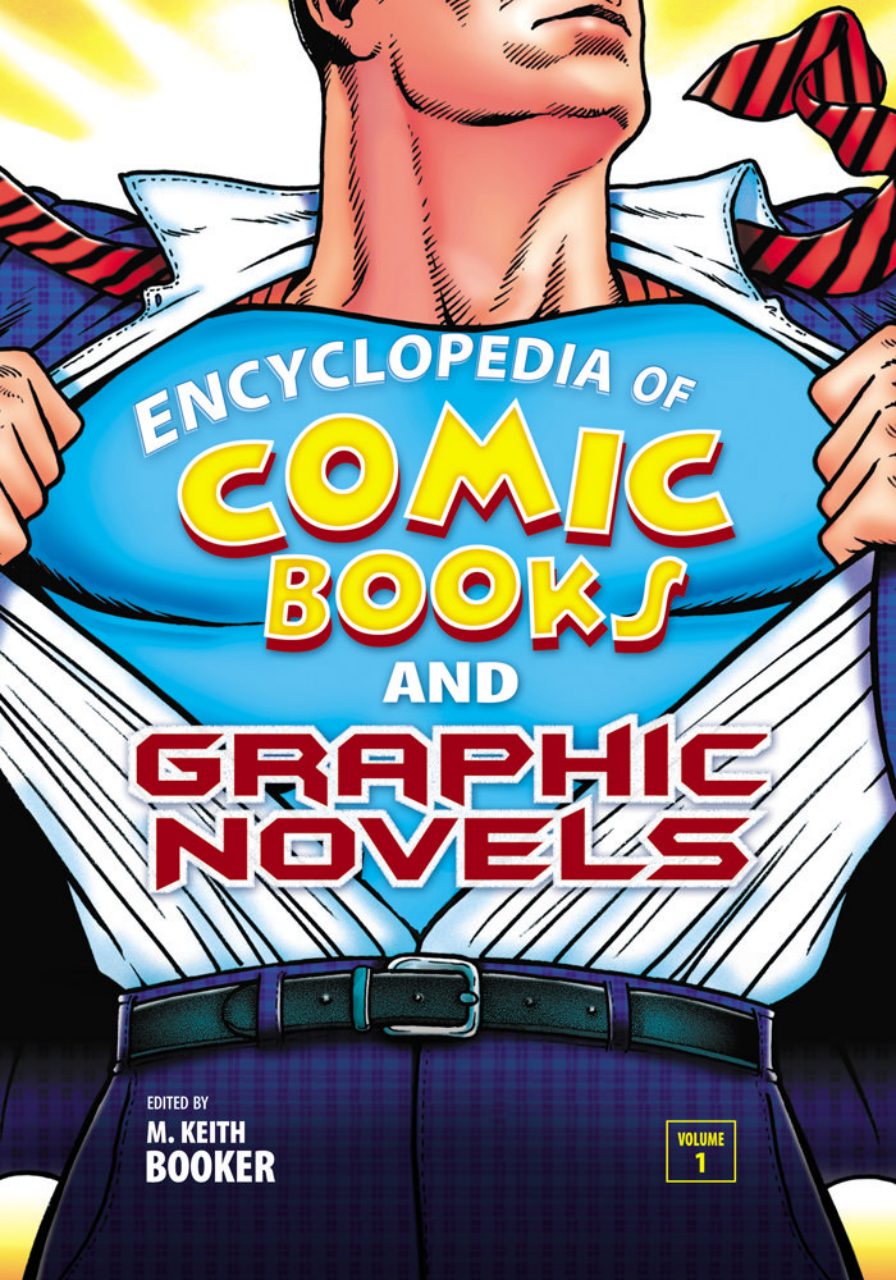

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
COMIC
BOOKS
AND
GRAPHIC
NOVELS
EDITED BY
M. KEITH
BOOKER
VOLUME
1

Encyclopedia of Comic Books and Graphic Novels

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ENCYCLOPEDIA OF COMIC BOOKS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS

VOLUME 1: A–L

M. KEITH BOOKER, EDITOR

GREENWOOD

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Preface

Comic books have long been among the least respected forms of American popular culture, often regarded as mindless entertainment for kids, yet sometimes regarded as dangerous bad influences unsuitable for kids. That has all begun to change, especially in the past two decades, when comic book authors and artists such as Alan Moore, Frank Miller, and Neil Gaiman have gained increasing critical acclaim for the complexity and sophistication of their work and when the publishing phenomenon known as the "graphic novel"—which allows for longer and more complex single-volume narratives in the comics as a medium—has provided a new and more respected outlet for the comics art form. Yet the comics have a rich and varied history even before this time of increased critical respect. Comics also tend to be highly intertextual, so that it becomes difficult fully to appreciate any given comic without at least some broad general knowledge of its background in comics history. This *Encyclopedia of Comic Books and Graphic Novels* is intended to provide a useful central resource both for those who have a professional interest in researching comic books and graphic novels and for those who simply want to enrich their reading of comics.

The history of comic books is vast and complex, and these two volumes cannot hope to be comprehensive, so some practical (but often difficult) decisions have had to be made regarding content. These decisions have been made in consultation with the project's Editorial Board, as well as with the full list of contributors to these volumes. The most important decision was to emphasize Anglophone comics, with a special emphasis on comics first published in the United States—and on American writers and artists. Thus, the rich comics traditions in Europe and Japan are given less emphasis, though some of their highlights are at least indicated, mostly through the entries entitled "European Comics" and "Manga." Some 78 contributors, scholars of comic books,

graphic novels, and popular culture, have prepared 340 entries that provide as many as possible of the most important writers, artists, and specific comic book or graphic novel titles. In the latter case, many of the entries are actually listed under the names of important characters, because so many of these characters appear in multiple titles. This encyclopedia also includes entries on individual publishing companies within the comics industry and a few miscellaneous entries on comics-related topics. Finally, it includes entries that provide broader surveys of important themes and genres within comics—such as superhero comics, crime comics, and horror comics—as well as important themes—such as the Cold War, feminism, and religion.

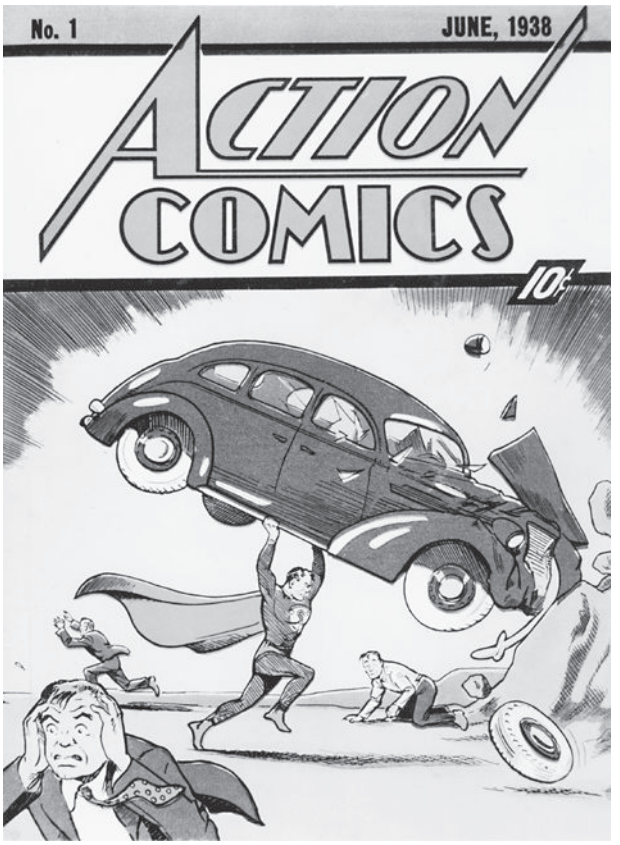
Many entries conclude with a selected bibliography of recommended resources, and at the end of volume 2, the encyclopedia features a selected resource list of the most important books, articles, and Web sites related to comic books and graphic novels. A comprehensive index following the bibliography gives readers more access to the information, as does a system of cross references, indicated both by boldface terms in the text, which indicate that there is an entry for that term, as well as "see also" references.



ACTION COMICS. *Action Comics* is considered the birthplace of the superhero genre based upon the debut of **Superman** in its first issue (cover-dated June 1938); it remains one of the most significant titles in the comic book medium. Originally published by ***Detective Comics***, a predecessor of **DC Comics**, the series began as an anthology featuring several heroic characters, such as explorer Marco Polo, adventurer Tex Thomson, cowboy Chuck Dawson, reporter Scoop Scanlon, prizefighter Pep Morgan, and magician Zatara. Included among these standard archetypal figures was Superman, the first super powered crime fighter in popular culture.

Superman had been created several years earlier by **Jerry Siegel** (writer) and **Joe Shuster** (artist) in the hope of selling the character to a newspaper syndicate. That effort proved unsuccessful, but the ***Man of Steel*** was eventually accepted for possible inclusion in the forthcoming *Action Comics*. Siegel and Shuster cut their sample newspaper strips apart and reformatted them for the comic book page. Publisher Jack Liebowitz discarded the originally advertised cover drawing in favor of the now iconic image of Superman hoisting a car over his head. Only 200,000 copies of *Action Comics* #1 were published and Superman did not appear on the cover again until the seventh issue. Within the first months of publication, customer surveys revealed that Superman was attracting a legion of new readers. Monthly sales of *Action Comics* skyrocketed to nearly a million. The popularity of Superman led publishers to introduce countless other costumed superheroic characters and, thus, a new genre was born. Today fewer than 100 original copies of *Action Comics* #1 are known to exist.

Action Comics #1 introduced many enduring elements of the Superman mythology, including Lois Lane, Clark Kent, and *The Daily Star* newspaper (later changed to *The Daily Planet*). Superman's archenemy Lex Luthor debuted in issue #23 with a full head



The cover of *Action Comics* issue #1, June 1938, the first appearance of Superman in a comic book format. Photofest

of red hair. He was followed by other villains who made their initial appearances in *Action Comics*, such as Ultra-Humanite (issue #13), Prankster (issue #51), Toyman (issue #64), and the evil android Brainiac (issue #242). Another landmark issue is *Action Comics* #252, which features the introduction of Supergirl.

Action Comics has been in continuous publication since 1938 and is the second-longest running title published by DC Comics, after *Detective Comics*. It reached its milestone 850th issue in 2008, and is only behind Dell Comics' *Four Color* as the title with the greatest number of issues. In 1988, DC Comics attempted to return *Action Comics* to its roots as an anthology feature. Beginning with issue #601, the title was changed to *Action Comics Weekly* to reflect its new distribution format. Superman's presence in the series was reduced to a two-page spread, while other heroes such as **Green Lantern**, Deadman, **Phantom Lady**, Nightwing, the Secret Six, and the Blackhawks were highlighted. Ultimately, this new incarnation of the title proved unsuccessful and in 1989, *Action Comics* reverted back to being the primary home of Superman.

Charles Coletta

ADAMS, NEAL (1941–). Considered one of the finest comic book illustrators of all time, Adams was born in New York and attended the High School of Industrial Art in Manhattan. Known for his distinctive and innovative artistic style and for his activism for artists' rights within the comics industry, Adams has been one of the most influential comic book artists of all time. He first approached **DC Comics** when he was 18, and his timing could not have been worse as the popularity of comics was in a steep decline. After receiving no response from DC Comics, he went over to **Archie** comics where **Joe Simon** (**Captain America** co-creator) told Adams that he was going to do Adams a big favor by turning him down. Although Adams did get some work at Archie and also did backgrounds for the *Bat Masterson* strip by Howard Nostrand,

he quickly went on to greater solo efforts. At the young age of 20, he already had a syndicated newspaper comic strip, *Ben Casey*, that ran for three-and-a-half years. Even though he wanted to be a serious commercial illustrator, Adams returned to DC Comics with the intention of finding extra work. Working for Carmine Infantino, Adams took on *The Spectre* and his signature character, Deadman, in *Strange Adventures*. His dynamic covers were anything but cartoony and his naturalistic style coupled with his dramatic posing shook up DC Comics' entire artistic approach. His classic 1971 cover of **Superman** breaking chains of kryptonite (Superman #233) is one such example. In *The Brave and the Bold* he turned **Batman** into a brooding, moody, and dark character as opposed to the campy version that mimicked the popular television series at the time. This resulted in Adams being given the flagship *Batman* title only a few months later. His version of Batman proved highly successful; for many fans of DC Comics, his is the definitive Batman. Adams also went over to **Marvel** and took on the failing ***X-Men*** title. While not able to save it, his brief run remains a highlight in the series. He also managed to become the first artist to be publicly credited as working for both Marvel and DC at the same time (others had feared reprisals and resorted to using pseudonyms if they worked for the competition).

In the early 1970s Adams, along with writer **Dennis (Denny) O'Neil**, worked on the now classic but then controversial run of ***Green Lantern/Green Arrow.*** In addressing current social topics such as race and drugs, the duo's message did not go unnoticed by the readers, especially as it ran so thoroughly against the grain of most recent comics, the content of which had long been seriously curtailed by the **Comics Code**. Adams's Green Lantern would also appear on a U.S. stamp in 2006.

Adams also did work for National Lampoon and **Warren Publishing.** In the 1980s, Adams created the short-lived independent company, Continuity Comics, which was later renamed and turned into an animation company for test commercials. Adams's influence in the comic book industry was not limited to his artistry. He successfully fought for artists to get their original work returned to them, as it was traditionally kept by the company or simply destroyed; and he helped Superman creators **Jerry Siegel** and **Joe Shuster** receive their long overdue financial and creative rights.

Jeff McLaughlin

ADAPTATIONS FROM OTHER MEDIA. Adapted works have long been a part of comics, ranging from a single story in an anthology to a one-shot comic book, an ongoing series, graphic novels, and even a series of graphic novels. These include adaptations of literary works as well as adaptations of films and, on some occasions, television programs. None of these tell the full story as told in the original work, but they can inspire an interest in that work or extend the story beyond the original.

Literary Adaptations

Adaptations of literary works have undergone a resurgence in recent years, ranging from works aimed at older readers to heavily condensed adaptations of classic works

aimed at adolescent readers. Some of these works are even adapted by the original author. In the 19th century, popular prints in Europe adapted various literary works (from fairy tales to literary novels). Adaptations have been prominent in more modern European comics as well, as in Tardi's adaptations of detective novels, Mattotti's version of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, or Heuet's adaptation of Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*. In the United States one of the earliest adaptations was a 1921 comic book version of *Swiss Family Robinson*. In 1935, *New Fun* (later called ***More Fun***), one of the first, if not the first, comic books in the modern format containing all-original material, featured a one-page serialized adaptation of *Ivanhoe* in many early issues. This was followed by an adaptation of *The Three Musketeers*. Beginning in the 1940s, the title most widely known for literary adaptations was ***Classics Illustrated***, which adapted numerous classic literary works to the comic book format.

However, *Classics Illustrated* was far from the only comic book to adapt literary works. In addition to ongoing series, many anthology titles over the years included adaptations as one of the many stories in the issue. For example, the **science fiction**, **fantasy**, **horror**, and **crime comics** put out by **EC Comics** in the 1950s adapted the work of such writers as Ray Bradbury. Originally the adaptations of his work were done without his permission, but Bradbury and EC soon came to a formal arrangement. A number of these stories were collected in two paperback books, *The Autumn People* and *Tomorrow Midnight*, published in the mid-1960s by Ballantine Books, making them one of the earliest examples of trade paperbacks collecting stories from comic books.

More adaptations came out in the 1970s. One of the first books to use the designation "Graphic Novel" was Richard Corben's *Bloodstar* (1976), which adapted a story by Robert E. Howard. In 1976, **Marvel Comics** began *Marvel Classics Comics* which ran for 36 issues. The first 12 issues of the series featured reprints of comics published by Pendulum Press in 1973–74, but the rest were new adaptations by regular Marvel personnel including **Chris Claremont**. Various other literary adaptations came out over the next two decades. Another notable work from the 1990s was an adaptation of Paul Auster's ***City of Glass*** from Avon books, which the *Comics Journal* considered to be one of the "100 Most Important Comics of the Century."

The late 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century have seen a boom in literary adaptations for readers of all ages. This is due in part to the increased popularity of graphic novels (as well as their increased use in libraries). Many of these works are original graphic novels, but some, especially a new line of adaptations from Marvel Comics, begin in comic book form and are then collected. Some of these works are being produced by comic book/graphic novel publishers, while others are produced by publishers of non-graphic materials.

Many of the latter are from publishers of nonfiction books for children. Such publishers have also put out graphic novels with a biographical, historical, or various educational theme. These include Abdo with their Graphic Horror and Graphic Classics series, and Gareth Stevens's Bank Street Graphic Novels line which puts

three similar-themed 16-page stories in one volume. Stone Arch Books, which has a line of original graphic novels for children, also has a line of adaptations called Graphic Revolve. Barron's has a Graphic Classics series, which has short adaptations of classic works mixed in with information on both the author and the time in which the books are set. Puffin Books, the children's line of Penguin Publishing, has produced a series of Puffin Graphics with 150+ page adaptations, including a version of *Macbeth* adapted by science fiction writer Arthur Byron Cover and set in an alien world.

Several popular children's book series have been adapted into graphic novel series, including *The Baby-Sitter's Club*, *Warriors*, *Time Warp Trio*, and *Goosebumps*, as well as new stories based on the *Hardy Boys* and *Nancy Drew* books. Other adaptations of recent popular children's books include *Artemis Fowl*, *Redwall*, and *Coraline*. Some stories have been adapted by multiple publishers; some choose to very briefly adapt the story while others feature much more complete versions of the original work. A number of publishers have adapted *The Wizard of Oz*, and writer/artist Eric Shanover has created a number of comics that incorporate the Oz characters, even those from the lesser-known books. There have also been a number of versions of *Alice in Wonderland*.

Marvel Comics has recently put out adaptations of works for both adults and children, using both modern and classic literary works. Their Marvel Illustrated line contains classic stories such as *Treasure Island*, *The Man in the Iron Mask*, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, all of which are first released as a limited series, then later collected into book form. In addition, they have also created a limited series of works adapted from contemporary adult fiction, including Laurel K. Hamilton's *Anita Blake* books, Orson Scott Card's *Wyrms* and *Alvin Maker* stories, Raymond Feist's *Magician*, and Stephen King's *The Stand*. Marvel has also had several limited series by Peter David which act as a prequel to King's *Dark Tower* stories.

Many of Marvel's adult adaptations were created along with Dabel Brothers Productions. This publishing company has helped to adapt a number of science fiction and fantasy stories. In addition to those mentioned above (not counting King), other authors whose works have been adapted by Dabel Brothers include Tad Williams, Robert Silverberg, Robert Jordan, Dean Koontz, and Jim Butcher. Butcher even created a new story featuring his magical detective Harry Dresden. Butcher is not alone in using graphic novels to create additional stories. For example, Dean Koontz created a graphic novel prequel to his *Odd Thomas* series, and David Brin was able to expand his short story "Thor Meets Captain America" into the graphic novel *The Life Eaters*.

The Dabels are not the only ones creating graphic novel adaptations for adults. In the 1980s and 1990s, the works of horror writers such as Clive Barker and Anne Rice were adapted. In recent years, more and more adaptations are being created to appeal to older teen or adult readers, some of which are even written, or co-written, by the original author. Of special note is the *Graphic Classics* series of books by Eureka Publications. These books adapt the shorter works of many well-known authors, including

Ambrose Bierce, Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain, Jack London, O. Henry, and Oscar Wilde, as well as various horror, fantasy, gothic, and adventure stories. Some of these works are fully adapted, while others are just the original stories with accompanying illustrations added. The stories used in these books often include some lesser-known works by a particular author.

As adapted works are often aimed at comic book readers who tend to also enjoy science fiction, fantasy, and horror, many recent adaptations have focused on those genres. These include *The Nightmare Factory* books based on Thomas Ligotti's work, various adaptations of *Dracula*, Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*, L. Neil Smith's alternate history title *The Probability Broach*, Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* stories, Clive Barker's *The Great and Secret Show*, Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, and several short stories by **Neil Gaiman**. Another Gaiman adaptation of note is *Neverwhere*, a work that started as a television series written by Gaiman and was then expanded by him into a novel, which was then adapted into a limited series comic book.

Other genres have been adapted as well. Donald Goines's urban novel *Daddy Cool* was adapted in 2003, and the romance-themed Harlequin novels were adapted in Japan in a manga style. Japanese works of fiction have also been transformed into manga, some of which have been translated into English including *The Guin Saga*, *The Ring*, and *Battle Royale*. Along with the Harlequin novels, other non-Japanese works have also been translated into manga form such as *The Two Faces of Tomorrow* by British writer James Hogan. Other adaptations in manga form include *Oz: The Manga* and the Manga Shakespeare series of books.

