda's studies mark the emergence of the false-composition-hypothesis, which has been elaborated in various ways by Ogura Toyofumi, Fujieda Akira, Koizumi Enjun, Ōyama Seiichi, and other scholars. Those advocating this position offer evidence which they claim proves Shōtoku could not possibly have written the three texts, arguing instead that they must have either been written by a continental author or authors and brought to Japan, or been composed solely or jointly by an immigrant monk or monks from the Korean peninsula residing in Japan, after which they were falsely attributed to Shōtoku. To support their claims, these critics cite a lack of contemporaneous written records describing Shōtoku as an individual and the details surrounding his composition of the texts, noting that the earliest records that do exist are not only filled with embellishments and inaccuracies, but also postdate Shōtoku's death by at least one hundred years. These scholars dismiss the work of Hanayama and the others as the delusions of the faithful who have, asserts Ōyama, been bewitched by the spell of the legends of Shōtoku's greatness (Ōyama, 198). Indeed, Ōyama has taken this search for the authentic Shōtoku to its logical extreme, asserting there is no reliable evidence proving his existence prior to the compilation of the *Nihon shoki*; he argues that it was, rather, a confluence of political and religious interests of the eighth century that conspired to fabricate the prince.

Although the principal lines of debate have been drawn between these two camps, a middle position has been elaborated by Hirai Shun'ei and Inoue Mitsusada, proponents of a joint-composition-hypothesis. They believe that although Shōtoku may have participated in some meaningful way in the production of the commentaries, he may not have put brush to paper. Hirai argues that it is improbable that Shōtoku authored the commentaries alone and that he was most likely not even the principal intellectual force behind their production. He believes instead that Shōtoku participated in their planning and composition jointly with a scholar-monk or monks from the Korean peninsula who had immigrated to Japan. As such,

> the doubts raised by Tsuda and others that Buddhism was too new in Japan to

> have produced an indigenous exegete are logical only if we assume that the three commentaries were written by Shōtoku alone. But this argument would not hold true if they were a joint effort between Shōtoku and one or more immigrant monk-scholars. If this were the case, then even without the necessary time for indigenous thought to develop it would still be possible for the *Sangyō-gisho* to have been written during Shōtoku's lifetime (Hirai 536).

Hirai thus argues that only if one takes composition to be the act of setting brush to paper could the false-composition-hypothesis be accurate. He also argues that the composition of the commentaries by Shōtoku shows the prince's desire to fashion his image on the model of Emperor Wu of Liang(464 – 549) as part of a broader effort to elevate Japan's cultural status relative to that of Shōtoku's contemporary Emperor Yang (569 – 618) of the Sui dynasty (581 – 618). Hirai thus describes the composition of the three commentaries as part of a broader effort to assert the legitimacy of the emergent Yamato (the ancient name for Japan) Buddhist tradition. That is, Shōtoku sought to challenge the prestige of Emperor Yang by proving that local Japanese Buddhist traditions had, despite the relatively recent transmission of Buddhism to the archipelago, attained a high level of proficiency. Hirai argues that in Shōtoku's era a country's level of Buddhist competency and sophistication was an essential gauge of its status as a developed society. And while building temples, conducting rituals, and other such activities were considered basic indicators of this level of attainment, more important still was developing an indigenous commentarial tradition.

In his study of the *Sangyō-gisho*, Inoue Mitsusada identifies a gradual shift in the relative roles attributed to Hyeja and Shōtoku in the composition of the three texts. He argues that in the Nara period (710 – 784) it was widely accepted that Hyeja "symbolized the significant influence and participation of Korean monks in the composition of the three commentaries," which agrees with Inoue's own hypothesis that they were written with the help of these monks (Inoue, 201). Over time, however, Hyeja's role diminished as a later group of texts described him as a participant in the composition of the second (referred to as the "extensive commentary"), not the first, version of the *Shōmangyō-gisho*. Inoue tracks the elaboration of stories by which Shōtoku's position and authority in the actual production of the commentaries gradually shifted, as he eventually came to be viewed not as a "disciple of a Korean monk-scholar but as the reincarnation of a holy Chinese monk" (301). At the end of this process, "Prince Shōtoku thus became established as a scholar greater than his principal preceptor Hyeja" (300).

Manga and Exegesis as Distinct Media of Historical Expression

While each of the three camps draws distinct conclusions regarding the relationship between Hyeja and Shōtoku in the composition of the *Sangyō-gisho*, they share a disciplinary history and scholarly medium that reflects the assumptions and methods of traditional Japanese Buddhist studies. As stated above, they have focused on recovering the details surrounding the texts' composition, and have produced highly detailed works of impressive scholarship that provide their readers with copious foot-

notes, useful comparisons to related texts and authors, and detailed analyses of the historical context in which the *Sangyō-gisho* were likely composed. Their study of that context includes critical historical analysis of texts like the *Nihon shoki* and the *Teisetsu*, an inventory of the Buddhist texts that would have been available in Japan during Shōtoku's lifetime, and an assessment of the degree to which members of the royal line would have been educated, among other such issues.

As suggested above, moreover, their work offers barriers to entry—temporal, monetary, linguistic, and educational—that are high. That is, the scholarly works of Hanayama, Tsuda, or Inoue are not only costly relative to the manga, but are also frequently written in complicated academic prose that freely incorporates passages of classical Japanese and Chinese as well as technical Buddhist terms. Assuming that readers will have mastered the requisite linguistic skills, this medium rarely includes the diacritic markings noted above, which are commonly inserted into manga and other sorts of texts to aid Japanese readers pronounce difficult or obscure words. As such, this body of scholarship, as a medium of historical expression, differs in key ways from the various non-traditional media that take Shōtoku's authorship of the *Sangyō-gisho* as a given and are unconcerned with these debates.

Among these alternative media, the manga offer a particularly illuminating contrast because they represent, in many ways, the antithesis of these scholarly studies since they are inexpensive, readily available, and popular. They offer a combination of simple written and graphic material in a disposable form that is meant to be consumed quickly and then discarded. Indeed, Tessa Morris-Suzuki notes that a typical Japanese manga reader takes just 3.75 seconds to read a single page. Thus, the selections from *Shōtoku Taishi: Nihon bukkyō no so* described above would take an average reader less than one minute to complete. In less than sixty seconds, this average reader would obtain essential information about these key events from Japanese history that have been the subject of extensive scholarly research. Typically, Shōtoku expresses interest in Buddhism at a young age; Hyeja and other Buddhist monks from the Korean peninsula arrive in Yamato; Shōtoku studies under Hyeja and quickly masters Buddhist teachings; the prince lectures on those teachings at court; the audience is deeply moved and Empress Suiko rewards Shōtoku with a gift of land that he donates to Hōryūji; the Buddha-Dharma flourishes on the archipelago with Shōtoku as its first Japanese patriarch.

Manga Depictions of Shōtoku's Relation to Hyeja in the Composition of the *Sangyō-gisho*

Each of the following manga, which are dedicated to Shōtoku's life, offers a mix of these elements, portraying his study of Buddhist teachings under Hyeja but depicting the composition of the *Sangyō-gisho* as his individual work. One example is *Shōtoku Taishi: Asuka Jinbutsuden*, which is translated into English on the cover as "Shōtoku Taishi: The Legendary Hero of the Asuka Era." In this manga we see Shōtoku as a young man seated before a scroll, with accompanying text that reads, "The young prince assiduously studied Buddhism." Soon thereafter, we see Hyeja's arrival in Japan and the development of an increasingly close relationship with the prince (Hayakawa 19).

The scene that is reproduced below is set in Shōtoku's palace at Ikaruga[4]. It shows the prince seated at a table holding a brush, although the text on which he writes is illegible. Standing next to the prince, Hyeja implores him not to overexert himself in his studies of Buddhism because he is worried about his health. Shōtoku reassures him that he is feeling well and that he has almost completed his work. Surprised by this response, Hyeja asks him about what he has written. We then see a close-up of the brush and paper, although the characters are still unreadable; the next panel explains that the prince had been working on the texts known as the *Sangyō-gisho*. At the bottom of the same panel we see a drawing of three manuscript scrolls each tied with a string, and accompanying text stating: "These are the *Shōmangyō-gisho*, *Yuimagyō-gisho*, and the *Hokke-gisho*, the commentaries composed by the prince in an easily comprehensible style on three Buddhist texts" (89). Hyeja is then shown exclaiming: "You must have been working on these texts day and night! I no longer have anything to teach you" (89). In a later narrative section, we are told that Hyeja took copies of the Sangyō-gishoback to the Korean peninsula. As noted above, this act of Hyeja illustrates one of the key markers of the texts' perceived value: that is, the recognition of their authenticity and depth of thought by a master from across the sea. Indeed, this simple sequence expresses a recurrent narrative found in the *Nihon shoki* and other early texts in which a sage from across the sea recognizes the wisdom of a local sage like Shōtoku.

A second example is Akimoto Osamu's *Shōtoku Taishi* (Prince Shōtoku), in which we find a section titled "Prince [Shōtoku] emphasized Buddhism." It states that the prince, "who was devoted to the Dharma, lectured on Buddhism for Empress [Suiko] and the princes at Ikaruga [Palace]. In addition, he wrote commentaries, known as the *Sangyō-gisho*, on three Buddhist sūtras that were then popular in China. Until the end of his life, he continued to study Buddhist teachings" (Akimoto,

166). In another section, beneath a photograph of what is described as Shōtoku's own handwritten manuscript of the *Hokke-gisho*, is written: "The *Hokke-gisho*, composed by the prince, is the oldest extant commentary on a Buddhist sūtra [in Japan], and is one of [the three texts] that constitute the *Sangyō-gisho*" (166). The manga also depicts a conversation between the prince and Hyeja dated to the eleventh month of 615. Hyeja tells Shōtoku, "We must say goodbye again. I've taught you everything. It's no longer necessary for me to be by your side" (166). Before he returns to his homeland, Hyeja says to his student: "The *Sangyō-gisho* is a splendid [piece of work]. I will take it back to my country" (179).

Another example is *Shōtoku Taishi: Hōryūji o tateta seijika* (*Prince Shōtoku: The Statesman who Built Hōryūji*). On one of the first few pages we see Shōtoku seated in the traditional seiza position at his desk with brush in hand, an illegible scroll laid out before him. His table and cushion appear to be suspended in air in front of Hōryūji's Yumedono (Hall of Dreams), where Shōtoku had been known to engage in meditation. In the middle of the manga, we find a short section showing Shōtoku studying the *Srīmālā-sūtra* with Hyeja. The prince asks his teacher about the essence of the sūtra and is told it teaches that one must be willing to sacrifice everything to follow the true Buddhist path—that one must be prepared to offer even one's own body to a hungry lion.

But a later section, titled "*Sangyō-gisho*," describes Shōtoku's composition of the three texts with no mention of his teacher: "After removing himself from political life, the prince put forth great effort, from early morning to late evening, studying Buddhism. In this way, he composed commentaries on three Buddhist sūtras: the *Lotus*, *the Vimalakīrtinirdes*a, and *the Srīmālādevi*. It is said that the [texts] he composed were of the highest quality" (Nagahara, 116). The next frame shows Shōtoku standing with a scroll in hand, saying, "Finally, it's complete. I will give this to Empress Kashikiyahime (Empress Suiko)" (116-7). Similarly, the next panel states: "It is said that the *Sangyō-gisho*, which are commentaries on three sūtras (*the Srīmālādevī*, *Lotus*, and the *Vimalakīrtinirdesa*), are our country's earliest scholarly books. And while they are called commentaries, they are not simply explanations of [these sūtra's individual] words; rather, in a number of passages, Shōtoku offers his own interpretations of these texts. The content of these three texts are as follows: the *Srīmālādevī-sūtra* is the story of Queen Srīmālā, the daughter of India's King Prasenajit, who expounds the teachings of Sākyamuni. The *Vimalakīrtinirdesa* tells the story of the layman Vimalakīrti, who, in an unexpected turn of events, teaches the monks [the Dharma]. Finally, the *Lotus-sūtra* teaches that all beings who follow the Buddha's Dharma will be saved. Although it is said that Prince Shōtoku alone composed the *Sangyō-gisho*, one hypothesis is that while Shōtoku was the main contributor, the monks and scholars [in his service], just as they had done with the [historical texts known as the] *Tennōki* and the *Kokki*, contributed [in some way to their composition]" (116 – 7). This example is noteworthy for its invocation of key markers of the texts' value using the phrase "it is said": that is, it is said that Shōtoku's texts are of the highest quality and that they are Japan's earliest scholarly books. But the passage is also of interest because it is the only example to address even indirectly

the possibility that Shōtoku was not the sole author of the *Sangyō-gisho*. Even so, it describes him as the main contributor to the texts' composition and says nothing about the doubts of Tsuda and his successors.

We conclude by returning to *Shōtoku Taishi: Nihon Bukkyō no so*, where we find the same pattern: we see the prince studying Buddhist doctrine under Hyeja, but his teacher is absent from the scenes depicting the texts' composition. Indeed, in the scene reproduced below, we read: "Prince [Shōtoku] composed commentaries on three sutras: the *Lotus*, *Vimalakīrti*, and *Srīmālā*. He put all his effort into writing these texts, which came to serve as the foundation for the spirit of the Japanese people," clearly echoing the sentiments expressed by Nakamura Hajime (114).[5]

But this manga is also interesting because of what we discover about its artist and writer. The biographical information states it was illustrated by Shiba Jōtarō, whose artistic work has focused mainly on Buddhism and Japanese history, while the narrative was composed by was composed by Sachiya Hiro さちやひろ, who graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Indian Philosophy from the Humanities Department of Tokyo University, where he also completed graduate work. We are told that his pen name, "Sachiya Hiro," is based on the Sanskrit term satya ("truth") and the Greek word philo ("love")," His biography lists just a few of his many publications on Buddhism, including titles on Sākyamuni and his disciples, the history of Buddhism, and a collection of Buddhist stories. He is described as an individual "seeking out

the meaning of Buddhist thought for people living today, and the simplicity of the style with which he explicates these issues has attracted widespread attention" (154).

The popularity of Sachiya Hiro's work and the Shōtoku manga more broadly suggests that this medium resonates with readers and that their depictions of the *Sangyō-gisho* must be considered part of a living textual tradition. That is, just as Tessa Morris-Suzuki argues, it is crucial to listen attentively and seriously to the range of voices that tell us about the past, whether expressed in medieval poetry, exegesis, and artwork, or in modern scholarly monographs, manga, or YouTube clips. Indeed, the large body of received scholarship on the *Sangyō-gisho* has operated largely in isolation from other academic fields, and has, by privileging the exegetical and erudite as the only serious way to understand the *Sangyō-gisho*, deprived readers of the opportunity to investigate how communities outside monastic elites or modern academics have come into contact with and understood this important event from early Japanese history. Our understanding of other non-traditional materials will help us to think more broadly about the original texts they are based upon. Pondering questions about format, access and transmitted values in relation to media like manga, sheds light on how different audiences are understanding and perhaps even recasting traditional texts. Such transformations are no less—and perhaps increasingly more—relevant to understanding a living work than the received scholarship itself.

Notes

1. Tessa Morris-Suzuki addresses this issue in describing the recent controversy in Japan over manga produced by Kobayashi Yoshinori. In his work he attempts to justify Japanese colonialism in Taiwan and Korea, dismisses the historicity of the "comfort women", and has made other controversial claims. And while his work has elicited harsh criticisms from social commentators and historians, it highlights the "fundamental dilemmas of debating history through the medium of the comic book. Written critiques of Kobayashi's texts expressed in academic essays and magazine articles, however valid their arguments, seem to have only a rather limited power to reduce the impact of the comics on the imagination of readers" (Morris-Suzuki 189).

2. These images of Shōtoku have also been transmitted through a wealth of non-literary material that includes statues, and pictorial biographies, some of which are believed to date from soon after Shōtoku's death. A Shōtoku discourse was also transmitted through the performance of rituals at Hōryūji commemorating the prince's lectures on the Srīmālā- and *Lotus-sūtras*, and through the interpretive accounts of these pictorial biographies given by monks to lay believers, among other means. Over time, such images were embellished through the appearance of a body of auspicious omens, predictions, and supernatural events. These accounts claim, for example, Shōtoku could speak at birth, faced the east and chanted "hail to the Buddha" at the age of two, and at seven was capable of reading Buddhist texts sent from the continent. He was believed to possess the gift of clairvoyance and the Solomon-like ability to listen simultaneously to the claims of ten men and produce a sagacious judgment for each. Shōtoku was also connected by rebirth or other means to central Buddhist figures including Sākyamuni Buddha, Maitreya (the Buddha of the future), Avalokitesvara (the bodhisattva of compassion), Queen Srīmālā (the protagonist of the Srīmālā-sūtra), Bodhidharma (the first patriarch of Chan Buddhism), and Huisi (515-577; the third patriarch of Chinese Tiantai). He later was said to have reappeared to the faithful as he reincarnated or manifested in dreams or

other forms, including as Emperor Shōmu (701 – 756), and other prominent figures.

3. While many manga focus on the significance of Shōtoku's political and religious achievements, others are more concerned with the prince as an individual and his personal relationships. For example, the exquisitely drawn seven-part manga titled *Hiizuru tokoro no Tenshi* (*The Prince from the Land of the Rising Sun*) by Yamagishi Ryoko, focuses on Shōtoku's relationships with the women in his life, particularly his amours, and is somewhat risqué as it displays partial female nudity.

4. I wish to thank Furuta Ayako for her kind assistance in securing permission to reprint images from *Shōtoku Taishi: Asuka Jinbutsuden* and from *Shōtoku Taishi: Nihon bukkyō no so*. I also wish to thank Popurasha for granting me permission to reprint these images from *Shōtoku Taishi: Asuka Jinbutsuden*, and also the team that produced it: author Mizutani Toshiki, editor Kaku Kōzō, and artist Hayakawa Daisuke.

5. I wish to thank Suzuki Publishing Co., Ltd., Sachiya Hiro(the writer), and Shiba Jōtaro (the artist) for giving me permission to reproduce this image from *Shōtoku Taishi: Nihon bukkyō no so*.

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Queering the Family Album: the Re-orientation of Things in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*

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Abstract Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir, *Fun Home* (2006), is one woman attempt to understand and recapture her father after his untimely death. The memoir focuses on his existence as a closeted gay man living in a small Pennsylvania town, the dysfunction of his family life, and as the memoir progresses, Bechdel explores her sense of psychic connection to her father based on her own identity as a lesbian. This essay explores Bechdel's representational practices, in particular the methods she uses to link family, sexuality, and emotion to autobiography. She uses representations of things, especially her drawings of photographs and interior décor, to imbue her memoir with both veracity and emotionality; meanwhile she uses narrative, drawing, and photographic discourses to queer what Marianne Hirsch has coined "the familial gaze." In showing us hand-drawn snapshots of the private interior of the Bechdel family home, and in revealing the secrets contained in the pictures and drapes and antique chairs, Bechdel destroys what can loosely be called "the familial pact." By this Bechdel tries to transform private suffering related to family and sexuality into a text for public consumption; her subjective experience is given representation as a means for eliciting emotion on a collective scale. In short, The paper discusses the implications of this memoir's particular politics of emotion and its potential to queer representational practices related to autobiography and family, allowing us glimpses into new possibilities for self-representation.
Key Words *Fun Home*; queer studies; autobiography; photography

Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir, *Fun Home* (2006), is one woman's attempt to understand and in a sense recapture her father after his untimely death, a death Bechdel claims was suicide. In grappling with her father's ghost many years later, the memoir focuses on his existence as a closeted gay man living in a small Pennsylvania town, the dysfunction of the Bechdel family life as a result of this, and, as the memoir progresses, Bechdel explores her sense of psychic connection to her father based on her own identity as a lesbian. Having received near-universal praise from book critics, academics, and general readers, *Fun Home* is one of the most celebrated American memoirs, graphic or otherwise, of the past 5 years. The growing body of secondary literature about the book likens it to Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* as a unique contribution to contemporary autobiographical graphic art and

literature. This means that its literariness has allowed it to surpass the seemingly low designation of comics, and enter into the more gentrified terrain of graphic art and graphic narrative more generally.

Bechdel has been a cartoonist for well over two decades. Her long-running *Dykes to Watch Out For* is a truly funny comic strip infused with tongue-in-cheek commentary from a progressive left perspective, yet its status as an alternative comic strip means that *Dykes'* popularity has generally been limited to its target audience. While *Fun Home* also foregrounds queer identities, there is something about this graphic memoir that has catapulted it out of the specialty gay market and into the mainstream spotlight.

The general public of readers is not particularly known for its embrace of gay narratives, and many reviews I have come across, both professional reviews and reader reviews posted on the internet, often go to some length to point out that *Fun Home* is powerful despite its focus on homosexuality. While *Time* magazine named *Fun Home* the best book of 2006, the magazine makes sure to proclaim, "Forget genre and sexual orientation: this is a masterpiece about two people who live in the same house but different worlds, and their mysterious debts to each other" ("10 Best"). What I argue in this essay is quite the opposite: that it is the queer gaze at the very center of the text (literally and figuratively, as I will explain later) that is key in establishing this graphic memoir's connective or empathetic power. Queer is not simply an aspect of the text that describes the sexual identities of Bechdel and her father Bruce. As I will argue, Bechdel queers many aspects of both comics and autobiography as a way to engage readers, to pull us into her world. Most of the literary criticism and review essays about this graphic memoir focus on homosexuality as a theme in the text, but very few critics have examined queerness as a particular artistic strategy. This essay looks at Bechdel's queer strategies, that is, how her artistic methods re-work and expose the ideologies of the family, especially in the way the family is represented in photographs and interior space.

In this vein, I focus on Bechdel's strategic placement of family photographs within the text, rendered by hand, as well as on her drawings of the family home, the interior décor in particular. I argue that these images of things function as material emblems that deconstruct and queer the familial archetype, the myth of the patriarch in particular, and in playing simultaneously on the extremely familiar and the extremely uncomfortable within the realm of the family home, strike a deeply uncanny chord. In *Fun Home*, Bechdel brings the dead back to life, in a sense, as part of Bechdel's project is an act of ventriloquism: putting words into the mouth of the dead, giving animation to the inanimate, both in the representations of her father and in the world of things surrounding the Bechdel family. This project of re-animating the dead, in fact, is expressed quite simply in the book title, for *Fun Home* is the nickname of the Bechdel family business, short for funeral home.

To paraphrase cultural and literary critic Bill Brown, Alison Bechdel is able to do fascinating and surprising things with things. A self-professed obsessive—"I'm the most anal-retentive person I've ever met" (qtd. in Chute, "An Interview" 1007)—with a strong penchant for archiving, Bechdel draws from her personal archive to cre-

ate the sensation of authenticity in comics format. In frame after frame, she faithfully copies her own childhood handwriting, her father's handwriting (a very painstaking process, she mentions in the Chute interview), type-written letters from her father with spelling and alignment mistakes, long passages from important books, local maps, visual details of the family home interior, and family photographs. This selective archive of things crowding each frame establishes Bechdel's veracity as memoirist. In *Fun Home*, "the autobiographical pact" (Lejeune 7) is in many ways forged by a reader's engagement with representations of Bechdel's things, things that Ann Cvetkovich calls "memorial talismans that carry the affective weight of the past" (120). Cvetkovich argues that by drawing by hand and not simply scanning such things into the text, Bechdel imbues these things with an intense emotionality that adds a kind of witnessing dimension to them; they do not merely serve as information for the reader, but also as affective and thus connective sites of identification.

In what Brown has named "thing theory," he advocates for literary critics to formulate a history of things, and in particular a history in things, that produces new forms of knowledge and desires, that defies containment and definition, and that gives us glimpses as to how "things might be other than what they are" or appear to be (10). Thing theory and queer theory intersect and share certain interests, especially in the way that these theories are not meant to function merely as explanatory tools, but more as activating tools. Brown's "thing theory," like queer theory, looks for moments of disruption when artists and writers are able to "misuse" an object and its representation, to "re-objectify" that object as a way to "clear the dust away," to snap us out of habitual forms of seeing that blind us to the slippages and contingencies of everyday life (10). Thus, also as in queer theory, the purpose of such a form of reading is to catalyze a subject but not contain it (3). It is my contention that Bechdel's handling of things in *Fun Home* queers conventions of both autobiography and comics in this way, allowing us glimpses into new possibilities for self-representation.

While Brown's thing theory calls attention to representations of things such as dolls, paperclips, stones and glass, Bechdel draws on one of the most interesting and liminal of familiar objects. A photograph is a fascinating object, especially in its materiality. Like a chair or a doll, a photograph is an object or thing to hold and display, yet its constitutive ideologies are more obvious. The traces of life and light that are contained in the photograph render it one of the most uncanny of all objects.

In *Fun Home*, each chapter title plate is a drawing of a photograph that actually exists, and more photographs of the Bechdel family are included in individual panels. Importantly, Bechdel calls attention to the thingness of the title plate photographs, for she draws photo corners, as if the photos are still in place inside a Bechdel family photo album, perhaps suggesting that the book you are holding in your hands is that album, that *Fun Home* is a new form, what an album could be, consisting of memory, emotion, artistry, and archive.

Bechdel carefully differentiates the title plate photos, as well as some of the photos that appear in the course of the narrative, from the main body of comics. While slightly cartoonish due to the fact that they are hand-rendered pen-and-ink illustrations, they are nevertheless more real looking than the character drawings in the main

body of the text. The drawings of photographs communicate a kind of seriousness in their realism, and serve as a *memento mori* for the lost father. The sense of mourning elicited by these photos is achieved stylistically through contrast; that is, the realism of the photo drawings acts as a "disruptive force" and as "the unassimilable real" within the memoir (Cvetkovich 117). According to Bechdel herself, this disruption is necessary in order to "continually [ground] the story—reminding readers that it really happened, that the characters are real people" (Tison). As a result of this intention, the Bruce Bechdel in the photograph drawings and the cartoon version of Bruce Bechdel in the sequential narrative appear almost as two different people, and it is in the gap between these different versions of Bruce (the gap literalized visually by the gutter or by the turning of a page) that a sensation of discomfort resides. Yet this is a memoir, and the real person is signified by a drawing, or rather a multiplicity of drawings, an uncanny signifier of the dead man himself, but perhaps even more so, the various drawings of Bruce are really autobiographical avatars (Whitlock) of Alison Bechdel, the artist-storyteller-daughter. What this gap reminds us of is that the real Bruce Bechdel exists only as an un-representable ghost haunting the gutters of the comic book, a paratextual presence invoked through a continual reminder of his absence. Bechdel literalizes Barthes' claim that "Death is the *eidos*" (15) of the photograph: in the title picture for Chapter 2, "A Happy Death," with her rendering of a photo not of Bruce himself but of his grave, his name partially concealed by flowers. In a very real sense, this is Bruce Bechdel.

In a crucial moment in the first chapter of the text, Bechdel uses the family photograph to depict Bruce's attempt at control over the Bechdel family image. His photographing of the family is contextualized by a caption that echoes Marianne Hirsch's claim that the family photograph is instrumental in building the ideology of the family, in particular in its gesturing towards "[reducing] the strains of family life by sustaining an imaginary cohesion" (7). With Bruce taking a picture of his wife and three children on the steps of their home, Bechdel's caption reads: "He used his skillful artifice not to make things, but to make things appear to be what they are not... That is to say, impeccable" (16). Already indicating a rupture in the image of the cohesive family, Bechdel then queers this moment almost immediately. The next frame shows the Bechdel family at church, Bruce surreptitiously eyeing an altar boy, with the caption: "But would an ideal husband and father have sex with teenage boys?" (17). This line is delivered matter-of-factly, but its effect is explosive. This moment is not simply a revelation of same-sex desire, but one that borders on what many readers would consider criminal deviance, an issue Bechdel complicates throughout the text, first indicated here with a Wildean allusion that adds a strangely ironic twist to this shocking revelation. Not only is the secret at the heart of this family revealed up front, but such a revelation positions queerness right in the center of the family. This is an almost instantaneous subversion of the power of the father, achieved by exposing familial cohesion as an illusion created in large part by the things of family life, with Bechdel performing this deconstruction by de-mystifying the photographic process itself, using comics to make visible what appears invisible in the family snapshot.

By continually incorporating the photograph into this graphic memoir, Bechdel

transposes some of the qualities of the family album into comics format and vice-versa. By shuttling between and layering photographic and comics methods, it is as if the text is always pulling the reader in different directions, between the photographic real and the graphically comic. But Bechdel ultimately meshes comics and photographic discourses, revealing both not so much as possible signs of reality per se, but as routes towards expressing emotional truth and affective experience. The use of language or captions, which is such an important (though not axiomatic) genre aspect of comics, allows Bechdel to clearly question the factuality of the photograph. As in the example above, through captioning she reveals that truth does not reside in what is depicted in the family photo album; rather, what is true is usually what photographs attempt to conceal. Further, what is concealed is often woundedness and trauma, a kind of truth that is less about factual evidence and more about subjectivity and emotion. Here the comics form has a particular role to play in representing affective experience, particularly when it comes to the style of the author's line drawing: "In the graphic narrative... the presence of the body, through the hand, as a mark in the text... lends a subjective register to the narrative surface of comics pages that further enables comics works to be productively self-aware in how they 'materialize' history" (Chute, "Comics" 457). In other words, while Bechdel is clear about amassing factual, archival evidence to produce her memoir, the graphic form itself continually communicates the subjective and affective dimension of these pieces of evidence.

On the other side, by using photographs and the family album as the foundation for much of her drawing, she opens the way for the comics format to produce the same kind of emotional impact so often evoked by photographs, imbuing her graphics with the same sense of uncanniness and nostalgia that a photograph is able to communicate. That is, as Barthes has so convincingly argued, photographs are potentially intensely emotional things, able to place the viewer into a vulnerable position, one of affective engagement with the image, embodied in the image's potential for producing a feeling of woundedness, what he calls the photograph's *punctum* (27). Thus photography and comics meet in *Fun Home* along the axis of emotionality, so that ultimately each discourse reinforces the other, creating multiple emotional entryways into Bechdel's story. Once she has pulled us inside this world, Bechdel politicizes affective experience through her queer moves, rendering *Fun Home* a memoir that meditates not just on the emotions of family life, but also on the politics of emotion.

Nancy Miller says about *Fun Home* that "[t]he tangled relation of self to family stories and settings is illustrated with extraordinary complexity," and then uses Bechdel's text as instrumental for formulating her main argument regarding autobiography as a specific genre:

> Perhaps it is time to understand the question of relation to the other—to others—as being as important, foundational, to the genre as the truth conditions of the "autobiographical pact." Not the exception but the rule. Put it in another way, in autobiography the relational is not optional. Autobiography's story is about the web of entanglement in which we find ourselves, one that we sometimes choose. (544)

Miller deliberately allows for ambiguity and slippage in regards to who these "others" are: on the one hand she refers to the others within the memoir, in this case, to Bechdel's relation to other family members, her father in particular. But Miller indicates that the others here are also the readers, for through identifying with the narrator and her things we, too, become emotionally entangled within the family drama: "the reader... is the autobiographer's most necessary other" (545). Thus Miller positions the reader, the object of address, as the privileged other. In this statement, Miller addresses the memoir's particular politics of emotion: by pulling the reader into a "web of entanglement," it renders the private emotions linked to family life a relational and collective experience. As I will discuss later, this move from private to public revelation radically transgresses the implicit familial imperative to maintain silence, especially around issues of queerness. But it is also this slippage between the internal familial relations depicted in the text, and the reader-response aspect of autobiography, that Miller's formulation touches upon photographic relationality, for the photographic familial gaze is, like the autobiographical conditions mentioned here, produced by both forms of inter-relationship layered one upon the other: internal and external dynamics of the gaze at play.

Significantly, in the panel following the revelation of her father's desires, Bechdel reconfigures the family photograph and therefore the family dynamic she has set up thus far. Young Alison now stands where father stood taking a snapshot; she becomes the one with the camera in her hands, thus she seems to be saying that she is taking things back from the "old artificer"—the Joycean term she applies to her father (17). In the sequential reading of the chapter, this panel comes across subtly yet powerfully: it is a clear sign of the daughter reinterpreting the things of her family 's life; it is a very bold wresting of control. In general in *Fun Home*, Bechdel takes the things of her family and inserts them into "an alternative economy" from that of her father, one that is "an intensely private and privatizing reorientation of value," and yet, interestingly, she turns this notion of privacy on its head at the very same time as she claims it (Brown 20). Throughout the text Bruce is framed as attempting to control the outward image of the family through photographic imagery and his complete control over the aesthetics of the family home; this, Bechdel shows, was his way of manipulating the surface of things in order to hide in plain sight. It is Bechdel who literally handles things differently, transforming her own private universe into public spectacle through drawing and through outing. Orientation becomes a key factor here in relation to the re-interpretation and re-signification of things, and not just in terms of sexual orientation; rather, Bechdel's text activates and exposes the contingency and situationality of things, how things, like language and images, can be taken out of their habitual uses and spaces to be made anew, made critical and affective, and perhaps most importantly, made queer.

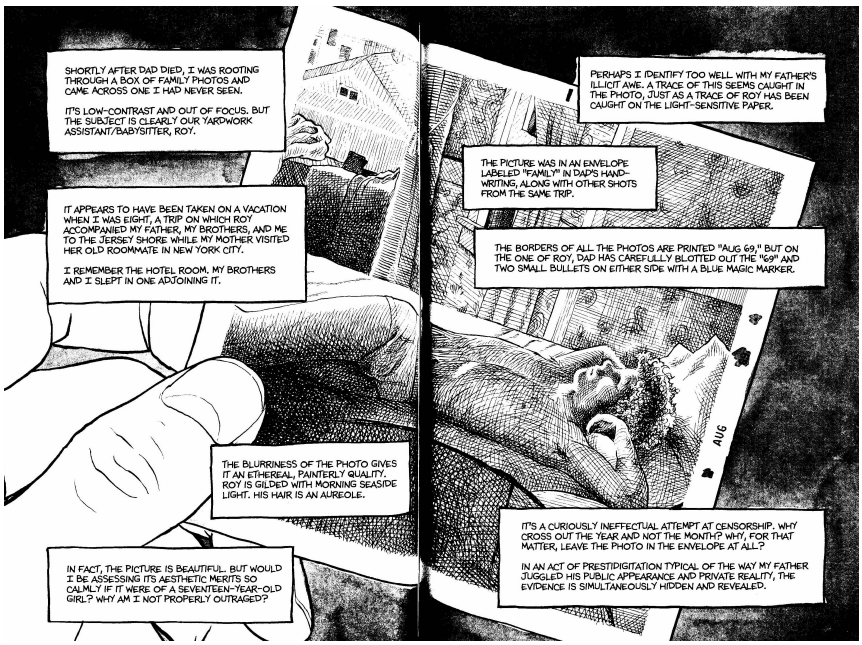
Hirsch argues convincingly that the myth of the family is constituted by an exchange of gazes, what she calls "the familial gaze," which is a kind of web of interrelationship or visual narrative told through photographic juxtaposition: "…the family is in itself traversed and constituted by a series of 'familial' looks that place different

individuals into familial relation within a field of vision" (53). But interestingly, she does not theorize one of this field's most obvious imperatives, that of reproducing heterosexuality. A field in this sense is defined not just by what is included within the exchange of gazes, but also by what falls outside or is excluded from such a field, and it is very often queerness that is excluded from the familial gaze; Bruce is very careful to arrange the image of his life to enact this exclusion, though, and especially through his daughter's intervention, he ultimately fails. Sara Ahmed sees family photographs—whether placed on the wall or in the album—as objects that "measure sociality in terms of the heterosexual gift," and furthermore, that familial photographs "do not simply record or transmit a life; they demand a return" (559). In this formulation, family photographs are not simply objects for display, but are used as a means towards the reproduction of heterosexuality, the familial gaze imploring one to continue the family line in an orderly (i.e. straight) fashion. It is this heterosexual imperative, linked to the imperative to silence I briefly mentioned, that Bechdel queers in *Fun Home*, and there is no better illustration of this queering dynamic than the two-page spread that constitutes *Fun Home*'s centerpiece.