Shakespeare's works are not the only classical works to be adapted. **P. Craig Russell**, who has adapted the works of Oscar Wilde, has also adapted famous operas, and there have also been adaptations of Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. Even the Bible has been adapted in various ways over the years, ranging from comic books to graphic novels that focus on the main points of the Old and New Testaments, as in the work of **Chester Brown**. One version was even done in a manga format.

Movie and Television Adaptations

While many comic book series have been based on films and television programs, there are some that simply adapt them. Due to the nature of comic books, it is much more common to directly adapt a film than episodes of a television program. Like books, movies have a long history of being adapted into comic book form. For example, the films of Charlie Chaplin inspired several adaptations in the early 20th century. The highly popular British magazine *Film Fun* (which ran for more than 2000 issues from 1920 to 1962) was a weekly comic book inspired by popular movies and actors. For example, Western star Gene Autry had several of his films adapted into comic form before becoming the star of his own self-titled comic series. In addition, many comic book publishers have produced ongoing series featuring film adaptations. Some of these adaptations are fully illustrated by artists, while others are airbrushed and contain inked movie stills with word balloons or captions added.

Characters from animated cartoons were natural candidates for adaptation to the comics, and characters such as **Felix the Cat** (1920), Mickey Mouse (1927), and Donald Duck (1934), became the heroes of their own comics early on. One of the earliest movie adaptations was the six issue *Movie Comics* from National (later **DC**) in 1939. Others included Fawcett's *Fawcett Movie Comics* (also known as *Motion Picture Comics* 1949–53), the other *Movie Comics* titles from Fiction House Magazines (1946–47) and Gold Key/Whitman (1962–84), and Dell's *Movie Classics*, which were also included as part of *Four-Color Comics* and continued as *Walt Disney Showcase* (1956–80).

Many more adaptations over the years have been either one-shots—sometimes even adapted into a tabloid-sized work—or limited series. In recent years those limited series have been put into various collected works. Some of these works simply collect the limited series, while others, especially in cases where the story is based on an existing comic book character, include reprints of related stories. The vast majority of these adaptations are of films in the science fiction, horror, and fantasy genres.

A notable title from the late 1970s and early 1980s was the *Marvel Comics Super Special* which was mainly released in a magazine or tabloid form. Adaptations included *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Blade Runner*, *The Last Starfighter*, *The Muppets Take Manhattan*, *Dune*, *Buckaroo Banzai*, and *Sheena*. Many of these were also released as individual limited series and some were even put into paperback book form. Other publishers made movie comics by using fumetti which, like some of the early movie adaptations, would take movie stills and add captions and word balloons. Some have also been used to start an ongoing comic book series based on a particular film. Another notable work is *Alien: The Illustrated Story* published by ***Heavy Metal*** in 1980 and based on the classic science fiction film. Adapted by Archie Goodwin and Walter Simonson, this was the first graphic novel to be on the *New York Times* Best Seller list.

In recent years, adaptations of both new and old films have been made with both direct adaptations and volumes that expand upon the original work. IDW has published adaptations of several of George Romero's zombie films. A 1990 Eclipse Comics limited series adaptation of Fritz Lang's 1931 classic film *M* was recently collected and reprinted by non-comic publisher Harry N. Abrams. Darren Aronofsky adapted and expanded his film *The Fountain* into graphic novel form in what has been referred to as the ultimate director's cut and a sister-project to the film. An adaptation of *Underworld* bundled it with an original story set hundreds of years earlier.

As with *Underworld*, additional works are also created which, while not direct adaptations of a film, are written as a way to directly tie in the work. Marvel has created various "one-shot" stories that act as prequels to the various ***X-Men*** films. DC did something similar prior to *Superman Returns*. In both cases, the portrayals of the characters in these stories were the same as they appear in the films, but not as they appear in the mainstream comic books. Fox Atomic's *28 Days Later: The Aftermath* is

set prior, during, and after the events of the film *28 Days Later*. In 2009, IDW created best-selling prequels to both the new *Star Trek* and *Terminator* films, as well as creating a comic version of the never adapted 1982 film *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*. There are also many comic based sequels to films, though these will be discussed more in the next section.

Television programs tend to be directly adapted much less often than films. Usually this happens in the case of a special episode such as a first, last, or very popular episode and often it is a program that is based on a comic book or already has a comic book based on it. This includes an adaptation of the television-movie ***Archie:*** *To Riverdale and Back*, the last episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, and several episodes of *Angel*. Besides comic book series that feature the continued adventures of the characters, there are in-continuity comic stories that wrap up loose ends from television shows that were cancelled before their storylines could be resolved. After Fox's *Alien Nation* ended on an unresolved cliffhanger, the comic *Dark Horizon* was created to tell the rest of the story (though a few years later, *Dark Horizon* was finally made into a TV movie). The creators of the recent television programs *Pushing Daisies* and *The Middleman* (the latter of which was based on a comic) also wrapped up their stories in comic book form. In other cases, the comic books *Buffy The Vampire Slayer Season Eight* and *Angel: After the Fall* provided new and ongoing in-continuity stories that were not only approved by creator **Joss Whedon**, but partly written by him as well. Even sitcoms have become comics, including *I Love Lucy*, *Ozzie and Harriet*, and *Welcome Back Kotter*.

One of the largest adaptors of television stories in recent years has been Tokyopop's Cine-Manga series, which employs the fumetti technique of using photos taken from the program. Made for young children, the Cine-manga titles adapt both live-action and animated children's programs including *Spongebob Squarepants*, *That's So Raven*, *The Fairly Odd Parents*, *Lizzie McGuire*, and *Totally Spies* as well as movies such as *Finding Nemo*, and *The Incredibles*. Actual graphic novels of some of these titles have also been created by other publishers, including Papercutz and **Dark Horse**. Another popular manga publisher, Viz, has put out "Ani-Manga" which does the same thing for several anime series and films including the films of Japan's Studio Ghibli.

Since the 1930s, characters that made their debut in literature, movies, or on television have had new adventures portrayed in comic books. Given their nature, cartoon characters have been especially popular in such adaptations, with Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Bugs Bunny, and Daffy Duck featured in comics almost as long they have been portrayed in movies. Some comic books have been based on real people, putting them into fictional activities. These range from Western stars such as Roy Rogers and Gene Autry (with even their horses getting their own titles) to comedians like Jerry Lewis.

Certain literary characters have found their way into comics as well, especially those from the horror genre. When the **Comics Code** was revised in 1971, one major

change was that certain horror characters were allowed in a code-approved title as long as they were "handled in the classic tradition such as Frankenstein, Dracula, and other high caliber literary works written by Edgar Allan Poe, Saki, Conan Doyle and other respected authors whose works are read in schools around the world" (Comics Code, http://www.reocities.com/Athens/8580/cca2.html). Besides full adaptations, Dracula and Frankenstein's Monster have appeared in various places, including having their own titles from Marvel Comics and interacting with superheroes such as the X-Men and **Spider-Man**. One author who has made the most of literary characters (mostly those in the public domain) is **Alan Moore**. In ***The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen***, Moore features such characters as Captain Nemo, Mr. Hyde, The Invisible Man and other 19th- and early 20th-century characters. In ***Lost Girls*** Moore features the erotic adventures of Lewis Carroll's Alice, L. Frank Baum's Dorothy, and J. M. Barrie's Wendy.

One of the most notable franchises of licensed properties is *Star Trek*, which has appeared almost continuously in comic book form for over 40 years. This phenomenon began with comics from Gold Key, which were known for such bloopers in their early issues as the African Lt. Uhura being drawn as Caucasian and rocket exhaust coming out the engines of the Enterprise. Beginning with an adaptation of the first *Star Trek* film, Marvel took over the franchise, continuing the new adventures. Beginning in 1983 and continuing until the early 1990s, DC had comics with both the original characters (set after the events of the second film) and the new *Next Generation* spin-off. In the early 1990s, rights to the franchise split when another publisher, Malibu, began to publish new stories based on the second spin-off, *Deep Space Nine*. The various DC and Malibu stories ran independently of each other, though there was a multi-part intercompany crossover.

Marvel took possession of the rights to *Star Trek* in the mid-1990s and created a new series based on the third spin-off, *Voyager*, as well as new titles based on minor characters, including *Star Trek: Starfleet Academy* and *Star Trek: The Early Years* which covered the adventures of Captain Kirk's predecessor Captain Pike. Marvel even put out two one-shots in which both the original and next generation crews met the X-Men. The Next Generation/X-Men comic even concluded in the form of a paperback novel. When Marvel lost the rights to *Star Trek* in 1998, the various titles were caught off guard and several titles ended with unresolved storylines. DC's Wildstorm imprint was next to get the license, and while they did not have any ongoing series, they had several limited series and one-shots including one that was based on the original line of *New Frontier* novels by Peter David (who also did the comic).

Moving into the 21st century, there was no original *Star Trek* work being produced in comics, though comic publishers Checker and Titan reprinted some of the Gold Key and DC stories. Beginning in 2006, Tokyopop began publishing several original short stories in a manga format for both the original series and the *Next Generation*. Writers included Wil Wheaton, who played the role of Wesley Crusher in the second series. Starting in 2007, IDW has created a limited series based on characters from

the original series, *Next Generation*, and *The New Frontier*, as well as various alien races (such as Klingons) and other secondary characters. This included the characters from the original series episode "Assignment Earth" and the evil mirror universe from the episode "Mirror, Mirror." IDW has also begun collecting and reprinting the comics put out by Marvel, DC, and Malibu.

The case of two *Star Trek* series being simultaneously licensed by two different companies has happened on other occasions as well. For example, Dark Horse once owned both *Buffy* and its spin-off *Angel;* however Angel has since moved to IDW. Dark Horse had held the *Star Wars* license for about 20 years, but it was previously owned by Marvel. One of the reprint collections put out by Dark Horse is *Star Wars: A Long Time Ago* which collects the Marvel run. The same holds for Marvel's ***Conan The Barbarian*** titles which are being reprinted by Dark Horse, who also publishes new stories. The new Adventures of Red Sonja, a *Conan* spin-off once published by Marvel, is now being distributed by Dynamite Entertainment.

Dark Horse is one of the larger publishers of licensed materials. Besides *Buffy*, *Star Wars*, and *Conan*, Dark Horse has also published comics based on *Aliens*, *Predator*, *The Mask*, *and Indiana Jones*. Besides *Star Trek* and *Angel*, IDW also publishes new adventures featuring the toy/cartoon characters Transformers and GI Joe (both of which were once licensed by Marvel), the television shows *CSI*, *24*, and *Doctor Who*, and the film *Galaxy Quest*. Dynamite's other licensed properties include *Xena: Warrior Princess*, *Army of Darkness*, *Highlander*, *Zorro*, *The Lone Ranger*, and *The Green Hornet* all of which have previously been adapted over the years by other publishers. DC/Wildstorm has had new stories with Jason of *Friday The 13th*, Freddy Krueger of *Nightmare on Elm Street*, and the chainsaw-wielding Leatherface from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Several other companies have also used licensed characters in original stories.

In addition to the X-Men's encounters with Dracula and the various Enterprise crews, licensed characters have interacted both with other licensed characters and with characters owned by the publisher doing the licensing. "Ash," the character played by Bruce Campbell in the *Army of Darkness* movies, has encountered Jason and Freddy Krueger, the Marvel zombies, and characters from *Xena*, including one also played by Campbell. The "Aliens" fought the "Predators" in the comics long before they did so in the movies and they both have had encounters with several DC superheroes, including in one comic with the lengthy title of *Superman and Batman vs. Predator and Aliens*.

There are also signs of increasing diversity in recent adaptations. For example, two international publishers have created graphic novel literary adaptations aimed at younger readers. The British Classical Comics publishes adaptations of both Shakespeare and 19th-century classics, but in multiple versions. Some have the text in the original form, while others contain easier to understand plain text, or an even easier quick text version. Campfire is an imprint of India's Kalyani Navyug Media and produces 72-page adaptations of classic works. Whether it is a direct adaptation of a

work in another medium or a new ongoing title based on another work, adapted and licensed works have been a part of comic books for 75 years and will continue to be so for years to come.

David S. Serchay

ADULT COMICS. *See* ***Underground and Adult Comics***

ADVENTURE COMICS. Beginning as one of the early **Golden Age DC** anthology series, *Adventure Comics* ran under that title from issue #32, in November 1938 to #503, dated September 1983, and featured a wide array of DC heroes. *Adventure Comics* is best known for its lengthy run of Superboy stories along with the introduction and subsequent adventures of the Legion of Super-Heroes.

Adventure began in December of 1935 as *New Comics* (changed with its 12th issue to *New Adventure Comics*). Early anthologized works included the Federal Men by **Superman** creators **Jerry Siegel** and **Joe Shuster**. Also featured were adaptations of literary classics including *A Tale of Two Cities* and *She*. The title became *Adventure Comics* with issue #32 in November 1938. With the popularity of the new mystery men/superhero genre (Superman was introduced in ***Action Comics*** in June 1938), *Adventure* showcased **Manhunter**, Hourman (and his sidekick Minuteman), and most notably the work of **Joe Simon** and **Jack Kirby** on **Sandman** (from issue #72 in March 1942 to #91). Sandman would continue to be featured up to issue #102, February–March 1946.

Superboy stories begin with issue #103 in April 1946. Other heroes were anthologized but *Adventure* would feature Superboy on the cover throughout the 1950s and 1960s (including the first appearance of Krypto the Superdog in issue #210). Issue #247 in April 1958 introduced Superboy to the Legion of Super-Heroes. As the popularity of the legion grew, the solo Superboy stories began to give way to Superboy-and-the-Legion stories by 1962. With issue #300, the "Tales of the Legion of Super-Heroes" ran alongside solo Superboy stories until issue #380 in May, 1969.

Supergirl was a featured character in *Adventure* for 43 issues, between June 1969 and October 1972. *Adventure* showcased Supergirl's first solo outing as National Comics (the forerunner of DC) would benefit by tying their limited line of well-known female heroes, such as **Wonder Woman**, to the women's liberation and empowerment movements of the late 1960s and 1970s.

The tone and content of *Adventure* would change in the 1970s to feature the more marginalized characters who would have traditionally been unsuccessful in carrying their own titles, such as Black Orchid, Spectre, Martian Manhunter, and the New Gods. After the Cancelled Comic Cavalcade implosion in the late 1970s, *Adventure* began to anthologize canceled series storylines, most famously the ***Justice Society of America*** tales that began with the revived ***All-Star Comics***, of which issue #462 featured the death of the Golden Age (Earth 2) **Batman**.

Steve Ditko's version of Starman (Prince Gavyn) would be featured in issue #467 and subsequent issues; Dial "H" for Hero would also have a prominent run; and more Superboy and legion stories would return. The series ended in 1983 (along with similar titles such as *DC Comics Presents*, *Brave and the Bold*, and ***World's Finest Comics***) as DC began plans for new editorial and character directions that would eventually lead to 1985's ***Crisis on Infinite Earths***.

As of 2009, DC plans to relaunch *Adventure Comics* as a vehicle to showcase the cancellation-plagued Legion of Super-Heroes.

D. R. Hammontree

AGES OF COMICS. Comic books, with the central genre of narratives involving **superheroes** leading the way, have evolved through at least four distinct historical periods, usually referred to as "ages." Especially in the case of the evolution of the American superhero, historians of comic books refer to these four periods as the Golden, Silver, Bronze, and Modern (or Iron) ages. Adapted from the ages of Greek and Roman myth, these ages reflect emerging stages in the material production of the comics industry, though genres other than superhero comics sometimes evolved differently. (For example, the Golden Age of **horror comics** occurred in the late 1940s and early 1950s and was thus both shorter and slightly later than the **Golden Age** of superhero comics.) In addition, the era of the evolution of the comic book medium, prior to the rise of superheroes in the 1930s, is often referred to as the Platinum Age.

The Golden Age of superhero comics, dated from the early to mid-1930s through the late 1940s, encompasses the publication of the first book-length comics and World War II. The earliest comic books, collections of previously printed strips, were published in 1933; the first collections of original stories were published in 1935. Many of the superhero figures that subsequently defined the genre debuted during this period, including **Superman**, who first appeared in **DC Comics'** ***Action Comics*** #1 in 1938. DC Comics also introduced **Batman** in ***Detective Comics*** #27 in 1939, the **Flash** in *Flash Comics* #1 in 1940, the **Green Lantern** in ***All-American Comics*** #16 in 1940, and **Wonder Woman** in ***All Star Comics*** #8 in 1941. **Timely Comics**, the forerunner of **Marvel Comics**, premiered **Captain America** in *Captain America Comics* #1 in 1941, while **Captain Marvel** first appeared in Fawcett Comics' *Whiz Comics* #2 in 1940 before becoming a DC character. The meteoric popularity of these and other superhero figures of the period can be attributed in part to their association with wartime patriotism and anti-Nazi propaganda. Superman was featured in several stories highlighting his success in eradicating enemies of the Allies, including hand-delivery of Hitler and Mussolini to the United Nations.

Some commentators label the period between the mid-1940s and the mid-1950s as the Atomic Age because of comics writers' preoccupation with nuclear proliferation and the burgeoning arms race. However, this period is best understood as a transition to the **Silver Age** of comics, which was characterized by increased public scrutiny of

comics and further refinement of generic conventions. In 1954, the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA) created the **Comics Code** as a means of regulating violent and sexual content in comics. Another starting point for the Silver Age was the introduction of a new incarnation of the Flash in DC's *Showcase* #4 in 1956. A wider range of superheroes appeared as the genre regained popularity, including Marvel's **The Fantastic Four**, which premiered in *The Fantastic Four* #1 in 1961, and **Spider-Man**, which premiered in ***Amazing Fantasy*** #15 in 1962. DC also introduced **The Justice League of America** in *The Brave and the Bold* #28 in 1960. These and other characters helped to create many now familiar genre conventions: scientific explanations for superpowers, residence on alternate earths such as DC's Earth-One, and moral conflicts and disagreements among the members of superhero teams. Many publishers of comics understood their audience to be primarily adult and began to focus on more complex storylines and subtle ethical questions. However, a few publishers, such as Harvey Comics, targeted young children with titles like ***Richie Rich*** and ***Casper the Friendly Ghost.*** The Silver Age, whose many popular titles and iconic heroes spawned a host of collectors' items, ended in the early 1970s with milestone events that challenged the genre's previous optimism, including the death of **Spider-Man's** girlfriend Gwen Stacy and the redefinition of Green Lantern as a more jaded hero.

Such darker and more pessimistic storylines heralded the beginning of the Bronze Age, a period lasting from the 1970s through the mid-1980s. While the popularity of Silver Age superheroes persisted through this era, its negative themes laid the groundwork for the dystopias prevalent in the more recent Modern Age. Bronze Age storylines typically centered on urban unrest and real-world issues such as illegal drug use, racism, poverty, and social injustice. Many heroes experienced the effects of these social problems on a personal level. Several ethnic minority characters appeared, including Marvel's **Luke Cage**, who debuted in *Luke Cage: Hero for Hire* #1 in 1972, and the African American Green Lantern, John Stewart, who debuted in *Green Lantern* volume 2 #87 in 1971.

The Modern Age, also known as the Iron Age or Diamond Age, began with the publication of **Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*** (1986) and **Alan Moore's *Watchmen*** (1987, with art by **Dave Gibbons**). This period's comics are characterized by morally and structurally complex storylines in both independent titles and traditional superhero comics. Both Moore's and Miller's work focused on the concept of the anti-hero in protagonists who, despite their superhero status, were flawed and vulnerable both morally and physically. The theme of vengeful justice, pursued by heroes lacking in superhuman abilities, is seen frequently in the actions of this age's increasingly violent characters, such as Wolverine, **The Punisher**, and **Todd McFarlane's Spawn**. Even **Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*** series, the third landmark work of this age, is premised on the title character's initial desire for revenge against both his captors and lost loves.

During this period, artists such as **Art Spiegelman** and **Scott McCloud** theorized about comics as a medium capable of handling more mature content and complex

artistry. Starting in the 1980s, the publication of longer story arcs across single issues and their compilation in trade paperback format coincided with the evolution of comics as an art form, the maturation and diversification of subject matters, and the appeal of comics to a wider audience. Public interest in every type of comic—especially Japanese **manga**, independent trade paperbacks and graphic novels, and alternate-earth versions of superhero standards—continues to increase exponentially.

Tim Bryant

ALICE IN SUNDERLAND. Described by Paul Gravett as "a tour de force landmark in graphic literature," Bryan Talbot's magnum opus *Alice in Sunderland* combines line drawings, watercolors, Photoshop collages, and pastiches of various comic and artistic styles with elements of travelogue, **fantasy**, historiography, biography, and polemic in a genre-bending, visually inventive epic about stories and storytelling. Presented as an imaginary Edwardian-style variety performance on the stage of the Sunderland Empire theater, Talbot's sprawling *Alice* follows two main threads that often intersect in unexpected ways: the history of the real port city of Sunderland in northeast England, and the lives of author Lewis Carroll and his child muse Alice Liddell. Along the way, the nonlinear narrative moves through a series of intricately plotted digressions that tell the history of England in microcosm and reveal Sunderland as an underappreciated influence on not only Carroll's classics *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* but also modern commerce, industry, and culture. More than a revisionist take on Sunderland and Carroll, however, *Alice in Sunderland* also presents a wide-ranging survey of comics and their antecedents, including metafictional sections on the book's own creation, as well as an extended narrative about the making and remaking of individual and collective identities.

Subtitled "An Entertainment," Talbot's *Alice* stages a theatrical performance in the form of what its author calls a "dream documentary." Talbot plays three different roles in his one-man show: the churlish Plebian, overweight and unshaven, dressed in a leather jacket and jeans, standing in for both the Empire's legendary tough audience and the reader; the aging Performer, in a puffy white shirt, who serves as the master of ceremonies and co-narrator; and the black-clad Pilgrim, the writer-artist who creates the book and serves as a second narrator, moving freely through time and space. The black-clad Pilgrim has an incarnation tightly connected to still-another version of Talbot: the photo-real blurry-style version of himself who dreams the narrative. (The book ends as this "Bryan Talbot" awakes from a nap in a theater.) This cast of avatars is joined by the Empire's spectral odd couple, uninvited ghosts who occasionally interrupt Talbot's show: the austere White Lady and the wise-cracking, lecherous spirit of comedian Sid James, who died on the Empire stage and is rumored to haunt the theater. Other individuals, real and fictional, interact with the Pilgrim in slides projected onto a screen on stage. Talbot's paper theatricals also feature an opening curtain, an intermission, a backstage tour, a finale, and an encore about Sunderland's post-industrial renewal. Talbot adds his own drama in the form of a MacGuffin by announcing the presence of

one "total falsehood," which he challenges the audience to spot. He presents a history of the Empire on its 100th anniversary before moving onto his ostensible focus: "What has *Alice [in Wonderland]* to do with Sunderland?"

To answer this question, Talbot's Pilgrim takes the reader on a virtual guided tour of Sunderland and environs past and present, from Talbot's own house in St. Bede's Terrace, through the city, to the village of Whitburn on Sunderland's northern border, and up the river Wear to Durham, home of the great Norman cathedral and the tomb of the Venerable Bede. Each stop on this literary pilgrimage provides an array of associations that reveal Carroll and the real Alice's Sunderland connections through seemingly extemporaneous tangents on local, regional, and national history. Describing Carroll as a longtime visitor to the area, Talbot identifies local residences of Carroll's family and acquaintances, including his Whitburn cousins. He also explores the known or possible Sunderland origins of some of Carroll's characters, settings, and writings through a number of creation stories, some of which are more compelling than others. To get at the whole truth about Carroll, the pen name of Charles Dodgson, Talbot uses recent scholarship to refute the conventional image of him as a shy Oxford don who preferred the company of children to that of adults, a stereotype created by Carroll's nephew and first biographer, Stuart Collingwood of Sunderland. He even goes on to challenge Carroll's own account of improvising the first Alice story during an 1862 Oxford rowing trip, making room for Sunderland's place in Carroll's books.

Despite its *sui generis* character among comics, Talbot's *Alice* relies extensively upon other sources for its content and structure, as reflected by its two-page bibliography. In particular, Talbot credits local historian Michael Bute, author of *A Town Like Alice's*, for unearthing Carroll's and the Liddell family's links to the area. As Talbot traces the growth and development of Sunderland from an early Romano-British settlement into a coal-mining district and the world's largest shipbuilding port in the 1850s, before its recent decline and recovery, his allusive and associative approach to history recalls the psychogeographical works of Iain Sinclair, whose writings explore the power of place through local tales. In terms of comic books, *Alice in Sunderland* also recalls Alan Moore's account of Northampton in *Voice of the Fire*. Carroll's own *Alice* books provide the principal literary model for Talbot with their episodic narratives and dream frames.

Talbot's primary visual influences come from comics, as seen most prominently in his imitations of various predecessors in short tales. Talbot uses a different artistic style for each of these stories, depending on its subject matter. Thus, the tale of sailor Jack Crawford, the hero of Camperdown, is told as a *Boys' Own* adventure comic; the ghost story of "The Cauld Lad of Hylton" appears as a 1950s **horror comic** from **EC Comics**; the Norman Conquest receives a **Marvel Comics** treatment. A cartoon polemic supporting asylum seekers, sketched on pages of lined notebook paper to reflect the subject's journalistic character, serves as the book's culmination and, in Talbot's words, "is to some extent the heart and soul and raison d'etre of the piece" (qtd. in Flanagan).

Elsewhere, Talbot draws upon a dizzying array of visual sources, including pop culture ephemera, photographs, newspapers clippings, and fine art, to create the digital collages that compose most of his book. In fact, these pages display one of the book's main themes, which it shares with Sunderland's riverside sculpture project, according to crime writer Chaz Brenchley's description of the art installation: "The project's all about tying past and present together, linking what's new with what was here before." As Talbot's words and images unite in a single vision reminiscent of Carroll and illustrator John Tenniel's *Alice* books, he shows the many ways in which Sunderland's history and its present state, as well as his book and the history of comics, are interconnected.

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Michael W. Hancock

ALL-AMERICAN COMICS. *All-American Comics* was the primary title published originally by All-American Publications beginning in 1939. All-American Publications was a partnership between Max Gaines, who was largely responsible for creating the comic book in the mid-1930s while working for Eastern Color Printing; and Jack Liebowitz, who was part-owner of National Periodical Publications (later **DC Comics**) with Harry Donnenfeld. Liebowitz partnered with Gaines because he was frustrated with Donnenfeld's unwillingness to expand the number of published titles at National. Liebowitz and Gaines were successful enough in their publishing ventures that they were eventually bought out by National in 1946. *All-American Comics* continued to be issued by National, with some changes in title and content, until 1966. Gaines, after ending his partnership with Liebowitz, founded his own comic book publishing company, **EC Comics**. Despite the fact that All-American Publications was a separate corporate entity from National, characters from National made routine appearances in *All-American* titles, and vice-versa. *All-American* seldom displayed publishing indica on its front cover, and occasionally displayed National's DC-**Superman** Comics logo prior to 1946.

All-American Comics introduced several **superhero** characters that are now considered mainstays of the DC Comics roster, such as **Green Lantern**, the Atom, Dr. Mid-Nite, and many others, including Red Tornado, a parody superhero, which was unusual for the time. Other titles by All-American Publications included ***All-Star Comics*** and *Sensation Comics*, and featured the characters **Wonder Woman**, the **Flash**, **Sandman**, Spectre, and the earliest adventures of the **Justice Society of America**. At this point in comic book publishing, it was relatively uncommon for an entire title to be named for and starring a specific character, thus a feature character was used to attract interest in anthology titles, which would also feature work by other artists and writers, and starred other characters.

Edited by Sheldon Mayer, *All-American Comics* focused primarily on superhero stories. Other publishers, particularly those operating on low overhead, tended to hire out the creative duties to shops, such as ones operated by **Will Eisner** and Jerry Iger, where large numbers of pages of print-ready art would be generated in a clean house style quickly and efficiently. Mayer instead preferred to work on an individual basis with freelance creators. This editorial approach allowed All-American Publications to nurture its creative roster, which included such writers as Gardner Fox and Robert Kanigher, and artists such as **Alex Toth**, Joe Kubert, Sheldon Moldoff, and Ross Andru.

Despite eventually shifting to a primary focus on superhero stories, *All-American Comics* did feature non-superhero content prominently, primarily by the urging of Max Gaines. Gaines was skeptical of superhero characters, and considered them a passing fad (it should be noted that Gaines's misgivings about superhero stories would largely prove true, as superhero comics were significantly less popular in the 1950s than in previous years). Gaines brought in *Mutt and Jeff* comic strips by Bud Fisher, a mainstay of his legendary Eastern Color Printing title ***Famous Funnies***, to fill in additional space in various *All-American* titles. Other non-superhero characters to appear in the pages of *All-American Comics* include Hop Harrigan, perhaps the earliest aviation pilot hero character, and Johnny Thunder, a Western character unrelated to the superhero character of the same name.

After being bought out by National in 1946, *All-American Comics* remained in print under the same title with largely the same content until 1948, despite the lack of involvement by Gaines. The title was subsequently changed to *All-American Western*, and then *All-American Men of War* in 1952, which included similar changes in the book's content. *All-American Men of War* was ultimately canceled by DC. Many of the characters on the All-American roster were given solo titles as characters of DC comics. Many of the creators for *All-American Comics* continued to have distinguished careers in comics for **Marvel**, DC, and EC comics. For many fans, the books published by All-American Publications, including *All-American Comics*, were must-read examples of superhero comics, starring some of the most beloved superheroes of all time.

Robert O'Nale

ALLRED, MIKE (1962–). Michael "Mike" Dalton Allred is one of the more uncompromising writers and artists to come out of the independent comics community of the 1990s, a context that also fostered creators like Jeff Smith, Peter Milligan and **Garth Ennis**. A self-proclaimed child of the 1960s and 1970s, Allred has said that he sees his medium as the perfect way to combine his love of visual art with his interest in music and film, which arose out of growing up in an age that saw similar serious subject matters finally finding expression in popular culture. He realized that comics provided this avenue after reading the **Hernandez brothers'** series ***Love and Rockets***, and Jaime Hernandez's work on *Mister X*. More than anything, Allred has found comics to be the perfect means to explore his existential leanings, fostered by his father's work as a

psychologist, and to establish works that are character driven, not profit driven. Allred, however, thinks that comics themselves still have to be perceived differently in order for a character driven narrative to shine through. "I don't think comic books are the gutter so many people think they are."

In 1989, Allred started his own superhero title, ***Madman***, the story of Frank Einstein, a possible paid assassin who becomes, through the miracles of science, the superhero (or anti-hero) Madman after dying in a car accident. Besides its surreal sense of humor, *Madman* is an outlet for Allred's elastic artistic style, which is influenced by Charles M. Schultz, Maurice Sendak, and (most importantly) pop artist Roy Lichtenstein. The Lichtenstein effect is achieved mostly through the work of Allred's wife, Laura, who has been acting as his colorist since he started working in comics professionally, and has often incorporated pointillist elements into his covers. In addition to *Madman*, Allred is best known for his work on *Red Rocket 7* (begun in 1997), the story of an alien clone with super heightened musical ability who goes on to influence the past 50 years of popular music; and *X-Statix*, his 2001 relaunch of the X-Man title, *X-Force*, with Irish scripter Peter Mulligan, which features a group of anti-heroes more worried about fame than they are about saving the world.

Recently, Allred has returned to **Dark Horse Comics** and has a new 13-issue run of *Madman*, which evolved into a series of one shots that continued *Madman's* dedication to artistic and narrative experimentation. As he has been throughout his career, Allred is not afraid to cover material that seems either controversial, unfit for the comics medium, or both. He derived his current project, *The Golden Plates*, from his faith in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. It is a full graphic adaptation of the Book of Mormon. Allred has also been working since the late 1990s with writer/director Robert Rodriguez on a film adaptation of *Madman*.

Selected Bibliography: Fanboy Interview with Mike Allred (November 19, 2008). Available at http://revision3.com/ifanboy/allred.

Jason Gallagher

ALL-STAR COMICS was originally an anthology comic book series. It was published first by All-American Publications, in cooperation with Detective Comics, initially featuring heroes from both companies. It was published by National Periodical Publications (the future **DC Comics**, formed by the merger of ***All-American*** and ***Detective Comics***) beginning with #26 (Fall 1945). The first two issues featured a variety of short stories. With issue #3 (winter 1941), it became the home of the **Justice Society of America**, which remained until the series ended with #57 (February–March 1951). The series was briefly revived in the 1970s.

All-Star #3 marked the first time a group of **superheroes** teamed up. The original lineup included Dr. Fate, **Green Lantern**, Hawkman, Hourman, The Atom, **The Flash**, **The Sandman**, and The Spectre. Additionally, Johnny Thunder and his magic Thunderbolt served as the team's mascot.

In the first issue, the heroes simply have an informal get-together. No major threat presents itself. Instead, the members each tell a story of one of their exploits. Issue #4 establishes the regular format: at the beginning, the team learns of a villainous plot; each member gets a chapter of his own in which he tackles part of the threat; finally, they all reconvene at the end to defeat the villain together. This format stuck until issue #38, when the number of chapters was reduced to three or four. Starting with #39, the members split up into smaller teams of two or three, although a solo chapter would still show up occasionally.

The series was edited by Sheldon Mayer for most of its run. Gardner Fox was the writer of the book until issue #34. At that point, John Broome took over until the end, with Robert Kanigher writing #37 and #38. All three men contributed to issue #36. Generally, each segment was drawn by the artist of the hero's regular strip. Stanley Aschmeier, Bernard Baily, Jack Burnley, Joe Gallagher, Joe Kubert, Sheldon Moldoff, **Joe Simon**, and **Alex Toth** were among the prominent contributing artists.

Inexplicably aware that they were comic book characters, the Justice Society initially had a rule that any character with his own book had to leave. For this reason, **Superman** and **Batman** were referred to as "honorary members." Flash was the first member to leave, and Johnny Thunder replaced him as a full member in issue #6. He made a quick appearance along with the other honorary members in the next issue. Green Lantern and Hourman (who did not get his own book) left in #8, replaced by Dr. Mid-Nite and Starman.

Initially, the team was quite active in the war effort. One prominent example is #11, in which most of the roster joins up in their civilian identities. At the same time, Hawkman's girlfriend Shiera runs into Diana Prince (aka **Wonder Woman**). In the end, the commander of U.S. Pacific forces reforms the Justice Society and appoints them "The Justice Battalion" and Wonder Woman joins the team as, of all things, the secretary (though she also had her own solo comic book at the time).

Several other early issues feature the JSA helping out with the war. In #10, they travel through time to collect high-tech weapons to assist the Allies. Issue #12 sees them bust a Japanese spy ring, while in #14 they bring food to starving Europeans. Two issues later, the team spends time urging Americans to present a united front, because the Nazis will try to divide and conquer. That theme is picked up again in #24, which featured the team taking a trip through time with the Conscience of Man, who shows them the German menace throughout history. Even stories not explicitly about the war had ties, such as the **science-fiction**-flavored #13, in which the members are all blasted into space by Nazis.

Soon, though, the team started building a stable of villains unconnected to the war, beginning in #15, with the introduction of illusionist Brainwave. Psycho-Pirate, who uses emotional themes in his crimes, first appears in #23. Swamp-monster Solomon Grundy makes his *All-Star* debut in #33, followed by hypnotist The Wizard in #34, and time-traveler Per Degaton in #35. Finally, #37 sees the inevitable team-up, with the formation of The Injustice Society of the World, featuring Brainwave, Per Degaton, and

The Wizard, along with Flash's foe, The Thinker, and Green Lantern's villains Vandal Savage and The Gambler.

Even while building a rogues' gallery, the team's roster continued to change. In #24, Wildcat and Mr. Terrific both guest-star. Wildcat appears as a member in #27, while Mr. Terrific doesn't return at all. Both, however, are treated as longtime members in the 1970s *All-Star* revival. Issue #27 sees Flash and Green Lantern return to active status, replacing Starman and The Spectre. A second female hero, Black Canary, guest stars in #38 and is added as a full member by #41. She takes the place of Johnny Thunder with no explanation. From that point on, the line-up is stable. It should be noted that #36 is the only story to feature Superman and Batman as active members of the team.

With cast changes behind it, the series returned once more to the socially conscious stories that had been a hallmark of the war years. Issue #40 (April–May 1948) shows the team battling juvenile delinquency. As the 1950s begins, the series heavily features science fiction tales, with aliens invading in #49, #55, and #56.

In 1951, with the popularity of superheroes fading, the plug was pulled on *All-Star Comics*. The numbering was taken over by *All-Star Western* with issue #58; but that was not the end of *All-Star Comics*. Following the JSA's successful team-ups with the Justice League in the 1960s and 1970s, *All-Star Comics* was revived in 1976, beginning with #58. The series was written first by Gerry Conway and later **Paul Levitz**. **Wally Wood** initially handled the art chores, which were later taken over by Joe Staton and Bob Layton.

The new team consisted mostly of **Golden Age** members, but several younger heroes are introduced—the formerly lost-in-time Star-Spangled Kid, an adult Robin, Batman's daughter Huntress, and Superman's cousin Power Girl. Several classic villains return, including Brainwave, Vandal Savage, and Solomon Grundy. The series ended permanently with issue #74.

Anthony Strand

ALPHA FLIGHT. Though they are one of the minor **superhero** teams in the **Marvel** universe, the Alpha Flight team of Canadian heroes has been around in various incarnations for over 30 years. They are technically a spin-off of ***X-Men***, but they have interacted less with that team than other spin-off groups, and they include far fewer **mutants**. As a team, Alpha Flight has made only between 200 and 300 appearances, with less than 200 appearances in their own titles. After various appearances in *X-Men* titles and elsewhere, the team finally got their own self-titled book in 1983. The series would run for 130 issues, finally ending in 1994. **John Byrne** was the initial writer and artist and the early issues included origin stories of the team's members. Also of note in the series' first year was #6 (January 1984) in which the characters fought in a blizzard; many panels were all white except for dialogue and sound effects. Other creators include Bill Mantlo, James Hudnall, **Mike Mignola**, and **Fabian Nicieza**. The most famous issue of the rest of the series was #106 (1992) when the character of Northstar was revealed to be gay. During the run of the series there were also two annuals,

a special, and a two issue-limited series, *X-Men and Alpha Flight* (1985). The first eight issues have been collected as *Alpha Flight Classic, Vol. 1*, with additional volumes expected, while the limited series can be found in *Essential X-Men Vol. 5* (with Alpha Flight's earlier appearances in the previous volumes).

The second *Alpha Flight* series featured several members of the original team and ran for 20 issues (1997–99). Steve Seagle and Duncan Rouleau were among the creators, and during this period there was also a one-shot subtitled "In the Beginning" (numbered "-1" as part of 1997's Flashback Month) and the annual *Alpha Flight/Inhumans '98*. The third *Alpha Flight* series, done by Scott Lobdell, Clayton Henry, and Mark Morales, only lasted 12 issues (2004–5), featured almost none of the original team, and has been entirely collected. Following recent events, a new team, Omega Flight, was formed; they appeared in a five-issue limited series (2007) by Michael Avon Oeming and Scott Kolins, which has been collected. A related story that year from *Marvel Comics Presents* by Rich Koslowski and Andrea DiVito was also collected as *Weapon Omega*.

Originally, Alpha Flight worked for the Canadian Government's Department H and was started by James McDonald Hudson, who had developed a suit that allowed him to fly and shoot energy beams. He then developed the various "Flights," Alpha Flight (active group), Beta Flight (senior in-training group), and Gamma Flight (junior in-training group). There were two people who were instrumental in helping him in those early days—his wife Heather and the mutant known as Wolverine. However, when Wolverine left to join the X-Men, Hudson, now draped in the Canadian Flag and calling himself Weapon Alpha, was sent to bring him back (*X-Men* #109, 1978). The X-Men stopped him but soon he tried again and this time he had help.

In *X-Men* #120 (1979) the X-Men encounter Alpha Flight. Besides Hudson, now calling himself Vindicator, the group includes Sasquatch (aka Dr. Walter Langkowski), a scientist who can turn into a super strong Bigfoot-like creature; French-Canadian siblings Jean-Paul and Jean Marie Beaubier who, as Northstar and Aurora, possess the mutant power of super speed and flight; Shaman (aka Dr. Michael Twoyoungmen), a member of Canada's First Nations who possesses a mystical medicine bag; and Snowbird, the daughter of a goddess and a mortal man, who can change into various animals. The group parts as friends and would work together again, but soon Department H is shut down and Alpha Flight is left without a home.

When the giant mystical Great Beast known as Tundra threatens Canada (Vol. 1 #1 1983), the team reforms along with former Beta Flight members Puck (an acrobatic dwarf) and Marrina (an amphibious woman). In their next adventure, Vindicator changes his name to Guardian, and the team fights the villain known as the Master; Marrina learns of her alien origins and leaves the team to be with, and later marry, The Sub-Mariner.