The centerfold of *Fun Home* is just that—the image of a semi-nude person, in this case a young man, spread across two pages and placed at the very center of the book. The young man depicted is Roy, the Bechdel children's babysitter, and the photographer is Bruce. Bechdel, again, draws an actual photograph, in fact the photograph which she claims inspired the entire book project (Chute, "Interview" 1005). She again uses captions and comics methods to contextualize this photograph and to draw us into her world, and in this particular case, one important piece of her drawing serves to position us, the readers, the privileged others, into multiple subject positions and gazes vis a vis the text. Coming up from the bottom left corner is the drawing of a hand grasping the photograph, and it is the drawing of this hand—positioned almost exactly where a reader's hand would hold the book—that Bechdel ingeniously creates a site of affect and palpable, physical connection between reader and image/text.

The most obvious reading of this hand is that it is Bechdel's own, as she explains in the first caption the circumstances that led her to discover the picture; Cvetkovich, for example, reads the hand in this way "This aligns us with Bechdel's own surprised and perplexed gaze, a gaze easy for us to slip into, as it is Bechdel who we have been following throughout the tale thus far. However, I think this image of a hand is much more ambiguous" (115). Another way to imagine the hand is that is Bruce's, and we are gazing at the beauty of the young man much as he would have done; in a sense, we are sharing his erotic and queer gaze. But the fact that our hand rests in the same position as the drawing renders this an image of our own hand as well—as a kind of repetition or echo—demonstrating our kaleidoscopic complicity with Bechdel's and Bruce's queer gazes. This a graphic show of our role in the "web of entanglement" that Miller suggests is foundational to the efficacy of autobiography, made manifest at a very queer reading moment.

Scott McCloud argues in *Understanding Comics* that the more cartoonish and abstract faces are drawn in comics, the more the reader imagines him or herself "in-



side" the frame so to speak, pointing to the way in which comics interpolates a reader into the visual world on display (36 – 7). Yet faces, even the most abstract, are still other and distant. By drawing just a hand, Bechdel arguably allows us to place ourselves into the frame to an even greater degree, for there is no other we can definitively locate; it is a likeness of our own hand, at the exact same time that we imagine it to be Bechdel's and Bruce's as well. Such a move paradoxically calls attention to the thingness of the book itself—the weight in our hands and the feel of the page are highlighted when we become aware of our own hand, our own bodily position in space. That is, we become aware of our position as reader and, simultaneously, we are entangled in the world of the text; we are both outside and inside, both ourselves and other. And it is particular to touching, to the tactile realm, that the slippage between inside/outside becomes understandable, for to touch is always, also, to be touched; there is a reciprocal dynamic at work, one that bridges visuality and tactility, or seeing and feeling. While Chute pays attention to the tactile or haptic elements of *Fun Home* in her book *Graphic Women*, like Cvetkovich she keeps her analysis focused on how tactility functions within the text, as a form of connection between the artist and her representations (197 – 200). What I am suggesting is that the haptic moments also constitute a palpable form of readerly address, where the internal gaze constructed in the text meets the external gaze of the reader through invoking the hand, creating the conditions for affective forms of reading. So in invoking touch, then, Bechdel is not only trying to touch and thus recapture her father by repeatedly drawing his body, she is also touching us; we are also absorbed into the author's reach.

This queer, palpable moment of moving into tactility is one that Bechdel repeats several pages later in the text. What strikes me as particularly interesting is that a

drawing of a hand grasping a photograph occurs at moments in the text when queerness is actively acknowledged. On page 120, Bechdel draws a photo of her father as a young man wearing a woman's bathing suit, another one of him sunbathing in which she wonders if the photographer was his male lover, and a third picture of herself as a young woman, looking quite butch. Each of these photo-drawings depicts a hand holding the photo's edge. Again, this is a representation of the way in which readership works; our hands, which echo Bechdel's images of hands, become the link through which we see and feel things queerly in *Fun Home*.

Bechdel acknowledges that on this page she is making a comparison between her and her father's sexualities through photographic juxtaposition, that is, through the familial gaze: "The exterior setting, the pained grin, the flexible wrists, even the angle of shadow falling across our faces—it's about as close as a translation can get" (120). Thus Bechdel reformulates and queers the familial gaze; family photographs do not follow the pattern of the heterosexual imperative. These images certainly contribute to the child's formation of sexuality, but a sexuality which Bechdel describes

as a "translation," not a reproduction. There are no straight lines of reproduction here, only approximations and subterfuges; that most of these photos were found in a box labeled "Family," including the picture of Roy, emphasizes Bechdel's (and arguably her father's) deliberate queering of the photographic familial gaze. And by incorporating the reader into the familial web of looking and being looked at (and touched), Bechdel begins the process of breaking down what textual representations of family mean.

Much like Bechdel's re-orientation of the family photograph, her drawings of the interior décor of the Bechdel home function in a similar manner. That is, decorative objects also act as things that both represent what they are (drapes, lamps, wallpaper, etc.) and take on meanings that resonate far beyond their immediate function as things; their meaning is not contained within the representation itself. As I have already mentioned, most of the household objects and the arrangement of these objects are a product of Bruce's aesthetic control over the family environment. This control over the décor is even more powerful than his control over the photographic image of the family. One of the very first things we learn about Bruce is his obsession with decorating and restoring the family's Victorian-era home: "His greatest achievement, arguably, was his monomaniacal restoration of our old house" (4). The result of his endeavor appeared magical in the eyes of young Alison: "The gilt cornices, the marble fireplace, the crystal chandeliers, the shelves of calf-bound books—these were not so much bought as produced from thin air by my father's remarkable legerdemain" (5). But this obsession with beauty and perfection came in the form of total control; when the child Alison protested against the wallpaper he chose for her room, "But I hate pink! I hate flowers!" Bruce's response was simply, "Tough tittie" (7). At the same time, Bruce's obsession with décor and household aesthetics more generally, a feminine and thus suspect obsession, always threatened to undermine his performance as a straight family man; even the young Alison saw this: "Of all his domestic inclinations, my father's decided bent for gardening was the most redolent to me of that other, deeply disturbing bent" (90).

In *Fun Home*, the things of the Bechdel house are not simply signs of class status and consumption, or some kind of simple signifier of taste, or even, as in the example above, an oblique reference to the gender queer lurking in the Bechdel family home. Instead, things, as drawn by Bechdel, take on a kind of phenomenological function; they are the necessary background that Bechdel must return to in order to map out and re-orient familial space. She retrieves these things from her past, and while in one sense copying them (and as she mentions in interviews, relying heavily on old photographs to do this), she does more than this: in terms of their significance and resonance, she repositions familial things by drawing them while still remaining faithful to the form and organization of the things themselves. That is, she shows her readers how Bruce organized the image of the family and the rooms they inhabited, but through comics—fragmenting and arranging these personalized copies in time and space along graphic axes, and contextualizing these drawings with a personal narrative—she is able to activate these emblems of familial life, imbuing them with life and movement; things become facilitators of complex affective experiences for both

creator and reader. By reclaiming her own past through her management of things, Bechdel's text provides a very powerful example to her readers of just how to do this; this activating principle at work can thus be considered a form of empowerment, one purposely made accessible to her readers, and this is definitely part of the book's overwhelmingly positive reception.

Ahmed reminds us that the family home is the primary site of habit, and just like the demands made by family photographs, this primary familial site is the necessary background from which heterosexuality is the intended effect of the organization of space: "heterosexuality would be an effect of how objects gather to clear a ground, of how objects are arranged to create a background" (558). Furthermore, the interior space of the house is like a stage, and the family that inhabits that space is always on show to a certain extent within that space. The interior, or private, is a kind of practice ground for the public face of the family; in domestic space, what has been categorized as public and private is in reality blurred and often indistinguishable. Bechdel reveals the reality of this liminality, turning family secrets outward, revealing what lurks in the folds of the drapes, in the gilt of the cornices, in the smiles of the photos. What I want to suggest is that this re-orientation, this turning outward, this queering of private and public Bechdel constantly toys with in the pages of *Fun Home*, also represents a violation of the family. And like the "web of entanglement" Miller discusses, this violation, I argue, is foundational to the efficacy of this autobiography.

While Bechdel invites us into the intimate realm of family emotion, she establishes trust with her readers not merely through a kind of complicity of gazes and the sharing of secrets, but that veracity is also established through Bechdel's violation of the family pact. By this phrase I mean the implicit directive to maintain silence, to keep family secrets just that. Instead, if what we are given is a new kind of family album, it is from the perspective of the rebellious daughter shouting family secrets from the rooftop. Bechdel transforms private suffering into a text for public consumption, and her subjective experience is given representation as a means for eliciting emotion on a collective scale. In a sense, she forfeits her nuclear family for the sake of us, the readers, numerous and invisible and imagined. *Fun Home* is at once a breathtaking act of betrayal, and an open-armed, extended invitation to share in her world; there is, in my mind, something very queer in this balance between betrayal and invitation. It is interesting that the book is dedicated to her mother and brothers, to whom she writes, "We did have a lot of fun, in spite of everything" (iv). In the acknowledgements that follow the last page, she thanks them again "for not trying to stop me from writing this book" (234). These paratextual addresses come across as apologetic and defiant at the same time, and as readers we perhaps trust Bechdel more because of her willingness to betray these people, as the reader is in turn framed as a kind of confidante, pulled into the web of revelations and connections yet still separate from it.

This sense of violation is also, I think, an inherent part of the book's project in terms of its handling of things. To take the habitual forms of family filiation—in this memoir expressed through a return to the family's things—and point them in new di-

rections, giving them a new spin, is in itself an act of violence or violation; in this particular case, Bechdel violates the order of the father. To queer representations of the family, to queer familial space and imagery, is to expose the family as oriented in the first place; one of the ways that heterosexuality holds onto the image of itself as normal and natural is precisely by obscuring the fact that is produced and constructed through the orientation of things, spaces, and people (Ahmed). To expose the contingency of all things and identities is to queer them; and with exposure comes the possibility for deconstruction and critique. In *Fun Home* Bechdel's politics of emotion goes to the heart of familial things and shows how to transform these things into points of connection, affect, critique, readership, and knowledge. There is a certain intimacy established with readers in violating the familial pact, as we are invited, in fact wholeheartedly encouraged, to peer deep inside the fun home. Filiality is thus transformed into a question of readership: to whom are our loyalties directed? Why should we keep secrets as a form of honoring the nuclear (and heterosexual) family? In the same vein, why maintain a line between public and private forms of family and feeling? Perhaps it is Bechdel's own queer identity that has given her the courage to step outside the familial pact and expose its constitutive ideologies by re-orienting the things that define it.

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Breaking Barriers: Moving Beyond Orientalism in Comics Studies

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Abstract Because the field of comics studies is still relatively new, critique of the rhetoric used by luminaries such as Scott McCloud and Paul Gravett pushes the study of comics closer to legitimation. Taking as my premise the assumption that criticism affects the development of its object of critique, I argue that Orientalism in the discourse of comics studies has been detrimental to the evolution of comics in the US. Orientalist rhetoric inscribes and partitions the East from the West, foreclosing the possibility of using Eastern subjects or styles in Western comics, and also presenting comics in both the US and Japan as monolithic and homogenous. If those who study US comics want to encourage further growth in their medium of study, then rather than perpetuating Orientalism, they need to recover cultural flow and the diversity of both manga and comics in the US. As critics open the door to cultural flow in their rhetoric, comics artists will be able to do the same for their techniques and subjects, learning from each other and growing the medium to reach its full potential.
Key words manga; cultural flow; Orientalism; comics

You see a photo of a businessman on a train, reading. He is dressed in a grey suit, white collared shirt, and a single colored tie. At first glance, the photo appears to be nothing special, but then you take a closer look at what he is reading. The magazine-like text in his hand is a comic book with cartoon images. How odd! A businessman reading comic books? In public? Aren't comic books supposed to be for kids? The image of the businessman reading manga (the Japanese name for comics) on the train is the first image evoked in many Western discussions of manga, including work by Schodt, Gravett, and Patten. Rhetorically, these authors use the image to differentiate the history of American comics from the history of manga, making a point about the wider audience for manga in Japan. They begin with the image to situate manga as exotic and alien, essentially different from American comics, distancing the two cultures from one another.

In fact, the distancing of American comics' history from manga history is a general trend in the rhetoric of discussions surrounding manga conducted by English speakers, from Frank Schodt's *Manga! Manga!*, to Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, to Paul Gravett's *Manga*, published twenty one years after Schodt's text. As English speakers who discuss manga emphasize the diversity of the genre that is their

subject, they define manga in opposition to comics in America, in the end essentially claiming that while manga appeal to diverse audiences because they cover a variety of subjects, American comics are only superhero stories written for children.

I argue that this Orientalism, where manga are cast as the exoticized Other of American comic books, has been detrimental to the growth of comics in the US for two reasons. First, the rhetoric perpetuates a homogenous view of comics in America as being for kids, an image that led to the establishment of the Comics Code Authority in 1954. Second, Orientalism implies a partitioning of the two cultures, making the characteristic attributes of one culture unavailable to the other culture. In the case of manga and American comics, techniques employed and genres used in manga are cast as inaccessible to American comics artists. I propose that the Orientalist rhetoric needs to stop and cultural flow between manga and American comics needs to be recovered. In other words, that the partition, the barrier, needs to be broken down and the cultural flow between manga and American comics recovered. The stakes are economic as well as cultural. Perhaps if American comic book artists explored other genres and techniques, comics in the US would be more economically successful. Comics in the US have much to learn from manga, and the more we identify aspects of manga in opposition to Western comics, the less likely it is that US comics artists will experiment with techniques deemed essential to manga.

This article, after exploring the different Orientalist rhetorical moves used by those who discuss manga, examines how the opposition between Japanese and American comics has been detrimental to the understanding of comics in both cultures and begins to recover the cross-cultural exchange that gets eclipsed by that oppositional stance. My goal is not to tear down the burgeoning field of comics studies, but to urge its members to look critically at the distance they have created between manga and comics in the US and at how Orientalism in the rhetoric surrounding comics has limited the scope of comics in the US.

Orientalist Rhetoric

In his introduction to Orientalism, Edward Said defines his title term from three separate angles. First, he highlights the way Orientalism divorces ideas about the exotic culture from the realities of that exotic culture, that an Orientalist move deals not "with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient... despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a 'real' Orient" (5). Second, he indicates that "[t]he relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination" (5). And third, that the perception of the Orient in the West is ingrained in and perpetuated by "cultural hegemony" in an effort to situate the West as superior to the East (7). Strange as it may seem, I'm less interested in the power dynamics the term usually indicates—though those dynamics could be at play when American and British academics profit from explaining Japanese culture—and more interested in the constructed, often homogenized picture Orientalism can create of both the cultures involved, a characteristic that is tied to Said's first aspect of Orientalism.

Said claims that one who performs Orientalism "comes up against the Orient as a

European or American first, as an individual second," that an us gets set against a them rather than a me against a him or her (11). This homogenization of both the West and East can be detrimental to both cultures as the hegemony absorbs and overshadows individual voices that do not fit its paradigm. Often, conversations about Orientalism focus on the detrimental way in which the East gets homogenized. I want to turn the tables and look at how the homogenization caused by Orientalism in comics studies has been detrimental to the view of comics in the West, particularly in the US. In this case, manga, presented from a defensive standpoint as a diverse genre, get pitted against the homogenized construction of American comic books, a construction that has been detrimental to the growth of the American comics industry. First, let us look at the Orientalist rhetoric that operates when English speakers (from both the US and Britain) discuss manga. My focus in this section is on the way that these authors, in their glorification of the diversity of manga, imply and sometimes even claim outright that comics in the US are a homogenous genre.

Schodt, whose *Manga! Manga!* was one of the first books published in America about manga, begins the Orientalist trend (with both *Manga! Manga!* and his second book, *Dreamland Japan*), homogenizing American comics both implicitly and explicitly in his effort to draw distinctions between manga and comics in the US. The homogenous construction of American comics begins implicitly as Schodt tries to differentiate manga from comics in the US. The statement, "The comic magazines—where most Japanese comics first appear—are targeted separately at boys, girls, men, and women, but all are today characterized by an increasing crossover of readership. They bear little resemblance to American comic books," implies that American comic books do not target a diverse readership (*Manga! Manga!* 12). The fact that manga target different audiences makes them different from American comic books, implying that American comic books are not diverse in terms of their targeted readership. The homogenous view of American comic books is more explicit in Schodt's later work, when he claims that "Japanese manga offer far more visual diversity than mainstream American comics, which are still shackled by the Greek tradition of depicting the human form and still reveal an obsession with muscled males and full-figured females" (*Dreamland Japan* 21). According to Schodt, American comics artists draw figures in only one style. While manga come across as diverse, American comics come off as homogenous, limited, and, most importantly, separate from Japanese comics.

Schodt increases this separation with claims that there is something essentially Japanese about manga—a claim that Theisen points out is characteristic of the way Japanese critics discuss manga—that only the Japanese could have produced the genre.[1] He emphasizes the essentially Japanese nature of manga by situating the art form in a long line of Japanese art dating back to before the Edo period, highlighting calligraphy specifically. "It is possible that to an extent the Japanese are predisposed to more visual forms of communication owing to their writing system. Calligraphy—still practiced in Japan—might be said to fuse drawing and writing" (Schodt, *Manga! Manga!* 25). The Japanese, unlike Americans, see drawing and writing as connected processes, therefore, according to Schodt, American comics have not enjoyed

the same success as Japanese comics. In addition, there is the idea that "Japanese art styles can bewilder Westerners" and the separation between manga and comics in the US is complete (*Manga*! *Manga*! 22).

So Schodt started the Orientalism and erected the barriers (ironically, some might say, given his project to introduce this foreign art form to Westerners) and others followed suit, reinforcing the separation between American and Japanese comics, and consequently reinforcing the view that comics in the US deal only with one style and subject matter. Scott McCloud, an author who has been influential, if controversial, in the field of comics studies, continues to perpetuate the barrier in *Understanding Comics*, emphasizing that "[c]omics in Japan have evolved very differently from those in the West" by separating his discussions of manga techniques from his discussion of the comics form in general (44). He even goes so far as to visually depict all the differences between comics in Japan and comics in the West in a splash page summary towards the end of the book (210). Like Schodt, he espouses the concept of the essentially Japanese nature of manga by situating the form in the lineage of Japanese art, a lineage unavailable to the West when he says that "[t]raditional Western art and literature don't wander much... But, in the East, there's a rich tradition of cyclical and labyrinthine works of art" (81). He repeatedly hammers home the fact that manga are different from American comics, reinforcing the barriers that Schodt erected and closing off techniques employed in manga to comics artists in the US.

While Schodt and McCloud are the strongest perpetrators of separation of manga from American comics, many have followed their lead in drawing distinctions between the two cultural forms. In most library guides to comics, manga are segregated in their own chapter, often with introductions similar to this one from Fingeroth's *Rough Guide to Graphic Novels*: "[a]lthough manga might resemble Western graphic novels at first glance, there are many differences that distinguish them from their Western counterparts" (246). Even Gravett, who has written books on both manga and various genres of Western comics, contributes to the barrier between Japanese and American comics in his chapter on shonen (action manga aimed at boys) by saying, "Crime-fighting costumed superheroes... have dominated American comic books since the 1960s. Few American superheroes have made much impact in Japan, however... Japan's unlikely champions are mostly aliens and androids" (57).

The Orientalism these kinds of statements perpetuate not only sets up a barrier between manga and comics in the US, but also, as with Said's Orientalism, but also is based on imaginative conceptions both of the homogenous nature of American comics and of the separation of manga and comics in the US. American comics—though admittedly less full of variety than they are today—were not only superhero stories for children when Schodt and McCloud were writing. The underground comix movement of the sixties (spelled with an 'x' to indicate some of the more explicit adult material that those comics contained) had already happened when Schodt wrote *Manga*! *Manga*! in 1983, and Art Spiegelman had already won a Pulitzer Prize for Maus when McCloud published *Understanding Comics* in 1993. Both the examples of underground comix and of *Maus* indicate the prevalence of the genre of autobiographical comics, a

genre which used different stylistic techniques from those used in superhero comics.

Beyond the imaginative idea of a lack of genre variety in American comics, the separation enforced by these authors is fictional. In Japan in the sixties and seventies, "boys in particular were enthralled by American Heroes such as Tarzan, which were repackaged Japanese-style by the mangaka, and countless stories set in the United States invaded the market" (Koyama-Richard 138). Chip Kidd has compiled and translated some of these American influenced manga in his volume *Bat Manga!*, and Ikegami's manga version of America's Spider-Man, which was translated and published by Marvel in the US, ran in *Monthly Shonen Magazine* (a Japanese manga magazine featuring boys manga) in the early seventies (Bainbridge and Norris 244). Thus, Gravett's claim that "few American superheroes have had an impact in Japan" sets up an imaginary barrier that separates Japanese from American comics unnecessarily (57).

The Orientalism that English-speaking authors perpetrate when writing about manga has resulted in two imaginary constructions that have been harmful to the conception of comics in the US. First, the barrier has separated manga from American comics, implying that the techniques and genres available to manga artists are not likewise available to comics artists in the US. Second, as Said claims Orientalism is wont to do, these authors have created a homogenous view of American comics, a view that has stunted American comics' growth as an art form.

Effects of Orientalism

But why do these barriers matter? Can't we just say that manga and American comics are different genres and they need to be discussed separately? That these claims are descriptive rather than prescriptive? My answer is that, yes, manga and American comics are (or at least have been) separate genres, but the rhetoric used to differentiate between them has been detrimental to American comics because it has served to perpetuate a homogenous view of American comics that has historically been harmful to their success, and it has closed off Japanese techniques and genres that comics in the US could use to become more diverse. Comics in the US have endured a long struggle for recognition as an art form and the effects of this Orientalism continue to impede their progress.

Most books about comics still begin on the defensive with the assertion that comics are not just about superheroes and for kids anymore, mostly because that view has historically been detrimental to the growth of comics as an art form and as an industry. Lopes's statement in his introduction to *Demanding Respect: The Evolution of the American Comic Book* highlights the way in which this perception of the form as being limited and directed at children led to its downfall in the US with the establishment of the Comics Code Authority in 1954:

> While readers of all ages actually enjoyed comic books, the perception in the popular imagination of comic books as a children's medium won over the reality. And where once the comic book faced the stigma of being a danger to the youth of America, after the new code, it faced the stigma that it could not conceivably

> be anything but a medium suited only for children or readers suffering from arrested development. (xi)

The Comics Code authority, developed by comics' publishers, was established to regulate explicit material in comics. By establishing the code, publishers implicitly admitted that comics were directed at kids, and by strictly regulating sexual and violent content, they lost whatever adult audience they may have had. As McCloud points out, this limiting of both audience and subject matter led to an economic downturn for comics (*Reinventing Comics* 86 – 88).

Those who discuss manga sustain this homogenous view of comics that has been detrimental to their economic and cultural success. I do not mean to suggest that these writers on manga caused the downfall of American comics, only that they have perpetuated a perception that has been harmful to comics in the US, that they have not done anything to bolster a form struggling for legitimacy and, if anything, have set that form back.

Similarly, the perception of a lack of diversity in comics in the US, a quality remarked upon by those who write about manga, has been detrimental to the economic growth of the form. I have already mentioned that, when Schodt claims that American comics are only superhero stories, he ignores the underground comix movement. What I have not mentioned is that the underground comix movement included many women artists, like Phoebe Gloeckner and Lynda Barry, whose stories fall into the autobiographical genre. Thus, by ignoring the underground comix movement, Schodt sustains the perception of comics as a masculine art form and eclipses female involvement in the history of comics. In *Reinventing Comics*, McCloud points out that this perception of comics as a male-dominated industry has prevented comics from reaching a larger audience, which would in turn lead to increased economic success (98). Again, the limited view of American comics that Orientalism maintains has not helped comics in the US reach their full potential.

Along with the homogenization, the barrier that closes off techniques and genres used in manga has been detrimental to the growth of American comics. For example, both Petersen and Schodt point out that American comics artists lag behind Japanese artists in terms of sound effects. Since Japanese versions of sound effects have remained unavailable to comics artists in the US because of the barrier between manga and American comics, US comics artists have not experimented with sound in the way the Japanese have. Such experiments with sound could increase the dimensions of expression available to American comics.

Another way that the separation of American comics artists from Japanese manga has been detrimental to American comics is in the avenue of genre. In *Graphic Novels: A Genre Guide to Comic Books, Manga, and More*, the chapter concerning romance, contains 67 entries, and only seven are for American comics. The rest are examples of manga. Comics artists in the US have not experimented with the genre because it is claimed by manga. Clearly, the US can learn about how to write romance in comics form by studying manga, but first the barrier between the two cultural forms must be broken.

Based on these effects, it seems that those who write about manga, who should have been advocates for the development of comics in the US, have actually contributed to its continued lack of success by perpetuating a homogenous view of the form. They have also made sure that that form has stayed limited by closing off possible avenues in which American comics artists can learn from manga.

Solutions: Recapturing Cultural Flow

Now that I have pointed out the problems in this Orientalist rhetoric, let me begin to propose some questions that might guide us to solutions. The barrier between American and Japanese comics needs to be dissolved. I propose that we accomplish this dissolution through an examination of what Arjun Appadurai refers to as flows between the two cultures. This entails looking at how comics in the two cultures can and have learned from one another. Such an analysis will not only serve to break down the barrier between American and Japanese comics, but also to recapture the diversity of comics in both cultures.

Appadurai, in discussing fashion, situates the origin of flow in the colonial context where "the urge to imitate the new powers" is "often integrated, for better or worse, with traditional sumptuary imperatives" from the home culture (39). The old culture and the new culture coalesce to create a new form that contains remnants of both the old and new cultures. While the current relationship between America and Japan is not a colonial one, the origins of manga mark it as one of these forms made from a combination of old and new. In its current form, manga stems from the influx of American animation during the occupation following World War II. Osamu Tezuka, referred to by many as the God of Manga, references both the Japanese tradition of scroll painting from the Edo period and the figures of Disney animation, both the old tradition and the new culture. The Disney's influence on Tezuka is generally the only mention of America's influence on the development of manga, the only instance of acknowledged cultural flow.

After that, the quick growth of manga that basically coincides with the demise of comics in the US under the Code, causes those who write about manga to erect their Orientalist barriers. But what about the manga versions of American properties I discussed earlier, like *Bat Manga*! and the manga version of *Spider-Man*? What effect did they have on the development of the art form? Again, these examples seem to be evidence of the cultural flow in that they take the new American property and assimilate it in an old manga form. Looking more closely at how these manga versions of American properties were received in Japan and at how they may have influenced subsequent manga seems crucial to recapturing the cultural flow of comics.

And how have manga influenced American comics artists? One of the first manga published in the United States was *Barefoot Gen* by Keiji Nakazawa in 1978, which details the aftermath of the bombing of Hiroshima in graphic detail. It was published by the activist organization called Project Gen, who paid for its translation and distributed the book on a not-for-profit basis (Patten 25). What was the organization's motivation for publishing a book where the US is responsible for such destruction? Did this seemingly anti-American stance (along with the graphic violence) result in the

distancing of American comics from Japanese ones? Unfortunately, there is currently little information on Project Gen and their motives, but I believe the recovery of this particular moment is also crucial to understanding cultural flow between manga and American comics.

Thankfully, recent publications have begun to consider cultural flow more thoroughly. Koyama-Richard situates manga in the context of both traditional Japanese art and American influence, and Napier considers manga and other modern Japanese cultural forms, such as anime and video games, a form of soft power. The various essays in *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives*, a volume edited by Toni Johnson-Woods, also look at how manga has traveled around the world and how it has been influenced by that travel. This is a good trend. In order to encourage the growth of comics studies as a field, as critics, we owe it to comics as a medium to cease and desist with the Orientalist rhetoric. As we open up the door to cultural flow in our rhetoric, comics artists will be encouraged to do the same for their techniques and subjects, learning from the more successful Japanese genre and growing the medium to reach its full potential.

Note

1. See the forthcoming article "The Problem of Manga Theories as Theories of Japanese Identity." by Nicholas A Theisen.

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The Breakdown of Heroism in the 1970s: Miserable Men in Franco-Belgian Western Comics

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Abstract In the present landscape of Hollywood movies the image of the cowboy is widely decreased to the nonconforming misfit with infantile features. As the so called golden boy giving some variety to the audience, he became a synonym for otherness. As for the matter of Western comics, the Franco-Belgian cowboys belong to a special hero species. They represent the dismantlement of the flat and flawless Western heroes in the manner of old John Wayne movies. Regarding those failing Western men it is interesting to see in which way political and social circumstances influenced the authors. Although the stories were told on the background of the American west, famous artists like Jean-Michel Charlier expressed via their works dissatisfaction with Americas politicking and criticized international affecting events like the Vietnam War. By comparing different types of Franco-Belgian Western comic protagonists, ranging around outlaws, gunfighters and drunkards as well as mountain men and trappers, the essay interrogates the position of artists and authors towards the political and economic situation during the 1970s. As one of the examples, the portrayed hero of the chronological arranged epic *Lieutenant Blueberry* who, throughout the course of the episodes experiences not only a vehement change in appearance but also in personality will be the principal focus of research.
Key words Western comic; France; anti-hero; Vietnam War

While Italian artists were already very active during the post-war years producing several series being assigned to the Western genre, like the series *Jane Calamity* (1948) by the female artist Linda Buffolente (1924 – 2007), the French-speaking comic artists took their time to notice the short period between 1850 and 1900 of Americas history to be qualified as a source for creating epic stories (Ackermann 34). The French publishers were anxious about the theme of violence, treating it with high sensibility during the time of the war and even during the years afterward. But the use of firearms, plus the conflicts between Native Americans and the white colonizers as the fundamental elements of the Western genre, made it difficult to offer series appropriate for young people.

When Paul Dupuis, son of the publisher Jean Dupuis, commissioned the comic artist Jacques Dumas (1908 – 1995) in 1954 to produce a Western series, the elements of the long before established Adventure and Detective stories had their influ-

ence on *Jerry Spring*, the first remarkable Western comic series of France (Mietz 3). Long before, in 1941, Dumas already had created, under his penname Jijé, together with the author Jean Doisy the Detectiv series *Jean Valhardi*, with a protagonist decisively influencing not only the future works of fellow artists but also shaping his own narrative techniques. The large blond man solving crimes on an insurance company's instructions distinguishes himself by intelligence and nobility of mind as well as courage. In comparison to American Adventure comic heroes, Valhardi and his successors are acting even more virtuously and they are fighting within a straight defined mission while the motive of the so-called "soldier of fortune" is nearly completely missing.

By constraining the hero to a mission given by a society, an organization or a company, the publishers tried to legitimize the presentation of the violence as necessary and emphasized that the hero is not acting subjectively (Knigge 52). The same goes for France's first Western hero, Jerry Spring, who acted in accordance with the American President or a general. He is a well-dressed U. S. Marshal with a good figure going to great trouble to lend aid unselfishly to the weak and to the victims of persecution. In accordance to his opponents, his facial expressions are always a little fixed, no matter if he is smiling or not. As the perfect hero he is supposed to demonstrate not only his courage to the readers, but his honesty and generosity as well, which makes him appear monotonous and smooth. Like the actor Alan Ladd (1913 – 1964) as the title role Shane in the movie of the same name by George Stevens (1904 – 1975)[1], *Jerry Spring* appears as the mysterious bringer of salvation from nowhere and again, disappears from the scene after the solution of the conflict. By replacing the Western film motives of revenge and the final showdown by the motive of expiation, Jijé managed to create a Western comic series appropriate for the youth.

The American screenwriter Frank Gruber (1904 – 1969), known for his Western and Detective stories, described seven main themes to which each Western film can be assigned: the Union Pacific story, the ranch story, the empire story, Custer's last stand, the outlaw story, the revenge story, and the Marshall story (Cawelti 19). Those themes are also to be found in most of the later French Western comic series and in isolated cases of the *Jerry Spring* series. The stories center on cattle breeding, gold prospectors, occupation and settlement of land, as well as the confrontation with Native Americans. But Jijé doesn't give the role of the criminals and the defeated ones to the Indians. In his work he presents them as the mediators between humans and nature and as peacemakers pointing out wrong and right in human actions. Opponents however are mostly presented through the white settlers, cattle breeders, or greedy gold prospectors (Mietz 6).

But if you disregard the decorative elements of *Jerry Spring*, this series seems, just like *Jean Valhardi*, to belong to the Detective genre. There aren't even accurate hints to be found according to the history's action period because of the nearly complete absence of historical allusions to America's history. Indications of place in general are also avoided by the author who confines himself to give only vague information, letting the reader know that the story takes place in the frontier area of the USA and Mexico.

Together with his always cheerful and ready-for-a-laugh companion Pancho, a

chubby Mexican, Jerry picks up the trail of criminals in nearly every episode. While the pair always endeavors to find the guilty ones and to arrest them, they are continuously coming across hints until they manage to find the answer to the mystery. Just like in the case of Detective stories, the climax is always retarded via skillful delivery of information until the sudden turn of events (Ackermann 50). Jijé reunites the elements of Detective comic stories like kidnapping, the search for the missing person, faked alibis, and unsolved murders in a new backdrop. This rather unusual combination was a result of many years of experience Jijé gained during his work on *Jean Valhardi*, and his great love for the nature and the rough country he realized during the time he spent in the USA.[2]

But Jijé lost all his enthusiasm for the Western genre and the last episodes he created between 1962 and 1964 were afflicted with loss of quality in plot and drawings. A lot of already considered scenarios were reused, the characters became sketchy and some panel backgrounds were even totally blank. Jijé's publisher was forced to look for alternatives which would reduce the printing costs and decided to release the following *Jerry Spring* episodes in red and black instead of full color versions (Schleiter 89). This led to a breaking-off between artist and publisher, and Jijé not only turned his back on his contracting party, but also on the Western genre until *Jerry Spring*'s revival in the episode "Le duel" in 1974.

But from this episode on, all of the series' and character's ingenuousness was gone. Not only did *Jerry Spring* make an appearance without his usually loyal friend Pancho, but also the atmosphere became depressing in every respect. In the manner of the Italo-Western films (also known as Spaghetti-Westerns)[3], Jijé set the motive of the army in a wretched condition and the protagonists seem to be exhausted while they trudge through the inhospitable wilderness. The décor seems to be some kind of filthiness which underlines even more the gloomy atmosphere.

The new narrative course in stile Jijé pursued was no accident. Previously, he had returned to the USA where he met the famous Italian Spaghetti-Western film director Sergio Leone (1929 – 1989) and was invited to visit the setting of the movie production of *Il mio nome è Nessuno* (*My Name is Nobody*) where he was introduced to the actor of the leading role, Terence Hill (1939). Jijé was requested to work on a comic version of the movie and he started to work on the drafts right away while he was observing the filming. Nevertheless, the realization of a Western parody as a comic emerged as a difficult task to undertake and Jijé abandoned this comic project without ever getting beyond the planning phase (Hamann 24).

Blueberry—The Undying (But Aging) Legend of the Wild West

But not only the visit to the film setting of *Il mio nome è Nessuno* had a lasting impression on Jijé. During the artist's break of his craft creating Western stories and turning his hand to different genres, his former assistant Jean Giraud, who was once, in 1961, entrusted with the inking of the episode "La route de Coronado" (The Road to Coronado), brought 1963 a Western comic series into being which should have the most determining influence on the Franco-Belgian Western comic creation. The series which should later become known under the title *Lieutenant Blueberry*, started off with

a 48 page embracing episode named "Fort Navajo" released in the 210th issue of the youth magazine *Pilote* (Mietz 1).