Over the next 11 years the team underwent many changes. The Master returned, as did the other Great Beasts. The team worked with other heroes and fought evil, both solo and as a group. Members changed their names, left and returned, and others joined. New members over the years have included Shaman's daughter Talisman, who

had mystical powers of her own; Guardian's wife Heather, who became Vindicator after receiving her own supersuit; the original Box, a paraplegic who invented a robot body that he could merge with; Madison Jeffries, a mutant with the power to control machinery; he later became the new Box and used his powers to turn the robot into a "transformer"; Diamond Lil and Wildchild, former members of Gamma Flight who joined the villainous Omega Flight and them reformed; and the mind-controlling Persuasion, the daughter of the villain The Purple Man who became part of the new Beta Flight.

During the 130-issue run, many team members died, though some came back in one form or another, complicating the shifting makeup of the team. The team also went through two different major reincarnations, with substantially changed lineups of characters. Meanwhile, the various members of Alpha Flight have made appearances throughout the Marvel universe including Northstar and Madison Jefferies appearing in *X-Men* and Aurora appearing in the new *Weapon X* title. In *New Avengers* #16 (2006), a powerful force known as The Collective possessed a man named Michael Pointer and began a rampage going from Alaska to the rest of the United States. In Canada, the team (made up of members from various incarnations) tried to stop him, and several were killed. Recently, a new government-sponsored team called Omega Flight was formed. Sasquatch is a member along with Pointer, who was given a Guardian suit to control the powers left to him after The Collective's defeat. Joining this new team were the American heroes U.S. Agent and Arachne (formerly the second Spider-Woman). Talisman and Thor's alien counterpart, Beta Ray Bill, have also aided this new team. The next storyline in the series is currently unknown, but Alpha Flight, no matter its line-up, will continue to make contributions to the Marvel universe.

David S. Serchay

ALTERNATIVE COMICS. *See* ***Underground and Adult Comics***

AMAZING FANTASY. Published by **Marvel Comics** in 1962, *Amazing Fantasy* was the final issue of a comic book series that anthologized short **science fiction** and **fantasy** stories. The series was originally published, starting in 1961, as *Amazing Adventures* (AA), with contributions from **Stan Lee**, **Jack Kirby**, Dick Ayers and **Steve Ditko**, among others. Starting with the seventh issue, the series was renamed to *Amazing Adult Fantasy* (AAF) and was composed exclusively of stories co-created by Ditko and Lee. Facing declining sales, the 15th and final issue of the series was renamed *Amazing Fantasy* (AF). Despite the various titles, the series maintained continuous numbering. AF #15 is best known for introducing Peter Parker and his superhero alter-identity of **Spider-Man**, who received his own ongoing title (*The Amazing Spider-Man*) starting in 1963. In the 1990s, *Amazing Fantasy* was revived for three issues (1995–96, #16–18) to detail the events in Peter Parkers's life in between AF #15 and *The Amazing Spider-Man* #1. In the 2000s, a revamped

volume of *Amazing Fantasy* was published (2004–6, #1–20), essentially as a platform for introducing new **superheroes** into the Marvel universe.

The short stories of the early 1960s featured endings with a twist and a moral message, often reflecting wider societal issues through allegory. One of the most common themes was that of an unscrupulous figure becoming the victim of fantastic poetic justice, such as a hypnotist who seeks to use his power to rob people but instead ends up hypnotizing himself into amnesia, or a cheating gambler who, after seeking to learn from a Martian how best to swindle others, ends up becoming an interplanetary zoo exhibit. The initial story of Peter Parker fits into this pattern—with a notable exception. Seeking personal fame and fortune, Spider-Man fails to stop an escaping burglar, who later that night goes on to kill Peter's uncle. Having been spared a grisly fate, but being responsible for the demise of his uncle, Peter Parker learns that "with great power there must also come—great responsibility!" This marks the turning point after which a legend was born.

The trope of extraterrestrial alien encounter was also especially prominent in *Amazing Fantasy*. Mostly, aliens were hostile beings looking to conquer the planet (inevitably beginning their would-be conquests in the United States); they were then thwarted from their designs by often clever and sometimes completely unsuspecting Americans. Often, these hostile aliens shape-shift or otherwise disguise themselves as humans. In a few cases, however, the aliens would come in peace (again, inevitably to the United States) to expand mutual understanding and to benevolently impart their superior technology—yet often the fear, intolerance or indifference of Americans would drive them away. The tension between an American populace that had to be ever-vigilant against hostile takeover and that yet should not put forward a blanket refusal of all things foreign was clearly an allusion to the **Cold War**: on one hand the threat of communism, and in particular the threat of communists infiltrating American society from within, and on the other the increased interactions with various nations as a result of increasing U.S. interventions in global affairs.

The Cold War is also addressed directly in AAF #13, where a belligerent and literally red-faced ruler of the Soviet Union (who resembles then Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev) is humbled when the ingenuity of American scientists leads to a nonviolent defeat of the Communist Bloc. In AAF #12, the ruthless criminal Ramon Corbo (a pastiche of Cuban communist leader Fidel Castro) becomes the military dictator of his Third World country, spurning aid from the United States because he would have to prove that it would be used for the benefit of his people. True to the poetic justice motif, he dies of a heart attack after shooting down a U.S. aid plane. The latter story is especially ironic considering the United States' support—in the name of anticommunism—for brutal, anti-egalitarian and authoritarian dictators in much of Latin America throughout the postwar period.

The 1960s series is also remarkable for completely ignoring the issues of race and racism despite the upsurge in the Civil Rights Movement, except for the various references to mankind (Americans in particular) being unready to accept those who are different, such as scary-looking aliens or **mutants** with special powers (introduced in

AAF #14). In virtually all of the stories, the protagonists are male, and women—to the extent that they do show up—are treated in a patronizing manner. "Darling," a woman cries in AA #6 after her male companion has saved the world, "Forgive me for criticizing—for complaining!! I'll never do it again, never!!"

In contrast, the first three protagonists of the 21st century's *Amazing Fantasy* comics are females. However, unlike Spider-Man, who discovered how to use his powers on his own, Araña (#1–6) and Scorpion (#7–12) are found and have their powers pressed into service by agencies (and strong male figures) that guide them. A patronizing patriarchy is thus preserved, if transformed. The stories of the 21st century also fit neatly into the established Marvel universe, whereas the stories of the 1960s provided much of the raw material for creating this universe in the first place. Scorpion, for instance, is recruited by the global police agency S.H.I.E.L.D. and courted by the global terrorist organization A.I.M., organizations common to many titles and characters in Marvel. Moreover, advanced and fantastic science and technology are no longer strange and novel, but are in fact taken for granted, having become the norm. The morality tales of poetic justice are also largely abandoned.

If the Cold War defined the field of stories of the 1960s, the stories of the 2000s take place in the context of the United States' War on Terror and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, the main antagonists in the stories are not Arab/Muslim terrorists, but secret criminal societies or A.I.M. (Advanced Idea Mechanics), a "techno-anarchist" terrorist organization that critiques corporations, consumerism, and capitalism. Western civilization (and the United States in particular) still faces an existential threat from those out to destroy it. However, the rather minor contradictory tension this time is not the misidentification of potential friends as foes, but the potential abuse of power by American rulers and allies—such as weapons manufacturers who make profits from war or the incompetence of (an implied) President George W. Bush. Simplified representations of war- and dictator-prone Third World countries that ignore, or only moderately imply histories of Western intervention, abound. Yet, while Western civilization is seen as worth defending (for this is what the protagonists do), the critiques of its belligerence, its war-profiteering and anti-egalitarian capitalist system are not substantively opposed.

Noaman G. Ali

AMERICAN BORN CHINESE (2006). *American Born Chinese* is a graphic novel by Gene Luen Yang published by First Second Books, an imprint of Roaring Books Press. Yang's earlier graphic novels include *Gordon Yamamoto and the King of the Geeks* (2004) and *Loyola Chin and the San Peligran Order* (2004). Like these earlier comics, *American Born Chinese* focuses on an Asian American teenage protagonist, but it is a more complex and autobiographical text than its predecessors. It also reached a much wider audience than Yang's earlier comics, becoming the first graphic novel selected as a National Book Award finalist (in the category of Young People's Literature, 2006) and the first graphic novel to win the ALA Printz Award (2007).

The novel consists of a trilogy of interspliced narratives. The first follows the adventures of the Monkey King, a figure from traditional Chinese mythology and popular culture who first appeared in writing in the epic tale *Journey to the West*, a Ming Dynasty narrative attributed to the scholar Wu Cheng'en. *Journey to the West* follows the adventures of the Monkey King, or Sun Wukong, as he accompanies a Buddhist monk on a mission to India. It also narrates the exploits of his early life and rise to immortality, portraying him as a mischievous, ambitious, and proud shape-shifter who resents being looked down upon by superior deities. *American Born Chinese* appropriates the character of Sun Wukong as allegorical adolescent, driven by humiliation to pursue first social respect and ultimately self-knowledge. The novel opens with the story of the Monkey King's mortifying rejection from a dinner party of the gods because, as the guards inform him, "you may be a king—you may even be a deity—but you are still a *monkey*" (15). When he returns in shame to his royal chamber, "the thick smell of monkey fur greeted him. He'd never noticed it before. He stayed awake for the rest of the night thinking of ways to get rid of it" (20). The Monkey King's socially compromising monkey-ness thus frames the novel's primary theme of how Chinese ethnicity forms a part of an American teenager's identity.

The second narrative follows a boy named Jin Wang from his early childhood in San Francisco's Chinatown to his ordeals in elementary school and junior high in a primarily white suburb. The son of Chinese immigrants, Jin is an "ABC," or "American Born Chinese," a term used within immigrant communities to emphasize the difference between first and second generation Chinese Americans, particularly the compromised "Chineseness" of the American-born generations. Jin's experiences include being introduced by a teacher to his third-grade classmates as having "moved to our neighborhood all the way from China!" (which he must correct as "San Francisco") (30), enduring perpetual racist slurs from bullies, and attempting to start a relationship with a girl at school despite his classmates' disapproval of his dating a white girl and his parents' disapproval of his dating at all. As an "ABC," Jin feels neither Chinese nor American, and the awkwardness of living between these two categories compounds the traditional humiliations of American adolescence. Another Chinese American boy, Wei-chen, arrives at Jin's elementary school later in the year when his family moves from Taiwan. At first, Jin reveals that "something made me want to beat him up" (36), but eventually the boys realize that they share common interests and become best friends. While Jin is an "ABC," Wei-chen is an example of an "FOB," which stands for "Fresh Off the Boat," another term used within Chinese American communities to demarcate the difference between the American-born and the foreign-born. Just as "ABC" is used pejoratively by first-generation immigrants to call the group's Chineseness into question, "FOB" is a similarly pejorative term used to call attention to new immigrants' failures to assimilate into American culture. Jin's initial hostility toward Wei-chen reflects these historical tensions within a community that is under pressure to embody multiple identities at once. Yet when this hostility gives way to friendship, readers see how social alienation can produce camaraderie rather than antagonism. The trials of Jin and Wei-chen's

friendship show both how delicate this bond of friendship is, and how necessary it is if one is to survive adolescence. The particular interest that brings the two boys together is not their ethnicity per se, but their attraction to Transformers—a popular American toy in the 1980s, but also an echo of the Monkey King, renowned for his unmatched powers of transformation.

The third narrative is a satire of an imagined American sitcom, framed by the applause and laughter of an invisible studio audience, entitled "Everyone Ruvs Chin-Kee." Its protagonist, a white teenager named Danny, is subjected to repeated embarrassments when forced to take his "cousin Chin-Kee" to high school with him. Chin-Kee is drawn in the style of Chinese caricatures developed in American comedy theater and minstrel shows from the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries: yellow-skinned, squint-eyed, buck-toothed, and pigtailed. He bursts in on the novel in a full-page panel, crying "HARRO AMELLICA!" while his uncle takes his luggage—all in oversized Chinese take-out cartons—to the bedroom. As he follows Danny to Oliphant High School—named after the cartoonist Pat Oliphant, known for his ethnic caricatures—he continues to display examples of stereotypically repulsive "Chinese" behavior, ranging from his "model minority" tendency to outperform other students in the classroom, to eating "cat gizzards" in the cafeteria (114), to going "to *riblaly* to find Amellican girl to bind feet and bear Chin-Kee's children!" (120). This nightmarish character born of American popular culture is Danny's own personal nightmare, "ruining [his] life" (205) even though, as he tells the girl he's interested in, "I don't even know how we're related!" (123).

The question of how Danny and Chin-Kee are related is answered only at the novel's end, which reveals how all three narratives are related. Danny and Jin are one and the same: Danny is Jin's ideal self, the perfect American boy he has always dreamed of becoming, and Jin is Danny's real self, the boy tormented by America's long history of racism because he is (though he doesn't feel) ethnically Chinese. Chin-Kee is, in addition to an embodiment of the culture's long-standing race anxieties, a disguise of the Monkey King, who has been putting Jin/Danny through a series of trials comparable to those the Monkey King himself faced on his own "journey to the West," or toward enlightenment. Wei-chen is the Monkey King's son, sent to live among human beings as a test of his virtue. This element of the Monkey King's story is of Yang's own invention, replacing the original story's Buddhist underpinnings with Christian ones. Consistent with the novel's theme of transformation, *American Born Chinese*'s Monkey King has thus been transformed from a Chinese to a specifically Chinese American god. In the end, the significance of Jin and Wei-chen's friendship is heightened by the interplay of these narratives beyond individual happiness to a kind of universal harmony; it gives both characters the spiritual strength to endure the challenges of American social life.

Eugenia Zuroski Jenkins

AMERICAN FLAGG! A **science fiction satire** that also draws from the **Western**, **crime comics** and fiction, and **funny animal** comics, Howard Chaykin's *American Flagg!* is set in the year 2031, decades after a series of natural disasters and political upheavals

have combined to radically remake the face of global civilization. Lauded for its sophisticated political critique and formal innovations in the comic page, as well as being notorious for its depictions of its characters' sex lives, *American Flagg!* expanded the boundaries of the possible in mainstream American serial comics.

In a short essay published in the first issue of the series, Chaykin explained that the roots of *American Flagg!* lay in his dissatisfaction with the way in which the 1960s counterculture had "handed over the concept of patriotism to the corporate fascist elite" and in his desire to reclaim and rehabilitate "the mythic aspects of America." This conflict between substantial and superficial versions of the American myth is central to the series and part of its larger project of exploring the increasingly blurry line between reality and simulation. In the future of *American Flagg!* all experience is mediated by an enormous corporate-governmental entity known as the Plex. Formed when the United States' governing elites, allied with a group of Soviet scientists, withdrew to Mars after the disasters of 1996, the Plex claims to be working to restore the United States to its former greatness; in actuality, it conspires to sterilize the remaining inhabitants and sell off major portions of the country to the highest bidder. The general populace remains unaware that such nefarious activities are afoot, as they are distracted by the Plex's endless stream of lurid, mind-numbing entertainment, including programs such as "White Sluts on Dope," "Bob Violence," and especially "Firefight All Night Live," a show which pits "paramilitary poli-clubs" such as the Gotterdammacrats, the Moroccan Popular Front, and the Shabbas Goys against each other in armed conflict. "Firefight" thus provides the illusion that Earth-bound political disputes are meaningful while simultaneously reducing them to mere spectacle.

Chaykin's hero in this world of artifice and corruption is Reuben Flagg. Once the star of the hit program "Mark Thrust, Sexus Ranger," Flagg finds himself on the wrong side of Plex authorities. When the producers of "Mark Thrust" replace him with a computer-animated double drawn from his previous performances, Flagg accepts a commission with the Plexus Rangers, the Plex's police force. Assigned to Chicago, and assisted by allies such as Raul, a talking cat; Luther Ironheart, an earnest but dim robot Ranger; and Medea Blitz, a reformed gang member, Flagg struggles to thwart dangerous elements such as the reactionary American Survivalist Labor Committee, to find an effective means of resistance to the Plex's overwhelming hegemony, and to restore some semblance of democracy to a citizenry with a severely diminished understanding of free will.

In order to communicate the effect of living in a world flooded with information but free of understanding, Chaykin developed an experimental visual style unprecedented in mainstream comics. Assisted by letterer Ken Bruzenak, Chaykin created detailed, multi-tiered pages that often featured overlapping panels of varying size. Video displays, advertisements, marquees, and sound effects formed an integral part of the overall design. This unity of narrative and visual style earned the series widespread acclaim. *American Flagg!* won 7 Eagle Awards in its first year of publication, and it was the first comic book series to be nominated for a Nebula, a prestigious science-fiction award.

Yet despite widespread acclaim, the series proved controversial as well. A 1984 essay in *Psychology Today* argued (while missing or downplaying the satirical aspects of the series) that it was an example of a pernicious moral rot and hollow cynicism typical of the era's comics, and the book's letter column roiled with debate over Chaykin's depiction of sex and of women generally.

Though *American Flagg!* is primarily associated with its creator, the book continued for several years after his departure. Chaykin gave up art chores on the title with issue #26 but, after an issue penned by **Alan Moore**, returned as a writer for three issues with Joe Staton as artist. The book subsequently passed through a number of hands, with Chaykin occasionally returning as co-writer. Although each new creative team brought its own voice to the series, they also developed the themes and ideas established by Chaykin. Moore's tale featured the Plexus Rangers' attempt to thwart a pornographic entrepreneur who used subliminal manipulation to transform the former state of Kansas into "Loveland," an orgiastic theme park. Steven Grant came aboard as a writer with issue #31, joined by Mark Badger on art, with stories spotlighting Flagg's pirate television station and supporting character Bill Windsor-Jones, the rightful king of England. Badger stayed on for J. M. DeMatteis's eight-issue run, a story in which Flagg nearly succumbs to despair as he confronts the seeming impossibility of mounting any effective resistance to the pervasive Plex. After a tongue-in-cheek all-apology issue (#46) addressing Chaykin's absence from the book, Chaykin returned for four issues to close out the first volume, joined by co-writer Mindy Newell and artists Paul Smith and Mike Vosburg. This four-issue arc saw Reuben and his allies uncover surprising truths about Plex leadership, and it ended with Reuben himself as the leader of the newly sovereign and independent state of Illinois.

The series was relaunched as *Howard Chaykin's American Flagg!* in 1988. Chaykin was credited in early issues with "story, editing, and art direction," though John Francis Moore eventually took over writing duties, with Mike Vosburg on art throughout. New stories dealt with Reuben's difficulties in fostering a participatory democracy in Illinois without being tempted into fascism, and his exploration of the U.S.S.R of the 2030s, a "brave new world of rampant consumerism" (#6) in which the political ideologies of Marx and Lenin survived only as empty rhetoric and merchandising slogans. After 12 issues, this second series came to a close as well, though Chaykin has occasionally revisited the setting and characters in recent years.

Brannon Costello

AMERICAN SPLENDOR. A long-running autobiographical comic book by **Harvey Pekar**, *American Splendor* began in 1976 as a self-published comic book that Pekar put out once a year, but eventually moved to larger established comic book publishers. It also was adapted into a theatrical play and a motion picture.

In 1962, Pekar became friends with **Robert Crumb** over their mutual interest in music. Encouraged by Crumb, he dabbled in writing stories in underground comics. In 1976 he decided to write and publish *American Splendor* with stories based on his life

and work as a government file clerk in a Veteran's Administration hospital. The title is satirical—in a 2005 interview he said, "When I was a kid, and I was reading comics, there was all this patriotism going around, and comics were being called ***All-American Comics*** and ***Star Spangled Comics*** and stuff like that, so that's where I got the 'American' from. And then the 'splendor' . . . the movie, *Splendor in the Grass* . . . I don't know . . . for some reason that always struck me as an absurd title, absurdly funny. I just hooked up American and splendor—an American splendor—it's an ironic title. I don't think most people would consider my life particularly splendid." Crumb illustrated many of Pekar's stories for early issues of *American Splendor*, and his artwork helped draw attention to the comic book.

Writing about his life, or the lives of people he knows, Pekar has said of his work, "I started thinking about doing stories that were realistic, and the best realistic stories I could do were autobiographical. It seemed that the more accurately I wrote about my life, the better the story came out. I also wanted to write about everyday life, quotidian life, because I felt that writers in just about every area had ignored a lot of what goes on in everyday life. . . . I was thinking about writing stories about working and what it was like to work on a daily basis and how to get along with your boss . . . Writing about the nuts and bolts of marriage and things like that." Many of his stories deal specifically with his worries, fears or neuroses. He writes each story and then hires artists to draw it. Pekar provides them with stick-figure layouts of how he thinks the story should work. A typical story may be one or 10 pages, and in the early years of the comic, often focused on some aspect of the hospital Pekar worked in, whether it was Pekar getting annoyed with a co-worker or listening to a story being told by one of them. Over the years, Pekar used over 50 artists to illustrate his stories.

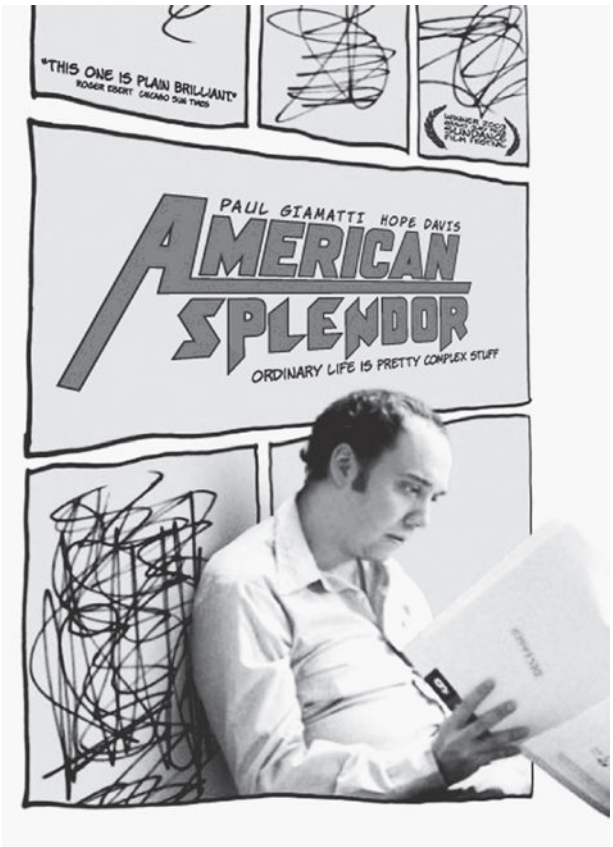
Pekar initially self-published, in the tradition of underground comics. "I published it because I frankly had more and more grandiose ideas about what I could do in terms of stories in comic books—more complex stories and longer stories. And frankly, there weren't any publishers around that I thought would accept any of these stories." Self-publishing *American Splendor* came with both financial and physical costs. The initial print run for a self-published issue was 10,000 copies, all of which Pekar had to store, pack, and distribute. He did this through issue #16 in 1991.

In the course of those 16 issues, the wider world discovered *American Splendor*. Pekar's third, and continuing, marriage to activist and comic book writer Joyce Brabner came about as a result of his comic book. She contacted him about getting a missing issue of the comic and a long-distance romance led to their marriage in 1983; she also became a regular character in *Splendor*. In 1998, the two become legal guardians of a 10-year-old girl who also became a character in the comic. Meanwhile, *Splendor* was adapted to the stage three times in five years—in Lancaster, PA (1985), in Washington, DC (1986), and in Hollywood (1990), with Dan Castallaneta (best known as the voice of Homer Simpson) appearing as Pekar. In October 1986 Pekar first appeared on the *Late Night with David Letterman* television show. Pekar hoped to promote his comic book on the show, but he came to feel that his appearances did not help his sales while

Letterman used him as a Rust Belt foil. Pekar used his appearances on Letterman's show as recurring stories in the comic book. *Splendor* became both more easily and widely available when Doubleday collected issues into two books in 1986 and 1987. Pekar won an American Book Award for the first self-titled collection.

Pekar was diagnosed with cancer in November 1990, but recovered after a brutal short course of chemotherapy. His and Joyce's experiences coping with cancer became the *American Splendor* original graphic novel, *Our Cancer Year*, illustrated by Frank Stack and published in 1994. *Our Cancer Year* won the **Harvey Award** for Best Graphic Album of Original Work in 1995. Pekar's cancer forced him to consider alternatives to self-publishing, and short-lived Tundra co-published *American Splendor* #16 as Pekar recuperated.

Dark Horse Comics published *Splendor* from 1993 through 2002. Pekar stretched his writing beyond his own life in these issues. *American Splendor: Music Comics* (1997) reprinted *Village Voice* comic strips done with **Joe Sacco**. *American Splendor: Transatlantic Comics* (1998) was about a British fan of the comic, Colin Warneford, who has Asperger's Syndrome and drew the story that Pekar wrote about him. In his most ambitious work since *Our Cancer Year*, Pekar worked with artist David Collier to create the three-issue *American Splendor: Unsung Hero* (2002), based on his co-worker Robert McNeill's experiences as a black Marine in the Vietnam War.



A poster from the 2003 film *American Splendor*, showing Paul Giamatti as Harvey Pekar, directed by Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini. Fine Line Features/Photofest

Hollywood's two-decade-long flirtation with Pekar came to fruition in 2003 when HBO's *American Splendor* movie (with Paul Giamatti as Pekar) won awards at film festivals. Pekar and Gary Dumm's "My Movie Year" comic strip appeared in *Entertainment Weekly* and forms the core of the 2004 *Our Movie Year: American Splendor* collection. Artist Dean Haspiel and Pekar published *The Quitter*, the story of Pekar's childhood, with **DC Comics** in 2005. After the success of the movie, Pekar began to spread beyond his *American Splendor* brand, but DC

Comics' Vertigo imprint also published two four-issue miniseries between 2006–8, using artists new to Pekar such as Rick Geary, Gilbert Hernandez, **Eddie Campbell**, and Richard Corben.

See also: Memoir/Slice-of-Life Themes; Underground and Adult Comics

Michael G. Rhode

ANIMALS. *See* ***Funny Animal Comics***

ANT-MAN. The name "Ant-Man" applies to various **Marvel** characters. The first was Dr. Henry Pym, created by **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby** for a story titled "The Man in the Ant Hill," and published in *Tales to Astonish* #27, cover-dated September, 1962. Initially meant to be a one-time **science-fiction** character, Pym returns as a **superhero** in issue #35, now calling himself Ant-Man. In issue #44, Janet van Dyne, Pym's lab assistant, is introduced; Pym shares his "shrinking formula" with her, and she becomes his sidekick, The Wasp. In *Tales to Astonish* #49, Pym—now a member of the newly formed **Avengers**—finds a formula for growing, as well, and Ant-Man becomes Giant-Man. (The Wasp remains The Wasp.)

The name change, a first major hint of what later writers spun off into an identity crisis of gigantic proportions, is only the first of many. The "Giant-Man" feature in *Tales to Astonish* ended with issue #69 in 1965, but Pym and The Wasp continued to appear in *Avengers*. In issue #28 of that series, published in 1966, Pym becomes Goliath. In issues #59 and #60, writer Roy Thomas and artist John Buscema let him experience his first major breakdown: Pym suddenly believes himself to be a new superhero called Yellowjacket, complete with a new costume, who has "killed" Goliath and now wants to marry The Wasp. Pym eventually finds his marbles again, the marriage sticks, and so does Pym's new superhero identity. All seemed to be well again, give or take a few disturbing warning signs—until 1981, when writer Jim Shooter firmly cemented Pym's status quo as an uneasy superhero with an inferiority complex who would rather stay in his lab. In *Avengers* #213, Pym, increasingly overwhelmed by his duties as an Avenger, hits his wife during an argument. He is subsequently expelled by the Avengers and divorced by van Dyne. Ever since, virtually all major storylines involving the character have circled around the same issues: his mental instability, his ever-changing costumed identities, and his relationship with Janet. Currently, Pym appears regularly in *Mighty Avengers*, now calling himself The Wasp to honor his ex-wife, who dies at the end of the 2008 miniseries *Secret Invasion*.

Like most of Pym's identities, the "Ant-Man" moniker has been used by other Marvel characters. In 1979, David Michelinie and **John Byrne** introduced Scott Lang, a reformed crook and electronics expert who steals Pym's costume and technology to help his daughter. Once she is safe, Lang keeps the equipment and becomes a superhero, with Pym's blessing. After a career of ups and downs, he joins The Avengers, but dies shortly after.

In 2006, the most recent Ant-Man, alias Eric O'Grady, debuted in *The Irredeemable Ant-Man* #1, by **Robert Kirkman** and Phil Hester. As the title suggests, O'Grady is not quite as heroic as his predecessors. After obtaining the latest Ant-Man suit and technology through a series of accidents, O'Grady largely uses it for his own benefit. Not an outright villain, he nonetheless proves to be a callous egotist who does not care about the lives of others, let alone their feelings. When his solo title was cancelled after 12 issues, the character began appearing regularly in *Avengers: The Initiative* and, in 2009, moved on to *Thunderbolts*.

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Marc-Oliver Frisch

AQUAMAN. Introduced in late 1941 in ***More Fun Comics*** #73, Aquaman, who commands an undersea kingdom and protects three-quarters of Earth's surface, is one of the most enduring heroes in the **DC Comics** roster. The character is the creation of Mort Weisinger (writer) and Paul Norris (artist). Aquaman's special abilities allow him to breathe underwater, swim through the ocean at 100 miles per hour, and telepathically communicate with and control all sea life. The aquatic superhero's origin has been altered significantly over the decades. Originally, he was the son of an undersea explorer who was instructed by his father in all the secrets of the ancient civilization of Atlantis. In 1959, this tale was altered as it was revealed that Aquaman was really Arthur Curry, the son of a lighthouse keeper who had discovered, and later married, a beautiful outcast from Atlantis. The origin was changed again in the 1990s by writer Peter David in *The Atlantis Chronicles* (1990). In this story, Aquaman's true Atlantean name is Orin and he is the child of Queen Atlanna and Atlan, a demigod. Throughout most of the decades Aquaman has been seen wearing a scaled orange tunic, black swim trunks, and green gloves and leggings. In recent years, he is often portrayed carrying a large trident, a three-pronged spear associated in mythology with either Neptune or Poseidon.

During the 1940s, Aquaman's sea-based adventures primarily depicted him as defending the oceans against threats by modern-day pirates like Black Jack, his longtime enemy, and Nazi U-boat commanders. While most **superheroes** ceased publication after the World War II era, Aquaman's stories continued. The "King of the Seven Seas" is one of only five superheroes of the **Golden Age** to remain in print during the 1950s. The **Silver Age** of Comics saw a great expansion of the hero's role in the mainstream DC Comics universe, as he was given a large supporting cast, a more menacing rogues' gallery, and new psychological depth. He also acquired a new weakness: after an hour without exposure to water, he would die. Aquaman was a founding member of the **Justice League of America,** appearing in the team's first story in *The Brave and the Bold* #28 (1960). This era also revealed him to be the king of Atlantis. The primary artists of Aquaman stories of this period were Nick Cardy, Jim Aparo, and **Ramona Fradon**, one of the few female artists drawing superheroes at the time.

The expansion of Aquaman's world began in 1959 with the addition of a teen sidekick known as Aqualad. The boy, whose actual name was Garth, had been expelled from Atlantis as a child due to the kingdom's prejudiced view that those born with purple eyes were inferior. Adopted by the Sea King, Garth served as an apprentice to the hero and eventually gained his own love interest, Aquagirl. In 1964's *The Brave and the Bold* #54, Aqualad joined with other sidekicks Robin and Kid Flash to form the **Teen Titans**. Other additions to the supporting cast included Vulko, Aquaman's Atlantean advisor; Quisp, a water sprite, and, most significantly, Mera, a beautiful red-haired humanoid alien from a watery dimension. She and Aquaman soon fell in love and eventually married. The couple welcomed a son, Arthur Jr. (nicknamed "Aquababy") in 1965. Aquaman was the first Silver Age hero in the DC Comics universe to father a child.

Aquaman's main foes include the Fisherman, the Scavenger, and Ocean Master, who was revealed to be Orm Curry, Aquaman's troubled and jealous half-brother. The most notable member of the rogues' gallery is Black Manta. Clad in a dark wetsuit and an ominous looking metallic helmet with large red eye pieces that allowed him to fire laser beams, the character was one of comics' first African American super-villains. His main objective was to take control of the seas and establish them as a home for African Americans, who had been oppressed for so long on the surface. The villain and Sea King battled repeatedly with their most notable confrontation occurring in 1977, when Black Manta kidnapped and murdered Aquaman's infant son. This event is one of the most significant moments in the Aquaman mythology.

Over the years Aquaman's solo stories appeared in a number of titles, such as *Aquaman*, ***Adventure Comics, Action Comics, World's Finest Comics,*** and several miniseries and specials. The most dramatic alteration of the hero came in *Aquaman* #2 (1994) which saw him lose his hand in a piranha-infested trap. His costume and appearance were redesigned so that the once clean-cut superhero was now seen shirtless, with a long hairstyle and beard, and a menacing harpoon replacing his missing hand. He was often written as an angry warrior king who possessed little sympathy for "surface dwellers." By the early 2000s, the more familiar-looking Aquaman had returned as he served as the protector of "Sub Diego," a portion of San Diego that had plunged into the Pacific Ocean after a massive earthquake. During this period he gained a new female sidekick named Lorena, who soon became the new Aquagirl. In 2006, Aquaman starred in the short-lived series *Aquaman: Sword of Atlantis*, which took the character in a new direction by emphasizing a more mythological tone.

Aquaman has also often appeared in other media forms outside of comics. He was first seen on television on *The **Superman**/Aquaman Hour of Adventure* from 1967 to 1968. From 1973 until 1986 he appeared in the various incarnations of *Super Friends*, a Saturday morning staple. Many of Aquaman's fans believe this series has led to a negative perception of the hero by the public at large. They claim that the series' decision to focus almost exclusively on Aquaman's "talking to fish" telepathy made the character look weak and ineffective. A more masculine Aquaman made several guest appearances



Aquaman promoting good nutrition, from the 1973 ABC television series *Super Friends*. ABC/Photofest

on *Justice League Unlimited*. Beginning in 2005, Aquaman was portrayed by actor Alan Ritchson in several episodes of *Smallville*. This led to the CW television network's producing a live action pilot episode for a proposed *Aquaman* series starring Justin Hartley. While the pilot was not aired, it later became a popular download on iTunes. The character gained even wider exposure via HBO's series *Entourage*, which included a story arc involving a fictional *Aquaman* movie. Aquaman remains one of the most stalwart and recognizable heroes of the DC Comics universe in the new millennium.

Charles Coletta

ARCHIE. *Archie* is the title of a long-running, teen-oriented comic book series that is the flagship publication of publisher Archie Comics. The adventures and misadventures of young Archie Andrews and his friends date back to 1941, when they first appeared in *Pep Comics* #22, published by MLJ Comics. By 1942, Archie had his own title, *Archie Comics*, which was such a success that the publisher changed its own name to Archie Comics in 1946. The title of the comic was shortened simply to *Archie* with issue #114. *Archie* has run ever since, while its characters have spread out into other comics and other media.

See also: Youth Culture in Comics

M. Keith Booker

ARKHAM ASYLUM. *Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on a Serious Earth* is a story in the **Batman** universe centering around Arkham Asylum, the Gotham City mental institution where the villains Batman catches up with are put for safekeeping. Written by **Grant Morrison** and drawn by **Dave McKean**, it was published as a graphic novel by **DC Comics** in 1989 and republished in a special 15-year anniversary edition in 2005. In the story, Batman is called to the site because the inmates have rebelled and taken over the asylum, holding the staff hostages. Naturally, the instigator of this event is Batman's arch nemesis The Joker, who wants Batman to come inside and experience the madness of the people and the creatures he has put away. The narrative cross-cuts with the story of the building itself, telling the tragedy of the founder Amadeus Arkham and his mentally ill mother, and how his wife and daughter later on were

killed by a former patient. There is very little action going on in this graphic novel, since most of the pages depict the various kinds of mind games The Joker plays on Batman. The Joker's point is that Batman, with his manic pursuit of criminals originating in his personal trauma of his parents' death, is just as mentally disturbed as the inmates of Arkham Asylum. The past and present narratives with Batman/Joker and Amadeus Arkham, respectively, are mixed in a highly symbolic style where fragmented sentences and pictorial allusions underline the polysemic nature of both written and drawn language.

Morrison's story is heavily loaded with intertextual citation both within the DC universe as well as biblical references, mythology, and occult themes. The story makes use of imagery from psychological tests and tarot cards and makes reference to Arthurian legend, *Alice in Wonderland*, and a long line of literary contexts.

Dave McKean's artwork is very dense, with a mixture of different techniques: pencil, ink, crayon and collage, and even if the general tone is dark and sober, the villains are often characterized by vivid coloring, like The Joker's bright green hair and Maximillian Zeus's electric blue. The coloring creeps into the speech balloons as well, so the hovering shadow of Batman appears in black, while Clayface speaks in a muddy, olive brownish-green, and The Joker's speech is depicted in ragged, red lettering—too unruly to be confined within bubbles.

Arkham Asylum sold extremely well at the time of its publication. Critically, however, it has been widely debated, with opinions at both ends of the spectrum; where some feel that Dave McKean's artwork is the only thing giving a too complex and confusing story some value, others think the story is great but that the art places too much symbolism into the narrative. There are those who judge *Arkham Asylum* to be one of the most complex, haunting, and successfully made Batman stories, but they are countered by the critics who have put it at the very bottom of the Batman stepladder of value.

Rikke Platz Cortsen

ASTRO CITY. Currently published under **DC Comics'** Wildstorm imprint, **Kurt Busiek's** *Astro City* is an ongoing series written by Busiek and featuring character designs by cover artist **Alex Ross** and regular penciler Brent Anderson. Growing out of the success of Busiek & Ross's ***Marvels*** (1993) project created for **Marvel Comics**, *Astro City* follows the lives of a rotating cast of characters in a fictional, eponymous city located somewhere in the American West. The first issue of the book was published by **Image Comics** in 1995, and as Busiek explains in an interview by Richard Vasseur, the idea for the title grew out of "years of thinking about what kind of things happened in a world full of **superheroes** that we don't see during the adventures—what happens to the guy on the street, what it's like to live in that world." By focusing on the lives of the ordinary people who live in a city of super-powered beings, *Astro City* is able to produce a type of story rarely seen before the title's publication.

Busiek populates Astro City with characters of his own invention, but drawing upon his extensive knowledge of American comics, many of the concepts for characters in

his fictional world are based on more popular mainstream characters. For example, the character Samaritan is a **Superman**-like creation whose alter ego, like Clark Kent, works for the local newspaper; Winged Victory is a female warrior-hero who champions the rights of women, making her similar to **Wonder Woman;** the First Family team of explorers and superheroes is an homage to Marvel's **Fantastic Four**; and the characters the Silver Agent and the Old Soldier both have similarities to **Captain America**. Yet despite containing a pastiche of elements from previously existent characters, the heroes of *Astro City* nevertheless are infused with qualities and personal histories that make them unique. The character known as the Confessor, for instance, has many of the same characteristics as **Batman**—he is a nocturnal vigilante who takes on a teenage side kick and uses fear as a means toward his crime-fighting ends. Yet, in a surprise twist, the character winds up being a literal creature of the night when Busiek reveals that the Confessor is actually a former priest who has become a vampire.

Arguably the most prominent character in the book is the city itself. Astro City was formerly called Romeyn Falls before World War II, but, after suffering widespread destruction before being saved by a hero known as the Astro-Naut, the town was re-christened as Astro City in his honor. The geography of the city is well-documented and highly detailed, with some issues of the comic even containing maps of the area. Though there are many points of interest in the metropolis, most of the action in Astro City stories occurs in one of four neighborhoods: Old Town, which is comprised of affluent nineteenth-century buildings, including the notable Grandenetti Cathedral; City Center, which is the modern downtown business area; Chesler, a working class and low-income part of the city widely known as "The Sweatshop"; and Shadow Hill, an ethnic neighborhood settled in the 19th century by Eastern European immigrants. The city is bordered by two rivers—the Wildenberg and the Gaines—and the northern border is dominated by the towering Mount Kirby. Each of these areas has its own peculiar character, courtesy of Busiek's storytelling, just as each has a distinct visual identity provided by Anderson's renderings. Further, place names in Astro City often allude to notable creators from the history of comics, such as the Biro Island prison, which is an allusion to comic creator Charles Biro and his famous ***Crime Does Not Pay*** series. Busiek and company excel at infusing the city with its own history and culture, as recurring newspapers, shops, television stations, and commercials are sprinkled throughout.

By foregrounding the setting and telling stories from untraditional points of view, *Astro City* is able to take on a wider variety of topics than is traditionally associated with the superhero genre. Examples of this breadth of storytelling are abundant even in the early issues of the series, from stories such as "The Scoop," which examines the place of sensationalism in journalism, to one-shots such as "Safeguards," which takes a look at cultural differences between long-established neighborhoods and immigrant neighborhoods. Yet if the stories of the book can be said to engage societal issues that exist outside of a world brimming with garishly dressed heroes, it is often just as adept at offering commentary on the world of comics. Later issues, particularly those published

as part of the Dark Age series, provide insights regarding the evolution of content in American superhero comics, even going as far as making the Silver Agent and his subsequent execution a virtual allegory for the death of **Silver Age** comics. All of this metatextual commentary is presented skillfully in a manner that does not crowd out or overshadow the main story lines, which are often classic superhero tales.