Even Giraud's former tutor Jijé had no choice but to notice this achievement. The increasing popularity of this comic series safeguarded its future and the series was extended to a chronologically arranged epic including the narrative timeframe between 1866 and 1900 of America's history, while the first episode, "Fort Navajo," starts off in the year 1881. But this span only refers to the main plot of the series. Afterward the comic was expanded via the appropriate stories called *La Jeunesse de Blueberry* (*The Youth of Blueberry*), taking place in the narrative time between 1861 and 1865, and *Marshal Blueberry*, taking place in the narrative time between 1868 and 1869.

Right from the start, this comic series was planned to be as realistic as possible and while time passed, the protagonist Mike Steve Donovan, alias Mike S. Blueberry, grew older, gathering experience that changed his character. Although he was never presented as the stereotypical upholder of moral standards in terms of *Jerry Spring*, at first he was introduced to the readers as a hero who would show no hesitation, only determination and courage. Apart from Mexicans, he even would bury his dead opponents.

However, his eccentric appearance and his ill-disciplined behavior prove that he is not the classic comic hero. His outward neglect increased. His unshaven, unkempt, and grubby look emphasizes the image of the violent brute he mutated into. But since Giraud was only the illustrator of *Lieutenant Blueberry*, the protagonist's moral degeneracy at first only emerged in his drawings. But the plots written by Jean-Michel Charlier (1924 – 1989) started to fit the visual disassembly of the protagonist during the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s where Blueberry became a dropout and outsider while he was accused of robbery which led to the dismissal from his military position in the army in the tenth episode "Général tête jaune" (General Yellow Head).

This transformation of Blueberry's character would not have been possible without the massive change the publishing business underwent as an effect of the protests in 1968. The strongly circulating underground press, which was a result of the revolt of the students, started a trend noticed in the French comic scene. Also, the editorial department of the comic magazine *Pilote*, hosting the *Lieutenant Blueberry* series, was infected by the ideological disputes. Staff members of the magazine reproached the managing editor for standing up for the wrong party and many members left the magazine in order to work for a rival paper. Comics started to be noticed as a medium that not only functioned as a source for entertainment. The long lasting image of comics as children's literature, could finally be shed (Holtz-Bacha 119). In view of America's politicking, France adopted a critical attitude towards the US and many French comic artists vent their spleen with the Vietnam War

via their art as did Giraud with his partner Charlier. They reflected the frustrating impotence of a single one, using Blueberry as a sport of fate who was helplessly carried away by the stream of events. Totally powerless and resigning himself to his fate, he gets bashed up by Confederates many times, which already seems to be a running gag. In the episode "Angel Face," released in 1975, he even acts like an ordinary criminal, not caring about principles and shooting an opponent in the back without scruple. He lost his faith in the power of resistance and decided to disappear into the crowd, thinking of the world as evil. Finally, with the following three episodes "Nez Cassé" (Broken Nose), "La longue marche" (The Long March) and "La tribu fant? me" (The Ghost Tribe) released between 1980 and 1982, Charlier allows Blueberry to regain little of his self-assurance while he lives with an Apache tribe.

The Children of the Seventies-Trappers, Mountain Men and Postmodern Cowboys

Because of the great impact of *Lieutenant Blueberry*, Dargaud launched 1974 a magazine called *Lucky Luke Mensuel* presenting only stories of the Western genre. The magazine became the platform for two newly released series, "Mac Coy" by scenarist Jean-Pierre Gourmelen (1934) and the Spanish artist Antonio Hernández Palacois (1921 – 2000), and *Jonathan Cartland* by the female scenarist Laurence Harle (1949 – 2005) and the artist Michel Blanc-Dumont (1948).

The story about Lieutenant Alexis Mac Coy is a Western comic that shows betrayal, lies, intrigue, and corruption in different variants. In 1865, after the breakup of the Confederate States of America, he flees from Georgia to Mexico and blunders into the revolution of Benito Juarez against the emperor Maximilian and the French occupation troops. Two years after the war, Mac Coy returns to the states and starts off as a captain in the US Army and Gourmelen and Palacois make him witness G. A. Custer's last stand against the Sioux and the Cheyenne at Little Big Horn (Janssen 61).

However, the series *Jonathan Cartland* tends to be from a different kind of Western comic. Just like the 1972 series *Buddy Longway*, by Claude de Ribaupierre (1944), alias Derib, *Jonathan Cartland* refers to the myth of the wilderness as a paradise far from any semblance of civilization where only forces of nature dominate. Nevertheless *Buddy Longway* always had a tendency to be more na? ve, simple, structured, and unconstrained telling a story about a save home. As well in this comic, all the protagonists are designed as realistic human beings (except for the graphic style in the first two episodes, which is redolent of a humorous series Derib worked on before) and the author sets great value upon making his characters express emotions, not only displaying affection, understanding, and love, but also rage and doubt. The female characters have an important part in every episode although they are nearly without exception presented in traditional gender-role allocations. For example, Buddy's Sioux Native American wife Chinook is often shown in scenes cooking, caring for their two children, Jérémie and Kathleen, and tending to the sick, while her husband goes out hunting and setting traps. She is not a totally passive character in the story and is even capable of defending herself in situations of violent conflicts, but most of the time Buddy returns just soon enoughin time with his firearms to avert the

danger, acting as the traditional male guardian and hero.

Chinook is the family part who takes care of their stability and maintains continuity in their everyday life, while Buddy, as the provider of his family, is inclined to react on the constituted situation. On that score, his wife, who is a Sioux woman who has grown up in the wilderness, reminds him to consider the longer-term consequences (Pilloy 59).

Buddy is not an anti-hero; he always seizes the initiative in situations of danger and protects his family and friends without hesitation, notwithstanding if they are white colonizers or American Indians. Nonetheless, he is a fallible human, often presented by Derib as injured, passed out, or basted. Also, he comes with endearing weaknesses, according to his wife with whom he often consults in situations of decision, acknowledging her intuition and her wisdom.

The evil in *Buddy Longway* always makes an appearance in the form of Palefaces. Even if the Native American Indians happen to be guilty of the use of violence, the Palefaces are the cause of the disturbance of the peaceful being-with-one-another, affecting the Indians negatively with fire-water, just as in the episode "L'eau de feu" (Fire-Water) from 1979. On the other hand Derib always casts a shadow on the military, showing them as mindless humans who are longing for revenge and destruction, while the ordinary troops emerge as subordinates that only care about obeying orders.

The mountain man Jonathan Cartland as well turns his back on civilization, detesting the white colonizers for their backstabbing actions, such as using whiskey against the Indians in order to cause uproars between their tribes. Dumont conceived a dislike for the period of demystification, disillusionment, and violence of many Italian Western films and concurred in the new change in trend of some Western films in the early seventies. So films like *Little Big Man* by Arthur Penn, (1922 – 2010) released in 1970, and *Jeremiah Johnson* by Sydney Irwin Pollack (1934 – 2008), released in 1972, with trappers as protagonist who discovered the wilderness as their living environment, became Dumont's and Harlé's paragons. It was never their endeavor to copy Charlier or other colleagues; as an alternative they wanted to slip some contemporary events into the story (Dumont 6). That is why *Jonathan Cartland* seems to be more oriented towards ecological aspects than any other series. The end of the Vietnam War and the oil crisis of 1973, which made France decide to make conditional on nuclear energy, affected the interests of Dumont and his generation. He reflected his own opinion via his series, enhancing that the war between different cultures brings no good to mankind and that arrogance and ignorance towards nature and peoples living in close touch with it will only lead to the destruction of one's own habitat (Janssen 62).

But contrary to Buddy, Jonathan experiences an emotional collapse, like Blueberry did when he went down to the level of a mere criminal. Jonathan's idyllic family life is destroyed when Shoshone kills his wife and kidnaps his son in the beginning of the story. Until he gets the chance to lead a trek to Oregon, where he has got the opportunity to kill the murderers of his wife, Jonathan does not manage to build up the courage. But the story does not change into the classic revenge story. That is why it would be an exaggeration to talk about Jonathan Cartland as an anti-hero. He be-

came, just like Blueberry, a victim of fate, being tossed into situations he cannot really cope with. His attitude is always a little ambivalent because he is caught in the middle of two cultures. Because Dumont thinks that there cannot be a hero dying and changing the course of events, Jonathan also cannot influence the circumstance he finds himself in, and fails miserably without even trying to get a hold of the situation (Dumont 8).

In 1978 a Western-like comic series was released which was in a great contrast to the other comics of the Western genre. In the first episode, "La Nuit des Rapaces" ("The Night of Predators"), of Hermann Huppen's series *Jeremiah*, the author needs only two pages to stop the contemporary progress of civilization and show how the nature conquers the country again. Although considered as a comic series of the *Science Fiction* genre because of the post-apocalyptic story, the setting is redolent of the Wild West. The story centers on the young David Walker, alias Jeremiah, who is searching for his parents, abducted during the racial wars shaking the USA. Only a handful of people survived the inferno, living on farms again, like they did in ancient times, and battling for their existence in a hostile environment while they are trying to reestablish a new society. Together with his cynical and hard-boiled friend Kurdy Melloy, the rather simple-minded and kindhearted Jeremiah roams the post-modern Western setting looking for a job and shelter (Semel 66).

Some scenes, like the ride into an inhospitable town and the duel over a buried treasure, in the second episode "Du sable plein les dents" (Teeth full of Sand), from 1979, even bear a resemblance to some Western films of Sergio Leone (*A Fistful of Dollars* and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*).

Conclusion

The political events of 1968 affected the Franco-Belgian comic artists not only because of the cultural, social and political reforms resulting from the demands of the students and the citizens, but also primarily through the suspension of the July 2, 1949 law regarding the censorship of depictions of violence. The publishing companies and the authors were not constricted in their freedom anymore and were able to enjoy their art. What they at first only were able to publish in secrecy within the limits of the underground-press, reached the general public. The artists used their comics to rise to speak about their opinion on the Vietnam War, the prudish society, ecological destruction, the oil crisis, and other subjects stirring up their emotions. They poured out their frustration over their own powerlessness in the world's conflicts via the projection of this powerlessness on to the protagonists, who can't help but only watch how cultures with more highly developed firearms eliminate other cultures in order to con-

quer their living environment. The authors adumbrated how this powerlessness can break a person, causing them to lose faith in the good of mankind and resign themselves to the superior forces.

But their comics are not only a manifestation of frustration, but also an admonition to return to traditional virtues of family life and demonstrating respect to other cultures learning from their experiences and not to repeat one's mistakes.

Notes

1. *Shane* is a 1953 released American Western film produced and directed by George Stevens , based on the 1949 novel of the same name by the author Jack Schaefer (1907 – 1991).
2. 1948 together with his family and his fellow workers Maurice de Bevère (1923 – 2001) and André Franquin (1924 – 1997), Jijé emigrated to the USA in order to cooperate with the local comic book publishers. He also traveled to the West coast, North Mexico and New York and was swayed by the landscapes (Gillain 17).
3. The Italo- or Spaghetti-Western is a sub-genre of the American Western film which became known in the 1970s and received its name according to Italy where most of those films were produced and directed.

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Historical Narrative and the Misrepresentation of Wartime Labor Recruitment in *Kenkanryū*

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Abstract Historically, Japanese manga has been used to comment on social and political issues in the present, as well as describe and narrate events in the past. Since the early 1990s a growing amount of revisionist manga has been published alongside increasingly vitriolic public debates concerning Japanese colonialism and the Greater East Asian War. These two groups have been known to influence one another. One example of this can be seen in manga artist Yamano Sharin's *Kenkanryū*, a work that aligns itself with leading scholars and commentators denying the ills of Japanese colonialism in Korea. This article examines some of the visual and narrative techniques used by Yamano to narrate and subsequently distort the history of Korean laborers during the war.

Key words Yamano Sharin; historical revisionism; forced labor; historical representation

"Korea: the more one learns about it, the more one starts to hate it" (Yamano, Kenkanryū, back jacket flap). *Kenkanryū* (*Hating the Korean Wave*) by Yamano Sharin is a work that raises important questions of historical revisionism, toxic nationalism[1], and racism against Koreans living in Japan (often referred to as *zainichi* Koreans). It concerns itself with examples of Japan's historical and cultural relationship with Korea, concluding in all cases Japan's superiority over an inferior Korea. Yamano's work offers one critique of Korean history and culture. He asserts that those who find Korean culture fascinates or repeats the various negative aspects of Japanese colonialism from 1910 to 1945 do not know the "truth" about Korean history and culture, a "truth" that has been hidden by widespread "lies" (1:33 – 34)[2].

Since the late 1990s, Korean popular culture, including television dramas, film, and music have become widely consumed by audiences in Asia, including Japan. This production, promotion, and exportation of Korean cultural content worldwide has been dubbed as the Korean Wave (Korean: *hallyu*; Japanese: *kanryū*). Over this same period, South Korean presidents Kim Dae-jung (1998 – 2003) and Roh Moo-hyun (2003 – 2008) began to develop closer ties with Japan. Kim's opening of Korea to Japanese cultural imports, banned since Korea's independence in 1945, and Roh's advocating of forward-looking relations with Japan greatly improved popular perceptions of the other in both Korea and Japan. This period of improving

relations arguably peaked in 2002 with the successful joint hosting of the World Cup and the unprecedented popularity in Japan of the Korean television drama *Fuyu no sonata* (*Winter Sonata*), leading many women in Japan to pledge their undying devotion to actor and heartthrob Bae Yong-joon (affectionately dubbed *Yon-sama* by the Japanese media).

The Korean Wave eventually evoked a backlash in Japan, characterized by a belief in Japan's superiority over its former colony and neighbor. This movement (*kenkanryū*) eventually led to the publication of a manga series by the same name. The premise of *Kenkanryū* follows Kaname, a first-year college student and his girlfriend, Itsumi, as they participate in their university's extracurricular "Far East Asia Investigation Committee". After classes, club members discuss, debate, and discover the so-called truth about Korean history and culture and its relationship with Japan. Throughout *Kenkanryū*, club members take part in after-school debates against *zainichi* Koreans, always winning in the end.

Beginning with the annexation of Korea in 1910 until the defeat of Japan in 1945, hundreds of thousands of Koreans migrated or were forcibly relocated to Japan, resulting in an estimated two million residing in Japan by early 1945 (Pak Kyŏng-sik 57). Approximately 600,000 Koreans remained in Japan after the war. Until the 1970s, many *zainichi* Koreans endured discrimination in the workplace (Chapman 33 – 36), were denied access to social services (Yoshioka 226 – 229), and faced problems obtaining an equal education compared to their Japanese counterparts (Aoki 158 – 160). The history of Koreans migrating or being forced to relocate to Japan is complex and open to a variety of interpretations which has produced a large body of literature on the subject expressing polarized views of Koreans in Japan as victims, on the one hand, and willing migrants to Japan on the other.

Nationalist histories of Japan's involvement in the war are nothing new, as can be seen in prototypical works like Hayashi Fusao's "Affirmation of the Greater East Asian War", serialized from 1963 to 1965 in the journal *Chūō Kōron*. In this work, Hayashi denied Japan was an imperialist power and argued that Japan had waged a defensive war in Asia against Western aggression. Since then, others including Fujioka Nobukatsu, an outspoken politically conservative commentator and professor of education at Tokyo University, have echoed this line of reasoning. Like Hayashi, Fujioka viewed the Greater East Asian War as just and pushed for the emergence of a "proper Japanese sense of nationalism" (McCormack 63). His bestselling 1997 book *Kyōkasho ga oshienai rekishi* (*The History Textbooks Don't Teach*) presented a group of upbeat stories about men and women in Japan that readers could take pride in. Fujioka has also described apologies for Japanese war crimes as "masochistic," arguing they present an excessively negative view of Japanese history in his book *Jigyakushikan no byōri* (*Masochistic Views of History*).

Similarly, manga illustrating Japanese history or politics in a nationalist or revisionist manner is not new or unique. Historically, manga has been mobilized to comment on political issues and influence public opinion, as demonstrated by early-twentieth-century works like *Tokyo Puck* that commented on the Russo-Japanese War and the annexation of Korea, for instance (Han and Han). One of the most well-known

contemporary manga serials presenting a nationalistic and positioned view of Japanese history is Kobayashi Yoshinori's *Gomanizumu sengen* and *Sensōron*. Other works, including Akiyama Joji's *Chūgoku nyūmon* (*An Introduction to China*) and Masanao Okada's *Manga Kitachōsen* (*Manga North Korea*) have presented similarly positioned and revisionist views of history.

Like the works of Hayashi, Fujioka, and Kobayashi, *Kenkanryū* presents a historically revisionist and nationalist depiction of Japanese history before, during, and after the war. Originally conceived as a webcomic, *Kenkanryū* was first published in print in 2005. Since then, the series has grown to four volumes selling over 900,000 copies and has spawned a (thus-far) one-volume spin-off, *Kenchūgokuryū* (*Hating the Chinese Wave*) and many other related publications (Yamano Vol. 4: cover). What differentiates recent revisionist and nationalist manga like *Gomanizumu* or *Kenkanryū* from the works of Hayashi and Fujioka is their widespread circulation in popular media and culture. As a result, this genre of historically and politically-charged manga has gained unprecedented visibility and popularity among[3] younger generations in Japanese society. Academic critiques of these works abound . For instance, Sakamoto and Allen have argued that a worsening economy, coupled with unstable employment prospects brought about by globalization, has heightened social anxieties. This has resulted in the "re-injection" of crude nationalist discourses "into [the] wider public discourse... [which] have come to be tolerated, if not accepted, by many Japanese" (Sakamoto and Allen). Echoing this analysis, Japanese writer and activist Amamiya Karin, a former self-professed nationalist, described her attraction to Kobayashi's work as:

> *Gōmanizumu* was packed with all the "society" issues that I wanted to know about... There was no other way for me to get to know about the world. Books sold at the bookshops that dealt with issues like politics or society were really thick, and easily cost close to 2000 yen. But *Gōmanizumu* was serialized in the weekly magazine "SPA!" which I could buy for 370 yen. I fiercely wanted to know about this society that I was living in; about how to live in a society whose bottom was starting to fall out; about the reality of the "postwar Japan" in which we were living; and about the reason that I couldn't help feeling this suffering in the midst of what people called "peace and prosperity." (259)

This article focuses on chapter three of the first volume of *Kenkanryū*, examining Yamano's attack on the issue of *kyōsei renkō* (enforced recruitment) of Koreans during the period of 1939 to 1945.[4] I begin by briefly outlining some of the significant works on enforced recruitment before moving on to an analysis of Yamano's key arguments for discounting the enforced recruitment of Koreans. I show that Yamano's overall reasoning is extremely similar to arguments by other politically conservative and revisionist researchers, especially in his explanations and references to the so-called myth of enforced recruitment. Unlike previous critiques of *Kenkanryū* (Pak Ⅱ) and the issue of enforced recruitment, I argue that one of Yamano's key methods in discounting enforced recruitment is tied to the otherness of Koreans as a people distinct from Japa-

nese people, and that he mobilizes a broader fear of Communism and North Korea to support these claims. In making these assertions, I identify particular narrative and visual techniques used by Yamano that evoke these particular arguments through written language and the visual medium.

The Myth of Enforced Recruitment

One way to describe myths as traditional stories provides explanations for early histories of civilizations and societies. Applying such a label to historical events, however, implies that these events misrepresent what people are interested in as historical truth or what are widely exaggerated about what happened in the past. Many politically conservative researchers and commentators argue that the history of Koreans in Japan is mythologized in relation, specifically, to the claim that Koreans were forcibly brought to Japan during the colonial period of 1910-1945. In *Kenkanryū*, Yamano is keen to impress upon his audience the "real history" of Koreans in Japan (*hontō no rekishi*) that is directly opposed to the widely perpetuated "myth" surrounding the origins of Koreans in Japan (1:80, 83).

Such arguments can appear plausible as, problematically, there is no one generally accepted definition for the phrase "enforced recruitment". Many researchers fail to specify exactly when, where, and how labor recruitment took place and consequently often arrive at radically different conclusions (Ropers 274). Historian Kim Y? ng-dal wrote extensively on the issue of language and terminology in describing enforced recruitment, noting that "it's not the language used to describe enforced recruitment that's the issue. Enforced recruitment is a matter of historical fact. [The problem is that] confusion and misunderstanding are often bred due to the various and different meanings people have [of the term *kyōsei renkō*]" (24, 26). In most works analyzing the Korean enforced recruitment issue, three methods are typically discussed: *boshū* (literally recruitment, taking place from 1939 to 1942), kan'assen (government mediated recruitment, taking place from 1942 to 1944), and *choyō* (conscription, taking place from 1944 to 1945). Although these dates serve to indicate when different and widespread forms of enforced recruitment began, they are, however, by no means definitive dates, and all these methods were used to some extent over the period of 1939 to 1945.

Yamano's bemoaning of a myth of enforced recruitment echoes arguments by politically conservative researchers, particularly Tei Tai Kin in his book *Zainichi kyōsei renkō no shinwa* (*The Myth of Korean Forced Recruitment*). In this book, Tei argued that most histories of labor recruitment have "disproportionately exaggerated the Japanese people as perpetrators and Korean people as victims" (61). By selectively picking testimonies of Koreans who willingly migrated to Japan for economic or family reasons, Tei crafted an argument that was arguably representative of the majority of Koreans who migrated to Japan willingly, yet wholly misrepresentative of the important minority of Koreans who were coercively brought to Japan from 1939 to 1945 (Ropers 275 – 276).

This same misrepresentation of Koreans' experiences in Japan is present in *Kenkanryū*. Yamano cleverly implies that *zainichi* Koreans have been brainwashed to

think their ancestors living in Japan in 1945 were all forcibly brought to Japan (1:83). "If Koreans had been forcibly recruited," he asks, "wouldn't they have all gone back to Korea after the end of the war?", referencing the 600,000 who stayed in Japan (1:84). Even Koreans who were conscripted into the military against their will were not forced, according to Yamano: "To put it simply, conscription was a duty of Japanese citizens. How dare they call it 'forced recruitment'!" (1:88). Of course, full citizenship rights including the right to vote was only extended to Korean men living in Japan over the age of 25 and included additional qualifications that excluded a significant part of the electorate (Weiner 163 fn 149).

Using this and other unsound lines of argument, Yamano claims to prove that no Koreans were forcibly brought to Japan, thus asserting the revisionist interpretation advocated by Tei and others. Instead of logically justifying his views with the use of evidence, *Kenkanryū* appeals to readers' emotions. Yamano therefore presents the stereotypical and colonial dichotomy of an impoverished Korea versus a prosperous Japan, setting up migration as a perfectly natural and understandable occurrence attested to by migrants themselves (1:87 – 88). While correct that a great deal of migration was voluntary (Tei 67 – 108), Yamano and other revisionists' discount or bury testimonies illustrating enforced recruitment for ideological reasons.

The arguments in Tei's *Myth* and Yamano's *Kenkanryū* also share certain characteristics with the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (*Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho wo tsukurukai*), a group that repudiates Japanese war crimes during the Greater East Asian War including enforced labor, enforced military prostitution (so-called "comfort women"), and the Nanking Massacre. Efforts to promote the group's views were characterized by intimidation and resembled those of pre- and postwar politically right, ultranationalist groups in Japan (*uyoku dantai*) (McCormack 64). A 1995 textbook authored by the Society characteristically whitewashed brutal Japanese assimilation policies carried out in Korea and described the colonization of Korea as a "natural" process (Saaler 55). In this way, the Society, like both Tei and Yamano, constructs the migration of Koreans to Japan as a natural occurrence. By purporting a history based on incomplete bodies of evidence, by ignoring the testimonies indicating that a large minority of Koreans migrated to or were brought to Japan against their will, Yamano and his ideological allies are supplanting one so-called myth with an even more egregious one: that no Koreans were forcibly recruited.

Is Language Static?

Another argument Yamano presents to justify the claim that enforced recruitment is an imagined and conceived event is that the phrase "enforced recruitment" (*kyōsei renkō*) did not exist during the war (1:85). Such a revelation stuns the protagonists Kaname and Itsumi, leaving them speechless as upperclassman Ryūhei explains how they have been deceived by historians (1:86). Yamano is correct that the term "enforced recruitment" did not become widespread until first-generation zainichi Korean, Pak Kyŏng-sik, published his groundbreaking work *Record of Korean Forced Recruitment* in 1965 (1:86). However, this argument fails to recognize the ever-evolving nature of language and binds the history of enforced recruitment to terminology used by Japa-

nese perpetrators during the war. To draw an illustrative analogy on how language evolves, let us consider the development and usage of the word "genocide" in historical research.

The Oxford English Dictionary notes that the word only came into use in 1944 with Raphael Lemkin's book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. Writing that "New conceptions require new terms," Lemkin went on to state that he coined the word genocide from Greek to denote an old practice in its modern development. Many authors, instead of using a generic term, use currently terms [*sic*] connoting only some functional aspect of the main generic notion of genocide. These terms are also inadequate because they do not convey the common elements of one generic notion (Lemkin 79 –80).

Even though "genocide" was a word coined in 1944, many historians, scholars, governments, and international organizations acknowledge the systematic elimination of the Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1917, consistently referring to this historical event as "genocide". Of course, this characterization is still disputed by the Turkish government today: although they acknowledge that Armenians died during this period, they disagree with the number of victims and assert that massacres were committed by all sides during World War I. Yet, at the time, onlookers referred to the killings of Armenians as an "extermination" or "annihilation" (Dadrian 349, 352). Responding to this kind of issue, Lemkin observed that older terms like these only referred to one aspect of the killings and ignored the "biological aspect" of a group's elimination (Lemkin 80).

From 1939 to 1945, the Japanese government referred to the act of enforced recruitment using terms like *boshū*, *kan'assen*, or *choyō*. This kind of terminology does not change the nature of recruitment for many Koreans as enforced. These terms serve as euphemisms for different methods of labor recruitment, and the postwar phrase "enforced recruitment" effectively joins these different methods as one simple phrase. It further highlights the victims' forced position rather than a Japanese perpetrator's position. For these reasons, the fact that the government and military did not see such recruitment as enforced or coerced is moot.

The Specter of Communism

Critiques of Koreans resident in Japan often presuppose an existing anti-Japanese relationship with North Korea, characterized by Yamano's tactic of referencing North Korea in his discussion of enforced recruitment (Yamano, 1:92 – 93; Lie 141). Although the history between Japan and North Korea is too lengthy to explain at great length here, recent major issues between Japan and North Korea include the issue of Japanese citizens abducted during the 1970s and 1980s, ballistic missile tests, an active nuclear weapons program, drug smuggling, and compensation and an apology for colonial rule. These issues have all contributed to a relatively poor Japanese perception of North Korea.

Between 1959 and 1984, some 90,000 *zainichi* Koreans repatriated to North Korea, facilitated by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with the co-

operation of Japanese and North Korean officials[5] (Morris-Suzuki, "Freedom", 40). Given that Yamano argues Koreans willingly migrated to Japan in the first half of chapter three (1:87 – 88), it is not at all surprising that he uses this as evidence to discount wartime enforced recruitment (1:92). After all, what could be more natural than Koreans willing coming and then leaving Japan? A man with the Japanese character for "north" inscribed on his oval, black face beckons malevolently towards Japan, as Yamano narrates:

> *Zainichi* Koreans were enticed with propaganda promising things like 'free education' or 'full employment'... Repatriation to North Korea was done under the authority of the North Korean government and Chōsen Sōren [the main organization representing North Korean interests in Japan, also known as Chongryon]. The Japanese government even paid for part [of repatriation expenses] and cooperated [with officials], yet Koreans seem to be ungrateful. (1:92)

Having made no mention of the ICRC's role in mediating repatriations, he then goes on to describe in detail the discrimination *zainichi* returnees suffered in North Korea (failing to mention any kind of discrimination of Koreans by Japanese people).

Repatriation to the North was, for the most part, not driven by Koreans' political affiliation or personal connections, but rather because the South Korean military government's suspicion of politically left-wing *zainichi* Koreans made emigration impossible (Morris-Suzuki, "Dream", 364 – 65). When the Japanese government unilaterally stripped Koreans of their Japanese nationality in 1952 and imposed restrictions on welfare benefits to the Korean community, life became increasingly and intolerably difficult for Koreans living in Japan (Morris-Suzuki, "Freedom", 48 – 49). According to Morris-Suzuki, three reasons for repatriation stand out. First, *zainichi* Koreans were without a defined right of residence in Japan until the 1965 Normalization Treaty between Japan and South Korea. Second, Chōsen Sōren provided information to potential returnees that painted a misleading picture of life in the North that enticed many Koreans in Japan. Finally, whether or not women or children were in a position to reveal their desire to remain in Japan is questionable (Morris-Suzuki, "Freedom", 58 – 60). Unmentioned by Yamano, Japanese support for repatriation was, as Japanese Foreign Minister Fujiyama Aiichirō put it, based on the prospect of "ridding [the] country of [the] Korean minority," a minority that was "vaguely Communist" and perceived as a threat for Japanese postwar stability (qtd. in Morris-Suzuki, "Freedom", 48, 49). And, although the 1959 Calcutta Accord that outlined certain exit procedures and interviews for returnees, these assurances were reneged upon by North Korea and accepted by the Japanese government (Morris-Suzuki, "Freedom", 55).

By using the repatriation issue as an example of *zainichi* Koreans' close association with North Korea, Yamano is able to tap into pre-existing knowledge and emotions that his Japanese readership may have about North Korea. This technique lends *Kenkanryū* a kind of immediacy, allowing readers to confirm Yamano's threatening historical depiction of Koreans with recent events, such as missiles flying over Japan

or a nuclear-capable power on their doorstep.

"Us" versus "Them": Depicting Difference in Visual Terms

Morris-Suzuki observed that after the Russian Revolution in 1917, Soviet poster art drew sharp distinctions between "us" (the Soviets) and "them" (the enemy) through the use of exaggerated physical features and divergent graphic styles within the same image (*Past* 192 – 195). In *Kenkanryū*, Yamano utilizes comparably exaggerated visual techniques to emphasize the differences between Japanese and Koreans. Specifically in chapter three, Koreans are often drawn in a hyperbolized style that differentiates them from their Japanese counterparts. There is an emphasis on certain physical attributes including tiny, slanted eyes and smaller facial features that contrast them to Japanese characters who are drawn with comparably larger features, particularly their eyes and hairstyles with both Itsumi and Ryūhei sporting blond and styled hair. While these kinds artistic techniques are not necessarily indicative of a clear desire to delineate Japanese or Koreans based on ethnicity (after all, large eyes are a widespread characteristic in Japanese manga), they do serve to starkly differentiate Korean and Japanese characters in this chapter and work as a whole.

However, the techniques used to visually construct difference between Japanese and Korean characters are not necessarily static and change between chapters. For example, during a discussion on issues of postwar compensation (*sengo hoshō mondai*) in chapter two, Yamano's depiction of Koreans is different from those in his chapter on enforced labor (1:38 – 76, esp. 45, 48). Here, several Koreans are drawn with a different set of facial features including prominent chins and exceedingly long and pointed noses. The key point here is that the ways in which ethnicity and difference are constructed are in no way constant as some commentators like Onishi have previously argued, except, I would argue, in that Korean characters are almost always depicted with hostile or negative emotions.

Visually, it is this continuity of Koreans' emotions throughout *Kenkanryū* that starkly differentiates the Japanese "us" from the Korean "them". Importantly, neuroscientists have experimentally proven what many people have always known: the inherent communicative power present in people's facial expressions (e. g., Blair 561; White 372). Surprisingly, we are able to discern and recognize facial expressions (and therefore emotions) with less detail than we need to identify a face as belonging to a specific person (White 372). In a recent experiment, Ulf Dimberg and colleagues at Uppsala University found that people confronted with positive or negative facial expressions unconsciously and rapidly react to and mimic those expressions, leading them to conclude that "emotional reactions can be unconsciously evoked" (Dimberg 86). Throughout *Kenkanryū*, Koreans are often depicted with expressions representing negative emotions like anger (1:93, 166, 219), embarrassment (1:210, 230), overt violence or murderous intent (1:60, 148, 150, 169), or greed (1:56) to name a few. In his chapter on enforced recruitment, no Korean actively smiles except for the one man who is shown taking pleasure in punching a Japanese person after the surrender in 1945 (1:81). These kinds of facial expressions construct Koreans explicitly as enemy figures opposed and hostile to Japanese people and

subconsciously predispose readers to a negative reaction.

Conclusion

In this article, I examined three different ways Yamano Sharin cast doubt on the existence of enforced recruitment of Koreans from 1939 to 1945, examining the terminology used, the supposed relationship between *zainichi* Koreans and communist North Korea, and the visual illustration of Koreans and Japanese. By taking an extremely contrived position similar to many politically conservative researchers and commentators, Yamano persuades or confirms for his target audience that Koreans were not forcibly recruited using emotional and fear-based appeals instead of sound historical research methods. In many ways, Yamano's work is preaching to an already converted audience that agrees with his ideas.

Whether or not it is possible to present controversial histories in the medium of manga is a question I have not attempted to answer in this article—suffice it to say, I do believe such presentations are possible. One such work, Chŏng Kyong-a's *Manga "ianfu" repōto* (*Manga Report on "Comfort Women"*) examines the issue of Japanese enforced military prostitution during the Greater East Asian War by drawing upon and incorporating academic studies in her presentation of the issue. Yamano's first volume of *Kenkanryū*, however, misrepresents not just the history of Korean enforced recruitment, but that of Korean culture (chapter 4), the Korean phonetic writing system (*hangul*, chapter 6), the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea (the 1965 Normalization Treaty (chapter 8), to name a few topics. We should not underestimate the popular appeal of manga like Kenkanryū, but whether we should see them as representing the majority opinion of younger Japanese people today is questionable. Scholars like Sakamoto and Allen have noted statistics citing increased political conservatism among younger Japanese people today (Sasada 119, qtd. in Sakamoto and Allen), although other surveys by the Japanese national broadcaster NHK found that a majority of Japanese people ages 16 to 59 believe the postwar generation still bears some kind of responsibility for the war (Makita 10, 19, qtd. in Saaler 142). Academic Sven Saaler's own surveys of university students have also found a clear rejection of revisionist interpretations of history like those found in *Kenkanryū* (Saaler 143). Doubtless these questions will continue to be hotly debated as historically revisionist manga continues to be published and consumed online and in print by the Japanese public.

Notes

1. Japanese and Korean names are presented in the customary order of last name first. I follow received Western spellings of certain Korean names in this article. In other cases I follow the McCune – Reischauer romanization system.

2. There are four volumes of *Kenkanryū*. Here the "1" refers to the volume number. There is a citation later referring to volume 4, so I have been consistent in adding them throughout the article.

3. In English, see Sakamoto, "Will you go to war? Or will you stop being Japanese?", Sakamoto and Allen, "Hating 'The Korean Wave'", Clifford, "Cleansing History, Cleansing Japan",

Rosenbaum, "Historical Revisionism in Contemporary Manga Culture".

4. My translation of the Japanese term *kyōsei renkō* as "enforced recruitment" differs from most researchers in the field who typically translate it as "forced transportation" or "forced migration".

5. Yamano quotes a figure of "approximately 100,000" (1:82).

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"This Living Hand": Fantasies of Handwriting in the Comics of Kevin Huizenga

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Abstract Using Kevin Huizenga's short story "Glenn Ganges in *Pulverize*" as a case study, this essay argues for a reconsideration of the function of handwriting in North American alternative comics. For reasons largely having to do with cultural politics, comics scholars have held that in the alternative comic, handwriting functions as a privileged means of access to the author's unique embodied subjectivity. By staging an encounter between handwriting and digital technology (specifically video games), Huizenga shows that handwriting is never about pure subjectivity's embodiment—that there is always a gap between the author and his or her handwritten trace. At the same time, Huizenga suggests that what makes handwriting poignant is precisely the conflict between the reader's knowledge of this gap and his or her desire for connection with the author.