The issues of *Astro City* are collected into trade paperbacks and published under various imprints, all overseen by Busiek's company, Juke Box Productions. The series has won numerous industry awards, including at least eight **Eisner Awards**, five **Harvey Awards**, and four CBG Fan Awards. In addition to his personal Web site (available at http://www.busiek.com/), Busiek also maintains http://www.astrocity.us/ which reports on all the latest happenings in Astro City. **Alex Ross** and Brent Anderson both keep their own Web sites, http://www.alexrossart.com/ and http://www.brentandersonart.com/ respectively, where readers can browse original artwork from the series as well as catch up on the artists' other projects.

Craig Crowder

AUTHORITY, THE. *The Authority* is a **superhero** title created by **Warren Ellis** and published by Wildstorm Productions starting in 1999, known particularly for its widescreen action and violence. Many of its primary characters originated during the time Ellis was writing for the previous Wildstorm title *Stormwatch*, which focused on a government-sanctioned international superhuman squad. After a succession of interceding writers, Ellis inherited *Stormwatch* from **Image Comics** founder and Wildstorm Editorial Director **Jim Lee**, intensifying the political and ultra-violent nature of the series. Ellis's *Stormwatch* was briefly relaunched in 1997 and ran approximately a dozen issues before being spun into *The Authority*, which featured a far more independent and extreme team of superhumans determined to safeguard Earth.

Ellis cleverly dismantled the Stormwatch force in the pages of an inter-company crossover, *WildC.A.T.s/Aliens*. In his book *How to Read Superhero Comics and Why*, Geoff Klock suggests that, due to the special appearance of the *Aliens* property from the film franchise of the same name, it would be especially difficult for any future writer to undo what Ellis wrote. That is, since the permission to depict the trademark-protected *Aliens* would be a legal nightmare for subsequent projects, their slaughter of the Stormwatch team would be Ellis's Gordian knot, preventing time-travel, alternate realities, or any other fictional convention from tampering with his decision. While the crossover has been reprinted since Klock's observation, the general thrust of his argument remains the same: *Stormwatch*'s demise and, thus, *The Authority*'s origin has not been overturned.

In the wake of Stormwatch's downfall, several of its remaining team members, many of whom Ellis had himself created, took it upon themselves to form The Authority. They included a number of the more covert and ruthless of Stormwatch's clandestine Black team, such as the century-old but still-youthful Jenny Sparks, an electricity generator and manipulator; Midnighter, a dark **Batman**-esque, biotechnically

enhanced hand-to-hand fighter; Apollo, an ersatz **Superman** powered by the sun; Jack Hawksmoor, an alien-abducted master of cities and urban environments; and Shen Li-Min (aka Swift), a Tibetan Buddhist birdwoman. They were joined by the Doctor—a drug-addled Jeroen Thorndike, the latest in a succession of mystic shamans—and the newest Engineer, an American woman named Angela Spica with a bloodstream full of nanotechnology. Apollo and the Midnighter enjoy an openly homosexual relationship, and, as the "spirit of the 20th century," Sparks's lifespan was limited to the end of the millennium. Since her passing, her possible reincarnation, Jenny Quantum, has been born and adopted by the two men. The Authority has also come to include a new Doctor, Habib ben Hassan, and the living embodiment of killing, Rose Tattoo. Peripheral members include the disgruntled genius Doctor Krigstein (a stand-in for comic book legend **Jack Kirby**), former Stormwatch leader Jackson King (aka Battalion), and the hapless Kevin Hawkins. Moreover, a replacement team was put in place by the G8 nations when they felt The Authority was running unchecked. These far more immoral substitutes consisted of The Colonel (a somewhat uncouth British ex-footballer), Street (Hawksmoor re-envisioned as a street-gang thug), Rush (winged like Swift), Teuton (god-like alternate to Apollo), Last Call (a brawling, vicious, homophobic Midnighter), The Surgeon (a butchering version of the Doctor), Machine (a Japanese Engineer), and Chaplain Action (another Sparks-like iteration, replacing The Colonel as Quantum would Sparks).

Each manifestation of The Authority has been headquartered on the Carrier, a 35-miles tall, 50-miles long, and 2-miles wide interdimensional vessel powered by the energy of a baby universe. This majestic craft was thought to be one of numerous shiftships, crafts capable of traveling through time, space, and alternate universes by means of the reality-lining Bleed membrane. In essence, the Carrier was designed to tack through the Bleed, but it had become separated from its fleet and stranded in Earth's orbit. Given its artificial intelligence and advanced technology, the Carrier could be said to be conscious, thereby actively choosing to aid The Authority rather than being in any way commandeered by them. The Carrier's reasons for allowing the immoral G8-Authority to use it, then, are unclear. In theory, the buried shiftship found by another of Ellis's superhero teams, **Planetary**, could be a sister craft to The Authority's, also set off-course centuries ago. This notion is supported by the fact that a replacement Carrier, obtained by Stormwatch's secretly villainous founder Henry Bendix, now houses The Authority in the wake of the original ship's destruction. This replacement Carrier, too, was scuttled, though its interdimensional hull remains a safe haven for The Authority.

After three story arcs of escalating peril—a global terrorist, an extradimensional incursion, and the return of a would-be God entity to Earth—Ellis and artist Bryan Hitch left the series in the hands of the writer/artist team of **Mark Millar** and Frank Quitely. These new creators made the team far more pro-active, no longer settling for Earth's status quo. Life imitated art as Wildstorm's parent company **DC Comics**, itself now owned by AOL Time/Warner, became uncomfortable with some of the

depictions found in Millar and Quitely's run on the book. As documented by *Sequart.com*'s Julian Darius, *The Authority* became subject to various degrees of censorship by its publisher, especially in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York City's World Trade Center and Washington, DC's Pentagon building. Prior to that time, the publisher had censored a male-to-male kiss between Apollo and the Midnighter, themselves parallels of DC Comics' own Superman and Batman. Quitely left the title, citing editorial interference regarding his ultra-violent art. Ultimately, post-9/11 sensitivities led to the preemptive cancellation of the planned *Authority: Widescreen* special and the further delay of Millar's final issue, #27, which required redrawn panels and altered art by Quitely's replacement, Art Adams. All this, in turn, led Millar and Adams's own *Authority* inheritors, writer **Brian Azzarello** and artist Steve Dillon, to back out of the commitment.

Though further volumes of *The Authority* would develop in the coming years—most notably in a 2006 reboot by renowned writer **Grant Morrison**, which also suffered from delays and his premature departure—the title would never return to its pre-9/11 heights. Regardless, it still marks a pioneering point for mainstream comics in pushing the limits of political correctness, hegemony, and the escalation of graphic violence and sexuality.

A. David Lewis

AVENGERS, THE. In late 1963, writer **Stan Lee** and artist **Jack Kirby** collected all of **Marvel's superhero** characters who were then headlining their own series (excluding **Spider-Man**, but adding the **Hulk,** whose short-lived title had been canceled several months earlier) to form the Avengers, their own superhero team in the style of **DC Comics' Justice League of America.** Marvel already had one other superhero team, the **Fantastic Four**, but the nature of that group as a family of heroes left its lineup fairly fixed; over the subsequent years, the Avengers would become known for their fluctuating rosters, as over 70 different Marvel heroes have actively served in the Avengers.

The initial roster consisted of **Ant-Man** and the Wasp (from *Tales to Astonish*), **Iron Man** (from *Tales of Suspense*), **Thor** (***Journey into Mystery***), and the **Hulk**. Brought together to face the threat of Thor's half-brother Loki and then bound together in response to their group success, the team was written with strong internal conflicts and the Hulk, feeling untrusted, left them after only two issues. Just two issues after that, the group added their first new member, **Captain America**, a World War II hero who was revealed to have been trapped in Arctic ice since the 1940s. Only a year later, every remaining original member left the team, leaving only Captain America and three new recruits, all reformed criminals: Hawkeye, Quicksilver, and the Scarlet Witch.

In 1966, Roy Thomas replaced Lee as writer, and the team saw new members Hercules and the **Black Widow** added. By 1968, John Buscema had become the series' artist, and he and Thomas remained on the book for many years, introducing



In the fourth issue of *The Avengers* writer Stan Lee re-introduced Captain America, March 1964. Marvel Comics Group/Photofest

the Vision, an android created by Avengers arch-foe Ultron, and bringing in the team's first African American member, the **Black Panther**. With John's brother Sal and later with **Neal Adams**, Thomas created the book's first epic in the Kree-Skrull War storyline, a 10-issue galaxy-spanning storyline that brought together various Marvel elements including the Inhumans and the alien Skrulls and Kree.

In 1972, Steve Englehart took over the writing chores and gave the Avengers a sense of social relevance fitting with their times. He introduced Mantis, a half-Vietnamese woman and martial arts expert. Englehart's storylines often dealt with issues of racism, corporate America, and personal identity. His classic arcs are the Avengers-Defenders War, pitting two of Marvel's teams against each other, and the Celestial Madonna storyline, which focused on Mantis's personal exploration and self-fulfillment.

Jim Shooter was the next writer to have an extended run on the book (beginning in 1977), creating a cosmic storyline that arrayed almost every Avenger against the mysterious "Michael Korvac," a godlike being who could kill and recreate the Avengers' allies almost at his whim. After this "Korvac Saga," David Michelinie took over with a series of stories themed around government interference and the individual Avengers' histories, after which Shooter returned with a series of stories dealing with individual responsibility, culminating in Ant-Man (then Yellowjacket) striking his wife, the Wasp, during a complex plot intended to manipulate the Avengers into forgiving him for his misdeeds.

By 1983, Roger Stern had come aboard as the Avengers' writer, and his stories would send the Avengers across the universe from the Savage Land to the Skrull Empire. He introduced a new female Captain Marvel (Monica Rambeau) and developed her from rookie to team leader; during this period the Vision established a second Avengers team

(the West Coast Avengers, who followed a four-issue miniseries with a 102-issue run), and the Masters of Evil assaulted the Avengers' home in the Avengers Under Siege arc, which saw the Avengers' butler, Edwin Jarvis, maimed, the demigod Hercules left comatose, and Captain America's few remaining remnants of his youth destroyed.

After a series of short stays, the next long-term writer was Bob Harras, beginning in 1991. Harras brought a soap opera mentality to the team, developing a love triangle between Sersi, Black Knight, and Crystal which would drive much of his five-year stay. Harras's era came to an end shortly before Marvel farmed the *Avengers* and three other books out to creators from **Image Comics**, who restarted the book with a new issue #1 following *Avengers* issue #402. After only one year, however, the *Avengers* were returned to the forefront of the Marvel universe with a third issue #1, this time written by **Kurt Busiek** and drawn by **George Pérez**. Several months prior, Busiek had introduced the Thunderbolts, a team of heroes consisting of traditional Avengers villains initially masquerading as heroes but soon moved by acclaim to try to redeem themselves. Now writing the *Avengers* proper, Busiek returned to the classic Avengers of Michelinie's era, writing stories heavily based upon Marvel's history.

In 2004, Marvel launched an alternate version of the *Avengers*, the *Ultimates*, a much more violent and conspiracy-oriented version of the team, deemed more appropriate to the times. Though the existing *Avengers* team was not directly impacted by the *Ultimates*, *Avengers* writer Busiek left that book once *Ultimates* was approved. After several more short-lived creative teams, Marvel turned the *Avengers* over to **Brian Bendis**, who took three issues to disassemble the team, killing several members and dismantling many of the elements familiar to longtime readers. Returning to the original concept of pulling together Marvel's foremost heroes, Bendis saw the book relaunched as *New Avengers*, featuring Wolverine and **Spider-Man** and omitting most of the traditional Avengers. Bendis's approach proved successful, and the Avengers moved to the forefront of the Marvel universe, eclipsing traditional high-selling titles like *Spider-Man* and the ***X-Men***. The team spawned a family of books, including *Avengers: The Initiative*, *Mighty Avengers*, *Dark Avengers*, and *Marvel Adventures: Avengers*, in addition to *New Avengers* and *Ultimates*.

Mark O'English

AVENGERS/JLA. *See* ***JLA/Avengers***

AZZARELLO, BRIAN (1968–). A native of Cleveland, Ohio, Azzarello is best known as the writer of the sprawling crime saga, ***100 Bullets***, an intricately plotted examination of retribution and violence published by **DC Comics**' Vertigo imprint from 1999–2009. *100 Bullets* exemplifies many of Azzarello's stylistic tendencies: an interest in genre, multi-layered flashbacks, and a love of punning and wordplay. In crafting noir, **Western**, war, and **superhero** stories throughout his career, Azzarello has established a distinctive voice in contemporary comics, one that is rooted in his command of dialogue and dialect. Azzarello's economical dialogue is reminiscent of Harold Pinter in that

language is always a weapon, and menace lingers behind seemingly every exchange. He challenges his readers to find meaning between the lines of both cryptic conversations and the panels on the page, to fill in the rhetorical and narrative gaps of what is merely implied.

All 100 issues of *100 Bullets* were drawn by Eduardo Risso, with whom Azzarello shares a widely recognized synergy. Azzarello and Risso first collaborated on *Jonny Double*, a four-issue series (also from Vertigo) published in 1998 that established their aptitude for gritty crime drama with noir-inspired narrative twists and graphic violence. In the midst of their run on *100 Bullets*, the two also completed a six-issue story arc in DC's ***Batman*** (2003–4). Their "Broken City" storyline offered little of the super-heroic posturing and gadgetry that is often associated with the Dark Knight; rather, Batman was given a hard-boiled internal monologue that figured the hero as an unflinching, jaw-breaking gumshoe. Azzarello followed his stint on *Batman* with another attention-getting run on a canonical DC character, **Superman**, this time collaborating with superstar artist **Jim Lee** in 2004–5. The 12-issue "For Tomorrow" arc arguably put as much emphasis on philosophical introspection as it did on action (the story is interspersed with Superman's often gloomy conversations with a young priest dying of cancer), much to the chagrin of hardcore fans of the character.

As his work on DC's most recognizable heroes attests, Azzarello frequently contorts generic conventions into provocative shapes. A 2003 original graphic novel with legendary artist Joe Kubert, *Sgt. Rock: Between Hell and a Hard Place*, inserted the familiar World War II hero into a mystery involving his own company of soldiers and murdered prisoners of war. A short-lived Western series for Vertigo, *Loveless* (2005–8), was structured around complicated flashback sequences and involved the bold choice of killing off the ostensible protagonist early in the series. In 2002, following a lengthy tenure on one of Vertigo's flagship titles, ***Hellblazer*** (2000–2), Azzarello was scheduled to become the writer of the sensationalistic superhero team, ***The Authority***, but he withdrew from the project in the wake of September 11, believing that the rampant patriotism and charged religious environment would compromise his vision for the series.

A recent *Joker* graphic novel (2008) with art by Lee Bermejo (the two also collaborated on a Lex Luthor miniseries in 2005) allowed Azzarello to put his strongest talents on full display: shining an unwavering light on the darkest, most desperate, and shockingly violent recesses of the criminal mind. Azzarello figures to be an integral member of DC's *Vertigo Crime* sub-imprint, announced in 2008. His first contribution to this brand, a standalone graphic novel entitled *Filthy Rich*, is scheduled for 2009.

J. Gavin Paul



BAGGE, PETER (1957–) is one of the foremost visual humorists of his generation. Raised in Peekskill, New York, Bagge dropped out of the School of the Visual Arts (SVA) in his late teens to pursue a career as a cartoonist. His early work appeared in an eclectic mix of publications, including *Punk*, *World War III Illustrated*, and *Screw*, as well as in ***Weirdo***, edited by **Robert Crumb**. In 1983, Crumb turned ***Weirdo***'s editorial reins over to Bagge, who served as the magazine's editor for three years. In conjunction with the Seattle-based publisher **Fantagraphics**, Bagge became a star of the burgeoning independent comics scene of the late 1980s and 1990s with his award-winning series *Neat Stuff* (1985–89) and *Hate* (1990–98). Since then he has worked for a variety of publishers, including **DC Comics** (*Sweatshop*), **Marvel** (***Spider-Man***), and **Dark Horse** (*Apocalypse Nerd*). A forthcoming collection of his cartoon opinion pieces for *Reason*, the libertarian journal, has been announced by Fantagraphics.

While Bagge's creative output embraces numerous genres, from **memoir/autobiographical comics** and graphic political commentary to gag cartoons and magazine illustration, he is best known for his bitterly satirical stories that revolve around sharply defined, over-the-top fictional characters. In the pages of *Neat Stuff* he introduced a succession of humorous personalities, including talk radio host Studs Kirby, suburbanites Chet and Bunny Leeway, and the pusillanimous Junior. His dysfunctional New Jersey family, the Bradleys, proved particularly popular; one urban weekly described their adventures as "suburban angst at its most violently extreme . . . the *Married with Children* cast going after each other with machine guns and hacksaws." The success of the Bradleys paved the way for *Hate*, which featured the adventures of 20-something scion Buddy Bradley as he pursued a slacker lifestyle in Seattle, only to eventually return to his hometown in New Jersey with his eccentric girlfriend Lisa. One memorable Buddy Bradley

story revolved around his effort to manage a Northwest Pacific grunge band whose members are named Kurt, Kurt, Greg, and Kurt. "Man, what a racket!" Buddy thinks to himself when he first hears their music. "Now I remember why I never go to live shows anymore! This has got to be the worst music ever invented in the history of the world!"

Peter Bagge has a high-energy, kinetic visual style that owes a greater debt to classic Warner Brothers cartoons than to the dominant approaches associated with the alternative comics movement. While his line work became more confident and precise during the 1980s and 1990s, his scathing approach to comics storytelling remains rooted in the anti-establishment ethos of punk rock. To date, comics scholars have paid relatively little attention to Bagge's work and career, and it may be that some scholars feel more comfortable writing about comics memoir and journalism rather than **satire**. It is difficult to theorize belly laughs. Bagge relocated from the East Coast to Seattle in 1984, where he still lives with his wife, daughter, and cats.

Kent Worcester

BAKER, KYLE (1965–). Kyle Baker is an award-winning artist, writer, and animator whose singular style draws on elements of both reality and caricature. Born in Queens, New York, Baker's first job after high school, interning with **Marvel Comics**, was intended to pay for attendance at the School of Visual Arts. However, he left SVA when he realized, in his own words, "you're going to art school to learn a trade, but I was already working at a trade, so I may as well save myself the money" (Cunard).

Baker's first professional work was a 1990 adaptation of *Alice Through The Looking Glass* for First Comics' ***Classics Illustrated*** line. The same year, his *Why I Hate Saturn*, from **DC Comics**' experimental *Piranha Press* imprint, won critical acclaim. Baker worked for **Dark Horse** on an anthology about the experimental band The Residents; 1993 saw the Doubleday release of his highly acclaimed and quite manic graphic novel *The Cowboy Wally Show*.

The 1999 story *Letitia Lerner, Superman's Babysitter*, was withdrawn from a DC ***Elseworlds*** *Annual*, in a flurry of controversy. Its depiction of a baby (a super baby, but still a baby) crawling into a microwave, drinking milk directly from a cow, chewing on electrical cords and jumping atop water towers caused the editor, **Paul Levitz**, to order most of the print run pulped. Baker won two **Eisner Awards** for the story, which was printed two years later in the DC anthology *Bizarro Worlds*.

While the majority of his comics work for companies besides his own has been with DC, Baker teamed with Robert "Rags" Morales for the 2003 Marvel miniseries ***Captain America: Truth***. Inspired by real-world military medical experiments using black soldiers, this series postulated a troop of black soldiers injected with preliminary versions of a "super-serum." The series cited historically accurate events from black and military history, and its illustrations were meticulously researched. Despite its commercial and critical success, Baker declared that he would not work for Marvel again; nevertheless, as of this writing he is completing a Deadpool and another Morales Captain America story, both for Marvel.

Baker has had successful runs on numerous comics, including ***The Shadow*** (1987), *Justice, Inc*. (1989), and a highly successful run on a 2006 revitalization of ***Plastic Man***, all from DC. Baker has done significant work portraying the black community and experience. With writers Reginald Hudlin and Aaron McGruder, creator of *The Boondocks*, he created the graphic novel ***Birth of a Nation***, a satiric vision of a black community seceding following a stolen election. In July 2009, Baker was invited to participate in a literary panel at the NAACP Centennial.