Key words alternative comics; Kevin Huizenga; handwriting; video games

Alternative comics (i. e. comics published by firms such as Fantagraphics and Drawn & Quarterly, and reviewed favorably in forums such as The Comics Journal) are often understood as handwritten texts. The alternative cartoonist is commonly viewed as a figure who takes advantage of handwriting in order to leave a permanent trace of his or her self, a trace which is at once a physical object and an externalization of the cartoonist's personality. I will argue in this essay that such a concept of the alternative cartoonist entails a misunderstanding of handwriting, and one which has been deployed at least partially because of its political usefulness. If some alternative comics critics and scholars have constructed the alternative cartoonist as a figure who writes by hand, they have done so in order to stress the similarity of comics to literature and thus to seek acceptance for comics in high-cultural and academic circles. In doing so, however, such critics have made handwriting in comics appear to be a less complex and poignant phenomenon than it actually is.

Through an analysis of Kevin Huizenga's story "Glenn Ganges in Pulverize" (2008), I argue that alternative comics often provide, not handwriting itself, but a fantasy of handwriting, which gains much of its poignancy from the reader's recognition that it is a fantasy. In this respect, alternative comics are less fully material, and have more in common with digital texts, than one might think – as we will see, Huizenga demonstrates this by staging an encounter between his quasi-autobiographical

avatar, Glenn Ganges, and a video game. It has already been argued (e. g. by Charles Hatfield and Bart Beaty) that in producing an alternative comic, the creator does not simply reveal his or her authentic self, but also constructs a self which is partly real and partly fictitious. I argue that the same thing happens when the cartoonist presents that self through handwriting. In drawing a comic, the cartoonist does not simply translate his or her self onto paper. Handwriting produces a sense of proximity to the writer, yet it also reveals the profound and constitutive gap between reader and writer. It is precisely because of this ambivalence that handwriting is such a crucial trope in alternative comics.

Handwriting, including hand-drawing, involves producing signs by direct physical contact with the pen and paper. It records both the fact of the writer's bodily presence at the moment of writing, and the unique, idiosyncratic qualities of the writer's physical movements. According to the pseudoscience of graphology, popular in the early 20th century, the character traits of a writer may be inferred from his or her handwriting (Thornton 96 – 98). Graphology is now considered to lack scientific merit, but its basic premise—that handwriting is somehow intimately linked to subjectivity—remains widely accepted. Handwriting functions within North American culture as an important signifier of embodiment and subjectivity, and for this reason, the contemporary North American alternative comic has chosen handwriting as its characteristic method of production. The alternative comic is a handwritten genre. It typically is, or presents itself as, a handwritten artifact, and moreover, it does what handwriting is often understood as doing: it presents the authentic, innermost self of its creator. I would even suggest that the alternative comic often propagates a fantasy of handwriting. It enacts a fantasy in which, by means of physically engaging with artistic tools, one can literally write oneself into the world. According to this fantasy, when one writes by hand, one creates graphic traces which serve as the record of one 's unique, embodied subjectivity, but which also have an independent existence.

Handwriting, understood in this way, is often believed to be in a state of crisis because of the advent of digital technology. Handwriting seems to be threatened by technologies like typewriting and word processing, which make it possible to write and draw without engaging physically either with the writing or drawing tools or with the surface of inscription. As early as 1938, a *New York Times* editorialist worried that "writing with one's own hand seems to be disappearing, and the universal typewriter may swallow all" (12). Yet even the typewriter still involves the production of letters by purely physical processes, whereas the computer seems to produce text ethereally, without reliance on any physical substrate. Computers seem to produce words and images devoid of embodied subjectivity. The ubiquity of computers creates a crisis for traditionally handwritten artistic genres such as alternative comics.

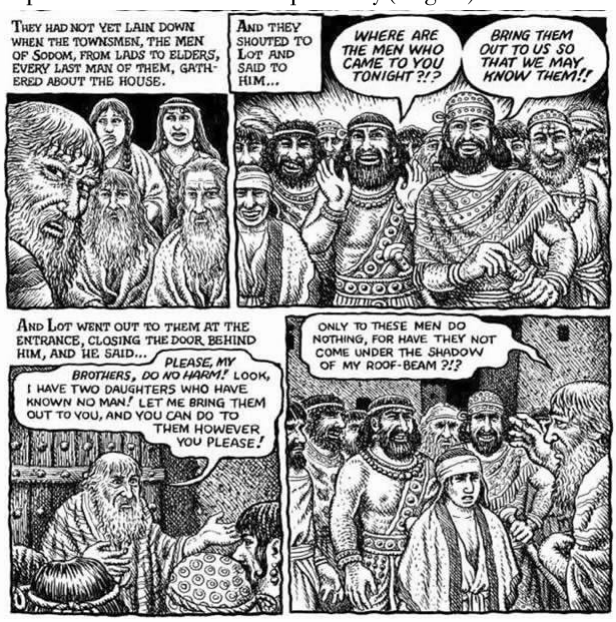
The American alternative comics movement is committed to the principle that the entire comic—script, artwork, lettering, and even sometimes printing and publication design—should represent the product of a single authorial hand. Nondivision of labor in comics is often understood as having inherent aesthetic merit, as Douglas Wolk argues:

> [C]omics produced under the sole or chief creative control of a single person of significant skill are more likely to be good (or at least novel enough to be compelling and resonant) than comics produced by a group of people assembly-line style... This naturally coincides with the observation that a comic owned by its creator is more likely to be stylistically adventurous than one produced on a work-made-for-hire basis. (31 – 32)

For Wolk, division of labor between writer and artist is acceptable only when one of the two figures is clearly dominant, or when the two creators work together so closely as to become essentially a single creative entity. Harvey Pekar is the exception that proves this rule: though he didn't draw his own material, he exercised such creative control and collaborated[1] so closely with his artists that he deserves to be recognized as the author of his works. [1] For Wolk, collaborative authorship, no matter the quality of the individual collaborators, is less genuine or authentic than sole authorship. The alternative comics author is a singular author. This emphasis on sole authorship is of course also intended as a way to differentiate the alternative comic from the commercial comic, in which creative duties are often divided between several different persons (writer, penciler, inker, colorist, letterer, editor, etc.). Alternative comics critics often derisively refer to this division of labor as an "assembly-line" mode of production, categorizing it as a Taylorist-Fordist industrial process rather than a true creative labor. [2] Groth characterizes the mainstream cartoonist as a hack rather than a genuine artistic figure: "If we define a hack by his [sic] willingness to subordinate his talent to purely commercial dictates, we find that the comics industry has been dominated by hacks since its inception" (Groth and Fiore xi). By contrast, the 1960s underground cartoonist, the predecessor of the contemporary alternative cartoonist, "worked out of an inner need, from the social and cultural matrix, not the economic one" (xi).

An important way in which the alternative cartoonist demonstrates his or her sole authorship is through the cultivation of a unique style of handwriting. Alternative comics "privilege the distinctiveness of the creator's hand" (Wolk 30, emphasis mine). For example, Seth's panel borders "are not perfectly straight, and they don't have a consistent thickness: they've got the same wobble as Seth's other brushstrokes, so they declare that they were made by the same hand that drew the image within them" (132). This is a convenient summary of Philippe Marion's theory that the artwork and the lettering in a comic can both be understood as traces of a single author-figure or authorial subject-position responsible for both, a figure Marion calls the *graphiateur* (Baetens 147). In comics produced by multiple creators, however, the *graphiateur* is a hypothetical figure, a sort of imaginary unification of the various personal styles involved, whereas in alternative comics, the *graphiateur* can be seen as more or less identical with the actual author. In alternative comics the similarity of writing to artwork, and the distinctive graphical traits of both, can be taken as evidence that one person produced the entire comic by means of physical engagement with drawing tools and a writing surface. Crumb's distinctively shaky artwork and lettering, for example, serve (for knowledgeable readers) as proof that the comic in

question was the product of Crumb's unique body(Fig. 1).



(Fig. 1 Four panels from The Book of Genesis Illusrtated by R. Crumb. Note the visual resemblance between handwriting and images. Copyright © Robert Crumb, 2009, all rights reserved.)

Independently of the actual style of handwriting, however, the bare fact of being handwritten—as opposed to typeset—is a significant distinguishing feature of the alternative comic. For Hilary Chute, handwritten-ness is so important as to represent a major difference between comics and novels:

> I suggest, then, that what feels so intimate about comics is that it looks like what it is: handwriting is an irreducible part of its instantiation. The subjective presence of the maker is not retranslated through type, but, rather, the bodily mark of handwriting both provides a visual quality and texture and is also extrasemantic, a performative aspect of comics that guarantees that comics works cannot be "reflowed": they are both intimate and *site specific*. Comics differs from the novel, an obvious influence, not only because of its verbal-visual hybridity but also because of its composition in handwriting. (11, emphasis in original)

For Chute, handwriting stands for embodiment, site-specificity, and instantiation—in a word, for materiality. Hence, original art pages are cherished collectors' items because, unlike published comics, original art pages are one-of-a-kind objects which physically bear the stamp of the artist's hand. Even published works of alternative comics, despite their mass-produced and non-unique nature, are often designed so as to suggest the presence of the artist's hand. Alternative cartoonists frequently devote significant attention to the publication design and appearance of their published work, to the extent that, as Emma Tinker argues, "[t]he finished, printed comics are often treated like original art works."[3] Finally, alternative comics often explicitly reference

their own handwritten quality. For example, in Craig Thompson's Blankets, the autobiographical protagonist masturbates while reading a letter from his girlfriend Raina. "Here, he is clearly making a connection between the flow of Raina's handwriting, the pressure of pen on paper, and the body that made the marks: for Craig, the trace of the writer's hand gives manuscript an erotic appeal" (Tinker 1176). Similarly, Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* includes numerous handwritten documents and insists on the embodied nature of handwriting as opposed to typewriting.

In deploying handwriting in this way, alternative comics participate in a long-standing cultural tradition. Since at least the late nineteenth century, handwriting has been regarded in North American culture as a privileged signifier of embodiment, subjectivity, and authenticity. For example, the Romantic calligraphy revival was predicated on an opposition between the lovingly handcrafted nature of handwriting and the soullessness of machine-produced goods (Thornton 106). The pseudoscience of graphology claimed to be able to deduce a person's character traits from his or her handwriting. The premise here was that because handwriting is unique to the individual writer, and serves as a trace of his or her idiosyncratic physical movements, it serves as a window into the soul. Handwriting has also sometimes, though certainly not always, functioned as a sign of the activity of the creative writer. Blake invokes the Muses to "Come into my hand / By your mild power, descending down the Nerves of my right arm / From out the Portals of my Brain" (96), and Keats "ha[s] fears that I may cease to be / Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain" (100). Handwriting is thus an appropriate trope for alternative comics to invoke, given their treatment of the comic as the expression of the unique self of the author.

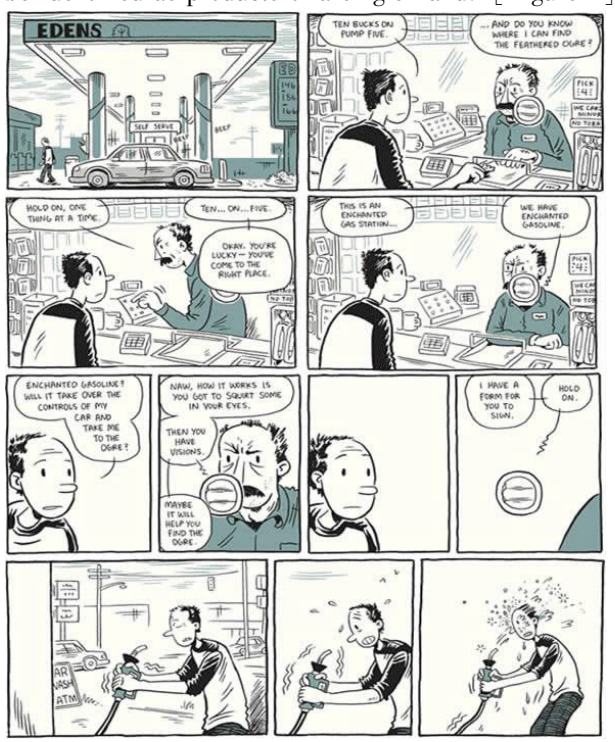
If we understand the alternative comic as a handwritten genre, then its polar opposite would be digital culture in general, or, more specifically, video games. In drawing an alternative comic, the artist seeks to provide a means of access to his or her authentic subjectivity. Ideally, in reading an alternative comic, the reader experiences an authentic intersubjective connection with the artist. As Whitman might have said, "Camerado! This is no [comic] book; / Who touches this, touches a man" [513]. Reading an alternative comic brings the artist's self into contact with the reader's self—a self which is equally genuine: in reading an alternative comic, I don't forget who I am; instead, I implicitly compare and contrast the artist to myself, understanding the artist's self in terms of my own self.

By contrast, the video game seeks to create an illusionistic presentation of an imaginary world. In playing a video game, the player enters that world and thereby steps outside his or her own actual self:

> Comic action is customarily described as occurring within a separate, semiautonomous space that is removed from normal life. The French sociologist and anthropologist Roger Caillois writes that games are "make-believe," that they are "accompanied by a special awareness of a second reality or of a free unreality, as against real life." The Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga agrees, writing that play transpires "quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life." (Galloway 6)

In playing a game, the player steps outside his or her actual physical and social location and enters a demarcated space of unreality—a space which game designers Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, citing Johan Huizinga, call a "magic circle" (95). In entering the magic circle, the player abandons his or her usual self and takes on a second self, as literally occurs in video games when the player takes on the role of a fictional player character. Contemporary video games often present a fictional game-world which is rendered in three dimensions and with photorealistic detail, thereby seeking to make the player feel that in playing the game, he or she physically exits the real world and enters that fictional world. In doing so, the player also leaves behind his or her actual self and takes on the self of the fictional character whose actions he or she enacts. Instead of facilitating an encounter between two authentic selves (those of the writer and the artist), the video game replaces an authentic self with an inauthentic one.

My principal case study, the work of Kevin Huizenga, initially seems to support this claim of a binary opposition between the alternative comic and the video game. In an e-mail interview with me, Kevin Huizenga stated: "I fall in with the school of thought that cartooning is a kind [of] 'handwriting' or typography."[4] One reason Huizenga's work fascinates me is because of the visual resemblance between his text and his images. In his work, words, images, and even other types of lines such as panel borders have the same line weight and the same degree of shakiness, so that all these lines can be identified as products of a single hand. [Figure 2]



(Fig. 2 Page from Huizenga's story "The Feathered Ogre". Note the similarity of all the various types of lines on this page. Reproduced by permission of the author.)

In terms of its physical form, *Ganges* #2, in particular, is a beautiful and lovingly crafted artifact; it's significantly larger than a standard comic book and features a dust jacket. Though the book is obviously mass-produced, the use of hand-lettering identifies it as an originalyhand-craftedartifact. [Figure 3]

(Fig. 3 Cover of *Ganges* #2. Reproduced by permission of the author.)

Almost every line of text in the book is hand-lettered. In short, the book presents itself as an example of a manual mode of production and as an object to be held and cherished. For a reader familiar with Huizenga's previous work, it calls up associations with Huizenga's hand-assembled minicomics.

The story in this issue is about Glenn Ganges's time working at a dot-com startup company, Requestra.com, from 1999 to 2001. Requestra.com, which metonymically represents the internet culture of this period in general, is the acme of inauthenticity. We never find out what goods or services Requestra provides, what its revenue stream is, or what kind of work its employees do. The motto of the company—proposed after its CEO rejects a more technical proposal that Glenn intended to make—is "We don't know and that's a good thing," which testifies to its lack of any genuine expertise. 9 Early on in the story the narrator observes that "It was exhausting pretending that the dotcom buzz wasn't really BS – as long as the money kept pouring in."[5] This all seems like a harsh condemnation of the dot-com bubble and the internet as a whole. The internet is here presented as a lot of flash concealing no substance. It lacks the authenticity we associate with handwriting.

After work each day, Glenn and his coworkers play *Pulverize*, a first-person shooter (FPS) computer game. (See Galloway 39 – 69 for a critical account of this genre) In playing *Pulverize*, Glenn steps into the magic circle. He takes on the role of a fictional character and enters into a gameworld represented in such photorealistic detail as to seem more real than the real world. Glenn's experience with *Pulverize* be-

gins to seem like a prototypical experience of disembodiment, of severance from authentic selfhood. *Pulverize* becomes much more fulfilling than Glenn's work or even his life at home. Glenn lies to his wife, Wendy, telling her that he has to work late, when he is actually staying to play *Pulverize*. At work, he and his coworkers call each other by the names of their Pulverize characters. In his dreams, Glenn imagines that the gameworld of *Pulverize* has replaced the real world: "What's weird is that Glenn didn't dream about playing a video game. He dreamt as if he had really been running through the game's endless hallways. His brain was fooled by the game's first-person point of view." Even when awake, Glenn imagines himself holding a weapon from the game. [Figure 4]

(Fig. 4 Glenn imagining himself playing *Pulverize*. Reproduced by permission of the author.)

Glenn seems to have fully embraced the video game's promise to provide him with a false form of embodied subjectivity, replacing his real self. Here again we might see a critique of the way in which the video game offers a false, unreal form of subjectivity, in contrast to the more substantial, authentic mode of subjectivity that the alternative comic promises.

But this binary opposition starts to break down when we notice that *Pulverize*'s illusion of reality is based on constitutive gaps. Glenn is never completely fooled by the game's illusion of reality, and for the logic of the magic circle to work, he can't be fooled. During the first of two *Pulverize* playing sessions depicted in the story, the narrator observes: "As you fall, you see that the valley is really an illusion – it's a flat image of a valley that rushes up to you, growing more pixellated, and you even start to see the seams of the backdrop right before impact." As compelling as Pulverize's world may seem, it can never present a fully seamless experience of the world; it is far from true virtual reality. The game's promise to replace the player's authentic self with an alien self is unfulfillable. *Pulverize* thus exemplifies "the fundamental paradox of immersion: if the viewer is able to marvel at the 'reality' of the immersive experience, she or he is no longer fully immersed" (Sandifer 139). In order to appreciate the way in which *Pulverize* absorbs the player into a fictional world, one must recognize its world as fictional and not real. The player must bear in mind the gap between the text's presentation of reality and the real world, and must not abandon his or her "authentic" self to embrace the alternative self provided by the game. Otherwise, the consequences can be disastrous. A fictional example of this is Yusuf's clients in the film *Inception* (2010), who spend all their time dreaming and never wake up. Glenn cannot not know that *Pulverize* is only a fake world, that his *Pulverize* avatar is not him. He understands that in a formal sense, *Pulverize* is the same game as

Spacewar (1962) (an actual game), where two players control 'spaceships' and duel on a black screen dotted with a few white pixels. Many years later, much more code goes into writing *Pulverize*, but essentially it's the same thing – abstract combat. And when I realized that, I guess it didn't seem so wrong to enjoy it as I did. Underneath, it's just dots shooting dots at dots. Under the hood, *Pulverize* is the same game as *Spacewar*, and its superior graphics and sound serve only as cosmetic trappings. *Pulverize*'s promise to transform the player into another person is necessarily a fantasy—we might call this a "fantasy of immersion".

Yet this fantasy is an appealing one, and it is disingenuous for Glenn to claim otherwise. The supposedly cosmetic elements of *Pulverize* are what make it seductive and affective. Glenn makes his above-quoted argument about "abstract combat" in a conversation with his wife Wendy, and as indicated by the words "I guess it didn't seem so wrong to enjoy it as I did," his intent is to explain away his disturbing addiction to the game. Wendy is not fooled, and instead offers another reason why Glenn might feel guilty about his enjoyment of *Pulverize*: she alludes to the Columbine High School massacre of 1999, suggesting that players of games like *Pulverize* may become desensitized to real-life violence. Glenn is visibly troubled by this idea, although he tries to brush it off. Glenn is in an ambivalent position of being seduced by *Pulverize*'s illusions at the same time that he understands them as illusions. Huizenga's artistic presentation of *Pulverize* places the reader in a similar position. Huizenga represents the world of *Pulverize* in a highly unrealistic visual style, but it's the same style he uses to depict Glenn's real world. When Huizenga depicts a scene from *Pulverize*, we can tell that the scene takes place in a video game only because we already know. [Fig. 5]

(Fig. 5 Scenes from *Pulverize*. Note the visual similarity to the scenes depicting "real life". Reproduced by permission of the author.)

In a sequence where Glenn falls asleep and dreams he is inhabiting the world of *Pulverize*, the transition from real world to dream is signaled only by a change in the color of Glenn's face. The end of the story reveals that the fantasy of immersion can also be deployed productively. In the story's climactic sequence, Glenn and his colleagues play *Pulverize* for what they know to be the last time, since they know that

one of them, Bob Bilson, will be fired the next day, and that the company has been doomed by Stane's mismanagement and by the collapse of the dot-com bubble. The emotional power of the game is intensified by the knowledge that this is the last time the game can be played by this particular community. The poignancy of the game derives from Glenn's simultaneous knowledge that *Pulverize* is more stable and complete than real life, and that it's not real life. Glenn notes "the wintry morning light, which never changes, because the sky is a JPEG. Nothing is ever added to or subtracted from the zeroes and ones that make up the buildings or mountains, so nothing changes—time stands still. It's always a winter morning here." *Pulverize* improves on the real world in that it never changes, but this very fact marks *Pulverize* as an unsustainable escape from the real world. This ambivalence is precisely what makes playing *Pulverize* an emotionally fraught experience. If the Pulverize player is ambivalently poised between his real self and his fake one, then this ambivalence can even be used proactively.[6] During the playing session, Matt Lewis, whose job is in no immediate danger, logs out of the game and logs back in under the name Candypants, which is Bob Bilson's usual screen name. One by one, the other players do likewise, and for a moment "they were all Candypants." Clearly becoming Candypants in this way has no practical effect – the players don't become Bob in any practical sense, nor does their action save his job. But the affective resonance of this action is increased by its inauthenticity: "They all felt, as they watched another Candypants explode into bloody chunks, a real affection and a kind of sadness." The action of becoming Candypants is not practically effective, but perhaps precisely for this reason, the emotions it activates are genuine.

In an initial moment of playing *Pulverize*, Glenn is seduced by the fantasy of immersion; in a second moment, he recognizes this fantasy as a fantasy; in a third moment, he is forced to admit that this fantasy is nonetheless appealing (as in Octave Mannoni's famous formula "I know very well, but all the same") and can even be a source of productive engagement with the world. This, I now argue, is analogous to the way in which handwriting works in comics. I earlier described the conception of handwriting that I identified in alternative comics as a fantasy of handwriting. The term "fantasy" is appropriate because this conception is not in fact a factual account of how handwriting actually works in alternative comics. As Emma Tinker reminds us, "Comic art is made for reproduction. Although original artwork by famous comic book artists does sell for substantial sums of money, the original is not generally regarded in quite the same light as a drawing that was not made with publication in mind." The alternative comic, as encountered by the reader, is an always-already-reproduced text, predicated on an originary disappearance of the artist's hand. Jacques Derrida argues that this is true of handwritten documents in general. If the handwritten text is the sign of the presence of the artist, that presence is always already prior. Handwriting reveals that the writer was there at the moment of writing, but is there no longer (313).

But if any sort of handwritten text is founded on this constitutive gap between the text and the writer's body, in Huizenga's work this gap is even wider than usual. His comics often suggest the absence rather than the presence of a guiding authorial sub-

jectivity. As noted above, all the lines in Huizenga's comics look the same, but this similarity doesn't suggest the presence of a single cohesive author-figure responsible for all of them, as in Philippe Marion's argument. What's emphasized instead is the indistinguishability of one type of line from another, which results in a disorienting inability to distinguish diegetic from nondiegetic lines, or words from pictures.[7] Similarly, Huizenga's work initially appears to be autobiographical, but instead ends up emphasizing the gap between the autobiographical text and its author. Huizenga's recurring protagonist, Glenn Ganges, has the same background as Huizenga, but turns out to be a mostly fictional construct. For example, in Huizenga's story "The Feathered Ogre," Glenn and his wife struggle with infertility, but at the time this story was written, Huizenga wasn't married (Epstein). Even Glenn's name, evocative as it is, was chosen randomly when Huizenga saw a road sign listing the distances to two Michigan towns called Glenn and Ganges. Even Huizenga's artwork, which seems like an instance of pure handwriting, is inflected—we might even say contaminated—by the same digital technology that seems to represent the antithesis of handwriting. In an interview with me, Huizenga explained his use of Photoshop to edit his artwork:

> I fix mistakes and fill black areas and even occasionally shrink a head or move a figure or something relatively drastic. It's difficult to generalize about the drastic changes, because they tend to be unique to unique situations. Occasionally a page will need major surgery--panels changed and swapped out and rearranged. Other times the page needs only minor fixes. I don't like to redraw, but I like to second guess myself and try out new ideas. Photoshop allows for pretty drastic editing, and I'd find comics making very frustrating without knowing I'm not trapped by what I've drawn (Huizenga, personal communication).

If Huizenga's work carries the imprint of his hand, that imprint is not an indelible one. The idea of handwriting as an imprint of the artist's body carries the implication that this imprint is unremovable; Birkerts argues that this is one of the virtues of handwriting (157). Huizenga, however, doesn't want to be "trapped" by the permanence of what's already been drawn or written. If his handwriting expresses his self, then this self is produced, not in a pure, originary moment of inscription, but only after a process of revision. A further result of Huizenga's decision to use Photoshop is that his original art—which, as suggested above, might be seen as the ultimate means of access to the embodied subjectivity of the artist—doesn't actually exist in physical form:

> I've had people inquire about buying a page and I have to break it to them that the page only really exists digitally. The original art exists on several different pieces of paper, often with major mistakes, and the lettering sometimes is on the back of some scratch paper. Some artists are concerned about this, but I've made my choice in favor of speed and flexibility. (Huizenga, personal communication)

Huizenga's original artwork "only really exists digitally;" there is no material, handwritten original to which the reproduced artwork on the published comics page corresponds. Unlike in the classic fantasy of handwriting, his artwork doesn't proceed directly from an originary act of physical engagement with the drawing tools; instead, it represents an assemblage of a variety of fragments which might be either physical or digital.

And yet readers still think Huizenga's art actually exists; more, they want to purchase it. The former perception arises because Huizenga's artwork looks handwritten. His use of Photoshop is sufficiently well-disguised as to go unnoticed (compare for example the recent work of Scott McCloud, where the use of graphics software is immediately obvious). He plays upon the assumption that the comic is a hand-drawn text, that the published comic is indexically connected to an artifact that bears the mark of the artist's hand. This assumption creates a desire for connection with the artist, a desire to see and even to own that originary artifact. In the case of Huizenga's work, the unsatisfiability of that desire makes it all the more powerful. The fantasy of handwriting, as deployed by Huizenga, owes much of its seductiveness to the fact that the reader knows it to be a fantasy.

I don't claim that there's anything harmful or misguided about the fantasies of handwriting we encounter in alternative comics; only that these fantasies need to be recognized as such. Critics have already recognized that the creation of the self in alternative comics is the result of a complex and deliberate negotiation, rather than a pure act of self-revelation. The autobiographical cartoonist, for example, doesn't simply reveal his or her past, but also shapes the past and filters it through his or her personal lens (Hatfield 108 – 127, Beaty 139 – 170). A gap exists between the truth of the cartoonist's past and the cartoonist's presentation of that past, and this gap is unbridgeable (we read Fun Home because we don't and can't know the truth behind Alison Bechdel's past; otherwise, the book would be redundant). We need to recognize that the same is true of the graphic presentation of the self in alternative comics via handwriting and hand-drawing. Just as the autobiographical comic exploits, but ultimately frustrates, the reader's desire to know the true meaning of the events it depicts, the handwritten comic appeals to, but can never satisfy, the reader's desire for connection with the body of the artist. As Chute argues, handwrittenness is a key element that distinguishes the contemporary alternative comic from the novel. If so, then comics scholars need to devote more attention to the way in which alternative and other comics play upon the reader's desire—and increasingly often, in the digital age, the reader's nostalgia—for the artist's living hand.

Notes

1. This is of course an oversimplification: see Hatfield 125 for a refutation of this reading of Pekar.
2. See, for example, Groth and Fiore 4
3. Incidentally, the same is often true of European art comics; see Beaty 4 – 5.
4. I'm grateful to Mr. Huizenga for kindly answering my inquiries.
5. Note that this comic book includes no page numbers.

6. Incidentally, "his" is correct here since all the *Pulverize* players depicted in the story are exclusively male; Requestra's one female employee tries playing the game but finds it unappealing.
7. I will demonstrate this claim at greater length in a forthcoming book chapter.

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Otaku Dreams: The Re-membering of Japan in Murakami Takashi's "Earth at My Window"

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Abstract Japanese pop culture artist Murakami Takashi's *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture* includes an explication of the artist's view of the relationship among *otaku* culture, post-World War II Japanese history, and the future national identity of Japan. In this article I argue that for Murakami the hope of a better future for Japan relies on the remasculinization of national identity. That remasculinization relies on the cultural imaginings of Japan's *otaku*. However, Murakami's account of *otaku* elides both the gender realities of the *otaku* community and the heterogeneity of that community; if the future of Japan is built on Murakami's account of *otaku*, that future has a shaky foundation.

Key words Murakami Takashi; Earth at my Window; otaku; national identity

"I Have a Message from Another Time." — *Twilight*, Electric Light Orchestra[1]

In the opening section of "Earth at My Window," the first essay in Murakami's *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture*, Murakami posits that "Japan may be the future of the world" (100). Murakami's essay is both an historical and a cultural project, an attempt to "find the kernels of our future by examining how indigenous Japanese imagery and aesthetics changed and accelerated after the war" (101). In his account of those changes and accelerations, Murakami posits *otaku*[2] culture as the historical culmination of post-World War II imagery and aesthetics, both condemning *otaku* culture for its obsession with *kawaii* (cute) merchandise and celebrating it for its exemplification of a uniquely Japanese culture. As Melek Ortabasi points out, Murakami knows that there is something wrong with *otaku* culture but "*Little Boy* is still a manifesto in defense of *otaku* cultural production" (282). More than that, the opening essay of *Little Boy* is a specific project, an attempt to position *otaku* as dreamers whose imaginative acts offer a better future for Japan, and in whose redemption lies the restoration of the Japanese nation-state. Murakami's argument begins by positing the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima as the beginning of *otaku* culture and culminates in his claim that while "it's night in America... Japan is always dreaming" ("Earth" 149). Specifically, it is *otaku* who are always dreaming, and it is their dreams that provide glimpses of the future of the nation.

Murakami's construction of history and emphasis on dreaming are reminiscent of Benedict Anderson's account of the production of nation-states in *Imagined Communities*, particularly given Murakami's explicit consideration of past, present, and future Japan. In this paper, I will explore the implications for Japanese national identity in the *otaku* dreams of Murakami Takashi's "Earth at my Window," and offer several criticisms of both Murakami's project and its implications. In order to do so, I will first attempt to clarify what is meant by *otaku* in Murakami's essay, review Murakami 's position in the world of Japanese contemporary culture, and link Murakami's essay and Anderson's work on the imagining of the nation-state. Both Partha Chatterjee and Marc Redfield offer important considerations of Anderson's seminal text, and I will briefly consider their work for implications relevant to Murakami's project. Anderson's, Chatterjee's, and Redfield's texts reveal the limited possibilities for an imagined community and the layers of privilege inherent in the imagining of the nation-state; these limits and layers provide useful guidelines in examining Murakami's "Earth at My Window."

Second, I will consider Murakami's essay as a historicizing project, one which establishes the atomic bombing of Hiroshima as the origin of *otaku* culture and post-World War II Japan, and the social redemption of *otaku* as the future of the nation. Murakami is not alone in claiming the atomic bomb as the beginning of post-World War II Japanese history, but his representations of the bomb clearly simplify and sanitize the actual event. Neither is he alone in arguing that *otaku* culture may provide insights to the future of Japan; however, his account of the *otaku* community is also a simplification.

Third, I will examine Murakami's discussion of Japan's "phantom limb" for its implications of what *otaku* and *otaku* dreams offer for the future of Japan. In this section of the paper, I will argue that the implicit masculinity of *otaku* culture informs what might be better understood as a re-membering of history than a representation of actual events. Re-membering history, constructing an explicitly masculine account of post-World War II Japan, permits the imagining of a future in which national identity is both limited and exclusive.

Finally, I will return to Murakami's account of *otaku* culture and the *otaku* community. While Murakami assumes a homogeneous *otaku* community, Melek Ortabasi and Alisa Freedman offer accounts of the *Densha Otoko* ("Train Man") phenomenon that reveal not only the existence of subgroups within the *otaku* community but also the differences and dissentions among those subgroups. Murakami's account of *otaku* elides both the gender realities of the *otaku* community and the heterogeneity of that community; if the future of Japan is built on Murakami's account of *otaku*, that future has a shaky foundation.

Otak-Who?[3]

> It is impossible to avoid *otaku* in any discussion of contemporary Japanese culture. (Murakami, 132)

"Earth at My Window" might be understood as an attempt to resolve misunderstand-

ings about *otaku* and *otaku* culture, and to establish the value and significance of *otaku culture*, *particularly in its promise of a better future*. *Moreover*, *Murakami*'s essay might be understood as an attempt to socially and morally redeem *otaku*; Mark McLelland, in his introduction to the April 2009 edition of *Intersections*, points out that the term has a rather dark history in Japan (par. 11). Such an understanding, though, raises the questions: What is *otaku* culture? and Who are *otaku*? More specifically, who are the *otaku* in Murakami's "Earth at My Window"?

In her article "National History as *otaku* Fantasy," Ortabasi writes, "for the uninitiated, the term *otaku* is commonly used to designate a rabid fan/hobbyist of anime, manga, computer games and related genres" (277). Lawrence Eng agrees, noting that while *otaku* is now a contested term, its meaning shifting with context and place, it began as a label for specialized consumers of specific media products (3); those consumers were recognized for their "monomaniacal focus" and social maladjustment (11 – 12). It is important to note that this process of labeling began within *otaku* subculture: Sawaragi Noi points out that "*otaku*—literally, 'your home,'—is derived from a habit of the subculture crowd, whose members called each other by this generic pronoun instead of using their individual names" (188 – 9). Such recognition is important given the explicitly negative representation of *otaku* through mainstream media following the arrest of Miyazaki Tsutomu, a young man portrayed as having an obsession with anime and manga, for a series of child murders from 1988 to 1989 (Ortabasi 278), and the 1995 Sarin attacks on the Tokyo subway performed by Aum Shinrikyō, a "recognized *otaku* cult" (Murakami, "Earth" 121). The in-group labeling of *otaku* by *otaku*, with its implications of competitive but harmless fandom, gave way to the out-group labeling of *otaku* by mainstream media, with its implications of dangerous obsession. Moreover, as Ortabasi points out, linking *otaku* culture with Miyazaki's horrifying crimes "caused the *otaku* to be gendered primarily male in the public imagination" (278). That gendering of *otaku* persists. While Tomoko Aoyama points out that female *otaku* now outnumber males in both cultural consumption and production (qtd. in McLelland, par. 12), Freedman argues that contemporary media "present female *otaku* as anomalies rather than role models" (par. 40). Media representations and the perspectives of non-*otaku*, it seem, outweigh the gender realities of *otaku* cultural consumption and production.

While Eng emphasises the imprecise qualities of the term and the importance of determining whether it is applied by non-*otaku* or by *otaku* themselves, Ortabasi emphasizes the out-group perspective, writing of the media coverage of Miyazaki's arrest that "overexposure has turned the *otaku* into a personification of anxiety about the nation's future" (279). In "Earth at My Window," Murakami reiterates Ortabasi's emphasis on the negative connotations of being *otaku*; he writes, "Japanese society has consistently ridiculed *otaku* as a negative element, driving such personalities into the far corners of the social fabric" (132). However, Murakami also reiterates Ortabasi's claim that *otaku* somehow personify the nation. In distinguishing subculture from *otaku* culture, Murakami defines subculture as "cool culture from abroad" and *otaku* culture as "uncool indigenous Japanese culture" (132). For Murakami, the distinction is essential: *otaku* may be socially alienated but they are essentially and uniquely

Japanese.