In 2004, Baker and his wife started their own publishing business, devoted to Kyle's work. Baker's web site also features his animation and sales of limited editions of his work. In 2006, the Bakers published Kyle's comic book biography, ***Nat Turner***. Baker has storyboarded for Disney and Nickelodeon, and has a text on comic illustration, *How to Draw Stupid*, in print from Watson Guptill. He has worked as an illustrator for numerous publications, including *The New York Times*, *Vibe*, and *Esquire*. Baker has won eight Eisner Awards, five **Harvey Awards**, and three Gylph Comics awards, given for comics work by, for, or about black communities.

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Diana Green

BAKER, MATT (1921–59). Born in Forsythe County, North Carolina, and raised in Homestead, Pennsylvania, an African American community on the outskirts of Pittsburgh, Matt Baker was one of the comic book industry's first major black cartoonists. He began his career in comics at the Iger studio in Manhattan, where he started illustrating backgrounds. Before long, Baker worked as an illustrator on comics published by Fiction House, Fox Comics, and **Quality Comics**. Baker is most highly regarded for his work on **Phantom Lady**, a character known more for her revealing outfits than for her adventurous exploits.

Phantom Lady was the ideal character for Baker to make his own. Stylistically, much of Baker's work is categorized as "Good Girl Art," emphasizing attractive, curvy women in skimpy or form-fitting outfits. His work in the style is highly sought after by collectors. Baker's art, including the iconic cover of *Phantom Lady* #17, figured into **Fredric Wertham**'s *Seduction of the Innocent* as examples of the salacious images present in the comic books of the day. On that cover, Phantom Lady is bound to a post in a Western town, her bosom highlighted by the rope and by her decidedly low-cut top, the neckline reaching nearly down to her belt. Baker also illustrated the daily *Flamingo* strip, syndicated by Universal Phoenix Features Syndicate. Like Phantom Lady and Rulah, the Jungle Goddess, *Flamingo* focused on an attractive, raven-haired heroine.

Baker was also the artist on what was arguably the first graphic novel, *It Rhymes with Lust*, published in 1950. The initial offering of St. John Publications short-lived Picture Novels line, *It Rhymes with Lust* contained elements of pulp noir novels and the

sexualized art in which Baker specialized, and was designed for and marketed to adults. Only two Picture Novels were published before the line was cancelled due to poor sales. Baker acted as St. John Publications' art director from 1952 to 1954.

While other cartoonists left the industry for other pursuits when jobs dwindled during the 1950s, Baker continued to illustrate for various companies, including Atlas, the precursor to **Marvel**, for which he lent his pencils to various **romance** and **science fiction** titles while working for Vince Colletta's studio. He continued to freelance until his death in 1959 from a heart condition complicated by a childhood bout with rheumatic fever. His final confirmed published story, a six-page romance story titled "I Gave Up the Man I Loved!" appeared posthumously in Atlas Comics' *My Own Romance* #73.

Ed Cunard

BAREFOOT GEN is the English title of the long running—but oftentimes interrupted—Japanese **manga** *Hadashi no Gen* (1973–87), by Keiji Nakazawa (1939–) about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima at the end of World War II. Nakazawa had previously created some short fictional manga about the war and a 46-page autobiographical story *Ore wa Mita* (*I Saw It*), which prompted Tadasu Nagano, one of the editors of the comic magazine *Shonen Jump*, to invite the artist to develop a much longer version. Thus, in June 1973, *Hadashi no Gen* began to appear in this popular Japanese magazine for boys, but the longer series incorporated more fictional elements than the initial *Ore wa Mita*. Meanwhile Shueisha, the publisher of *Jump*, refrained from collecting the episodes in a tankobon book edition, considering it potentially too risky for their reputation. Additionally, in September 1974, they canceled the serialization in *Jump*. Afterwards, new episodes of *Gen* were successively published in three leftist and non-manga publications: *Shimin* [Citizen] (1975–76), *Bunka Hyoron* [Cultural Criticism] (1977–80), and *Kyoiku Hyoron* [Educational Criticism] (1982–87). By 1987, Chobunsha had published the 10 volumes in book form.

Hadashi no Gen was also one of the first Japanese comics to be (partly) translated into other languages, including English and French. At first this manga was used in Europe and the United States as an activist tool against nuclear weapons, but a relatively wider readership arrived with the Penguin Books editions (of 1989 and 1990). Finally, from 2004 on, Last Gap set out to publish the complete cycle in English in 10 volumes, as Vertige Graphic already had done in French. Even before the end of the serialization in Japan, *Hadashi no Gen* was adapted into a live-action movie (1976), followed by two animated films (1983, 1986); in 2007 a new live-action adaptation was broadcast on Japanese television as a miniseries. Nakazawa's strong criticism of Japan's wartime leaders was usually subdued or erased in these film adaptations. On a political level, *Barefoot Gen* is an explicit anti-war comic: Gen's father blames not only the rich upper class and the military (Vol. 1, plate 13), but also every citizen who is cooperating with this regime (Vol. 1, plate 168). The manga also sheds a critical light on some dark elements of Japanese history, like the maltreatment of Korean workers during the war. The central theme remains the natural will to live and to remain true to

one's beliefs, repeatedly symbolized by the image of wheat that springs back and keeps growing no matter how many times it has been trampled. Readers worldwide were able to experience the terror of Hiroshima from a powerful new perspective thanks to this comic. Since the historical events are mostly viewed from the perspective of the innocent child, Gen, the reader is quickly swept up in his unfair fate. *Barefoot Gen* was not the first antiwar comic, or the first comic about the atomic bomb, but at the time Nakazawa started with *Hadashi no Gen*, survivors of the A-bomb were still often looked upon with distaste and discriminated against in Japanese society. Another important factor is that this was the first manga to be introduced as pedagogical material in Japanese schools at a time when manga were still looking for wider recognition. About 2,700 pages tell the story of Gen from April 1945 until August 1953. The first 250 pages describe how difficult life was in Hiroshima for a peculiar family with a father protesting against the war. Though the family undergoes several hardships (not only hunger, but also harassment by people in charge), their real ordeal commences after the A-bomb explodes in the center of the city. Hiroshima turns into a nightmarish post-apocalyptic inferno, with thousands of burned corpses piled in streets populated by wounded people covered with glass shards or dragging their own melted skin. In the comic, the father, the sister, and the youngest brother are buried under the rubble of their house, then burned alive in front of the helpless mother and Gen, though in reality, as shown in *I Saw It*, Nakazawa was not present at a similar scene involving his own family. On top of that, Gen's mother goes into labor but the baby dies a few months later. Gen and his mother try to survive but few people are helpful. Nakazawa depicts a cruel survival of the fittest, whereby violence is almost always present, even among young children. The seven-year-old Gen learns to grow up very fast. Though the first two volumes are much more impressive than the short version, in the long run *Barefoot Gen* becomes a quite traditional shonen manga about resourceful kids in difficult circumstances (coping with the black market and yakuza), and it diverges more from the real events of Nakazawa's experience. The fictional cycle ends in August 1953, when the 14-year-old Gen leaves Hiroshima for Tokyo to study, though, in reality, Nakazawa moved to Tokyo in 1961 to try his luck as a manga artist. The author explains in an interview with *The Comics Journal* that he considers the series unfinished, but that he has no plans to produce new episodes.

As an artist Nakazawa has serious limitations (quite heavy line work, a limited range of standard facial and corporal expressions), but he works nevertheless in one of the traditional shonen manga styles of that period—one can note for instance the influence of **Tezuka**'s drawing style. For Western readers, not being used to such manga styles and codes, the characters may seem to overact continuously. In spite of this cartoony and simplistic drawing style, the persistent reader is quickly drawn into the story and overwhelmed by an avalanche of heartbreaking scenes.

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Pascal Lefèvre

BARKS, CARL (1901–2000). The American writer, penciler, and cover artist Carl Barks was for many years one of the nameless artists collectively known as "Walt Disney" because of his work as a comic book creator for the Walt Disney Company. Barks was most famous as the "duck man," not only creating cinematic comic book adventures for Disney's favorite sailor suit-clad waterfowl, Donald Duck, but also developing personalities for additional duck characters (Uncle Scrooge McDuck, Elvira "Grandma Duck" Coot, Gladstone Gander) who have found their own beloved places in the Disney character canon. Barks's characters and stories were so influential that when the duck characters were brought to afternoon television in the mid-1980s, the Disney company decided to base the new series, *Ducktales*, on Barks's Scrooge McDuck stories, relegating Donald Duck to a minor player.

Barks was born on a farm in Merrill, Oregon. While he was brought up to be a logger, rancher, or factory worker, at the age of 17 he, on a whim, took a correspondence course in drawing. He then moved to San Francisco and on to Sacramento, but was unable to find employment as an artist in California. It took a move to Minneapolis and a subsequent move to Calgary, Alberta, for Barks to find permanent work as a newspaper cartoonist.

In 1935, while still working in Calgary, Barks came across the news that Walt Disney Studios was hiring artists for its animation department. Barks was initially unimpressed with the character that would establish his notoriety, calling Donald Duck "an unintelligible troublemaker that would find very few roles suitable for his temperament." In addition to the films, Barks was hand picked by Walt Disney himself to ghost write and draw the Donald Duck comic strip after a staff change in 1939. After a year on the Donald Duck daily, Barks thought he would be able to retire from the daily rigors of comic strips and the Disney Company and become a chicken farmer in his native Oregon. However, Western Publishing requested a monthly comic book based around Donald Duck, and Barks was called out of retirement in 1943 to pen the story "Donald Duck Finds Pirate Gold" in the title *Walt Disney Comics and Stories*, issue #23. He would continue to pen Donald's comic book adventures until 1966, creating some of the Walt Disney Company's most enduring stories not set to celluloid.

Barks's most famous story is one that first appeared in Dell Comics publishing companies *Four Color Comics* issue #178 for July of 1947. The story that filled this entire issue was entitled, "Christmas on Bear Mountain." In the story, Barks introduced the character of Uncle Scrooge McDuck, an anthropomorphized duck of Scottish ancestry who is the maternal uncle of Donald Duck. After Scrooge's first appearance, Barks created an extended history regarding the rise of a working-class Celtic immigrant to the position of richest character in the Walt Disney canon of characters.

Barks passed away on August 26, 2000 at the age of 99 at his home in southern Oregon.

Jason Gallagher

BARRY, LYNDA (1956–). Lynda Barry occupies a unique position in American comics, having maintained a prolific career outside of the mainstream but also on the fringe of the networks typically associated with underground or independent comics. Barry enjoys a devoted following, especially for her comics exploring the simple pleasures and profound difficulties experienced by children and adolescents. More recently, her work has turned autobiographical and made her own creative process a central focus of her carefully designed publications.

Born in Wisconsin and raised in Washington state, Barry's career began at Evergreen State College when fellow student Matt Groening published her work in the school newspaper. While living in Seattle, her distinctive four-panel comic strip, entitled (for no apparent reason) "Ernie Pook's Comeek," began to appear in alternative newspapers, earning her a passionate fan base that expanded as the strips were regularly collected. Although her comics have never followed a single narrative, many focus on a recurring group of children and adolescents, including the irrepressible preteen Marlys, her older sister Maybonne, brother Freddie, and their cousins Arna and Arnold. While kids and teenagers have been a staple of comic strips and books since their beginnings, perhaps no other cartoonist has captured their volatile emotional lives as vividly as Barry, who also has an uncanny ear and memory for the language of American children. Her images, often pushed to the bottom of her word-filled panels, can be deceptively simple, suggesting children's drawings or even outsider art, but closer examination reveals her precise control over the pace and effects of her material, which readers find laugh-out-loud hilarious as often as deeply moving.

Barry's early strips, collected in *Girls and Boys* (1981) and *Big Ideas* (1983), both published by The Real Comet Press, focus on romantic relationships between young adults. *Everything in the World* (HarperPerennial, 1986) continues in the same vein, but includes strips that marked Barry's emerging focus on childhood experiences (which readers often assumed must be autobiographical). With *The Fun House* (1984), and continuing through *Down the Street* (1986), *Come Over, Come Over* (1990), *My Perfect Life* (1992), and *It's So Magic* (1994), all published by HarperPerennial, Barry hit her stride with comics largely (though never exclusively) focused on her regular cast of characters and drawing upon her intense recollection of the joys and terrors of growing up. *The Freddy Stories* (1999), from new publisher Sasquatch Books, is an often harrowing account of Barry's principal male character. *The Greatest of Marlys!* (2002) collects strips featuring Barry's most popular character, an unpopular girl whose vivid imagination and healthy ego sustain her.

Barry also created a unique work, *Naked Ladies! Naked Ladies! Naked Ladies!* (Real Comet Press, 1984), which brilliantly combines a children's coloring book, a "pin-up" deck of playing cards, and a memoir on the female body. Among other things, the

work is a vivid demonstration of Barry's ability to find creative potential in established and disregarded forms. Barry has also written two illustrated novels, *The Good Times Are Killing Me* (1988), later adapted into a play, and *Cruddy* (2000), both of which extend her explorations of adolescence. Her most recent works, *One! Hundred! Demons!* (Sasquatch, 2002), identified as an "autobifictionalography," and *What It Is* (Drawn & Quarterly, 2008) are hybrids of her regular concerns with even more autobiographical content (including stories of her Filipina family), as well as highly creative "how to" books derived from her shift to the use of Asian brush techniques and exercises to stimulate creativity (created for the "Writing the Unthinkable" workshops she leads). *One! Hundred! Demons!* received a 2003 **Eisner Award** for Best Graphic Album and an American Library Association Alex Award. Barry also edited and provided an introduction in comics form to *The Best American Comics 2008* (Houghton Mifflin). Currently Barry lives in rural Wisconsin, and publisher Drawn & Quarterly has announced plans to reprint her collected work in a multi-volume edition.

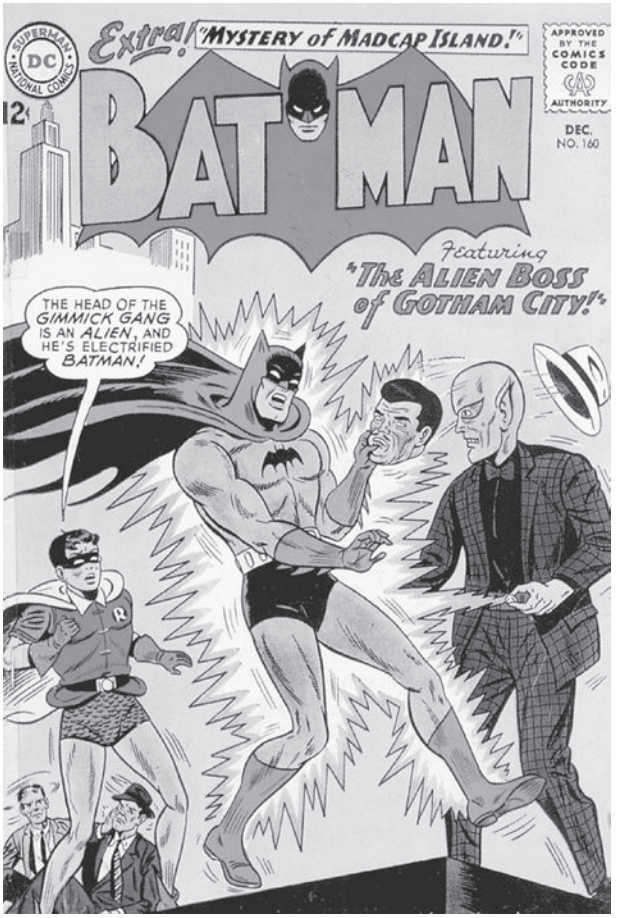
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Corey K. Creekmur

BATMAN. One of the most popular and recognizable fictional characters in the world, the superhero Batman first appeared in ***Detective Comics*** #27, cover dated May 1939. Looking to capitalize on the success of **Superman** the previous year, **DC Comics** (then National Periodicals) hired journeyman cartoonist **Bob Kane** to create another costumed hero. In order to differentiate his character from Superman, Kane made his creation a human without actual super powers, and drew upon film noir and pulp fiction, rather than the **science fiction** that influenced Superman's creators. Kane, who died in 1998, was a notorious self-promoter, and enjoyed citing as inspiration Leonardo da Vinci's sketches of a bat-like helicopter, Douglas Fairbanks's silent film performance as Zorro, and movies such as *Dracula* (1931) and *The Bat Whispers* (1930), among other sources. However, Kane's original design would be modified by the writer of Batman's early adventures, Bill Finger, who suggested Kane change the color scheme from red to grey, and added Batman's cowl with pointed horns and his scalloped cape. DC gave the savvy Kane sole credit for creating Batman, but most critics agree that Finger is his co-creator.

Batman proved an immediate sensation in *Detective Comics* and, within a year, was given a quarterly solo comic. The premiere issue of *Batman* (1940) saw the first appearances of enduring villains the Joker and **Catwoman**. In that same year, Batman began appearing alongside Superman in ***World's Finest Comics***. Since his first appearance, Batman has remained the lead feature in *Detective Comics*, and *Batman*, along with additional titles starring the character. Batman remains remarkably popular and viable after 70 years of continual publication.

Batman's creators waited until his seventh appearance, in *Detective Comics* #33 (1939), before depicting his origin in a short, two-page introductory tale. Bruce Wayne is the only child of a wealthy family in the fictional American metropolis Gotham City. During his childhood, his parents are killed in front of him during a mugging. The traumatic event motivates the young boy to train his body and mind to perfection, so that as an adult he can wage a war on crime. One night, a bat flies through Wayne's library window, which he takes as an omen. He designs a costume evocative of a bat, and, as "the Bat-Man," as he was originally named, he preys upon Gotham's criminal underworld using his physical and mental talents, as well as an arsenal of hi-tech gadgetry.



Batman, issue #160, published in December 1963. DC Comics/ Photofest

Although subsequent writers would elaborate or modify this story, the basic origin remains unchanged and powerful. Important additions to the story include the Wayne family butler, Alfred Pennyworth, who raised the young Bruce Wayne and assists him in his efforts as Batman; the city's police commissioner, James Gordon, who appeared in Batman's first story, but whose partnership with Batman would be developed more fully by later writers; and Robin, Batman's young sidekick. A number of teen and pre-teen characters have served as Robin, but the most famous is the original, Dick Grayson, a young acrobat whose parents are killed similarly to Wayne's. Seeing himself in the boy, Wayne adopts Grayson as his ward, and trains him as his partner. The brightly-garbed and wise-cracking Robin is a foil to the darker, brooding Batman, and remains a popular character in his own right.

The tones and styles of Batman's adventures have varied greatly throughout his publication history. Early stories—written primarily by Finger, with art by Kane and his assistant, Jerry Robinson—are exceedingly dark: grim tales of crime and corruption, with grotesque villains, set in a Gothic environment often reminiscent of German Expressionism. After World War II and throughout the 1950s, the tone became

increasingly tamer and childish, characterized by Dick Sprang's cartooning and stories pitting Batman against mischievous, yet generally harmless, adversaries. This period also saw an expansion of cast, most notably Batgirl and Batwoman, and the trend of putting Batman through bizarre transformations, such as making him a giant or a "Zebra Batman."

Sales plummeted during this time, and in 1964 legendary editor Julius Schwartz reinvigorated the franchise. Schwartz's "New Look" Batman included a yellow oval around his chest's bat insignia, as well as Carmine Infantino's more realistic art style and a return to classic villains and detective stories. This reinvention was curtailed somewhat by the camp trend of the mid-1960s, which affected Batman more than any other character due to the popularity of the campy ABC television show, *Batman* (1966–68). DC was more successful at returning Batman to his dark roots in the 1970s, particularly with a series of stories written by **Dennis O'Neil** and illustrated by **Neal Adams.** This creature-of-the-night period saw Batman leaving Gotham City more frequently; villains such as the Joker reverted to their homicidal, dangerous characterizations; and the introduction of new villains, such as eco-terrorist Ra's al Ghul. Batman's world continued to grow darker, perhaps reaching its apex in 1986 with two publications: **Frank Miller**'s ***The Dark Knight Returns***, a story set in the future where an aging Batman comes out of retirement to wage war on both a corrupt establishment and uncontrollable street crime, and Miller and artist David Mazzucchelli's *Batman: Year One*, a gritty retelling of Batman's origin. The dark, hard-edged approach to Batman has remained generally consistent since Miller's work, and unavoidable variations to this style tend to be in the slight differences of degree.