There is, though, an inherent tension in Murakami's definition of *otaku* culture. The negative connotations of "uncool" contrast with the positive connotations of "indigenous Japanese"; a similar tension is evoked through Murakami's claim that the latest generation of *otaku* has "ceased to attract social disdain" and has integrated "thoroughly into the mainstream" (133). This characterization of *otaku* culture is seemingly at odds with Murakami's account of *otaku* as being driven "into the far corners of the social fabric." It is, nonetheless, a critical ambivalence. Murakami can hardly posit *otaku* as a necessary step toward a better future for Japan without somehow redeeming them from their association with a serial killer and a fanatical, murderous cult. Murakami's claims that the latest generation of *otaku* is both essentially Japanese and has integrated into the mainstream of Japanese society is the extension of a historical timeline: *otaku* began as harmless obsessives, became seen as dangerous sociopaths, and now represent an opportunity for contemporary Japanese culture. Murakami may condemn *otaku* for their adoration of kawaii culture (Ortabasi 282) but he celebrates them for their vision of the future. The problem of kawaii, as McLelland writes, is that it is "a ubiquitous and hence extremely unstable signifier" (par. 3). As an essential part of Japan's "gross national cool" (McGray qtd. in Freedman, par. 29), kawaii culture transfers from products and merchandise to the national identity of Japan (McLelland, par 8); the result is a nation-state grounded in undetermined, unstable values. In this light, Murakami's condemnation of kawaii culture is the condemnation of a nation that has lost its stability and uniqueness. His celebration of *otaku* culture is the unveiling of an opportunity to restore Japan.

"Japanese People Are Too Unaware of History" (Murakami qtd. in Looser, 92)

The simultaneous condemnation and celebration of *otaku* in Murakami's essay, the ambivalence of claiming both positive and negative connotations of the term, echoes Murakami's own ambivalent status as *otaku*. As Ortabasi points out, Murakami "might deny that he is an *otaku* in the strict sense, but he is unquestionably indebted to the aesthetics of manga and anime" (282). Moreover, as the foreword to the text specifically states, *Little Boy* is an exploration of *otaku* "and their influence upon Japan's artistic vanguard of the 1990s and today" (vi). Murakami, it seems, might not identify himself as *otaku* but he is very much willing to speak on their behalf. Given Murakami's status and success in the world of contemporary pop culture, his voice is not only likely to be heard but respected.

In a 2006 review of *Little Boy*, Marilyn Ivy describes Murakami Takashi as "the regnant *enfant terrible* of Japanese contemporary art" (499). Ivy's choice of terms is, of course, a reference to the book's title, which, in turn, is a reference to the nickname given to the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Nonetheless, Ivy's point is clear: Murakami occupies a powerful and unique position in contemporary Japanese pop culture. He is a prolific artist, a successful entrepreneur, and the subject of dozens of articles and reviews; a recent curriculum vitae posted on V Gallery's web site includes 14 densely packed pages listing Murakami's exhibits, collections, publica-

tions, awards, interviews, and articles. Annual sales of his artwork and merchandise are in the millions of dollars and he has partnered with Louis Vuitton and Kanye West in producing, respectively, limited-edition handbags and a music video.

Sawaragi Noi, in an essay on Japanese Neo Pop, presages Ivy's description of Murakami within the world of Japanese contemporary art: "Japanese Neo Pop is a distinctively Japanese form of artistic expression... rooted in Japanese subculture[4] and perfectly exemplified by the work of Takashi Murakami [sic]" (187). Sawaragi might be forgiven some hyperbole, given that his account appears in Murakami's *Little Boy*; what remains clear, however, is Murakami's exalted position in contemporary Japanese pop culture.

Murakami's words, then, are likely to be understood as representative of *otaku* culture. What Murakami is interested in doing with those words, it seems, is establishing a history of *otaku*, one that includes the vision of an *otaku*-grounded future. Moreover, Murakami's project seems to be one of conflating *otaku* history with post-World War II Japanese history. Thomas Looser, in an analysis of contemporary Japanese culture and its relationship to Japanese history, argues that Murakami's art can be understood as a "remedy" to an ignorance of history among Japanese people. Looser points out that "Murakami seems to believe that art potentially has real social and political force;" presumably, that force can be channelled to educate Japanese people and offer an escape from the paralysis of ignorance (92).

Murakami's historical project is consistent with other literature around the development of *otaku* but only to a point; the project deviates in explicitly claiming that *otaku* culture offers an opportunity for a better future for Japan. It is precisely that deviation, that attempt to redeem *otaku* and position them as contemporary Japan's hope for the future, that I am most interested in considering here. Murakami's vision of an *otaku*-grounded future is a vision of a redeemed nation, a Japan made unique through its contemporary culture. It is a vision made possible only through a very carefully constructed history.

"The Nation is 'an Imagined Political Community'" (Anderson 6)

In his influential text, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson argues that the nation is not an inevitable political community but the product of very specific historical conditions. For Anderson, the nation is an arbitrary construct, a community that reveals the dynamics of power that underlie its formation even as it reinforces those dynamics. In considering the nation and the means of its formation, Anderson offers this definition:

> [The nation is] an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion... The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, bounda-

> ries beyond which lie other nations... It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. (6 – 7; emphasis original)

Of these three characteristics of the nation, that it is "imagined," "limited," and "sovereign," the first has occasioned the most discussion. In a post-colonial critique of *Imagined Communities*, Partha Chatterjee affirms Anderson's characterization of the nation as imagined, writing that nations "were not the determinate products of given sociological conditions such as language or race or religion; they had been, in Europe and everywhere else in the world, imagined into existence" (406). The imagining of the nation, though, is only made possible through the specific media shared by the nation's citizens. Anderson argues that the nation is reified through its citizens' imaginative acts of, for example, reading the newspaper (33). It is only through imaginative acts associated with the media shared by the nation's citizens that such a thing as the nation, with qualities that distinguish it from other nations, actually comes to exist.

Marc Redfield, in an analysis of Anderson's text, posits that "all communities... are in some sense imagined... But the nation is radically imagined: it cannot be experienced immediately as a perception" (49; emphasis original). Unlike a village or a small town, the nation cannot be experienced by its citizens: it is simply too large. The nation's size, though, is not merely geographical or physical but also conceptual, thus requiring radical acts of imagination (rather than, say, radical acts of travel). Those radical acts might substitute themselves as experiences of the national community by its citizens but they should be recognized as "grounded in and produced by a systematic misrecognition" of the nation's origins (54). The imagining of the nation constitutes the origin of the nation but disguises itself as a different kind of mental act: recognition.

Redfield's and Chatterjee's considerations of Anderson's text are perhaps most useful for their troubling of the assumptions around the imaginative act. In particular, Chatterjee raises the questions: Who imagines? Who is not permitted to imagine? and What are the limits of imagination? The answers seem to be linked to Redfield's qualification of imagining the nation as "patriarchal fantasy." Redfield points out that "it is part of the achievement of *Imagined Communities* to have shown how poorly grounded, yet also how insistent, that patriarchal fantasy is" (59). The nation, as a function of the dynamics of power that precede it, cannot help but embody those dynamics, despite their inherent arbitrariness. The answer to the first question posed above seems to be: men in positions of power in society. The answer to the second: everyone else. The answer to the last, then, is: any community that maintains men in positions of power.

Interestingly, Chatterjee writes that "as history, nationalism's autobiography is fundamentally flawed" (407). It is an important point to emphasize in Anderson's account of the nation as an imagined community, one which is consistent with Redfield's point about the poorly grounded yet insistent patriarchal fantasy. The history of

a given nation, that nation's "autobiography," is both arbitrary in its construction and necessary to the imagining of that nation.

In this light, Anderson's emphasis on the historical conditions of imagining the nation is immediately relevant to Murakami's history of *otaku* culture. Murakami's reference to post-war Japan's "American puppet government" (101), along with his insistence that "Japan is now enmeshed in the search for what it means to have a self" (131), evokes Anderson's characteristic of the nation as sovereign. The newspaper as the basis for imagining the nation easily gives way to Murakami's contemporary anime and manga. And, in "Earth at My Window," Murakami is intent on establishing the historical conditions that will permit a very specific imagining of the nation: the future of Japan.

In the Beginning[5]:

> On August 6, 1945, for the first time in actual warfare, an atomic bomb, nicknamed "Little Boy," exploded over the city of Hiroshima... After the tragic explosive-destructive-Whiteout! of the bombs, only burned-out rubble remained: wasteland upon wasteland, utterly vacant land. (Murakami, 100)

Like any good history, Murakami's account of *otaku* culture includes an origin, an absolute beginning. In choosing the atomic bomb as the origin of *otaku*, Murakami explicitly locates his history within an established *otaku* timeline, borrowing from the opening of DaiCon IV, the 1983 science fiction convention and *otaku* landmark. Emphasising the importance of the convention to *otaku* culture, Murakami provides more than three pages of detailed description of the opening, animated sequence, including this account of the last scene:

> the fundamental metaphor for any Japanese creator, the atomic bomb—our symbol of "destruction and rebirth"—explodes in an unexpected way... everything is destroyed by (what can only be construed as) an atomic bomb. In the ensuing whirlwind, petals from Japan's national flower, the cherry blossom, engulf everything in a blast of pink; the streets become scorched earth, mountains are burnt bare, and the whole world becomes a wasteland. Amidst this devastation, Spaceship *DAICON*, symbolizing *otaku*, floats in midair emitting a powerful beam—the beam of science-fiction fans. The world revives, giant trees rise in a flash, and Mother Earth is once again bedecked in green. (117)

In both of these accounts, the bomb dropped on Hiroshima may be a symbol of "destruction and rebirth" but the emphasis is clearly on the latter. In explicating the historical references of *otaku* culture, Looser argues that Murakami's focus on the atomic bombings "forms an absolute beginning... [It] serves as a single origin to a clear, unified narrative of modern national identity" (107). Ivy supports Looser's contention that Murakami's representations of the atomic bomb constitute not only the origin of *otaku* culture but of the contemporary Japanese nation; she writes that "Murakami

means for us to see that one thing follows another, to see that everything is related to everything else, with every aesthetic road leading back to its origin in nuclear explosion" (501). Murakami's account of *otaku* culture implies, as Ivy points out, a historical continuity; that historical continuity clearly relies on the atomic bomb as an absolute origin, an event without antecedent or precedent.

Ivy clarifies her criticism of Murakami's historical project by locating it within the "well-worn politics of the nation-state and postwar history" (502). Murakami's insistence, she writes, on installing "this well-rehearsed origin narrative as explanatory for all of Japanese aesthetic culture today... [is] an erasure of mediation" (502). Moreover, while he seems to be finally and explicitly relating contemporary Japanese art to politics, he does so according to a historical sense as one dimensional and flattened as the acrylics he produces... Aesthetic possibilities mutate but the historico-political narrative stays the same (502).

Murakami's history of *otaku* culture is flawed, a simplification that seeks to reinscribe the historico-political narrative of a unique nation. That simplification is clear in Murakami's victimless representations of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

Importantly, Murakami specifies that the animated "atomic-bomb-grade explosion" of DaiCon IV "hits an unpopulated city" (116); similarly, all that remains after the actual "tragic explosive-destructive-Whiteout!" is "utterly vacant land" (100). These representations of the atomic bomb occur in a mysteriously empty city and leave behind an equally empty nation; they fail to include the victims and survivors of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. This failure is a deliberate act of forgetting and also one of cleansing; as such, it is entirely consistent with Redfield's analysis of Anderson's imagined nation. Writing that "nationalism needs to be able to acknowledge and quarantine loss" (71), Redfield emphasises the appropriation inherent in historical representation: loss must be acknowledged, but it also must be limited and contained. In Murakami's account of the atomic bomb, loss is revised as an opportunity to form the basis of the imagined nation; the historical representation of the atomic bomb as origin is already a misrecognition. Moreover, it is misrecognition of Japan as a nation made feminine by the atomic bomb. Japan as "utterly vacant land" is unspoiled, virgin territory and, as such, allows the possibility of a reconstruction or restoration of masculine identity.

Murakami, of course, is not alone in constructing a history that permits such misrecognition. In a consideration of revisionism in Sino-Japanese history, He Yinan points out that "remembering the past is not a simple act of recording historical events, but a process of constant reconstruction of these events in light of present social and political changes" (65). In light of He's analysis, Murakami might be better understood as a mythologizer than a historian, someone who "[tends] to portray history as a one-dimensional picture, imposing a subjectively predetermined, often simplistic theme on the otherwise complex and multifaceted historical process" (65). Strangely, though, it is precisely that simplicity that Sawaragi appeals to in support of Murakami's construction of history. Wondering how the memory of the war and the atomic bombs ended up "confined to the utterly depthless, sleek, and Superflat space of manga and anime" (202), Sawaragi bizarrely claims that it is within the space of

Otaku culture that true history endures (205). Murakami's work, then, not only exemplifies otaku culture but also permits an understanding of the true history of post-World War II Japan, at least from an *otaku* perspective.

Re-membering the Nation

"There is a pun implicit in the notion of re-membering... the use of 'member' to mean the male sexual organ suggests that to 're-member' is also to reattach the penis onto the body of a male" (Michelson 231). In her discussion of Cartesian rationalism and its influence on the epistemological foundations of contemporary education, Elana Michelson argues for an understanding of knowledge as necessarily gendered. For Michelson, "re-membering" the history of contemporary Western epistemology requires acknowledging the power and privilege of men over women. "Re-membering" is not merely a pun but an explication of that power and privilege in the relationship between memory and remembering: "the reattachment of [the] penis becomes an oddly appropriate symbol for the re-location in particular human bodies and particular social histories" (231). The recognition of the implicit masculinity of historical knowledge, the "re-membering" of history, allows the possibility of refuting that masculinity and creating a space of memory that permits both male and female experience.

Murakami's history of *otaku* culture offers no such possibility. Instead, his vision of the future of Japan is based precisely on the re-masculinization of history and the nation: it is the very power and privilege of male *otaku* that Murakami posits as the hope for the future. The problem of contemporary Japanese culture, and hence the problem of contemporary Japan, is its "significant degree of sexual incapacity" and, more specifically, its "impotence" (137). In Murakami's eyes, Japan is a "castrated nation-state" (141). As it is for Michelson, Murakami's solution is a process of "re-membering"; however, Murakami's attempt to reattach the penis to Japan is not an attempt to create a space that permits both male and female experience. Instead, it is an attempt to create an exclusively masculine space, a nation and national citizen that are inherently male.

Interestingly, Murakami includes a discussion of the inadequacy of the Japanese national body in "Earth at My Window." For Murakami, "phantom limb" syndrome, the perception of sensations from a missing limb, provides an analogy for the incomplete post-World War II nation. Writing that "Japan has continued to operate with a phantom arm throughout the postwar era" (139-140), Murakami posits *otaku* and *otaku* culture as a remedy, albeit one which requires the acceptance of a missing arm. *Otaku* culture, in its apparently truthful representations of contemporary Japan and post-World War II history, permits the recognition of Japan's missing limb, the inadequacy of the national body. It is a recognition that has only recently become possible because " until now, Japan has rejected *otaku* profoundly. Why? Because Japan didn't want to acknowledge its missing arm. Because we didn't want to accept that our bodies were inadequate "(140 – 141). What has changed, it seems, is the ability of *otaku* to overcome that rejection, to force a recognition of Japan's missing limb.

In a fascinating consideration of the historical dynamics underlying the contem-

porary mail-order bride industry in Japan, Olena Guseva argues that the fragmentation and restoration of Japanese bodies occur along gender lines. Guseva points out that representations of female *hibakusha* (those affected by the atomic bombs) emphasize their damaged bodies; female *hibakusha* are exposed to the reader as "the Other—the opposite to the whole body idealized and promoted as the epitome of humanity" (15). This exposure is consistent with the way that "the bodies of mail-order brides... become texts that project the insecurities of the societal self-consciousness, desires and norms" (17). The implication of Guseva's argument is that it is through this fragmentation, this projection of insecurities on the female body, that the male body is able to restore and represent itself as whole. In this context, Murakami's identification of contemporary, post-World War II Japan as feminized, and therefore incomplete, allows the possibility of a complete, re-masculinized nation in the future. In light of Japan's "impotence," its status as a "castrated nation-state," the nation's missing limb may not be an arm. Instead, it seems more likely that Japan's inadequacy, as a national body, lies in its missing penis. Murakami's re-membering of history, his redemption of *Otaku* culture, is then an attempt to attach *otaku* as penis to the national body. *otaku* culture does not merely permit the recognition of the castrated nation but offers the possibility of re-masculinization.

Murakami's attempt to construct a history and future of post-World War II Japan through the historicization of *otaku* culture is hardly unique. In his article "Framing Manga," Eldad Nakar writes that popular manga is a "powerful [way] to access the Japanese people's recollections of World War II" (177) and that "manga [serves] as collective representations of how most Japanese perceived World War II in the post-war periods" (191). Leaving aside the assumptions that he makes in positing manga fans as representative of the entire national population, Nakar's article is noteworthy for its emphasis on post-World War II history as a subject for contemporary Japanese culture. Moreover, Shimazu Naoko, in a consideration of representations of history in popular Japanese culture, points out that while the government is influential in "redesigning" the past (101), "the Japanese case has shown that popular culture can bring to bear an inordinate amount of influence in creating and moulding representations of the past" (116). Murakami's project may not be unique, but in light of Nakar's and Shimazu's insistence on the power of *otaku* culture, Murakami's construction of *otaku* history, from the atomic bomb to the re-membered nation, is not easily dismissed, particularly given Murakami's own standing in the worlds of *otaku* culture and international art.

Otaku vs. *Otaku*

Nonetheless, Murakami's history is vulnerable to several criticisms. His claims that Miyazaki Hayao's animated film *Howl's Moving Castle* offers "vivid renderings of a contemporary Japanese ethos" (104) and that "the protagonist's quest for the meaning of life... mirrors the same quest of contemporary Japanese" (103) may be safely assumed within the world of *otaku* culture; it is not at all apparent, though, that Murakami's claims can be accepted outside that world. *Howl's Moving Castle* might offer an opportunity for an imaginative act, Murakami's dreaming, similar to that of reading

the newspaper in Anderson's imagining of the nation. But just as Anderson's analysis of the nation-state reveals the layers of privilege inherent in the process of imagining the nation, so too does Murakami's dreaming of the future of Japan. Specifically, Murakami's dreaming is conducted exclusively by masculinized *otaku*; the bodies of the future nation and the national citizen are both male. Murakami's re-membering of the nation requires an explicit construction and, far from providing an unquestionably better future for the nation, that explicit process might result in a destabilization of the Japanese body as male, a refutation of the *otaku*-grounded future. Given Guseva's explication of the fragmentary objectification of women's bodies in the restoration of male identity, Murakami's re-membering of Japan seems to require not just an exclusion of female identities and bodies but the objectification and fracturing of those identities and bodies.

Even within the world of *otaku*, it is not clear that Murakami's insistence on *otaku* culture as an opportunity for a better future is well-grounded. In her history of *otaku* culture, Ortabasi describes "a supposedly real *otaku* identified by his online username 'Densha otoko' ('Train Man'[6])" (278): Train Man's story became a bestselling novel, manga series, television series, and a movie. Unlike Murakami's future of the nation, one shaped by the power of *otaku* culture, Train Man's story culminates in his abandonment of *otaku* culture: "In the end, the protagonist is 'cured' of his *otaku* lifestyle and wins the girl, thus reentering the fold of the respectable citizenry" (Ortabasi 279). This version of *otaku* redemption is worth emphasizing, differing as it does from Murakami's version. Freedman points out that once Train Man won the girl, "his task was now to advance into 'mainstream' society... leaving his former life behind... Although a hero, he was no longer [*otaku*]" (par. 12). Countering Murakami's claim that the latest generation of *otaku* has already integrated into the mainstream, Train Man's story offers such integration at the expense of *otaku* lifestyle, reinforcing the rejection of *otaku* and countering their exemplification of the contemporary Japanese citizen.

Interestingly, Freedman's account of Train Man's story parallels Murakami's account of *otaku* and *otaku* culture. Freedman argues that Japanese mass media espouses "the belief that *otaku* are a cause and symptom of the possible breakdown of Japanese society" and points out that "prejudices against *otaku* have even resulted in hate crimes" (par. 30). Train Man's story, however, "shows that an *otaku* has the potential to become a new kind of ideal man" (par. 35). Further, "*Train Man* has had a lasting influence on the ways that *otaku* culture has been examined in order to find possible solutions to pressing national issues" (par. 44). In framing *otaku* as alienated and uncomfortable in mainstream Japanese society, *Train Man* nonetheless establishes *otaku* as essentially decent and good, and thus able to better themselves and integrate in that mainstream. In both Freedman's and Murakami's accounts, *otaku* culture is a possible resource in determining the future of the nation; however, Freedman's emphasis on Train Man's need to "move outside his community" (par. 13) is at odds with Murakami's insistence that the possible restoration of Japan lies within *otaku* culture.

Freedman's consideration of *Train Man* reveals an *otaku* culture inconsistent with

Murakami's account of that culture, not only in terms of the relationship between *otaku and "mainstream" society but also in terms of the otaku* community. While Murakami assumes that *otaku* are a homogeneous group, Freedman points out that "*otaku* are divided into subgroups" (par. 10) which differ in their reactions to *Train Man*: "not all *otaku* have felt positively about the mentality depicted in *Train Man* or the discourse on masculinity it engendered. Many instead have expressed a sense of pride at being part of a community apart from greater society and were angered by the suggestion that they should change" (par. 38).

Not only is Murakami's account of *otaku* troubling for its elision of the gender realities of the *otaku* population but also its failure to recognize differing and dissenting voices within the community. Murakami's account of *otaku*, then, is not only ambivalent in its condemnation and celebration, but also fundamentally problematic in its distortion and simplification of the realities of the *otaku* community.

Murakami's history of *otaku* culture places *otaku* at the centre of contemporary Japanese life; it is *otaku* culture that offers the possibility of a better future in the shape of a restored national body. Murakami's insistence on the historical necessity of *otaku* culture even allows the possibility that "an *otaku* lifestyle…may well be appropriated in the future world as an exemplary model of rehabilitation" (141). Such a possibility, though, is troubling. Murakami's project is founded on an historical appropriation, a simplified representation of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima as the origin of *otaku* culture. Further, the *otaku* who dream the future while America sleeps are clearly, and exclusively, male; the dream of the future of Japan consists in the re-membering of the bodies of the nation and the national citizen. The process of dreaming and its national product explicitly exclude the participation and recognition of women. For Murakami, the future of Japan may be *otaku* but that future is not better than the present, or even the past.

Notes

1. Electric Light Orchestra's "Twilight" was used as the soundtrack for the opening animation sequence at the 1983 DaiCon IV science fiction convention in Osaka, "one of the most famous *otaku* events of all time" (Ortabasi 279).

2. The foreword to *Little Boy* provides this definition of *otaku*: "roughly translated as 'geeks' or 'pop culture fanatics'" (vi). In this paper, I will attempt to provide a definition of *otaku* more specific to Murakami's "Earth at My Window."

3. This pun is borrowed from the title of Lawrence Eng's paper: "Otak-Who? Technoculture, youth, consumption, and resistance: American representations of a Japanese youth subculture."

4. Sawaragi notes: "I use 'subculture' in this text as a synonym for *otaku* culture" (206)

5. The following quotation is the beginning of the text of Murakami's "Earth at My Window."

6. Freedman discusses the differences among the original online posts, novel, manga, television episodes, and movie, in her article "Train Man and the Gender Politics of Japanese '*otaku*' Culture: The Rise of New Media, Nerd Heroes and Consumer Communities." The plot points discussed here are consistent across the various media versions.

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The Politics of *One Piece*: Political Critique in Oda's *Water Seven*

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Abstract *One Piece* is a long-running shōnen manga series that deals with many political themes. Shōnen manga is typically defined as manga for boys, but people of all ages and genders frequently read it. Shōnen manga is therefore analyzed in terms of its key themes, identified as hard work, victory, and friendship. *One Piece* uses these themes in a basic formula in which the heroic pirate crew faces off against a series of increasingly powerful villains. Each member of the crew represents specific values, and the enemies represent the antithesis of these values. Combat is ideological, with the heroes victory reaffirming the primacy of the values represented by the thesis. The are Water Seven is investigated, as is its use of characters to explore the relationships between the individual and the state in terms of national security. In *One Piece*, it is found unacceptable to sacrifice individual rights of the innocent for a perceived improvement in the security of other people.
Key words Oda Eiichiro; *One Piece*; Water Seven; political critique

2010 was a banner year for the Japanese comic series ワンピース (*One Piece*). The series, written and illustrated by creator Oda Eiichiro, has been serialized in ジャンプ (*Shūkan Shōnen Jump*, *Weekly Boys' Jump*) since August 4, 1997. *One Piece* has been popular in Japan throughout its serialization, but in the last year, the signs of its cultural and economic success have become impossible to ignore. In the year alone, *One Piece* sold 20 million volumes ("One Piece sells"), bringing the total number of volumes in print to a total of more than 200 million ("One Piece manga has"). *One Piece* also has extremely popular spin-offs in the form of a weekly television show, ten movies, several soundtracks, and countless varieties of merchandise. However, it would be a mistake to assume that it only a success as a children's multimedia franchise: *One Piece* has become so established in Japanese pop culture consciousness that its characters are considered sought-after spokespersons for Nissan's new Serena minivan ("One Piece, Nissan collaborate") and working women are being asked by marketing firms which male *One Piece* character would make the best boyfriend ("Working women polled"). Despite *One Piece*'s ubiquity in Japanese popular culture, very little has been written on the manga (comics) series that has grown so popular over the preceding thirteen years and some sixty paperback volumes of printed comics. It is my intention in this article to argue that *One Piece* uses the structure of shōnen manga to express political arguments. First, I will introduce the genre of comics to which *One Piece* belongs, shōnen manga, (boys' comics). I will

then explore the narrative themes common to shōnen manga, and how *One Piece* uses these themes to introduce and advance political statements. Finally, I will analyze a single important arc in *One Piece*'s story, known as the Water 7 arc, and discuss the stance on individual rights that Oda makes within this arc.

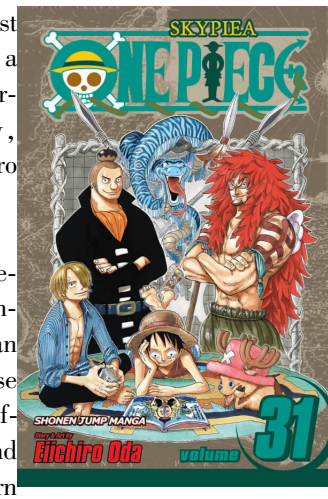
Shōnen Manga as a Genre

While manga series are divided into genres based on subject matter, they are also divided into categories based upon intended audience. The four primary divisions are shōnen(boys'), shōjo(girls'), seinen(men's) and josei(women's). Of these, it is shōnen series that produce the majority of internationally licensed properties for manga, and their anime and video game, and other multimedia adaptations (Thompson 33). Popular series *Dragonball Z*, *Naruto*, *Death Note*, *Fullmetal Alchemist*, and *Bleach* are also shōnen titles. According to Thompson, "modern day shōnen manga have vast diversity, ranging from comedy to sports, romance to hobby/occupational stories, detective stories to battle manga" (33). Shōnen manga is defined as manga specifically aimed at an audience of young and teenage boys, but in actuality, shōnen manga is read by people of all ages and genders. In fact, of the girls polled by marketing firm Oricon, a majority reported that *Weekly Shōnen Jump* was their favorite manga magazine ("Oricon"). If shōnen cannot truly be defined in terms of specific subject matter or intended audience, it is necessary to define other distinctive traits in order to discuss the structures and tropes of shōnen manga.

One of the most popular shōnen magazines is the previously mentioned *Weekly Shōnen Jump*, in which *One Piece* is serialized. While the magazine's sales peaked in the mid 1990s, it is still sells 3 million copies per week, and is considered an important trendsetter and cultural institution. (Thompson 339). *Jump*, founded in 1968, originally found it difficult to attract talented artists, most of whom worked with more established manga magazines that dated back to the postwar period (Schodt, "Dreamland" 89). According to Schodt, *Jump* "located newer, younger [artists], helped them develop their own identity, and contracted with them so they would continue with the magazine, even if they later became successful" ("Dreamland" 89). Due to this hands-on influence from editorial, *Shonen Jump* "contains some of the most individualistic art styles and most formulaic stories" (Thompson 338).

There is, in fact, an editorial policy that requires three specific themes of all works serialized in the magazine. This policy, which has inspired many imitators, was developed from a survey sent out soon after the magazine's launch. Readers were asked three questions, which Frederick Schodt translates as "What word warms your heart most?", "What do you feel is most important?", and "What makes you the happiest?" ("Dreamland" 89). The three answers they received, respectively, were yūjō (friendship), doryoku("hard work"), and shōri(victory). These three themes are required in all *Shōnen Jump* titles, including *One Piece*. Additionally, because *Shōnen Jump*'s massive sales and popularity sets standards for the rest of shōnen manga, these three elements work as an excellent starting point for defining the thematic structure of shōnen manga.

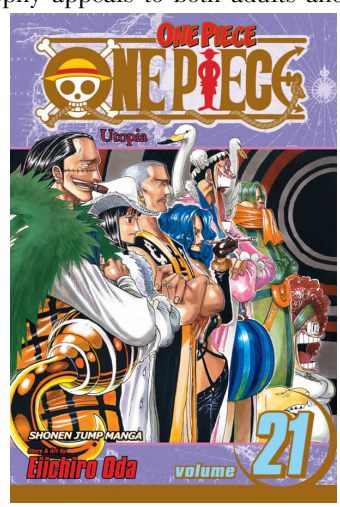
Let us first consider doryoku, or "hard work," the purpose of which in shōnen

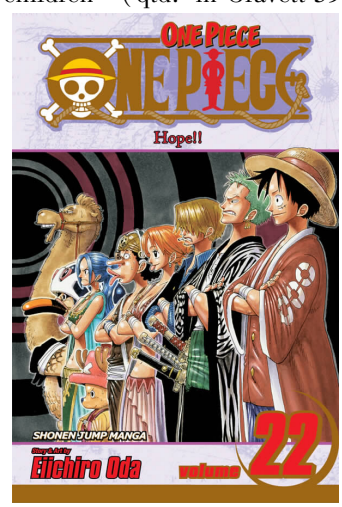


manga is the accomplishment of a goal or dream. Most shōnen manga focus on the hero's struggle to achieve a goal he sets for himself early on in the narrative. Referring to Joseph Campbell's idea of the heroic journey, Drummond-Matthews contrasts American style superhero comics with their shōnen counterparts:

> Unlike American comic heroes, shōnen manga heroes spend the bulk of their narrative time in the initiation phase of the hero's journey, while American heroes spend most of their time in the return phase of the journe... American heroes are often self-made; they are heroes not because they learned and grew and overcame difficulty. They are either born heroes, or, at least, the reader's first encounter with them is as the heroes they are. (73)

Superman doesn't spend the majority of the narrative wishing he were a superhero and working toward this goal: his goal is to exercise his already-existing powers. In contrast, a shōnen hero often wants to become a hero, or to excel in his field, and he must expend a great deal of effort and overcome countless obstacles to achieve this goal. *Shōnen Jump* editor Hiroki Gotō describes the publication's philosophy as, "If you work hard, you can accomplish anything. That's what our stories are saying. And that philosophy appeals to both adults and children" (qtd. in Gravett 59).





The second theme characteristic of shōnen manga is shōri, or victory. To have a victor, the narrative must contain competition, and nearly all shōnen manga deal with conflict and competition. Many series feature physical competition in the form of fighting, whether it be with fists, swords, magic, or some combination thereof. Sports manga featuring tournaments for baseball, soccer, kendo, and boxing have been popular since the 1950s (Gravett 54). Some series focus on games such as go

or shōgi, or battles of wits between detectives and criminals. Others still center on romantic conquests, and competition between suitors for the most attractive date. Rather than a series of random episodes featuring conflict, almost all shōnen manga are long form "story-comics" focusing on the character's growth (Schodt "Manga", 12). Drummond-Mathews describes shōnen manga in terms of a series of obstacles: "Each obstacle is greater than the next, but they build on each other in a stepwise fashion rather than randomly—which is to say that each is related to the other, proceeds from characters' attempts to achieve their goals, and relates directly, not tangentially, to the characters' goals" (72). Rather than focus on competition between a set selection of rivals or villains, shōnen series feature a series of temporary rivals, each stronger than the last. The hero is at first taken aback by his rival's strength, cunning, or charms. By learning from his mistakes and working hard, the hero learns to overcome his rival, gaining strength or knowledge in the process. The hero might exult in his victory for a brief time, but the reader knows that in the next chapter, the hero will be challenged by an even deadlier foe or much more clever opponent.

Sometimes the defeated foe will learn the error of his or her ways, or learn of an even greater opponent, and join the hero on his quest. The befriending of formal rivals is a staple of shōnen manga (Thompson 338) and an excellent demonstration of the ideal of yūjō, or friendship. While on a quest, shōnen heroes build a team of like-minded comrades: some may start the quest in competition with the hero, and others will join as the journey progresses. As competition gets more severe, and the price of victory grows ever higher, the hero requires a powerful group of friends to assist him.

Thus most shōnen series feature a potentially endless iterative cycle: the hero progresses on his quest to achieve his dream, and encounters a rival. He bests his rival in competition, and the rival joins the hero in his quest to achieve his dream. The two friends then encounter a newer, more powerful rival, and the two must work together to best this new foe. Once this new foe is defeated, a third companion might join the group. This cycle will continue, with both allies and enemies growing in power, until the hero's dream is accomplished. While this description may at first seem overly reductive, this basic formula is used, and embraced, by Oda in his writing for *One Piece*. I will now consider how *One Piece* itself fits in with these three themes. Before discussing the story in detail, however, I will note that there is some controversy about the proper translation or Romanization of character and place names. For the sake of clarity and consistency, I will be using the Romanized versions of names and places provided by the Viz Media English translation of the manga.

The Formula of *One Piece*

Gold Roger, the notorious pirate, "had achieved it all. Wealth, fame, and power had all been his" (Oda v1, 5). The so-called "King of the Pirates" had been humbled, captured by the Navy of the World Government. His public execution was held in his hometown, and was intended to demonstrate the power and authority of the World Government, and to act as a deterrent to would be pirates. In a great reversal of expectations, Gold Roger manages to ignite a wave of lawlessness across the seas of the world from his execution scaffold: "My treasure," he says, "why, it's right where I left it. It's yours if you can find it, but you'll have to search the whole world" (Oda v1, 6). The search of Gold Roger's fabled "One Piece" treasure begins what is to be known as "The Great Age of Piracy." Twenty years later, in the midst of this new age, we follow the adventures of seventeen-year-old Monkey D. Luffy in his quest to find the *One Piece* and become the new King of the Pirates.

Luffy's goal and dream is clearly spelled out in the narrative: it is to become the new king of the pirates. As often as this is said in the narrative, however, it is an oddly ambiguous goal. One of the great ironies of the series is the fact that Luffy is actually quite a poor pirate. He rarely finds treasure, never raids other ships, and never attacks the vulnerable. This is not done to make the series appropriate for a young audience, as the majority of pirates in the series are shown killing innocents and looting cities. The goofy, spirited Luffy seems to care more about food than riches, so it's unusual to see his devotion to his quest to find the *One Piece*. A fascinating clue to his motivations can be found in volume 52 of the series, when Luffy meets Gold Roger's first mate. With Luffy and his crew on the cusp of the "New World," the First Mate warns Luffy that "the New World surpasses even your wildest imagination. The enemies there will be strong, too. Do you think you can conquer such powerful oceans?" Luffy responds, "I'm not going to conquer anything. The one who is most free is the Pirate King" (Oda v52, 97). Oda has yet to spell out the exact nature of what the Pirate King represents, but Luffy's desire for freedom, and Roger's challenge to the World Government suggest that the title of Pirate King is given to a figure of resistance against established authority. As *One Piece* progresses, we begin to see Luffy in conflict with corrupt and unjust sources of authority, culminating in opposition to the World Government itself.

As Luffy sails from island to island, he meets a series of friends and rivals. Luffy will first meet a companion, who is then threatened by a villain who is the companion's exact antithesis in character and values. Based on his or her actions and words, it can be determined that Luffy's companion represents an idea of how a moral life should be lived, or a country should be governed. The rival is a threat to the existence of practice of the thesis. Though combat is carried out in the narrative via brute force and supernatural powers, the actual conflict between the heroes and villains is ideological. Through the vices of the villain, we come to understand the virtues of the hero, and through the villain's triumphs, we come to understand the seductive appeal of his or her amoral ideals. When Luffy and his friends triumph at the end of a story arc, it is a victory not only for Luffy, but a reaffirmation of the read-

ers' own hopes and values. Oda makes his intent clear when asked by a reader why Luffy and his crew never kill the vanquished foes:

> The reason Luffy doesn't kill is this: In his era, men live by their beliefs and risk their lives to defend them. Luffy shatters the beliefs of his enemies by defeating them. For them to suffer defeat and to have their beliefs destroyed is as bad as death. Killing their bodies is beside the point. (v4, 90)

Though rudimentary, the first story arc of *One Piece* serves as an excellent illustration of his formula. After leaving his home village, Luffy comes across a swordsman named Zoro, who is characterized by his integrity and the lengths to which he will go to keep his word. In a flashback, we see a young Zoro making a promise to a village girl that one day, either he or she will become the world's greatest swordsman. She is later killed in an accident, but Zoro insists on keeping his word, and sets out to the seas in an attempt to work hard and achieve his own dream. Things don't go as planned, and Luffy first meets him chained to a post outside of the island's Navy base. Luffy soon discovers Zoro is being punished for killing a Navy guard dog, despite the fact that it was threatening a young girl. Zoro tells Luffy to leave him be, as while Zoro is in a great deal of pain, the Navy captain promised Zoro that were he to remain standing for two weeks, he would be set free. Luffy decides to leave Zoro be, and decides to explore the nearby village. There, he learns that the Navy captain is a petty tyrant who terrorizes the villagers, and intends on killing Zoro anyway. He is a thoroughly dishonest man who even lied to gain his position in the Navy to begin with. Luffy tells Zoro of the planned execution, but agrees to set Zoro free only on the condition that he joins Luffy's pirate crew. Zoro gives his word to Luffy, and the two face off against the captain, who is easily defeated by their teamwork. The honorable swordsman finds his antithesis in the wicked, deceitful Navy captain, and Luffy is able to defeat him because Zoro keeps his promise.

A few islands later, Luffy's crew comes across an oceangoing restaurant inside a giant ship. Here, Luffy decides to look for a ship's cook who can provide food for the crew on their upcoming journey. Luffy decides that sous chef Sanji is the man for the job, but Sanji refuses to leave the restaurant. We learn that as a boy, Sanji found himself stranded on a desert island with the restaurant's head chef Zeff. Zeff gave up all of his food to prevent the young Sanji from dying of starvation. Sanji owes his life to this act of kindness, and struggles with the burden of his debt. Sanji has sworn that he will never betray Zeff, but he also feels obligated to feed the hungry to prevent others from suffering as he once did. His antithesis arrives in the form of "Don" Krieg, a ruthless pirate who takes advantage of others' kindness to achieve money and status. The Don has returned from a dangerous sea voyage, and his crew is starving. Krieg promises the restaurant that he will not attack if they show mercy and agree to feed him and his crew. The other chefs see through the obvious ruse, but Zeff and Sanji refuse to turn away anyone who is hungry. Unsurprisingly, once "Don" Krieg and his crew have returned to their full strength, Krieg's pirates attack the ship in an attempt to loot it. Sanji is enraged that the on that has so burdened him

was dismissed so easily by Krieg, and he fights back to defend the restaurant. Some of Krieg's men are moved by Sanji's sacrifices, and decide they cannot in good conscience continue with the attack. Once Krieg's forces are divided, Luffy and his crew are able to drive them off easily. Sanji's devotion to helping others helps to drive off his antithesis, in the form of the ungrateful pirate Krieg.

These earlier *One Piece* stories are trite morality tales. However, as Luffy's crew gets larger, and as the world of *One Piece* gets more fleshed out, the stories get increasingly sophisticated and political. I will advance to the Water Seven arc of *One Piece*, comprised of volumes 33 to 45, and analyze the political messages of this arc using the formula I have now established.

Water Seven: Individual Rights vs. Collective Security

Water Seven, named after the city in which the arc takes place, is the longest single story arc of *One Piece* to date, at 13 volumes in length. Like all *One Piece* story arcs, it is also a conflict between the values represented by two characters. The character representing the individual is the archaeologist of Luffy's crew, a woman by the name of Nico Robin. Her antithesis, the man representing the national security state, is Spandam, the head of the World Government's secret police force, Cipher Pol 9.

Nico Robin is unique among the crew in *One Piece*, as well as shōnen manga as a whole. She is first introduced as a villain, and joins the crew after the plans of her former boss are foiled by Luffy. In a world of primarily happy and optimistic characters, she attempts suicide but is stopped by Luffy. Because Luffy did not allow her to die, she reasons, he owes her a position in his crew. Aloof and reserved, Robin keeps her distance from the other pirates. Oda draws her facial expressions in a realistic and restrained manner, in contrast to the other characters' often exaggerated and comical reactions. While female heroes, usually buxom and beautiful, are not rare in shōnen series, Robin is rare in both her age and occupation. At twenty-eight, she is long past the age when women are expected to be married in conservative Japanese society (Brinton 80). She is also a trained and accredited archaeologist in a country where women who pursue advanced degrees are considered unusual (Raymo 85). Her supernatural power is to sprout additional arms from her body, and she often appears in battle looking like Hindu warrior goddess Durgā, a fiercely independent and liminal deity (Kinsley 99). A character warns Luffy that Robin cannot be trusted as a member of his crew, as all organizations that Robin has belonged to have all collapsed: Nico Robin always survives, and she is always alone.

Robin's life is one filled with tragedy. She is of the sole survivor of a government

ordered massacre of her home island. This island, named Ohara, was the site of a five-thousand-year-old library, and the institutions of higher education that surrounded it. Above all else, Ohara was famed for its archaeologists, who sought to uncover the history of the world. However, some of Ohara's discoveries about the foundation of the World Government caused some in power to express concern. Ancient written records known as poneglyphs were scattered around the world, and they detailed the history of a great war using terrifying weapons of mass destruction. The people of the time were threatened ruthless and warlike kingdom whose rulers, it was discovered, later laid the foundation for the World Government. The poneglyphs also detailed the locations of the weapons of mass destruction, to act as a deterrent should the warlike kingdom, or its descendant, the World Government, become too powerful a threat. Using the pretext that the scholars of Ohara were researching these weapons of mass destruction, the government sent the Navy to the island. The five-thousand-year-old Ohara library was burned to destroy the information kept within. As the extent of Ohara's knowledge was learned, orders came down from the World Government to execute all of the scholars. To prevent any of the information from spreading, a few overzealous Navy men decided to collectively punish all of the islanders, and massacre all the people. A lone Navy official refuses to murder Nico Robin, at the time only eight years old, and secretly helps her escape. Unable to account for Robin's disappearance, the Navy places a huge bounty on her head. For the next twenty years of her life, Robin lives a solitary life, running from criminal gang from criminal gang, as law-abiding citizens refuse to have anything to do with her. When she is not betrayed, because of the risk she represents and the value of her bounty, Robin betrays others in order to stay alive. Only after finding Luffy and his crew has she found any kind of stability.

However, the threat posed by these weapons had not been forgotten by the World Government. The existence of these weapons meant the World Government did not have a monopoly on the use of force, threatening the world's balance of power. Seeking a deterrent, World Government intelligence agencies attempted to locate these weapons, with nothing to show for it for twenty years. As Luffy sails the seas in the Age of Piracy, a new cadre of leaders has taken control of the World Government. These new officials feel that controlling the weapons only as a deterrent unfairly ties the hands of government officials. First strike capability is considered desirable, as pirates who are attempting to follow in the footsteps of Gold Roger have destabilized the world's oceans. In a world without automobiles and airplanes, this is a major threat to trade, exploration, and mobility. Unfortunately for Nico Robin, a major intelligence operation is occurring in Water Seven just as Luffy, Robin, and the crew arrive at the city. As Robin is the only remaining individual who can decipher the poneglyphs, the 9th unit of the Government's Cipher Police, or CP9 as they are called, captures her shortly after her arrival.

CP9 is an extralegal intelligence agency created by the government for illegal covert operations. It is lead by Robin's antithesis, a craven and ambitious government functionary named Spandam. If Nico Robin is an exceptionally talented individual whose life was destroyed by an unjust government system, then Spandam is the very

embodiment of that system. He is incompetent and untalented, and appears to have received his government position through the intercession of his powerful father. He is the head of CP9 in name only: The powerful personalities in the unit really decide on its tactics and operations. Befitting the head of a secret organization, he is always seen wearing a leather mask that obscures most of his face. He is unaccountable and unethical, and has made locating Nico Robin his life's mission.

To prevent Robin from resisting arrest, Spandam threatens to execute Luffy and his crew in the same manner as the innocent people of her home island. Horrified at the threat to her only friends, Robin relents, and is to be taken to the World Government's judicial island. There she will be given a show trial, found guilty, and taken to prison. Once in government custody, it is explained, she will be tortured to discover what she knows about the location of these weapons of mass destruction. As Robin has lived her life amongst outlaws, there are many legitimate crimes for which Robin could be convicted. Spandam decides to charge Robin for the crime of continuing to live after the government ordered all scholars of Ohara to be killed. Though Luffy will travel to the judicial island in order to fight CP9 and free Robin, the true battleground in this arc is in Robin's own mind. Spandam intends to take advantage of her suicidal tendencies to crush her will to resist the government's dictates.

When Luffy and his crew attempt to save Robin, they run up against the members of CP9. The agents first try and convince the pirates of the justness of the government's cause: "If there were a demonic power capable of burning the world to ashes, and the only one who could awaken that power was an innocent little girl of a mere eight-year-old, don't you think that girl should be killed for the sake of humanity" (Oda v39, 119). It is clear the World Government wishes to use Robin as the archetypal scapegoat. It is interesting to note that CP9 chooses to formulate their question by referencing the innocent eight-year-old Robin, rather than the inarguably criminal twenty-eight-year-old woman she has become. It is roughly similar to one of the most eloquent descriptions of the scapegoat archetype, written by Dostoyevsky in his *Brothers Karamazov*. Ivan Karamazov discusses the cruelty and injustice of the suffering of children with Alyosha, and poses a similar ethical question:

> Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last, but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature—that baby beating its breast with its fist, for instance—and to found that edifice on its unavenged tears, would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? (268; Pt I, Book V, Ch 4)

Spandam believes such an exchange is fair on the basis of numbers alone: "If a hundred must die to save one thousand, we will kill one hundred on the spot without hesitation" (Oda v42, 198). Luffy and his crew reject the terms of this deal, and rather than allow Nico Robin be punished for the crime of defying government edict by continuing to live, the pirates instead decide to declare war on the World Government. Luffy orders one of his crew members to set fire to the flag sitting atop the courthouse

tower. Nico Robin is so incredibly moved by this show of defiance that she screams, "I want to live!" for the first time in her life (Oda v41, 204). From that point on, Robin resists Spandam's attempts to transport her to the prison, at one point even biting a handrail to prevent Spandam from being carrying her away. In the battle between rights and security, Luffy and his pirates refuse to accept the easy answer of condemning an innocent woman to death to prevent a potential threat at an unspecified time in the future. Though Water Seven continues with exciting and imaginative battles and a chase to rescue Robin, the true climax comes with Robin's acceptance of her own innate desire to live.

Although Luffy and his crew do rescue Robin, the government does not simply fall due to the righteousness of their cause. Now sixty volumes into the series, the war between Luffy and the World Government continues. This has been a too brief introduction to the political world of *One Piece* and, I have regrettably removed detail that Oda uses to paint a far more nuanced and complex world. Additionally, new themes have been introduced since the conclusion of the Water Seven arc. Readers learn, for instance, that Luffy's father is a revolutionary leader considered by the World Government to be a major terrorist threat. It is revealed that the World Government itself may be nothing more than a puppet of a corrupt aristocracy, itself complicit in forced labor and human trafficking. With each new volume, new detail is added to the world that provides readers with a whimsical, defamiliarized interpretation of events and institutions that affect our current politics. *One Piece* and shōnen manga in general are popular because of the themes and values they express, and I look forward to further analysis of shōnen series.

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"True-To-Life": Romance Comics and Teen-Age Desire, 1947 – 1954

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Abstract Romance comics, a type of comic that featured illustrated narratives about love, were developed in post-World War II America and marketed extensively to girls and young women. Through a variety of narrative and visual devices, many of these comics claimed to convey truth to their readers, thereby offering plausible models of behavior for their readers to emulate or avoid. Very few romance comics engaged with controversial topics, but one particular example, entitled "Good-By Innocence!" dealt extensively with the causes and consequences of premarital sex, one of the strongest taboos for young middle-class women of the mid-20th century.
Key words Romance comics; adolescence; Cold War; Comics Code; premarital sex

Though once romance comics had a significant presence in American popular culture, today their appearance and affect are familiar to us primarily via the work of Roy Lichtenstein. Lichtenstein appropriated melodramatic panels depicting tearful heroines from romance comics, and used them, with few changes, in many of his paintings (Beaty 249). But Lichtenstein's focus narrows the range of issues and emotions that romance comics dealt with, and obscures under a heavy cloak of irony the intriguing narrative and artistic means that comic creators deployed to address their target audience of girls and young women. Romance comics are unique artifacts of the post-World War II era, a time in American history that is much studied, but these publications, which were cheap enough to be marketed directly to adolescent girls, offer a unique and little-scrutinized perspective on the experiences of these young women. Many historians have addressed the anxieties of late 1940s and early 1950s America, such as the atom bomb and the Communist threat. Others, among them Beth Bailey, Wini Breines, and Elaine Tyler May, have focused on the fears and frustrations of the era's young women. In a time when every aspect of American society was changing in response to rising affluence, suburbanization, mass marketing, and so forth, the questions that romance comics addressed, such as how to date, who to date, and how to behave as part of a couple—are certainly not trivial, and the comics themselves well repay a closer examination than they have been granted by most subsequent scholarship.

Romance comics were created in 1947, a time when publishers were casting

about for ways to broaden comics' appeal after the end of World War II precipitated a decline in sales of patriotic-superhero titles. Accepted wisdom has it that the legendary team of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby created the genre with Crestwood publication *Young Romance* #1 in 1947 (Goulart 311). The cover of this issue was forthright in declaring that it was something different than the lighthearted teen fare of *Archie* and his many imitators. Instead, *Young Romance* would address more mature, i.e. sexual, themes. It was, as an orange banner screamed across the cover, "intended for the more adult readers of comics" (*Young Romance* #1, cover). The first issue sold out, and subsequent sales reached the millions (Jones 237). In the spirit of the times, which was one of cutthroat competition and ruthless profit-mongering among comic publishers, *Young Romance* spawned over 120 imitators within two years and romances made up a full twenty-five percent of the total comics market at the peak of their sales in 1952 (Nolan 62).

The trick had been to incorporate into comic form the breathless melodrama of true confession pulp magazines. The degree of overlap between pulps and comics is not surprising, given that over the course of time many publishers and some of their employees worked in both forms, and many comic creators, such as Will Eisner and Jerry Siegel, grew up reading pulps (Jones 29). In the 1940s the pulps' heyday was coming to a close, though they were similar in size and price to comics and many sported attention-grabbing covers (Haining 13). But inside they lacked colorful illustrations and some kinds of pulps—those that were deemed too racy to be placed on display and were sold under the counter—were not available to children, especially not little girls (Haining 26).

The true confession pulps were the brainchild of physical-fitness-print-impresario Bernarr MacFadden. The first, *True Story* magazine, debuted in 1919. According to MacFadden's wife Mary, she had given her husband the idea of publishing some of the love and romance-oriented confessional letters that had been written by readers of MacFadden's fitness magazine *Physical Culture* (Hunt 87). The magazine became phenomenally popular, as romance comics would in later decades, and like the first romance comics it spawned a host of imitations and competitors. Of course all the stories in the magazine were supposedly true, but even though MacFadden required references and an affidavit to accompany submissions, his biographer acknowledged that it was "likely that many story submissions did not meet the standards of veracity MacFadden wanted" (Hunt 84). Joe Simon specifically referenced *True Story* when reminiscing about his first romance comic (Simon and Simon 122). Like the confessional pulps, the comics they inspired purported to offer truth to their readers but there was no guarantee that any of them actually did. In fact, Simon wrote, although "all stories were shamelessly billed as true confessions by young women and girls," male editors wrote them all (Simon and Simon 123). Nevertheless, the confessional style became a staple of romance comics and their claims to veracity persisted. (This was despite the fact that early romance comics focused on an incredibly narrow slice of American society, rarely acknowledging nonwhite or disabled people and virtually ignoring religious or politically radical views. Homosexual desire was entirely absent.)

The confession, as Michel Foucault wrote in *The History of Sexuality*, *Volume* 1,

is a powerful narrative device because it ritually "exonerates, redeems, and purifies" the confessor (Foucault 62). And in romance comics, the character that delivered the confession was intended to resemble the audience. She appealed to young female readers because they were like her, or they soon would be. Simon, speaking of the pioneering and much-imitated *Young Romance*, acknowledged that his audience included high-school-age girls who had outgrown the funny-animal and teen-humor comics, who would want to read about "people a few years older," and who would not stand being condescended or talked down to (Hadju 159). The protagonists of romance comics were jealous or timid girlfriends, G. I. sweethearts, shy students, lovesick nurses, devoted secretaries, young wives, rebellious daughters, waitresses, and factory girls. By and large, these characters grappled with the same problems as the girls and young women who read about them.

By virtue of their being marketed in this particular form directly to teens and children without the intervention, permission, or even knowledge of adults, the confessional claims to truth in romance comics warrant special attention. As Gerald Jones has remarked, comics are "where the great American popular dramas took place," a medium that provided "the rawest communication between storyteller and audience" (Jones 75). But comics were also a part of a peer-oriented media subculture that was rapidly forming around adolescents in the postwar era. As the executives at *Seventeen* magazine chose to put it, teenagers "came in bunches, like bananas" (Palladino 104). Since publishers were quick to cut titles that didn't sell, it was necessary for romance comic creators to cater to whatever their young readers desired, not only in terms of believable plots and characters, but with good artwork that conveyed drama though the stories were set in the domestic sphere and lacked fistfights and explosions. The best artists in the business, including Kirby, Alex Toth and Matt Baker, all worked on romance. Toth, who spent time researching in movie theaters and fashion magazines, considered it the most labor-intensive genre of them all (Levin). But publishers had to walk a fine line to avoid, if possible, provoking a backlash from such self-appointed censors as the Catholic National Office of Decent Literature or the Committee on Evaluation of Comic Books. While romance comics did not attract nearly as much critical heat as contemporary crime and horror comics, they did not escape completely. For example, in 1951 Dr. Hilde Mosse accused them of depicting "a distorted picture of love" (Hadju 170). Simon even alleged that comic publisher Martin Goodman had written a letter claiming that the first issue of *Young Romance* "borders on pornography" (Simon and Simon 125).

Comic historian John Benson credited St. John Publications with putting out some of the best of the early romance comics (Benson 7). In January of 1954, St. John published an issue of the title *Teen-Age Romance* featuring an illustrated trio of good-looking diner personnel caught in a love triangle, which quite overshadowed the text in the lower right corner. The small text box promised to reveal the shocking story of runaway Jenny, who faced heartache, despair, and all the other melodramas that readers had come to expect from the previous issues of *Teen-Age Romance* (TAR) and its numerous competitors. The story, "Good-By Innocence!" is one of the most explicitly sexual I have yet found in a romance comic form before 1954.

Sixteen-year-old Jenny Rawlins was, like many romance comic heroines, frustrated with her lot in life. As an uneducated farm girl under the thumb of a too-strict mother, she had reason to be. The comic presented her with a choice that would have been quite familiar to dedicated readers of romance comics: the choice between stability and excitement. Jenny could always marry Bill, her homespun suitor, and settle for a continuation of her unsatisfying lifestyle with an added degree of independence, or she could wait for an opportunity that offered more freedom and more excitement. When a couple of city slickers from Chicago opened up a lakeside resort nearby, Jenny decided to run away from home to work there, despite her mother's warning: "I've heard stories about these tourist people and no daughter of mine is gonna work around them!" (*TAR* #35 [2/6])

"Those tourist people" were rich Mrs. Bellows and her shiftless husband John, much younger than his wealthy, sad-eyed wife. It took John Bellows all of two days to begin seducing Jenny. Though she protested that it wouldn't be proper to walk down to the lake with him after hours, as an older, wealthier, and worldlier man, he was able to dismiss her objections until she rationalized to herself, "I'm just acting like a schoolgirl" (*TAR* #35 [5/5]). In their first moonlit kiss, Jenny saw a future that promised excitement and thrills. The very next night John slipped into Jenny's room, and then into her bed. Their first night of sex was, for Jenny, a blend of desire and pride—"I was no longer innocent little Jenny Rawlins"—mixed with fear: "If only Mrs. Bellows doesn't suspect" (*TAR* #35 [7/6]). Thus began a two-month-long extramarital affair wherein Jenny was torn between guilt, gratitude for John's affections, and jealousy when he flirted with pretty guests.

However, the relationship turned unmistakably sordid when Jenny discovered that not only was she pregnant with John's child, but John was in no hurry to divorce his wealthy wife and make an honest woman of her. Instead, he revealed his true colors as a villain: a drunk, a manipulator, a serial philanderer, and a slave to his sexual impulses. In recklessly pursuing a beautiful but unattainable traveler, John finally drove his wife away and proceeded to vent his rage on Jenny, leaving her in a bruised and beaten heap and wondering only, "How could I have given myself to him?" (*TAR* #35 [16/2]). From this extreme she was rescued by the always loving and patient Bill, who took her away, married her, and helped her raise her son, the child of the man who took advantage of "a frustrated teenage girl" (*TAR* #35 [16/7]).

"Good-By Innocence!" has formal and narrative qualities that are typical of romance comics of the time. It is one of several stand-alone stories in the issue. Unlike superhero comics, or even the romance-oriented serial comic strips of the 1940s such as *Mary Worth* and *Brenda Starr*, romance comic books hardly ever employed recurring characters. Jenny and Bill never appear again. Like nearly all such stories contained in romance comics, it relies heavily on expository text boxes, including one right at the beginning that frankly acknowledges the didactic aim of the story—to "prevent other girls from making the same mistake" that the narrator did (*TAR* #35, [1/1]. These text boxes are almost uniformly written in the past tense, implying that the narrator is confessing her past escapades to an interested but less-experienced peer: "I was sixteen when I went wrong," Jenny reminisces (*TAR* #35 [1/1]). Yet

the word and thought balloons that accompany the images are obviously meant to occur as the action unfolds. Thus as the reader is drawn back and forth through time via the memories of the narrator, juxtaposed with the events of the present, the narrator's regret is reinforced. The readers' foreknowledge of the impeding tragedy seeps into the action, coloring the whole with hints of the mess to come and reiterating the catastrophic nature of the climax. The reader is not asked to imagine herself in Jenny's position as much as she is asked to accept that a girl like Jenny exists, that the past actions of the character that are illustrated in the comic book are plausible, and that therefore, so is the remorse that the narrator feels not only at the moment of recounting her past mistakes, but that she projects indefinitely into the future. The text box that concludes the story refers to Jenny's baby boy, a constant reminder of the terrible events in her past, the "sin" that still "weighs heavily" on her (*TAR* #35, [16/7]).

Other devices at work in this and other comics reinforce the veracity of the narrative. Not all were as blatant as the banners, boxes, and symbols that proclaimed "True Love Stories," "True-To-Life Romances," "True Pages of My Own Romance," or "A REAL Hi-School Romance!" Some were subtle, but simple: using ordinary, everyday names for the characters, incorporating current events, contemporary clothes, cars, and furniture into the narratives, and setting them in recognizable, real-world locales—Chicago, not Krypton, is Jenny's new world where the inhabitants are different. Other methods were less common, but more interesting, as they made better use of comics' unique ability to blend text and image. For example, the titles *Diary Secrets*, *Diary Loves*, and *Sweetheart Diary* distinguished their stories by sprinkling the narratives with images of characters writing in their diaries, then using supposedly handwritten pages of the diaries themselves, instead of printed text boxes, to reflect on the narrative.

So in some respects "Good-By Innocence!" is a typical romance comic book story, and it illustrates some of the characteristic ways in which romance comics manifested their claims to truthfulness. In other respects the narrative is quite unusual. At sixteen pages, it was longer than most stories in other comics, and correspondingly complex. Certainly "Good-By Innocence!" was able to deal quite graphically with the consequences of extramarital sex. The seduction and impregnation of an unmarried teenager was strong stuff for kids, especially as America in the mid-fifties was in the grip of a media-fuelled hysteria over juvenile delinquency, of which sexual deviance was very much a part. Both Bradford Wright and Matthew Costello have argued that Cold War anxieties over juvenile delinquency stemmed from fears that the American family, that stronghold of American values and the foundation of the American identity, was crumbling. It is important to note that social commentators, officials at every level of the government, and the media explicitly linked anxieties about the family, women's roles, and childrearing to the Communist threat (Costello 54). As Costello argues, defining the American identity in opposition to the Soviet required a consensus on the nature of the American self, which by the end of the 1950s had become conformist, even hegemonic, to the degree that actions and words that fell outside the narrow range of the permissible could be, and were, attacked as un-Ameri-

can (Costello 3). The degree to which William Gaines and EC were taken to task for horror comics depicting murder and mayhem between family members is an infamous illustration of the way in which American authorities, and society in general, closed ranks against threats to the middle-class norm (Wright 147).

Romance comics often provided multiple depictions and interpretations of the various anxieties of adolescent female life, and not just within the genre, or within the run of one title, but sometimes within the confines of a single book. This has sometimes been dismissed as a failing of the genre, an adherence to stock formulaic plots. However, I would argue that the multiplicity of narratives concerning certain key emotions, such as jealousy, fear, and desire, at work in different characters and in different circumstances, allowed girls to explore a variety of ways to deal with the powerful and confusing feelings that arose in such fraught situations in the privacy and comfort of their own homes. Even a small sample of romance comics will provide several iterations of one such crucial moment: the moment when a female character must engage in a negotiation of her status as an adult versus her status as a child. Her status might be fluid throughout a comic narrative, and contested between a girl and her parents, or a girl and her boyfriend, or both. A girl's status as an adult was bound up with questions of her sexual agency, and there were often ancillary concerns relating to her status as a girl who had been brought up according to middle-class values. These are words that code her as belonging to the broad segment of the American population that self-identified as culturally middle-class, as Beth Bailey has argued in her study of American courtship, *From Front Porch To Back Seat* (Bailey 10). That sexual misbehavior implies a lower class status is apparent from the frequent use of words like "cheap" and "tramp" as insults (Breines 114). The Kinsey report of 1953 asserted that boys would seek out the company of lower class girls for sex rather than romance and marriage (May 106). This assertion found its way into another *Teen-Age Romance* story entitled "Wrong Side Of The Tracks!" wherein the football-star love interest hints that he only dated the lower-class heroine "because—well, you know how it is for a guy" (*TAR* #37 [14/2]). His companion agrees, "But you don't marry a girl like that" (*TAR* #37 [14/2]). It seems, then, that beyond the punitive consequences of overtly sexual behavior as portrayed in romance comics (which could be dire enough, as in "Good-By Innocence!") a girl's failure to correctly negotiate her adult, sexual status was additionally freighted with a threat to her and her family's middle-class status. It is worth noting that while the end of "Good-By Innocence!" blames Jenny's plight on her "frustration," throughout the story she is explicitly coded as belonging to a lower social class, with her farm background, her lack of education (displayed by her poor grammar) and her status as a "little servant girl" (*TAR* #35 [15/4]).

Since a happy ending in romance comics depended on the heroine finding the right fellow, men of different classes are worth examining as well. Like John from "Good-By Innocence!" inappropriate candidates were usually not spectacularly bad at the outset, so a girl always had to be on the lookout for subtler signs of unworthiness. A romance comic character could increase her chances of finding true love by seeking a mate within her own class—the middle class, it was assumed. Though this

was not a uniform convention of romance comics, the oafs of the lower class and the playboys of the upper class were not to be trusted, as both were liable to be financially unstable (either shiftless or spendthrift) but morally unstable too, in that they were portrayed as oversexed. Though such potential partners might offer the thrills of rebellion or riches, readers were more likely than not to come to the last page of such a comic only to find the heroine struggling to escape from their clutches, either with a good slap of her own or a knockout punch from the steady, faithful middle-class guy who'd been pining for her all along.

Many comics implied that young girls could not entirely trust their own judgment and were better off listening to their parents or whoever else urged them to maintain the status quo. Even Jenny's strict and unsympathetic mother seemed to know what was "better" for her when she forbade Jenny to go work in the Bellows' hotel, and faithful Bill had qualms too: "Gee whiz, Jenny, maybe it won't be good for you to work around those tourists! You're so pretty and young!" (*TAR* #35 [3/6]). With few exceptions, romance comics championed the gender roles of the white, culturally middle-class status quo, elucidated the various ways in which such roles could be threatened, and presented the chilling consequences of disobeying the rules. Social ostracism, as in Jenny's case, was not even the worst thing that could happen to a romance heroine. For example, in a story from the October 1949 issue of St. John's *Pictorial Confessions*, called "I Was A Hollywood Glamour Girl," Anne Fields, led astray by her desire for a Hollywood playboy, ended up in jail for fencing stolen jewels, while "Thrill-Crazy!" published in 1952 in *Hi-School Romance*, featured an unsuitable boy who turned out to be a mobster's kid brother and implicated the heroine in a gang homicide. These are extreme cases, but in romance comics the threats to one's reputation and threats to one's true love were presented as equally hazardous, for to lose the one was to risk being rendered unworthy of the other. And reputations, in romance comics as in America in the 1950s, were fragile things, as addressed by one of the Kinsey report's findings cited by Elaine Tyler May, wherein women expressed fear of public exposure of their sexual activity that was only surpassed by their fears of an out-of-wedlock pregnancy (May 106). In comic after comic, girls who kissed too many boys, who kissed the wrong boy, or allowed themselves to be picked up by a stranger, were not undone a pregnancy, as Jenny was, but by public humiliation. With so few exceptions to this rule, it is tempting to think that comic creators were sending a message. Some may have been. For example, Rae Herman of Orbit, had an editorial agenda slanted towards persuading her readers to wait for the "fruits of marriage" (Goulart 312). But with competitors willing to publish more daring, creative, scandalous, or sleazy comic books, no single point of view could corner the market.

Of course people other than comic-book creators were concerned with adolescent sexuality at this juncture. One of the most famous was Esther ("Eppie") Lederer, writing under the name Ann Landers (Gudelunas 87). Landers' rules for girls were widely disseminated via her syndicated column and speaking engagements, and are useful in defining ways in which adult-oriented media outlets differed from those like comics, which were more peer-oriented. Lander's rules were punitive and aimed at

frightening readers. Her list of the consequences of "petting" which she defined as "roaming hands, passionate kissing, loose garments, feet off the floor," is worth listing (Landers 158):

1. Makes you feel guilty and ashamed
2. Ruins your reputation
3. Causes you to lose your boyfriend because after he goes farther than he knows he should, he may decide you're cheap
4. Leads to pregnancy
5. Breaks your parents' hearts
6. Results in an unwanted marriage or a child out of wedlock (Landers 158).

It was a girl's responsibility to avoid situations that would lead to all these horrible consequences. Landers directed girls to keep busy "so necking doesn't become the number one sport," avoid the practice of "going steady," and especially to stay out of parked cars, which she referred to as "portable bedrooms" (Landers 155 – 157). But, as some of the letters to Landers from teenage readers make apparent, this advice was not always very helpful, as when one girl wrote, "How can I make a guy keep his hands to himself? I like him a lot and don't want to lose him, but he's been getting out of line lately" (Landers 154). Critically, this advice also fails to acknowledge adolescent female desire, as seen in a letter from a girl whose relationship of five months was developing sexually: "We are trying to control ourselves but I don't know how much longer we will be able to manage" (Landers 154). A study of *The Adolescent Experience* quoted by Wini Breines put it bluntly: "The dating system, as we find it in the middle class, forces its participants to be their own executioners of impulse" (Breines 117). Romance comics may not have condoned, but they at least acknowledged the powerful desires of their young readers. For example, Jenny, in John's arms, says "good-by" to her innocence while feeling "an upsurge of passion so intense I couldn't drive it back" (*TAR* #35 [7/5]).

The plaintive letters written to Ann Landers serve as evidence that the romance comics did depict situations that girls actually faced in the early 1950s. But there is further proof, which can only be seen if we examine the comics as whole artifacts, not just individual narratives. Perhaps the strongest claim to truthfulness that the comics could put forward were their own pages of letters from readers. These came in two forms. The first were letters to the editor commenting on the comics themselves, such as in the November 1952 issue of *My Own Romance* (MOR) where a letter-writer requested a particular type of story ("I like stories about high school girls, office girls, and farm girls") and the editor, none other than Stan Lee, promised to oblige ("The reason our stories are true-to-life, Judy, is because they are based on actual letters we get from real girls like you") (Lee, *MOR* #25, [11]). Other letter-writers requested dating advice, and were answered in a variety of different forms. Some replies were dry, straight text employing an authoritative tone similar to Landers', but others incorporated their advice more seamlessly into their comics. For example, the

title Intimate Love featured an advice columnist called Martha Hale, although Simon's account of the *Young Romance* staffers taking turns at playing the "love counselor" suggests that Martha may have been the pseudonym of a male editor (Simon and Simon 125). In *Intimate Love* #18, "Martha Hale Suggests" was presented as a single-page illustrated narrative, rather than an all-text column, and it was capable of serving as a script for girls who were uncertain about coping with the delicate question of a boy who was demanding too much, but without seeming too aloof to get a second date. As Carol kisses Pat goodnight—on the cheek—he tries to pressure her into more by saying, "Gee, that's not much of a kiss! Can't you do better than that?" "Nope! That's my goodnight brand! I'm saving my real kisses for the man I'm going to love someday!" Carol replies jauntily (*IL* #18, [19/3 – 4]). Pat tries again, pouting: "So you don't love me! I'm glad you told me!" but Carol refuses to be drawn into an argument, and eventually Pat goes off thinking, "Somehow, I kinda like her more because she doesn't want to neck. It makes me sure she doesn't let the other fellows do it either!" (*IL* #18, [19/5,7]). This page could be a condensed version of many other romance comic narratives with titles like, "My Blind Date Wanted Thrills!" suggesting that these other, similar stories could also be read as plausible models for teen behavior (*TAR* #14).

The sympathetic and chatty tone of editors like Lee in their responses to letters, the comics' acknowledgement of adolescent female desires, the elucidation of their fears, and the offering of some positive (alongside the cautionary) models of teen behavior in all kinds of realistic situations I believe all support an assumption that romance comics prior to 1954 assumed an empathetic stance towards the tribulations of their young readers (though of course we can never underestimate the power of the profit margins). The girls who read romance comics were growing up at a time when dating rituals were in a state of flux, older authority figures had lost their centrality in their peer-oriented subculture, and the terrain they had to navigate in order to reach a safe, happy, and prosperous adulthood according to American middle-class norms was increasingly uncertain as the consequences of failure grew increasingly high. Ironically, one of the strongest proofs for this relatively compassionate orientation on the part of the romance comics can be found in General Standards Part C. 3 of the Comics Code of 1954, which dealt with marriage and sex. This mandated "Respect for parents, the moral code, and for honorable behavior shall be fostered. A sympathetic understanding of the problems of love is not a license for morbid distortion" (Nyberg 168). In practice, it seems that this meant that a sympathetic understanding for the problems of girls was more or less eliminated. Increasingly tear-stained romance comics, filled with female suffering, continued to be published into the 1970s, a period Benson characterizes as a "long, lingering decline," to which a variety of factors contributed (Benson 6). One of the most important was the ever-expanding presence of television sets in American homes (Spigel 331). Another was the film industry's eager embrace of teen audiences (Doherty 2). In 1976, Bruce Bailey argued in the *Journal of Popular Culture* that the values still espoused by romance comics in the era of second-wave feminism were the "bêtes noires of the liberated woman" (Bailey 247). It seems clear that despite their attempts to keep up to

date in fashion and slang, romance comics became increasingly irrelevant. But it is probable that the restricted tone of the majority of post-1954 romance comics also played a part. Bradford Wright characterized post-Code comics as "superficial and puerile," and argued that they had "forsaken" their audience (Wright 228). Characters like Jenny from "Good-By Innocence!" vanished. Romance comics no longer had the option of even addressing premarital sex, even though fifty percent of the respondents in the 1953 Kinsey sample reported that they had engaged in such behavior (Breines 89). Lesser transgressions against middle-class values were treated in a far more punitive way. By ignoring or condemning what was actually going on in the lives of their readers, romance comics forfeited their claims to truthfulness, and thus one of the qualities that had most endeared them to readers.

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The Liberal Imagination Unlimited: On Joe Sacco's *The Fixer: A Story From Sarajevo*

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Abstract Joe Sacco, arguably the most respected comics artist-journalist of his generation, dramatizes the stories of individuals whose lives have been traumatized by their involvement in the Middle East conflicts and the Balkan Wars. Through the defamiliarizing form of comics, anecdotal rather than panoramic perspective, and self-effacing autobiographical narrative, Sacco challenges the faux-objective stylistics of mainstream journalistic treatments of these unsettling topics. In *The Fixer: A Story From Sarajevo* (2003), Sacco addresses the problematic relation between the time-limited but saturational attention of the Western News Media's gaze and the war violence itself. Sacco interprets the Balkan conflict as in part a performative response by unacknowledged persons to a fleeting experience of notoriety. Interested in telling the stories of persons caught up in war after the mainstream media has moved on from covering their story, Sacco's work also has implications for our understanding of the relationship between liberalism ethics ,and the aesthetics of comix
Key words graphic narrative; collective trauma; the shaping of memories

Joe Sacco (born in Malta in 1960, now resides in Portland, Oregon), arguably the most respected comics artist-journalist of his generation, dramatizes the stories of individuals whose lives have been traumatized by their involvement in the Middle East conflicts and the Balkan Wars. Through the defamiliarizing form of comics, anecdotal rather than panoramic perspective, self-effacing autobiographical narrative, and interested relation to the effects of war on his subjects over a lengthy time period of observation, Sacco challenges the faux-objective and quick-in-quick out stylistics of mainstream journalistic treatments of these unsettling topics. While best known for the award-winning *Palestine* (2001) and *Safe Area Gorazde* (2000), I will discuss one of Sacco's somewhat lesser known and slightly later works—*The Fixer: A Story from Sarajavo* (2003)—in order to concentrate on what SUNY Buffalo Art Curator Lisa Fischman refers to as Sacco's project of recuperating "voices systematically excluded from mainstream news coverage to the margins of history." The specific aspect of this recuperative project in *The Fixer* is in fact the desublimation of the problematic relation between the time-limited but saturational attention of the Western News Media's gaze and the war violence itself. Sacco interprets the Balkan conflict as in part a performative response by unacknowledged persons to a fleeting experience of notoriety.

He is most interested in telling the stories of persons caught up in war after the mainstream media has moved on from covering their story.

Sacco's work also has implications for our understanding of the relationship between liberalism ethics ,and the aesthetics of comix. I will demonstrate the connections between these terms by concentrating on usages of a recurrent phrase, obsessively persistent, in Sacco. The phrase put me in mind of Scott McCloud's commentary about the dialogic nature of comix. The phrase also put me in mind of retro neo con Lionel Trilling's ideas in *The Liberal Imagination* (1974) of literature as a forum for political reflection, but in a complex manner that privileges the ambiguity of readerly responses to the unique, inscrutable nature of the individual. Here is Sacco's mantra-like phrase in *The Fixer*: "But put yourself in [fill in the blank] shoes." The shoes that Sacco wants "you" (meaning me?) to "put" on belong in *The Fixer* to the iconic version (in McCloud's terms) of Sacco himself, of The Fixer named Neven, and also of Bosnian President Izetbegovic (79), a corrupt politico involved with trying to save his ass by authorizing the murder of a renegade paramilitary leader named Celo. Celo is accused by NATO of bludgeoning to death and decapitating anywhere between 30 and 10,000 of the Chetniks, the pejorative term for Serb nationalists who commandeered the hills surrounding what was once the multicultural enclave of Sarajevo, in order to ethnically cleanse said city of Bosnian Muslims.

McCloud's theory is that more than any other visual art form, comics, because of the structural feature of "gutters" and "borders" that exist in space, and because of the time it takes for the reader/viewer to move the eye from one frame to the next, a gap, or liminal space, opens in the reader/viewer's interpretive consciousness. According to McCloud, it is into that in between space, a paradoxically full empty space of implied activity and characterization, that comix foreground the reader/viewer's dialogic co-creational activity (in Bakhtin's terms). McCloud notes that borders between frames do exist in filmic art, but because of the rapidity with which the frames are displayed, the spatial and, therefore, interpretative dimension of the border is omitted. Describing an axe murder to demonstrate the readerly dimensions of comix (what the choice of an axe murder to illustrate his points says about McCloud is, I suppose, the subject of another analysis of a comix master fascinated by primal instruments of brutality!), he writes:

> Every act committed to paper by the comics artist is aided and abetted by a silent accomplice. An equal partner in crime known as the Reader. I may have drawn an axe being raised in this example, but I'm not the one who let it drop or decided how hard the blow, or who screamed, or why. That, dear reader, was your special crime, each of you committing it in your own style. All of you participated in the murder all of you held the axe and chose your spot. To kill a man between panels is to condemn him to a thousand deaths. (68 – 69)[1]

Following McCloud, Sacco directly addresses the reader with the relatively unusual intimate second person address of "you" and "yourself." He then commands this "you" to take an imaginative leap into "the shoes" of *The Fixer*'s diegetic icon for the

authorial personae, as well as *The Fixer* himself and also the corrupt Bosnian president. By doing so, Sacco, again following McCloud's analysis of the medium's emphasis on Barthesian reader response and Bakhtinian dialogic co-creation, wants to bring the reader directly into the text. This is so to the point where we readers should not merely see Sarajevo, in modernist fashion, from multiple perspectives. We should quite literally partake in Sarajevo multiply. And while BEING THERE we are not merely to witness and testify in Tragedy Chic khakis ala Anderson Cooper and Christiane Amanpour. Instead, we are instructed to collaborate in the carrying out, remembrance, and representation of said atrocious events. Sacco thus offers a perplexingly multiple, ethically ambiguous, and ethnically complex situation in which we the readers are asked to don not one, not two, but three pairs of shoes in the course of one narrative. At least two of these pairs of shoes are owned, not by victims (who has trouble feeling empathetic identification with a victim?), but victimizers. We are to wear the shoes once worn by Bosnian men. These men are directly implicated in mass murder and the covering up or defending of these crimes. From their point of view (from their shoes), their acts may not have been crimes in the first place, but merely the inevitable excesses of war. From their point of view, mass murder may naturally take place when your beloved city, Sarajevo, once itself a multicultural space, is under siege by Serbian extremists who want to make any Muslims disappear by any means possible. Walk a mile in those shoes, Anderson Cooper, Sacco is saying. See if your snow-white hair and snow-white and o so crisp khaki jacket remain without some drops of blood and the stink of shit on them.

In a fundamental sense, *The Fixer* is never about uncovering the secret or true account of who did what vicious and inhumane things to whom and why in Sarajevo between 1992 and 2001. Like the great modernist texts *Citizen Kane*, *Light in August*, *Heart of Darkness*, or *The Great Gatsby*, the narrative is not about the narrator expressing confidence that he has gotten to the bottom of Neven, an uncanny figure of repulsion and attraction to Sacco. Rather, the text enacts the process of Sacco's inquiry and imaginative recreation itself, or what literary critic David Thorburn, discussing *Heart of Darkness*, has called "*a drama of the telling.*" Thorburn states, "Marlow seems either unable to find conclusive meaning in his experience or reluctant to acknowledge its meaning. There is a deep sense that Marlow needs to tell the story again and that his material is so psychologically disturbing that the tale will always be unfinished…Marlow's fear that he is like Kurtz haunts his narrative and is one of the reasons that the narrative is evasive and temporally fragmented. The story takes on an epistemological or philosophical dimension, dramatizing the problem of knowledge, of the limitations of our cognitive powers" (26). Thorburn speaks of "Marlow's tentative, back-tracking, interrupted narrative [that] creates two separate 'stories'—one story is the traditional adventure or action, the second a running commentary on that action and the difficulties of retrieving it in memory and words: *a drama of the telling*" (25)[2]. Sacco's desire to collaborate with Neven in the recreation of his story is, I am saying, diegetically repeated and doubled in Sacco's invocation of our entrance into the text via the wearing of the shoes of those responsible for atrocities, for the covering of them up, and for the libidinal-driven desire to recover and artistically re-

create the story of Neven, Sacco's dark double.

Sacco's gambit—to make us see, quite literally, through the eyes of perpetrator's of mass killing as well through the eyes of a confused, used, and compassionate comix journalist—is what put me in mind of Trilling and that phrase, which to be honest I never quite understood, *The Liberal Imagination*. Is Trilling for it or against it? I wondered. It turns out Trilling is for it, but he feels most liberals—such as those who preferred the social realism of a poor stylist such as Dreiser over the difficult modernist style James—don't have it. Under the influence of Freud and modernism in general, and writing in the wake of the Holocaust and World War Two, Trilling wants to open liberalism up to the irrational, or to what he calls "the primal imagination of liberalism" (xv). Trilling defined Liberalism as "a political position which affirmed the value of individual existence in all its variousness, complexity, and difficulty. And since this was so, literature had a bearing upon political conduct. Literature, especially the novel, is the human activity which takes the fullest and most precise account of variousness, complexity, difficulty—and possibility" (vii). As in Trilling, we see in Sacco the promise and problems of a certain kind of imaginative liberalism. This brand of liberalism refuses to "just say no" to the enabling of the author and reader to enter into, with empathetic identification, the perspectives of what Trilling calls "individual existence in all its variousness, complexity, and difficulty." Trilling's privileged authors such as Isaac Babel, the intellectual Odessa Jew who rode with the anti-Semitic Cossacks on their rampages into Poland in his *Red Cavalry* stories. Just so, Sacco revels in hanging in the hood with the murky, undecidable, ambiguous Neven. Truth is put in question marks.

Let me focus in some detail on the first time the "But put yourself in my shoes" mantra refers to the Sacco icon. I will do so to illustrate how *The Fixer*, like iconic modernist texts such as Babel's in the hands of Trilling, foregrounds a "precise account of variousness, complexity, difficulty—and possibility" (vii) and that defines culture in such a way that it does "not submit to serve the ends of any one ideological group or tendency" (9). Occurring on page 11, the equivocal "but" signals Sacco's acknowledgment that his presentation through the first ten pages must be pressing against the reader's moral sensibilities, the very kind of perspective that Trilling felt led liberal critics to privilege a Dreiser over a James. Why isn't Sacco condemning Neven as a crazed, alcoholic mass-murdering thug looking to shake down a naïve young journalist, rather than waiting like a forlorn lover for Neven's return?

In two prologues, one dated 2001, one dated 1995, Sacco describes his obsessive relationship with Neven., In 2001, we learn, he is still hanging out by himself in the cafes, streets, and promenades of post war Sarajevo. He is waiting, Beckett style, for the return of Neven, aka the Fixer. In the second prologue, from 1995, we quickly discern (more quickly than does Sacco?) that this Neven is, among other things, a desperate, broke, isolated, narcissist with a seriously blood stained past. His list of crimes includes, by his own account, participation "in some illicit activities... carjacking... ." a bank robbery or two" as well as getting "mixed up with some tough guys from Britain, the States, South Africa, Belgium... ." (22) as well as "dealing guns, selling them to Palestinians" (23). Neven is not even particularly

welcome in the ironically named Holiday Inn in Sarajevo where he waits to be storyteller, local guide, and, maybe even a pimp, for visiting journalists. Unfortunately for Neven, and, one could argue, I suppose, or Sacco as well: "The action isn't what it used to be. The journalists have followed the flies to somewhere else" (5). Sacco is looking mighty tasty to Neven when he enters the empty lobby of the Sarajevo Holiday Inn. In 1995 a cease-fire is in the works, but Sarajevo is still a very dangerous place to be. Poignant panels directly follow Sacco's plea that we put ourselves in his shoes. We get a truly harrowing sense of the existential darkness and profound sense of fear, isolation, and "what the fuck did I get myself into?" scenario Sacco has entered himself into for reasons that remain quite murky to the end of text. We see an extremely dark space, etched masterfully in black crosshairs. The establishing shot depicts Sacco in the left foreground, primarily in black, entering a large, very dark lobby that is cast as a collection of imposing and bewilderingly abstract shapes (Communist era modernism) that seem to belong in a Sci Fi movie space ship. The lobby is empty, except for Neven, who is sitting in the mid background on a lounge chair, waiting. Waiting, it turns out, for months. Waiting for some minor foreign journalist to talk to, to lead, since all of the mainstream journalists from the CNN crowd have left town. The scene is set as if Neven is a predator, a spider, and Sacco is the vulnerable insect, the moth-like prey. The dazed looking female clerk at the reception desk points to a map indicating the close proximity of the hotel to the still hot front line. Sacco, like a scared, lonely, shut in, enters his dark spare room. He gingerly stares at the window, lies flat on his bed with his clothes on, as if he is in shock. After resting on the side of the bed like a character out of Edward Hopper, then splashing water on his face, he takes his dark lumpy shape downstairs where he faces Neven: "Let me buy you a coffee," says Neven, who will end up draining Sacco's pockets, and they are off to the races, Neven playing Stanley, Sacco playing Blanche. Opposites attracting each other, they have had, in the words of Tennessee Williams from *A Streetcar Named Desire*, this date from the beginning.

How easy is it for us to understand, empathize, and enter into Sacco's subject position? Sacco is aware that he is, if not an unreliable narrator, then someone we might not care to enter into empathetic identification with for the next 90 pages of this text. One thing is for sure, we can't fault Sacco for failing to be self-effacing, self-critical, self-aware of his own, and shall we say, limitations in judgment about the kindness of strangers. Physically, his icon is nothing to write home about. He appears to be nerdy with round intellectual glasses, small, slump shoulders, flimsy armed, a bit pudgy, with big ethnic lips and a big nose and a little pack abound his shoulder almost like a female pocketbook. With his dark hair and bulbous nose and thick lips he looks different/other from the rather Aryan looking Sarajevo citizens who promenade, the young ones anyway, looking like Aryan Gods and Goddesses. What IS he doing here?

And if we can bring ourselves via The Liberal Imagination Unlimited to walk a mile in Sacco's icon, then how are we then able to perform a switcharoo and start being/seeing as Neven? Is Sacco saying that we, like him, are sado-masochistic voyeurs, rubber necking, not on the highways for carnage as in Warhol's "Death and

Disaster" series, but at a world-class atrocity? Through Sacco and our own dialogic co-creationism we will be transported into the dizzyingly complex, infinitely unreliable place where any easy us versus them, good versus bad, moral versus immoral, victim versus victimizer, truth versus lie kind of ethics or aesthetics do not seem to apply. We become, like Sacco himself, not a noble witness with clean hands, ala Cooper and Amanpour, but a dirty accomplice, ala Babel's intellectual soldier Liutov in "My First Goose" from *The Red Cavalry*. As critic Cicely A. Richard reports, Babel's Liutov responds to the jests from comrades in the Galician War over his intellect and sensitivity by killing a goose at the home of a peasant woman in an attempt to gain acceptance from his fellow soldiers. One could argue that Sacco's fears, sexual desires, loneliness, and need to believe in someone else as a protector or truth bearer take hold on him, skewing his judgments, and letting a murderer take a pass.

Given the traumatic scenario from their first meeting in 1995, we wonder doubly about why is Sacco so obsessed with meeting Neven AGAIN in 2001 six years after a first meeting in which Sacco himself admits, "But in the absence of other game—and as a matter of professional pride—he could not allow me to escape so easily. For if I did not have much meat on my bones, I was as big a pigeon as was likely to cross his sky anytime soon. . . . ?" (19) Why is Sacco still stuck in Sarajevo after all the action has gone away? Let me return to Trilling in order to take a stab at an answer. In a fine essay on "Freud and Literature" from *The Liberal Imagination*, Trilling's description of various characters in Diderot's Rameau's Nephew (1762) as representing id and ego, are suggestive of Sacco's Sarajevo. A space of Id unleashed, the inhibiting elements of what Freud called "civilization" are desublimated. With Neven as tour guide, Sacco enters a realm of something like pure Id. Violence, heavy drinking, rampant sexuality, thievery, and lawlessness run unheeded. A key into understanding Sacco's fascination with Neven lies in his libidinal fantasy of Sarajevo as a site of pure excess. It is a space of the body that is savage, primal. It is a space that challenges the self-conscious, self-effacing, guilt-ridden persona that I'd associate with a hyper intellectual looking squiggly armed, worry wart such as Sacco imagines himself to be in *The Fixer*. His ambivalent feelings towards Neven speak to this struggle between Sacco's self-consciousness, ego-centered hesitancy, and his desire to give himself over to the Id represented by Neven.

Sacco's picture of Neven is, in the end, to use a favored term of Freud's, Trilling's, and The New Criticism, ambivalent. Near the conclusion of the text, Sacco can represent his icon as laughing at himself and at Neven with a kind of grudging affection and acknowledgment of his own schleimeildom. Sacco realizes that a tape recorder, allegedly owned by Neven and lent to Sacco so he could do his interviews, was in fact not something that belonged to Neven in the first place, but rather to one of his comrades, Dutch. Sacco's tale foregrounds the desire-driven relationship of reader and writer, listener and teller. This in the end is why Sacco tells us he sticks with Neven over the course of several years, even after he hears from other, more trusted sources, that Neven's stories of his heroic exploits as a half-Serbian born defender of the City of Sarajevo fighting alongside a renegade crew of Muslims, are probably puffed up with a lot of hot air: "Neven is a godsend to me, too. Finally

someone is telling me how it was—or how it almost was, or how it could have been—but finally someone in this town is telling me something" (101). Sacco asks us to enter into the text in a way that may (and probably should) make us uncomfortable and circumspect about the author's motives for entering the same tale. He implicates us in a story of involving the same warped and despicable, but somehow also affectionate and addictively fascinating, persons he has wrapped himself up in for six years. Sacco's work is thus primarily about what the mainstream media doesn't reveal to us about the strange relationship between teller and tale. Unlike the CNN celebrity journalists, Sacco does not present himself as a preachy moral witness above reproach. He is certainly not beyond implication in the co-creation of the scenes he is, belatedly, reporting. He does not pretend that the scenes he depicts and the participants he travels with would exist in the same way without his, pay for play, presence. After his work as a paramilitary marksman ended, Neven's occupation as The Fixer, after all, is primarily escorting international journalists into and out of the danger zones. Sometimes his task is providing them with hookers ("That's part of the program. It's completely normal. I've arranged whores for journalists about 12 times" [7]). Sometimes he is providing worldly, if a bit long in the tooth, wisdom: "Do you know what is the only animal that kills for pleasure? That creature is called Home Sapiens" (25). Sometimes he is providing deep background on the dizzyingly complex relationships, both adversarial and conspiratorial, between the Bosnian State, the Serb nationalists, the Bosnian Army, the Bosnian police, and the renegade Bosnian paramilitary, which, in the end, breaks away from the Bosnian State so that there is a civil war within a civil war: "The Green Berets are not a single group but a collection of autonomous armed cells built around popular or self-elected leaders" (27). To add to the almost absurdly comic confusion of the situation, Sacco notes that the charismatic leaders of the paramilitary groups sometimes turn out to have the same nickname ("Celo"). Sometimes Neven's task is to offer self-aggrandizing and undecidably veracious narratives of heroism. Neven, for example, describes how, with a small band of icy veined brothers defended the city against Serbian tanks. Not least of all, Neven serves to make Sacco, represented as a timid, passive, guilt-ridden, out of sorts, out of place journalist, feel safe. Neven also allows Sacco to feel a little sexy walking in the hood with a Big Man: "With Neven, I'm like a teenager on his first few dates—a little enthralled, a little infatuated perhaps, maybe a little in love, and what is love but a transaction... I am vulnerable, understand me. It is war, for Christ's sake, and now that I've got myself into it, I need a hug, a support group, someone to carry me gently over the rubble" (14). Hard to imagine hearing Anderson Cooper admit to the affective relationship he and other embedded journalists must experience in comparable traumatic crises. It is this exposure of Sacco's own libidinal, emotional, psychic needs to create a bond with Neven that becomes the primary subject of Sacco's self-analysis. His self-mocking, self-critical perspective flies in the face of the garden variety MORAL OUTRAGE that is so typical of the CNN version of the story. Sacco asks us, as in Holocaust testimony in a film such as *Shoah* by Claude Lanzmann, to think differently about what we mean by reliable witness. This is so to the point where Neven's annoying behaviors, his self-aggrandizing memories,

for example, his excessive need to talk to Sacco and maybe even to take advantage of him, his alcoholism, his violent outbursts, are really a part of the living, real-time testimony about what Neven has been through over the 1990s. As in Caruthian trauma theory, the telling of the tale of what happened back then is not so much redeemed in the present telling, but acted out as if for the first time. Sacco's Liberal Imagination Unlimited is truly an example of seeing things 360.

Notes

1. McCloud continues: "Participation is a powerful force in any medium. Filmmakers long ago realized the importance of allowing viewers to use their imaginations. But while film makes use of audiences' imaginations for occasional effects, comics must use it far more often. From the tossing of a baseball to the death of a planet, the reader's deliberate voluntary closure is comics' primary means of simulating time and motion. Closure in comics fosters an intimacy surpassed only by the written word, a silent, secret contract between creator and audience" (68 – 69).
2. Thorburn adds: "The narrative structure displaces our attention from the traditional narrative matter of the story and toward the drama of the telling of the story. Conrad foregrounds the act of narration itself: one of his central themes is the problem of telling the story. As Marlow continues his fragmented and digressive tale, we realize that he is preoccupied with the difficulty of recapturing what happened" (25).

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Perceiving *Persepolis*: Personal Narrative, Sense Memories, and Visual Simplicity in Marjane Satrapi's Animated Autobiography

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Abstract In Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, the personal is political. Originally told through a series of graphic narratives and then as an animated film, Satrapi's autobiographical account tells of her experiences growing up in Iran under the Shah, then under the even more repressive Islamic Republic, before her parents sent her to school in Vienna at the age of 14. Caught between East and West, Satrapi finds herself having to adapt to her new culture while longing for home. It is suggested in this discussion of *Persepolis* that Satrapi's narrative works within the confines of what Laura Marks has termed intercultural cinema, an expanding genre wherein individual memories of diasporic peoples are called upon to connect with their cultural and social histories. This project is an examination of how the medium of animation functions in its visual and narrative structure in order to loosen the perceived boundaries between cultures, geographies, histories, and socio-political backgrounds. Employing Walter Benjamin's concept of storytelling, this analysis explores how *Persepolis* uses personal narrative and individual memory to make room for new voices and subjectivities to emerge within the historical archive. It is proposed that *Persepolis* encourages an embodied, sensory, and interactive relationship between viewer and viewed in order to create a shared collective experience, and an argument is made for the expansive capabilities of a simplified visual medium to deepen our understanding of the complex influence of memory, cultural tradition, and nostalgia in the production of individual and social histories.
Key words intercultural cinema; memory; personal narrative; storytelling; *Persepolis*; animation

In its prismatic enveloping of stories within stories and flashbacks within flashbacks, Marjane Satrapi's animated film *Persepolis* self-reflexively explores the nature of storytelling. The film is an examination of the very construction of the historical narrative,[1] and through its visual and narrative structure brings to issue the way we remember and deal with the past. Heavily abridging the vignettes of Satrapi's precursory graphic narratives, 1 the film engages in personal remembrance to confront the disasters of the war that tore her country apart. Its fluid, black and white imagery trans-

lates the pages of the fragmented graphic narratives into a fully integrated story of experience, only to contrast with and consequently highlight the disjointed, complex, and traumatic political and social ruptures that catalyzed Satrapi's tale of remembrance. Despite the film's departure from the vulnerable imagery and splintered storylines inherent to the graphic narratives, I maintain the film preserves its confrontational relationship with the past, albeit in an altering of visual and narrative functions. The seamlessly minimalist visual style employed in the film appears a conscientious attempt to emphasize the representational pitfall of providing simplified answers about Satrapi's homeland, its politics, and her status as an exile, while the narrative 's structural underpinning purposefully embeds itself within a tale of conflict and metamorphosis, underscoring the persistent intersecting of the personal with the political.

There exists a healthy appetite for recent scholarship devoted to Satrapi's graphic novels, much of which involves a reading of her narrative within a lineage of feminist and postcolonial criticism and interpretation. The analysis within these pages does not stray too far from these themes of political and cultural exile, notions of 'othering,' and the dynamic of East-West interrelations. However, the primary objective here is to examine how these issues have been translated into the field of animation and what this means for the viewer's participation with and interpretation of Satrapi's visual narrative. It is my suggestion that *Persepolis* works within the confines of what visual culture theorist Laura Marks, in *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, has termed *intercultural cinema*, an expanding category of film that is "characterized by experimental styles that attempt to represent the experience of living between two or more cultural regimes of knowledge, or living as a minority in the still majority white, Euro-American West" (Marks 2). According to Marks, intercultural cinema appeals to the individual memories of diasporic peoples through embodied, nonvisual, and sensory experience in order to connect to their cultural and social histories (xiii). Carving my argument out of the framework of contemporary visual culture and cinematic theory, this investigation seeks to understand how *Persepolis* functions within the discursive, sensual, and visual stratum in order to excavate and shed light upon the historical archive while employing individual narratives as a means to open itself up to its audience in a shared collective past.

This essay employs a selection of the stories that are framed within Satrapi's larger narrative to illustrate how *Persepolis* provides access to a collective history by means of personal experience, memory, and a simplified visual medium. The investigation begins with an examination of Satrapi's personal narrative as a reemergence of Walter Benjamin's notion of storytelling. In his critical 1936 essay "The Storyteller," Benjamin advocates for the continuance of the tradition of storytelling, the act of passing down experiences in social circuits, wherein new voices and subjectivities are allowed to emerge within the historical archive while provoking a ripple of transformation throughout the perception of history (83 – 107). This will lead to a discussion of how *Persepolis* activates personal and collective memories through the physical objects of everyday life as well as through sensory and bodily knowledges. Finally, I argue that the hybrid nature of *Persepolis* in both its form and content invites active viewership and investigation into Satrapi's world, utilizing visual simplicity to map out a

complex, multi-dimensional history, and emphasizing that geographies, histories, and individual and collective experiences are not segregated, but interwoven into a permeable relationship of exchange.

History in Flux

Concerned with the historical archive, Marks defines intercultural cinema as seeking to uncover who or what has been included in it, ignored by it, or denied access to it. Linked to this crisis is the discrepancy between officially documented history and private memory. In confronting this disparity, intercultural artists perform a dismantling of the historical archive as a means to reconstruct a past that includes their own voices, experiences, and perceptions. The political, social, and cultural changes that intercultural artists hope to spark must "be effected in a sort of dance between sedimented, historical discourses and lines of flight, between containment and breaking free" (Marks 28 – 29). As a storyteller, Satrapi's individual experience serves as a trampoline for historical and social analysis, providing us with an alternative archive and her endeavor to break free.

Storytelling is of a different order than reporting, suggests Benjamin. It requires the bringing of one's own interpretation to the table, making the telling of an event more than just an exchange of information, but instead an experiential process of understanding (Benjamin 69). With the dissemination of official information, Benjamin observed that the value of lived experience declines (83). This decrease in value represents a social decay, as the art of storytelling weaves wisdom into the fabric of everyday life (Benjamin 86). Satrapi's engagement with the graphic narrative and animated film to tell a different version of history serves as a counterpoint to this lack of personalized meaning within the mediation of information, stressing that the surface of events is merely an invitation for deeper investigation.

Constituting itself around the hidden knowledges embedded within the quotidian details of life, Satrapi's visual narrative reveals the documentation of an event to be inherently incomplete, neither history nor memory being reliable or capable of grasping the totality of the past. Waxing whimsically about how she and her first boyfriend Marcus met in Vienna, Satrapi recalls a handsome, sweet young man who danced with her under the stars, held her hand, and with whom she had snowball fights in the park. An aspiring writer, he would read his play to her, and she loved it. Then he cheated on her. Suddenly her saccharine remembrance turns sour: "How could I have been so stupid? That deceitful bastard led me by the nose..." (Paronnaud and Satrapi, 00:57:50).[2]

This remembrance is an expression of what *Gilles Deleuze* calls *the powers of the false*, wherein "the real and the imaginary, the actual and the virtual, chase after each other, exchange their roles and become indiscernible" (127). As *Persepolis* reflects upon the formative years of its young protagonist, it is necessarily a story of transformation and of how perceptions change as one grows older. How we remember an experienced event is a selective, fuzzy process resulting in a myriad of mentally constructed histories, which do not allow for an objective record of the past. *Persepolis* allows perceptions to directly confront lived events, and in doing so, highlights

their relationship of innate indiscernibility.

I do not suggest that Satrapi is an unreliable narrator making up fictions about a past that didn't happen. On the contrary, her story reminds us that communal histories are necessarily irretrievable and fragmentary, requiring that they be examined from all angles. The role of *Persepolis* as an excavator of the archive is not to uncover an objective truth of historical events, for that does not exist, but rather to show what the archive was not able to say. Satrapi's account of Marcus may seem trivial, but it is a defining moment in her cultural acclimation and gives context to her experience as an exile. In this moment, she finds herself both adjusting to a less sexually repressed culture and, having lost her closest companion, dealing with loneliness and cultural isolation. Satrapi's story is one of many hidden layers that has folded itself upon the events surrounding the Iranian Revolution. It is in her unfolding of it that social histories are revealed.

Recollection Images and Objects

Persepolis' employment of the idiosyncratic becomes a thread, which weaves its way through a personal and collective history and binds together the tales of previous storytellers, including that of her Uncle Anoosh. Sitting at her bedside, Anoosh passes down his own personal tale to the young Marjane. He tells her of his struggles under the Shah, how as a Communist he had to leave his family and escape to Russia, and that when he returned, he was imprisoned for several years. "It's important you know the history of our family that should never be forgotten," he tells her. "I promise I won't forget," she responds (Paronnaud and Satrapi 00:18:17). Never documented by official history, Anoosh's story becomes part of Satrapi's, and as she becomes a storyteller, she passes it on once again.

In the absence of images or documentation of her uncle's struggle, Satrapi offers her own. Reimagining her uncle dangerously trekking his way through the treacherous, snowy mountaintops and diving into magnificent, crushing tidal waves, Satrapi visually mythifies him. These imaginative reconstructions become what Deleuze refers to as recollection-images, dreamy, visual manifestations that through individual perception and memory both reveal gaps and add texture to the narrative of history (45). Recollection-images are not a direct link to memory, however. In envisioning for us her uncle's remembrance, Satrapi must employ her own imagination and a filmic flashback in order to beckon forth Anoosh's experience and ignite the significance of his memories. As Marks puts it, "a recollection-image, moistened with memory springs to life" (53). And by visually reactivating Anoosh's memory in the present, Satrapi quite fittingly re-animates her uncle's past.

Expanding on the recollection-image, Marks proffers the recollection-object, a material object, which, like the recollection-image, is capable of encoding collective memory (Marks 78). Each moment in time is the product of the past that has shaped it, and just as our bodies store the memories of our personal histories, showing the wear and tear of lived experience, objects have pasts all their own. Souvenirs, heirlooms, items we bought or that were given to us all possess their own stories of past ownerships, migrations, and experiences. Such material objects pervade the works of

intercultural artists as they serve as memorials to all that was lost due to the forgetting of official history (Marks 76). But they can also serve to reconnect someone with what has been lost on a more intimate level. When Satrapi tenderly recalls the bread swans her Uncle Anoosh made during his imprisonment and gifted to her before his execution, she both demands public recognition of his martyrdom and connects with her uncle's spirit. The bread swans, serving this purpose, become a physical medium between Satrapi and her uncle. What once touched him, touches her, and as Satrapi invokes the materiality of these hand-carved bread swans, she experiences physical contact with him.

Recollection-objects are also crucial for the intercultural artist who longs for what has been lost through cultural displacement. Complex intercultural movements may imbue commercial objects with memory and transformative powers. As global movements of capital and cultural exchange shift commodities between geographies, the most unassuming of items can become status symbols (Marks 98 – 99). Marks terms these objects transnational and asserts that they take on new meanings as they travel through new places and contexts (98 – 99). *Persepolis* is filled with such commodities, be it the Michael Jackson pin Satrapi wore on her punk jacket, her *Nike* sneakers, or the bootlegged *Iron Maiden* album Satrapi was caught buying on the streets of Tehran. These objects, considered symbols of Western decadence, were forbidden in her culture and consequently became coveted and mysterious.

Amidst the rubble created by its historical excavation, *Persepolis* uncovers many of these recollection-objects and transnational artifacts. These objects serve as fragments of private histories and memories that when pieced together, create the texture of lived experience. Each fragment calls upon the sensual and material experiences of everyday life in order to draw viewers into Satrapi's narrative while providing a physical link between the present and the past, between memory and the actual event. In *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory* as *Material Culture in Modernity*, anthropologist C. Nadia Seremetakis argues that material experience triggers the senses to act as meaning-generating apparatuses and serve as a valuable tool in the interpretation of collective history (6). An emphasis on sensory and bodily memory becomes crucial for intercultural works whose objective is to reveal the knowledges that may have slipped out of the verbal or visual archives, knowledges that have been stored in memory, the senses, and the body (Marks 111). When Satrapi invokes the jasmine flowers her Grandmother ritually put in her bra to smell nice, the abundance of foodstuffs available on Austrian grocery shelves, or the songs of her favorite musical groups, she is referencing the capacity of human sensory experience to transport a person to another time and place, pulling history onto the same plane as the present.

These objects and sense experiences are all sites for Satrapi's process of transformation. They are the objects that stood witness to her transitions and experiences, and the everyday details that Satrapi brings together to form the story of her life. And it is through the representation of these physical and sensual recollections that Satrapi allows access to her personal and cultural memory, inviting the viewer to connect his or her own material worlds, cultural lifestyles, and everyday experiences to hers. As Seremetakis suggests, "the sensory landscape and its meaning-endowed objects bear

within them emotional and historical sedimentation that can provoke and ignite gestures, discourses, and acts... Thus the surround of material culture is neither stable nor fixed, but inherently transitive, demanding connection and completion by the perceiver" (7). Working on an epic scale, *Persepolis* invokes the spirits of recent histories and ancient pasts and braids them into Satrapi's contemporary narrative. And as excavated material objects mingle with memory, as sense perceptions are called upon to reconnect to what is lost, the spectator is pulled closer to each layer of time. It is here, at the level of reception, that an affinity is created between the viewer and Satrapi's quotidian narrative, evoking histories of other lives, struggles, and journeys.

Cultural and Visual Hybridity

Persepolis operates within a complex web of temporalities and personal and cultural histories. While the term intercultural implies existence within multiple cultural contexts, it also indicates a fluidity of movement between those cultures and the subsequent potential for evolution and transformation (Marks 6). Throughout her narrative, Satrapi is in a constant state of transition, whether it be the political revolution in Iran, cultural displacement, or changes within herself. East meets West in Satrapi, but so too does adolescence and adulthood, a physical metamorphosis at which she unabashedly pokes fun in her story. Satrapi's willingness to present these periods of transition, the good, the bad, and the ugly sides of life, recalling unpleasant memories and embarrassing moments with brutal honesty, provides her character with an accessible vulnerability. The raw confrontation Satrapi has with herself and her place in the world provides an unguarded account of her personal and cultural transitions amidst volatile social upheaval.

When Satrapi is sent to live in Austria at the age of 14, she finds herself searching for both a personal and cultural identity. In Vienna, we see her struggling socially, befriending other outsiders at school, and losing connection with her homeland. Wanting to avoid the bombardment of stereotypes and judgments associated with her cultural background, Satrapi disengages from her Iranian heritage, at times pretending to be French. As an intercultural artist, Satrapi must work within a complex set of identity politics wherein one's identity is not viewed simply as a unique and stabilized position, but rather an interminable process of internal and external evaluations. This process, Marks argues, can lead to a feeling of cultural homelessness (4). As Satrapi says upon her return from Vienna: "What I experienced weighs on me but I cannot talk to anybody... I was a stranger in Austria and now I've become one in my own country" (Paronnaud and Satrapi 1:09:29).

In the process of these transitions and displacements, Satrapi's identity becomes what cultural theorist Ella Shohat calls "hyphenated" (Shohat 7). As a Franco-Austrian-Iranian, even the simple question, "Where are you from?" becomes hard to answer for Satrapi. Her skin color, accent, and name—anything that might set her apart—forces her to conduct a deconstruction of heritage in order to provide an adequate response. Satrapi's "body is inscribed with a language she must laboriously learn to read. That is, she must learn to read for the purpose of translating back to people who assume the right to know things in their own language" (Marks 90). This

process of continuous translation creates an excessive amount of cultural baggage for Satrapi. Moving between cultures, Satrapi learns to dutifully explicate anything about her cultural and national background that, while once seemingly self-evident, might suddenly be incomprehensible within another culture or nation.

Satrapi performs a kind of self-excavation, and in searching for her own identity, she speaks to a collective one. By situating herself in a system of historical, geographical, and personal archives, Satrapi acts as mediator between private and public worlds, both inside and outside her homeland. There are two moments in the film when Satrapi relies upon her father to pass down the history of Iran and its state of affairs: when he explains to the young Marjane how the Shah came to power not by divine appointment, but through a combination of political backscratching and nepotism (Paronnaud and Satrapi 00:05:55), and again upon Marjane's return from Vienna when he fills her in on what happened while she was gone, that while the eight years of war were over, many in Iran felt there was no real change other than the staggering loss of life (Paronnaud and Satrapi 1:04:24). In both moments, Satrapi finds herself not as an authority on a history she witnessed, but in the place of the inexperienced or uninformed viewer, enabling her to act as a medium between cultures and temporalities while providing access to a similarly positioned audience.

Staying with these moments from the film, I would here like to draw upon the relationship between the cultural and temporal hybridity of our protagonist, and the hybridity inherent to the narrative's visual structure. *Persepolis* works as a cinematic hybrid since it is a mix of autobiography, fantasy, and historical documentary, and the visual possibilities inherent to animation allow for this interplay. Playful imagery maps out complex issues of political calculations, revolutions, and executions. We see the Shah as if a puppet (figure 1), his convulsive movements triggering the connection to

Figure 1. Screenshot from *Persepolis*; Parronaud and Satrapi; 2008.

the physicality and dimensionality of a marionette. But when his figure is turned to the side (figure 2), we see the thinness of the image, the Shah appearing to be nothing more than a paper doll. This tension between physicality and transparency, between depth and superficiality within *Persepolis*' visual structure calls attention to its

incompleteness and begs the viewer for closer examination and visual cognition. The restraint of Satrapi's graphic style is not a vacant dead-end, but rather an exercise in visual excavation, each frame ready to be searched for hidden meanings.

Figure 2. Screenshot from *Persepolis*; Parronaud and Satrapi; 2008.

Persepolis is able to evoke what cannot be represented visually through the simplicity of its imagery. The focus of the film is not about offering a supposed authenticity by means of costuming or scenery, rather the emphasis is on presenting a narrative of human experience. In its representation of military combat, bomb strikes, and executions, *Persepolis* intensifies the emotional impact of its dramatic narrative by means of understated, static imagery with only the silhouettes of figures. While minimalist in form, the image of a soldier dying (figure 3), his body seamlessly bleeding against

Figure 3. Screenshot from *Persepolis*; Parronaud and Satrapi; 2008.

the flattened surface of the picture plane, it is in fact the bareness of the image that cries out for what has been lost.

Without changing the fundamental mechanics of the medium of animation, *Persepolis* transcends the boundaries of its graphic format. If it is through personal narra-

tives that intercultural works make us question where knowledge comes from, then visual representation becomes a tool for rethinking what forms these knowledges take shape. And just as the intercultural artist must work within the dominant discourse in order to make room for a new language to emerge, *Persepolis* finds itself operating within the constraints of its visual form, using minimalist line drawings and animation to challenge the conventions of visual understanding while graphically engaging the viewer through a heightened emotional, sensual, and physical relationship.

Conclusion

To steal a phrase from Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, *Persepolis* "bleeds history".[3] Satrapi's narrative, its dependence on memory, its handmade artistic production, intimately beckons forth each viewer to come to terms with it on an equally experiential level. By idiosyncratically employing the verbal, sensual, and visual to open up the historical archive, *Persepolis* seeks to close the gap between viewer and viewed, and between personal memory and official history. It becomes the viewer's turn to mingle his or her own knowledges, experiences, and memories with Satrapi's in order to bring about new subjectivities and depths of perception.

Nostalgia, in its Greek etymology, is a fusion of *nosto*, "I return," and *algho*, "I feel pain" (Seremetakis 4). Much more potent than pure memory, nostalgia washes over the entire body, manifesting itself in a fluttering sensation in the gut, or in an aching heart. It has the ability to awaken an unresolved trauma or the pain of an old wound. *Persepolis* works on this level of nostalgia, traveling back to a distant past and embedding it into the present. Moving across time and space, *Persepolis* takes its spectators back and forth, around and around, and back again. Like a merry-go-round, *Persepolis*—with its whimsical imagery— allows each viewer to journey through Satrapi's experiences, witnessing the events surrounding the Iranian Revolution as she did growing up, with comparable feelings of awe and wonder, rushes of excitement and anxiety, and that familiar longing to go home. Satrapi's story calls upon the audience to connect with her experience in order to bring them closer to her world. And it is in this intimate, mutual relationship where there exists potential for those old wounds to heal.

Notes

1. *Persepolis* was originally told through a series of four graphic novels and was released in France by L'Association publishers in the following order: *Persepolis* 1 - November, 2000; *Persepolis* 2 - November 2001; *Persepolis* 3 - July 2002; and *Persepolis* 4 - September 2003. These novels were condensed into *Persepolis* 1: The Story of a Childhood and *Persepolis* 2: The Story of a Return for the English publication. References herein are to the complete works of *Persepolis*, in a single volume edition.

2. Both French and English translations of the film and graphic novels were used during this research, however for purposes of this discussion only the English editions will be referenced.

3. See Art Spiegelman's *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History*. London: Penguin, 1987, c1986.

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Political Engagements: Thinking Inside the Frame

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Abstract This essay reviews a number of recent critical works in which comics and politics are intimately connected. From explorations of the cultural and national contexts in which specific comics appeared, to the study of the actual politics underlying works, the essay gives a survey of comics scholarship published today, which evidences the growing interest in the study of political notions such as nationhood, globalization, propaganda, or womanhood. Additionally, the essay also considers the audience for such works, as while many of the works reviewed are intended for an academic audience, the field of comics scholarship often crosses traditional boundaries into creator and fan produced criticism.
Key words: comics, politics, geography, nation, women, global, manga, India, Mexico, Russia, Japan

Comics are an inherently political medium. The potential for a broad understanding of their narrative images, even when language is not present, can sweep across class, race, gender, language, and national boundaries. Although much of the emergent field of comics scholarship focuses on works conceived, marketed, and received as sophisticated literature, such as Sacco's *Palestine*, Bechdel's *Fun Home*, and Satrapi's *Persepolis*, it is important to remember that even so – called kid's stuff has a strong political element. Some of the initial works about comics, from Wertham's sensational *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954) to Dorfman and Mattelart's *How to Read Donald Duck* (1972), recognize the way comics reflect and have the power to shape personal, religious, economic, and national identities. Because of our own interests, the focus of the conference the papers in this issue arose from, and the nature of this journal, our investigation of recent works of scholarship on comics takes a broad international and political focus.

Despite the relatively small number of critical works published about comics, the prominence of political approaches in the humanities makes attempting to produce a holistic portrait of the recent academic and critical work on comics more complicated than perhaps we initially expected. While the leading contemporary voices in comics scholarship have inherited the critical and rhetorical tools of the last decades to con-

tinue developing political interpretations, the polyvalent discourses surrounding not only the idea of the political but also the definitions of comics have fractured the field into countless approaches. Initially, the newness and the tendency toward approaches that variously combine semiotics, narratology, and cultural studies opened up innumerable avenues for the examination of comics, while trying to establish an overarching methodology and critical vocabulary. As a result, we are witnessing a scholarly unevenness in approaches to different media and genres as well as to works of differing national origins. Further, such work struggles with the difference in the levels of familiarity within both the academic and non – academic audiences. Thus, we see this as an opportunity for scholars and critics interested in exploring in detail specific avenues to discuss political issues as they manifest in comics. This review essay will look at six recent works on comics which variously address national comics traditions from Mexico, Russia, India, Japan, women in comics, and architecture and urban space. Many of these break new ground, some looking critically at their subjects for the first time, while others bring new perspectives to their primary material.

Bruce Campbell's *iViva la Historieta! Mexican Comics, NAFTA, and the Politics of Globalization* (2009) provides a comprehensive overview of the presence of NAFTA, globalization, and neoliberalism in the Mexican comics of the last decade of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. In an attempt to foreground the importance of the nation as a geo-political, cultural, and social framework in which comics are conceived, Campbell's main motivation is to emphasize that "[t]he shift to neoliberalism meant a final public abandonment of the kind of cultural work exemplified decades earlier in the revolutionary nationalist mural art of Diego Rivera" (14). Thus, sometimes a cultural-materialist text, sometimes an essay on neo- and post-imperialism, *iViva la Historieta!* navigates contemporary Mexican comics from very contrasting, sometimes antagonistic, perspectives in order to reveal the presence of comics across the Mexican nation as they emerge from very different ideological fronts.

Campbell's critical study emerges from the analysis of specific works that either promote or strongly react against the neoliberal and conservative agendas of the last three Mexican administrations, conciliating reflections on the political context of their publication and their reception. However, for Campbell contextualization and reception are insufficient to understand the importance of the issue at hand. The textual and visual analyses of the proglobalization and antiglobalization works that he selects deftly give shape to the cultural critique he constructs to point at the "ideological differences vis-à-vis the problematic of globalization" (19). A critique that, additionally, is unavoidably constructed around the inherently national tensions such as the country's modernization, Mexico's pre-Columbian identity in contemporary global society, or the economic and social policies that have given shape to the country as we understand it today.

One of the most important achievements of the book is Campbell's downright refusal to assume a countercultural or alternative nature with which comics have been traditionally characterized. Instead, the multiple ideological foundations underlying the comics he revisits evince rather naturally that comics cannot be seen as simply

pertaining to specific pockets of popular culture, but as a highly versatile and politically motivated medium. As a result, Campbell spares us the now outdated and perhaps pointless comics-as-legitimate-cultural-product apology to dive head-first into the three-dimensional ideological world in which cultural production, including comics, occurs. On the one hand, official annual reports on the government's performance published in the form of comics (like President Vicente Fox's "A Mitad del Camino") and narratives on the Mexico City (like Mexico City Mayor López Obrador's *Historias de la ciudad*) emphasize the fact that comics have an invaluable potential for channelling "political competition for popular loyalties and the necessity of legitimating governance" (45). Simultaneously, from the point of view of the entertainment industry, we are introduced to pro-US Mexican border western narratives such as *El Libro Vaquero*, or the patriarchal central character in *Las Aventuras del Dr. Simi*, manifest the promotion of a specifically conservative ideology. On the other hand, Campbell discusses the other side of the political coin by commenting on the extremely powerful connections between the Spanish conquest and the US post-imperialism in projects like Edgar Clement's *Operación Bolivar*, which offers a "long view of globalization in the Americas, from the European conquest . . . to the trasnationalization of domestic markets under the twentieth-century hegemony of the United States" (165), or parodies of the superhero tradition like *El Bulbo*, a humorous narrative that features "Japanese manga, Star Wars, [and] Superman" and subverts the genre while engaging in a carnivalesque celebration of the figure of the antihero (191).

All in all, iViva la Historieta! succeeds in highlighting the complexities of the Mexican political landscape as represented in the ubiquitous medium, while demonstrating that comics are not governed by an innocuous and inherent ideology, but they are shaped as cultural artifacts with a specific underlying ideology. Ultimately, Campbell's book is an accessible and entertaining read that, while satisfying the of its scholarly audience, it has the ability to reach out to the interested comics reader.

Working toward similar goals, but on a much larger temporal scale, José Alaniz constructs both a history and a critical framework for looking at Russian comics in *Komiks: Comic Art in Russia* (2010). Identifying a troubled and contentious history for sequential visual narrative in Russia, Alaniz works hard to create an argument for comics as a persistent Russian medium, assembling a genealogy for sequential narrative art in Russia that links them to "past visual cultural practices" (4) beginning with the essentially Russian religious icon paintings and continuing through to present-day comics, which exist almost despite a public that is and largely has been suspicious and sometimes hostile to them. In that context, he presents a visual tradition that the culture understood in ways that parallel comics, icons being quite literally painted on separate panels and conveying narratives. The message and visual form of the icon, which functioned as a portable device for conveying religion, was combined with printing to create the lubok, originally "a cheaply made sheet . . . depicting religious scenes through crude drawing and textual captions" (16). As the lubok form developed through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it began to include both folktales and political messages from oppositional forces. The lubok came to be viewed as a medium of the people, at times regulated by the government and

condemned by the Church. In the early twentieth century, however, its popularity declined with the advent of both cinema and radio, the strains of the Russo-Japanese War, World War I, and the various revolutionary struggles. However, apart from the lubok, visual forms of communication flourished. Experimentation in both posters and journals under the influence of vanguard forces such as Diaghliev's circle and the Futurists played with the relationships between text and image.

Alaniz recounts that with the formation of the Soviet state, the role of sequential art initially exploded. Posters conveyed propaganda and party messages, and sequential works hung in urban windows by the Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA) provided Communist party directives to the public in a decidedly comics-like form. These ROSTA windows criticized class enemies, warned of social evils, and formed a method of mass communication with a semi-literate public. During the same time, comics appeared in journals, most notably the satirical *Krokodil*, and artists such as El Lissitsky renewed experimentation in the interplay of image and text. This period was not to last, however, as the consolidation of Stalin's power and the rise of Soviet Realism put an end to ROSTA windows, many journals, and artistic experimentation in general. Alaniz describes the near-extinction of comics and most communication involving innovative uses of image and text: viewed as capitalist and part of primitive, backward culture, narratives that included pictures were seen as harmful to literacy efforts, and comics were relegated to consumption by children. Sporadic government poster work continued, but radio, television, film, and the printed word dominated. Alaniz traces some artists and comics creators that fled to environments more receptive to their work, especially Belgrade and Western Europe.

After laying out the often sad history of comics in the decades after Stalin, Alaniz then chronicles the return of Russian comics during Perestroika, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and beyond. Groups such as KOM and Tema took advantage of the new openness, but failed to find acceptance in a culture that had been trained to be mistrustful of comics. A second wave of post-Soviet comics arose in three main lines, but, just like its predecessors, it struggled for public acceptance and to compete with foreign imports. Alaniz credits the website *Komiksolyot* with saving Russian comics by becoming a gallery and encyclopedia that catalogs the lubok form, ROSTA windows, legal and samizdat publications, and various other forms of visual sequential narrative that have emerged over the past century or so. Despite the formation of an indigenous Russian comic convention, KomMissia, Alaniz's picture of Russian comics is still rather bleak. He mentions that no real distribution system exists for comics that are not imports or directly aimed at children, specifically citing the lack of any comic book stores. The comics community interacts through internet forums, a few conventions, and word of mouth, and faces a public that remains indifferent at best and a critical scholarly community that is often openly hostile. The book then looks closely at the place of comics in fine art, the commentary they provide on the emerging Russian society, the role of autobiography, and the place of women in Russian comics, identifying a small and contentious, yet vibrant group of creators. Especially fascinating are his discussions of the graphic novel *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy, a contemporary retelling of the Russian classic, and the works of Lumbricus and

Elena Uzhinova, two Russian women who use autobiographical comics to navigate and challenge their positions.

In his conclusion, Alaniz laments the absence of the political in Russian comics; here, he seems to be using the idea of the political quite literally, citing the disturbingly jingoistic response of comic creators to the Russian conflict with Georgia and the repression of overtly political comics. Thus, while Alaniz identifies a small Russian comics community that deals with notions of globalization, class, and gender, he issues a hopeful call for directly politically engaged comics. Throughout the book, Alaniz does close readings of many comics and proto-comics, yet unfortunately, many of the least familiar forms, especially to non-Russian readers, are illustrated with infrequent examples, and regretably, many of the icons, lubok, posters, and ROSTA window displays, are reproduced at such a small size as to be almost useless.

The history of comics in India stands in stark contrast to those in Russia. Comics enjoyed a rapid rise in popularity after independence, and what is more a single Indian publisher became a force not only in the national comics market, but in the creation of the national imaginary, the process of defining India itself. Karline McLain's *India's Immortal Comic Books: Gods, Kings, and Other Heroes* (2009) provides a history and analysis of Amar Chitra Katha (ACK), publisher of comics that have come to shape the religious, class, and national identities of India and Indians. ACK's comics take the form of 32-page volumes that tell the story of a religious or historical figure in one or more volumes, but are not ongoing series.

The book beings with a history of ACK, a venture that grew out of Anant Pai's disappointment in the lack of knowledge about Hindu culture that he perceived in the generation born just after independence. The comics, launched in 1969 with the volume *Krishna*, retold Hindu mythology in comic form, with a style that was both based on and fought the influences of comics imported from the United States such as *Tarzan* and *The Phantom*. ACK initially published its comics in English, a move which targeted the growing middle class. McLain identifies that by choosing English rather than Hindi, the comics appealed to the desire of parents from across India to both have their children learn Indian culture and practice English. Pai chose to begin by publishing religious tales, a potentially contentious move that ACK navigated by initially minimizing the depiction of miracles, a move that came from both Pai's scientific background and the general emphasis of the new state on science, technology, and progress as well as the desire to avoid creating objects of worship, as images of Hindu deities in any form may be venerated. The comics were wildly successful, sales surpassing foreign imports by the late 1970s, and reflecting and contributing to the growing idea of India as a Hindu nation. Even though ACK incorporated historical figures, colonial freedom fighters, and later political figures into its line-up, its comics McLain demonstrates the comics' strong religious connection with testimonies of people who specifically picture the ACK depictions of deities when worshipping.

Pai's insistence on basing the comics on historical texts, rather than contemporary retellings, led to the reception of the comics themselves as accurate historical depictions, used as references for film and television productions and in debates about the historical dress habits of women in the Indian subcontinent. The comics of ACK

were at various times officially endorsed by the state, and accepted as part of the public cultural fabric of India; as McLain's central argument goes, they "reached into the everyday lives of millions . . . [and] are a crucial site for studying the ways in which dominant ideologies of religion and national identity are actively created and recreated" (22). McLain traces the role of the comics in the changing roles of women in India, touching on depictions of sati, the emergence of women artists and writers, and the depiction of strong, martial Indian women throughout history. In investigating the goddess Durga, McLain reveals the dual nature of these texts as both popular and sacred as well as their role in the formation of modern Hinduism. In addition to the religious comics, ACK publishes historical stories, such as *Shivaji* (1971), that McLain reads as forming and reflecting Indian nationalism and uniqueness, both in relation its colonial past and its contentious relationships with neighboring nations. She also discusses the varied depictions of Muslims in the comics, from stereotypical villains to national heroes; fascinatingly, ACK publishes both the story of the Mughal emperor *Akbar* (1979) and the story of *Rana Pratap* (1979), a Hindu king who fought against him, and both men are portrayed as heroes in their respective volumes. The close readings conclude with a look at the various volumes on Gandhi, which Mclain reads as subtly questioning his philosophy of non-violence while simultaneously minimizing the fact that not all of India agreed with his message; a move that may not be surprising from a publisher whose works are largely composed of tales that involve combat and war and maintains a close relationship with the government. The book itself is replete with large reproductions of pages, panels, and even scripts, and should provide interesting reading to scholars who work on India, comics, religion and nationalism.

If national and socio-political concerns in the field have proliferated in the recent years resulting from an increasing interest in international comics, works offering approaches to individual politics have similarly appeared that expand the academic conversation. That is the case of a volume that has been much anticipated and should be well received is Hillary Chute's *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics* (2010), a work that turns its attention to the dramatic presence of five women comic authors in their autobiographical work, combining a commentary on the visual mise-en-scène of the authors-characters with a critical reflection on subjectivity, sexuality, and gender politics. Chute balances rather elegantly a well-articulated theoretical approach to these and other issues with a sharp textual analysis that reflects the authors' political and artistic endeavors. As she recounts in an anecdote involving one of the authors and her art teacher, Chute argues effectively for the value of a gender-specific approach. After Aline Kominsky-Crumb becomes disillusioned by her parents' lack of support, her teacher's encouragement is echoed throughout Chute's work as a marker of the urgency of these authors' production rather than an ungainly apologetic reminder that women indeed do matter: "'I think you have something to say,' and advises her to ignore the previous professors 'and their pathetic egos'" (48).

Graphic Women provides a rigorous analysis of works by five prominent contemporary authors. Following a chronological order, the book starts with Aline Kominsky-

Crumb's explicit work, praising it for its daring reclamation of the grotesque as a non-gendered mode. Chute's main objective here is to go full circle, first implicitly degendering the grotesque in order to explicitly gender it, tackling it as the author envisages. As a result, Chute manages to offer a fascinating triangulation between gender, sexuality, and aesthetic value. In the second chapter, we read about the intermingling of personal and political implications that emerge in Phoebe Gloeckner's shockingly explicit work, in which the author explores her innermost personal anxieties, ranging from the depiction of her own decaying body ravaged by Pemphigus Vulgaris, to the "painful text teeming with adolescent sexuality" in her *Diary of a Teenage Girl: An Account in Words and Pictures* (74). While showing a similar interest in the presence of trauma in comics, Chute also approaches Lynda Barry's work from an aesthetic angle: "Barry rejected others' conception of "high art" and "mass art" . . . Although her statement 'I don't know the difference' might be seen as disingenuous or simply polemical, for Barry, in fact, the fluid boundaries between the various forms stems from the fact that images are at the core" of her work (99). Yet, the nude female form appropriately appears in her *Naked Ladies* to reflect, in a reverse mode, how women "look, [how] they act, [and how] they engage our gaze" (105). With regard to Marjane Satrapi's work, Chute characterizes it as explicitly political precisely because it deals with the author-character's reminiscence of her own individuality: "while we need not understand Persepolis 2 as less political, we may understand that in also focusing on the intimate trials and tribulations of Marji's adolescence and young adulthood it integrates a deeply charged, additional mode of witnessing to the first book's witnessing on a world-historical stage" (140). The conflation between personal and historical remembrance, between the national instability and personal trauma, yield, as Chute shows us, one of the most compelling narratives in contemporary comics. Finally, the last chapter tackles Alison Bechdel's symbolically-charged and *Fun Home*, a narrative that reveals the author's traumatic past as much as it does her investment in creating a narrative full of symbolism and nuanced ambivalence. In her analysis, Chute offers the most effective readings of the comic when she explicates the numerous strategies that Bechdel deploys to bridge the gaps that her narrative, one could argue, opens up in front of its reader, from childhood trauma to the conciliation of past and present. As she concludes, "*Fun Home* is a book about trauma, but it is not about the impassable or the ineffable. It is rather about hermeneutics; specifically . . . about the procedure of close readings and close looking" (182).

A much needed work, Hillary Chute's *Graphic Women* is an example of great scholarly work and spot-on textual analysis. Its approach effectively escapes the trivializations that are often uttered with regard to contemporary comics, obliterating the power of self-reflection camouflaged as contemporary authors' solution to an inherent lack of creativity. Her text powerfully invites us to think about the problematic of self-portrayal, casting as wide a net as the autobiographical comics category can embrace.

While the majority of political approaches to culture favor readings of nation, class, race, or gender, the exploration of other angles to understand the political underpinnings of cultural creation and consumption is most opportune. This is the case

of recent studies in space, architecture, and the urban mass, which Jörn Ahrens and Arno Meteling's edited collection *Comics and the City: Urban Space in Print, Picture and Sequence* (2010) comics. This volume offers a wide-ranging selection of perspectives on space and the city that other works like *iViva la Historieta!* or Komiks cover only marginally. Spanning the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the collection comprises sixteen essays that are grounded, for the most part, on the textual analysis of comics from various Western genres and traditions. Additionally, the essays demonstrate an interest in engaging carefully with the main theoretical trends in semiotics and space theory, to produce cultural critiques that highlight the importance of physical and geographical contextualization in comics.

The volume opens with an introduction to "History, Comics, and the City," which emphasizes the power of comics as visual archive and highlights a rather hermeneutical understanding of comics through the representation of space in the frame and the reader's gaze as the natural motion that causes meaning to flow from panel to panel. The second section, "Retrofuturistic and Nostalgic Cities," appears as a logical step forward from the theoretical notions laid out in the first section, complicating new readings of the city with postmodern theories of space in which time and space are closely linked as manifested in utopian and dystopian comics, as Henry Jenkins does in "'The Tomorrow that Never Was'—Retrofuturism in the Comics of Dean Motter": "Retrofuturism suggests the process by which ideas that once were emergent become residual as tomorrow becomes yesterday" (66). In one of the most engaging sections, "Superhero Cities," both mainstream and underground narratives are explored to consider whether or not cities are represented in the same mythical terms that characterize superhero comics so distinctly. Of special interest is Jason Bainbridge's "'I am New York'--Spider-Man, New York City and the Marvel Universe," which highlights the interdependence underlying the creation of the real and the fictional city and explores the desires of the actual city to become its comics counterpart and vice-versa. From there, we move to an investigation of morality, individualism, and evil in "Locations of Crime," to finally "The City-Comic as a Mode of Reflection," which explores in more abstract terms the representation of urban space in comics as a psychological environment, as Thomas Becker asserts in "Enki Bilal's *Woman Trap: Reflections on Authorship under the Shifting Boundaries between Order and Terror in the City*": "The emphasizing of a single panel in stream of pictures is a genuine urban perception first established by the social conditions in New York at the end of the nineteenth century" (273).

Comics and the City provides its reader with a wide-ranging collection of perspectives that cover as disparate notions as the relations between fictional and real cities, reading as a spatial phenomenon, or the psychology of the city. Yet, this thematization of Western notions of space and Western cities in comics from all genres and traditions soon a similar volume will appear that deals with non-Western cities and spaces in comics.

Another recent collection, *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives* (2010), tackles comics from a more traditional, national perspective. The collection sets out with a grand intention: to provide an overview of the genres and histo-

ry of manga, several close readings of individual manga, some narratalogical and semiotic work on manga in contrast to Western comics, and to investigate the consumption and reception of manga on the global market. To that end, it is divided into four sections, "Manga and Genres," "Manga in Depth," "Reading Manga," and "Manga in the World." The variety of approaches and authors reflects the relative maturity of manga scholarship to the scholarship on other national traditions, like India, Russia, and Mexico. Perhaps because it seeks a place in a more crowded market, the collection seems to have trouble defining itself and its audience. Toni Johnson-Woods, the editor of the volume, delivers an introduction that simultaneously is directed at those approaching manga for the first time and manages to reel off details in a rapid-fire method that would be bewildering to the novice. generalizations about both manga and non-Japanese comics are made, and it is unclear if this collection is aimed at the casual reader who wishes to discover manga, the student in an introductory course about manga, or manga fans who wish to peek behind the curtain to see what the academics are saying about their favorite works.

The introductory section follows a similar establishing mode: Jean-Marie Bouissou covers the origins of the medium in Japan in "Manga: A Historical Overview," and the other chapters provide information on the genres of manga, with special attention to shōnen and shōjo, including an interesting but oddly placed chapter on representations of gay men in shōjo, "The 'Beautiful Boy' in Japanese Girl's Manga" by Mark McLelland. The next section comprises close readings of manga creators (mangaka) and manga. Of special note is Philip Brophy's "Osamu Tezuka's *Gekiga*: *Behind the Mask of Manga*," which looks at the idea of cuteness and gender in the hands of Tezuka, arguably the most important figure in the development of manga. Tania Darlington and Sara Cooper tackle transgendered and transitioning characters and how manga reflects and challenges social ideals in "The Power of Truth: Gender and Sexuality in Manga," and analyses of manga by animation legend Miyazaki, intersubjectivity in shōjo, and the oddly compelling genre of food-manga round out the section. Like the larger collection, these readings are inconsistent; some provide little more than a plot summary and a literature review, while others make serious critical and theoretical moves.

Neil Cohn's "Japanese Visual Language: The Structure of Manga" leads off the section "Reading Manga," is a detailed and statistical semiotic-literary cognitivist comparison of comics from the United States and Japan. While it is an interesting attempt to codify the structure of manga, it seems particularly out of place here, in a collection that has been thus far aimed at dedicated aspiring fans or academics unfamiliar with the genre. The rest of this section is similarly rigorous, although N. C. Christopher Couch's "International Singularity in Sequential Art: The Graphic Novel in the United States, Europe, and Japan" is much more about comics as a global phenomenon than about manga.

The collection ends with overviews of manga in the era of globalization, with chapters on its reception in Europe, the United States, and East Asia, and the role of Japan as a culture provider to the world. Many of the chapters are unfortunately too short to adequately treat their subjects with the level of detail they deserve. As a

whole, *Manga*: *An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives* might make an interesting critical text in a course about manga, but the variance between functioning as an entry-level text and assuming familiarity with both the medium and various schools of critical thought would most likely prove frustrating to students.

It is clear that the last decade has seen an impressive proliferation of studies on politics and comics motivated by a few of the seminal works that will set the tone for future scholarship. Yet, more important is the fact that comics no longer appear as mere exemplifications or anecdotal illustrations in works dealing with larger political issues. Instead, more and more scholarly and critical work is published that centers fully on political and ideological manifestations emerging in comics in the form of the cultural contextualization and formal analyses of specific works. Surely, with the support of major academic publishers, especially the University Press of Mississippi and the University of Texas Press, some of the most exciting recent works such as *Multicultural Comics*: *From Zap to Blue Beetle* (2011) and *The Colonial Heritage of French Comics* (2011) will soon be accompanied by refreshing studies on other manifestations of politics in the medium.

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责任编辑:杨革新

“诗歌与诗学的对话:中美诗歌诗学协会第一届年会”将在武汉召开

2007 年在武汉成功举行的“20 世纪美国诗歌国际学术研讨会”有力地推动了中国的美国诗歌研究和中美诗歌的交流。本次会议出版了由 70 余篇中外学者撰写的会议论文论文集并被美国 CPCI(原 ISSHP)全文收录,同时催生了 2008 年成立的以美国宾夕法尼亚大学为基地的中美诗歌诗学协会(CAAP),成为中美诗歌交流史上的大事件。为进一步推进中国、美国以及世界诗歌和诗学的交流,促进世界文学创作和研究的繁荣与发展,中美诗歌诗学协会、宾夕法尼亚大学、华中师范大学、《外国文学研究》、《世界文学研究论坛》杂志等多家国内外学术机构将于 2011 年 9 月 29 - 30 日在中国武汉共同举办“中美诗歌诗学协会第一届年会”,协会会长、斯坦福大学玛乔瑞·帕洛夫教授,协会副会长、宾夕法尼亚大学查尔斯·伯恩斯坦教授和华中师范大学聂珍钊教授等众多中外著名诗人和学者将出席会议,就诗歌的创作与研究展开对话和研讨。在此,我们诚邀国内外学者和诗人拨冗莅临本次会议。

一、会议议题

1. 玛乔瑞·帕洛夫诗学研究
2. 查尔斯·伯恩斯坦与语言诗
3. 诗歌经典的重读与阐释
4. 声音、表演、文本:诗歌艺术的疆界
5. 21 世纪诗歌中的身份问题
6. 诗歌与现代媒体
7. 诗歌译介理论

二、会议语言:英语、汉语

三、提交论文摘要截止时间:2011 年 8 月 20 日

四、会议时间与地点

报到:2011 年 9 月 28 日,华中师范大学桂苑宾馆大厅

会议:2011 年 9 月 29 - 30 日

五、成果出版

会后出版论文集,并将申报 CPCI(原 ISSHP)收录;论文将择优发表在《外国文学研究》、《世界文学研究论坛》等期刊。

六、会务联系人及其方式

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Call for Papers

Dialog on Poetry and Poetics:

The 1st Convention of Chinese/American Association for Poetry and Poetics
in Honor of Prof. Marjorie Perloff's 80th Birthday

The 2007 International Conference on 20th Century American Poetry in Wuhan, China, inaugurated a new era for American poetry study in China and for the exchange of poetry between China and America. The landmark conference proceedings included over 70 essays by authors from around the world. The conference also led to the formation of the Chinese/American Association for Poetry and Poetics (CAAP), based at the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing (CPCW). In order to facilitate academic exchange and to promote poetry and poetics of (and beyond) America and China, CAAP will co-host "Dialog on Poetry and Poetics: The First Convention of the Chinese/American Association for Poetry and Poetics" (Wuhan, China, September 29-30, 2011) with CPCW at Penn, Central China Normal University, *Foreign Literature Studies* (AHCI journal) and *Forum for World Literature Studies*. CAAP President Marjorie Perloff, professor of Stanford University and fellow of American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS), CAAP Vice-president Charles Bernstein, Professor of University of Pennsylvania and fellow of AAAS, and CAAP Vice-president Nie Zhenzhao, professor of Central China Normal University and vice-president of China National Association of Foreign Literatures, will attend the conference together with many other scholars from America, China and other parts of the world. We hereby sincerely invite all scholars and poets of the world to this grand academic occasion.

I. Topics

1) The Critical Writings of Marjorie Perloff: Retrospective Readings of the Works
2) Charles Bernstein and L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E
3) Reinterpretations of Poetry Classics: Canons New and Old
4) Sound, Performance, Text: the Boundaries of Poetry
5) Issues of Identity in 21st-Century Poetry
6) Poetry and New Media
7) The Poetics of Translation

II. Conference Languages: English and Chinese

III. Deadline for Abstract Submission: August 20, 2011

IV. Time and Place of the Convention:

Registration: September 28, 2011

Guiyuan Hotel, Central China Normal University, Wuhan

Conference: September 29-30, 2011

V. Publication of conference essays:

1) Selected essays will be published in journals: *Foreign Literature Studies* and *Forum for World Literature Studies*;

2) Proceedings will be published after the conference.

VI. Send abstract proposals to, or request more information from:

Prof Luo Lianggong
School of Foreign Languages, Central China Normal University
152 Luoyu Road, Wuhan 430079, China
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