Batman's success is not limited to comic books. Batman has appeared in virtually all media, and Batman's logo and likeness have also been used on any number of merchandise. The ironic, live-action *Batman* television series starring Adam West in the titular role was a massive success, yet burdened the character with the stigma of silliness. Tim Burton's films, *Batman* (1989) and *Batman Returns* (1992), which initiated a second round of "Bat-Mania," preserved the dark atmosphere that was in vogue with that period's comics, but two subsequent sequels by director Joel Schumacher returned to campiness. Although somewhat restricted as children's programming, the stylistic, Emmy Award-winning *Batman: The Animated Series*, which premiered in 1992, maintained a surprisingly mature tone and a consistently high level of quality. In 2005, Batman returned to film in the serious, somewhat ponderous, *Batman Begins*, directed by Christopher Nolan and starring Christian Bale. That film's sequel, *The Dark Knight* (2008), would go on to earn the second-highest box office gross in history, and receive nearly unanimous critical acclaim. Although levels of quality vary greatly, Batman's representations in other media have not only kept the character in the public's consciousness, they have also contributed to the overall mythology: for example, Batman's subterranean headquarters, the Batcave, was introduced in the *Batman* daily newspaper strip.

Batman has endured, even thrived, since his inception for many reasons. For instance, Batman tends to attract the highest talent, maintaining a relatively high level of quality

for the character's publications. Part of the attraction to Batman for professionals and fans is the strength and depth of Batman's villains—including Joker, Catwoman, Two-Face, Penguin, and the Riddler—who comprise what is generally considered to be the best rogues gallery in comics. His villains often resemble Batman in twisted ways: many have obsessive personalities, struggle with duality, and are scarred by a traumatic experience. Therefore, Batman's encounters with his enemies often force him to confront aspects of his own shattered psyche and extreme behavior, which facilitate compelling stories.

Simplicity in design and conception also contribute to Batman's continuing success. The simple, repeated triangle pattern in Batman's costume, and the overall bat motif, create striking images, which Kane knew was important in graphic design. Further, much of Batman's appeal comes from the ironic use of the traditional iconography of evil: frightening, yet tantalizing, images of bats, shadows, and demons are transferred onto a heroic figure. Finally, Batman's motivation is basic and virtually universal, making the character easily understandable and relatable. Yet, Batman's characterization is as stark as his origin, and that opacity of personality makes Batman one of the most versatile characters in fiction. Fans and critics argue over what type of portrayal or milieu is best, but nevertheless—whether he is the vehicle for ironic humor, gothic horror, superhero adventure, detective fiction, child's fare, or another—Batman can be made suitable and relevant for seemingly innumerable purposes, genres, and time periods.

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Jackson Ayres

BATMAN & DRACULA. Although they are popular literature's two most iconic batcentric characters, **Batman** and Dracula did not encounter each other until **DC Comics** published the 90-page ***Elseworlds*** graphic novel *Batman & Dracula: Red Rain* in 1991. Written by Doug Moench and illustrated by Kelley Jones (penciler) and Malcolm Jones III (inker), the text takes place within an alternate reality that is separate from DC Comics' long-established continuity. The *Elseworlds* imprint allows writers and artists to imagine the company's popular **superheroes** and villains in new and unique settings or situations unrestricted by decades of canonical adventures. Many of the *Elseworlds* graphic novels contain the description "In *Elseworlds*, heroes are taken from their usual settings and put into strange times and places—some that have existed, or might have existed, and others that can't, couldn't, or shouldn't exist. The result is stories that make characters as familiar as yesterday seem as fresh as tomorrow." The critical and financial success of Batman and Count Dracula's confrontation spawned two *Elseworlds* sequels and several crossover appearances within the mainstream DC Comics universe.

Batman & Dracula: Red Rain is a moody and disturbing graphic novel that posits what would be the result of Count Dracula's leaving Transylvania for Gotham City. Doug Moench was quite familiar with Batman and the other denizens of Gotham, as he had written both ***Detective Comics*** and *Batman* from 1983 until 1986. He later returned to write *Batman* from 1992 to 1998. Artist Kelley Jones also has had a long association with the Caped Crusader. He illustrated the 1994 *Elseworlds* graphic novel *Batman: Dark Joker* and served as the regular artist on *Batman* from 1995 to 1998. In 2008, he returned to the character to illustrate a 12-issue series titled *Batman: Gotham After Midnight*, written by Steve Niles. Jones's exaggerated style is often described as grim or macabre. His drawings are more reminiscent of classic **horror** and pulp magazine illustrations rather than the traditional superhero style.

The plot of *Batman & Dracula: Red Rain* revolves around a series of brutal murders taking place throughout Gotham City. All of the victims have had their throats slashed. Batman soon discovers that these crimes are being committed by Dracula and his minions. He also encounters Tanya, a rogue vampire who was once a member of Dracula's clan but ultimately fled his brood when she saw him ruthlessly kill an innocent child. Years later she developed artificial plasma that allowed her to escape the vampire's hideous cycle of killing and creating more undead. Over the course of the graphic novel, Tanya enlists Bruce Wayne (Batman) to destroy Dracula and begins to transform the hero into a vampire. Her "blood substitute" imbues Batman with the physical strength he will need to defeat his enemy and while allowing him to retain his humanity. Moench's Count Dracula offers an interesting perspective on modern society when he explains to the kidnapped Commissioner Gordon that Gotham has changed him. He states that the blood of all humans in this modern world is driving him mad and that he is more dangerous than ever because he no longer cares. His monstrous transformation is complete as he mutates into an enormous humanoid bat with massive wings. Bruce Wayne's exposure to Tanya's serum has likewise physically transformed the hero as he has sprouted bat-like wings from his back. Batman and Dracula's final confrontation occurs in the Batcave. Tanya and her compatriots battle Dracula's forces until Batman detonates several explosives that destroy Wayne Manor and expose his Batcave to the sunlight, destroying all the vampires within it. Tanya achieves her own "blessed peace" as she sacrifices herself to destroy Dracula's last follower. The final phase of the battle sees Batman impaling the infamous vampire on a tree that has been destroyed by lightning. Although Dracula has been defeated, it has not come without a great cost: the Count drained the last of Bruce Wayne's blood and humanity. The conclusion showcases the reading of Wayne's will in which he has bequeathed his entire fortune to Alfred Pennyworth, his loyal butler. The final pages reveal that Bruce Wayne may be "dead" but that Batman is now fully transformed into a vampire. He assures Pennyworth that, thanks to his new supernatural powers, Batman's mission to fight evil will now go on forever.

The popularity of the Batman and Dracula meeting caused DC Comics to publish two sequels: *Batman: Bloodstorm* (1994) and *Batman: Crimson Mist* (1998). Each

of these works continued the unique storyline of *Batman & Dracula* and allowed Moench and Kelley to incorporate other elements of the Batman mythology into their tales. *Bloodstorm* features the vampire Batman, Alfred, Commissioner Gordon, and **Catwoman** (transformed into a "werecat") battling the remnants of Dracula's horde, which is now led by the Joker. *Crimson Mist* adds more Bat-villains to the storyline as a now mad and decaying vampire Batman drains and decapitates many of his old adversaries such as the Penguin, Riddler, Scarecrow, and Poison Ivy. Ultimately, Alfred and Commissioner Gordon are assisted by the villains Two-Face and Killer Croc in a plan to destroy Batman. As in the previous graphic novels, the violence is gruesome and relentless. *Crimson Mist* concludes with the vampire Batman walking into the sunlight in an attempt to finally find the solace that has eluded him since his transformation.

Although the vampire Batman was created to exist outside the mainstream DC Comics universe, the character has occasionally been seen outside of the *Elseworlds* format. He appeared in *Batman/**Superman*** #25 (2006) alongside other alternate versions of the Dark Knight. Another appearance came in ***Justice Society of America*** #5 (2007) where he was a nightmare figure of an **Arkham Asylum** inmate. In 2007, DC Comics published *Red Rain* #1 as part of its *Countdown* series of one-shots. Kelley Jones returned to illustrate Peter Johnson's story of vampire versions of Batman, Robin, and Batgirl. Moench and Jones's horror-influenced version of the Batman legend has even been seen beyond the graphic novel format as elements of their work were incorporated into the animated movie *Batman vs. Dracula* (2005).

Moench and Jones's vampire Batman was successful in that it allowed DC Comics to present Batman through the lens of the horror genre. Those accustomed to the Caped Crusader as a conventional superhero were intrigued by this new perspective offered by the *Elseworlds* imprint.

Charles Coletta

BENDIS, BRIAN MICHAEL (1967–). Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Bendis is a prolific Jewish American writer and illustrator of comics. Coming from a background in journalism, he nevertheless aspired to be a professional comic book creator from an early age, an aspiration that led him to study for five years at the Cleveland Institute of Art. Although Bendis's best-known work has been as a writer of books published by **Marvel Comics**, he has also done much work on independently-owned titles.

Bendis's first professional stint as an illustrator and writer came in the form of small jobs for local newspapers and magazines in Cleveland. He later found work at Caliber Comics, and by the mid-1990s was writing and drawing creator-owned titles such as *Spunky Todd* (1993), *Fire* (1993), *A.K.A. Goldfish* (1994), and *Jinx* (1996). The latter of these would make the move to **Image Comics** in 1996, where Bendis would finish the series. These early creations show the strong influence of pulp crime novels and film noir on Bendis's work, influences that are also apparent in the writer's work on Image Comics' *Sam and Twitch* (1999–2000) as well as his later superhero noir series, *Powers* (2000–).

It was writer and artist David Mack, one of Bendis's colleagues from Caliber Comics, who helped get Bendis his first break at Marvel in 2000 by showing editor-in-chief Joe Quesada some of Bendis's writing. Quesada and then-Marvel President Bill Jemas subsequently decided to give Bendis the writing chores on *Ultimate* ***Spider-Man*** (2000–), the flagship title of the Ultimate Marvel Universe, an alternative continuity consisting of 21st-century re-imaginings of classic Marvel characters. The title—and the Ultimate Universe in general—proved wildly successful, and Bendis's work on *Ultimate Spider-Man* and other Ultimate titles such as *Ultimate Marvel Team-Up* (2001–2), *Ultimate* ***X-Men*** (2003–4), *Ultimate* ***Fantastic Four*** (2003–4), and *Ultimate Origins* (2008) has established him as the primary architect for this alternative continuity.

With his comics being some of the best-selling books published by Marvel, Bendis has also had the opportunity to write other Marvel titles, most notably ***Daredevil*** (2001–6) and *Alias* (2001–4), both of which show the gritty hallmarks of Bendis's love of film noir. Since 2004 he has also been the regular writer on several ***Avengers*** books and has even taken the helm on several company-wide crossover events, such as the "Avengers Disassembled" storyline (2004), *House of M* (2005), and *Secret Invasion* (2008).

While his writing for comics has garnered him critical acclaim, including five prestigious **Eisner Awards**, Bendis has also written for film and television. He was the co-executive producer and series pilot writer for MTV's *Spider-Man: The New Animated Series* (2003), and his script for the film adaptation of his *Jinx* series is in development at Universal Pictures. Despite having opportunities to write in other mediums, Bendis claims to prefer writing for comics instead because of the creative control given to writers.

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Craig Crowder

BINKY BROWN MEETS THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY. This 1972 underground comic, written and drawn by Justin Green, is one of the first works to address deeply intimate issues in the comic book format. Though Green remains quite prolific, with work appearing in over 100 undergrounds and trade publications, ***Binky Brown*** is widely held as Green's most significant work. Expanding on the underground traditions of violation of social taboo, this self-contained narrative confronts issues of adolescent sexual confusion and guilt, using the teachings of the Catholic Church as a vehicle. In so doing, *Binky Brown* uses the perspective of a pubescent boy to take the Church to task for the more rigid and contradictory aspects of doctrine concerning sexual mores. The book is widely regarded as one of the first successful, and most profound, attempts at memoir in comics, with the central character of Binky as an acknowledged substitute for Green.

The story concerns the mishaps and perspectives of the title character, initially torn between love of his Jewish father and fear of Catholic dogma, later wracked

with guilt over his own sexual desires. The fear and guilt lead Binky to concoct his own interpretation of religious teaching and sexual behavior. He builds his own set of rules around the intersection of these ideas, and enforces these rules on himself rigidly. However, it proves an ineffective coping mechanism. The rules prove unyielding, to the point of driving the adolescent Binky to concoct his own punishments for violating them.

Binky sees his thoughts and sexual desires as adversaries. He believes his body is betraying him by leading him into thoughts of sexual sin. His obsessions with the bodies of his female classmates, coupled with the harsh disciplinarian rule of the Catholic school he attends, create a causal detach in his thoughts. He internalizes all the dictates of the nuns and priests. These dictates, often reinforced through corporal punishment, create a mindset of unquestioning devotion to Church doctrine. This mindset is borne more out of fear of punishment, especially everlasting punishment, than it is out of a desire to behave morally for the sake of doing so.

As his fantasies grow more intense, Binky sees his body as his enemy. He sublimates his desires into fantasies, including bondage fantasies, in which exterior forces control his body. These fantasies evolve into a perception of visible manifestations of sexual arousal. Binky begins to see rays shooting out of his crotch any time he feels even slightly aroused. He evolves a language to combat these rays. The constructed term "noyatin" is Binky's contraction of "not to sin" and it becomes his mantra for repentance. These sensations prove intolerable when his fantasies begin to focus on the Holy Virgin Mary.

Binky begins to see his body as completely beyond his control. He imagines that his appendages are all phalluses, and that only he can see the reality of the situation. Into adulthood, his search for salvation from this self-imposed trap leads him to try to escape into a wide assortment of beliefs and passions as means of solace and escape. The work of many comic creators, notably Jon J. Muth's *Moonshadow* and, in superhero terms, Jim Starlin's *Warlock*, later trod this path of self-searching symbolism in their work.

As is inevitable, the issue is only resolved when Binky is able to confront his fears and guilt. This confrontation takes the form of a nearly naked Binky seated in the center of a circle of cheap plaster Madonna figurines. Binky addresses the religious iconography of Mary, his phallic fingers and toes still emitting sexual rays. After coming to intellectual and emotional terms with Catholic guilt and the paradox of the virgin birth, Binky shatters his guilt around these issues. He does this by physically destroying the plaster Madonnas. One figurine survives his cathartic destructive rampage. He saves this figurine in the hope of building new associations around it, and by extension, hopes of reinventing himself.

In 1990, Green was confronted by a Catholic priest about the potential harm *Binky Brown* might have done to children reading it. While the priest accepted Green's observations about the "adults only" disclaimer on the book and his argument about the aesthetic potential of the comic form, he still contended that comics remain largely the province of children and that, in light of that, the potential for harm remained ominous. Green countered by citing the harm done to children by repressive Church doctrine

over centuries; but this argument sidestepped a significant, often overlooked theme in *Binky Brown* (Green 8).

Beyond the issues of coming to terms with sexuality and faith, *Binky Brown* also addresses related issues of isolation and presciently tackles obsessive-compulsive disorder. Green came to accept his own OCD as part of both his work and his life, and discussed it in the 1990 essay *The Binky Brown Matter*. These factors come into play to varying degrees in the later autobiographical works of numerous creators, notably Howard Cruse's ***Stuck Rubber Baby*** and some of his shorter works, and in Alison Bechdel's ***Fun Home***. The latter deals directly with both major themes of *Binky Brown*.

Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary had two 55,000 copy print runs. A drawing of Mary placed behind a text block on the bottom left corner of page 23 appears in the first printing, but does not appear in the subsequent printings in any form. The character also appeared in other stories in *The Sacred and the Profane*, another collection of stories by Green. All *Binky Brown* stories were included in the 1995 anthology *Justin Green's Binky Brown Sampler*. All printings are under the Last Gasp imprint. An exhibition of Green's art, including *Binky Brown* material, was held in April 2009 at Shake It Records in Cincinnati, Ohio.

See also: Religion in Comics

Selected Bibliography: Green, Justin. *Justin Green's Binky Brown Sampler*. San Francisco: Last Gasp, 1995.

Diana Green

BIRTH OF A NATION. Published in 2004, this satirical graphic novel about a disenfranchised black community that secedes from the United States was written by Aaron McGruder and Reginald Hudlin, and illustrated by **Kyle Baker**. While the narrative's setting is drawn from Hudlin's own experiences growing up in East St. Louis, Illinois, *Birth of a Nation* is also loosely based on the U.S. Presidential Election of 2000 in which the victory of Texas governor George W. Bush against Vice President Al Gore was disputed by ballot recounts, federal lawsuits, and charges of voter suppression. By further alluding in its title to the controversial 1915 film by D. W. Griffith, which depicts black freedom and citizenship as inherently deviant, the comic highlights the absurdities of American racial politics at the turn of the 21st century.

Birth of a Nation begins on Election Day when the optimistic mayor of East St. Louis, Fred Fredericks, discovers that he is among the 1,023 black men and women erroneously purged from voter rolls as felons, despite having committed no crime. While the Supreme Court eventually concedes that Fredericks and his constituents were wrongly denied the right to vote, the court rules against a new election, thereby allowing President-Elect James Caldwell (who seems to have won largely because of the voting irregularities in East St. Louis) to be sworn into office. Fredericks is driven by this injustice—as well as by his frustration with the crime, pollution, and "Third

World" neglect of his community—to declare East St. Louis' independence from the United States. As president of the newly-christened "Blackland," Fredericks is supported financially in his efforts by an old college classmate and billionaire, John Roberts. International investments allow Blackland to provide social services, such as regular garbage pickup, while local gangsters are placed in charge of the military and law enforcement. As an outraged U.S. Government prepares to invade Blackland, Fredericks becomes torn between Roberts's entrepreneurial opportunism and the revolutionary idealism of a Black Nationalist organization called New African People's Party (N.A.P.P). Assassination threats come from auto manufacturers as well as Middle East oil suppliers who disagree with Blackland's use of alternative energy sources. Yet once the dangers subside, Presidents Caldwell and Fredericks sign a treaty, suggesting both the recognition of Blackland's sovereignty and the unexpected triumph of their revolution.

In its humorous consideration of an African American nation within a nation, *Birth of a Nation* satirizes American politics and religion, modern consumerism, and popular culture through slapstick comedy and caricature that is reminiscent of McGruder's popular comic strip (and animated television series) *The Boondocks* and Baker's comic parody *The Cowboy Wally Show*. The writers portray Blackland's residents in constant disagreement over their country's new flag (a white Jesus against Afrocentric red, black, and green colors); the national anthem (Prince's version is rejected in favor of words sung to the tune of the theme song from *Good Times*); and, the faces that will be printed on the country's currency (among those chosen are Martin Luther King, Jr., Harriet Tubman, James Brown, and Will Smith). McGruder and Hudlin originally conceived of *Birth of a Nation* as a screenplay, but lacking an interested movie studio, the writers turned their script over to Baker to illustrate in his characteristic loose, cartoony style. As a result, the small, brightly-colored panels of the comic progress like storyboards above the dialogue and narration, with cameo appearances by Al Sharpton, Shaquille O'Neal, and martial arts actor Jim Kelly.

Qiana J. Whitted

BLACK CONDOR, THE. First appearing in **Quality Comics'** *Crack Comics* 1 (May 1940) in a story written by **Will Eisner** and drawn by Lou Fine (under the pseudonym "Kenneth Lewis"), the Black Condor began life as Richard Grey, Jr., an infant raised by super-intelligent condors in Mongolia after his archaeologist parents were killed by raiders while on a safari. Grey grows to young adulthood in the care of the birds, and he eventually learns how to fly at their instruction. He is later taken in by a hermit named "Father Pierre," who names him "Black Condor" and teaches him human language and customs.

Black Condor's **Tarzan**-like origin, which features strong Orientalist imagery and attitudes, is preposterous even by **Golden Age** standards, made even more so by the fact that condors are not native to Mongolia. In addition to the power of flight, Black Condor also commands birds in their own language and occasionally carries a "black ray" gun.

Black Condor's adventures grew in popularity and soon became the lead feature in *Crack Comics*, though it would lose that position to Captain Triumph before leaving the book entirely by issue #31 (October 1943). In the 11th issue, the Black Condor's origin took another turn, when the hero uncovered a plot by racketeers, led by corrupt power-broker Jasper Crow, to assassinate U.S. Senator Tom Wright. The hero failed to stop the assassination, but due to his strong resemblance to the deceased senator, Black Condor adopted the senator's identity and cast the deciding vote that foiled the racketeers' plans. Grey chose to maintain the Wright identity at the behest of the father of the senator's fiancée. This turn introduced frequent plots involving political corruption and the war effort, which were also common in many Golden Age superhero strips. Crow became the Black Condor's primary nemesis, returning in later stories as a Nazi sympathizer and saboteur.

Lou Fine's dramatic, dynamic style, strongly influenced by Eisner, Alex Raymond, and Hal Foster, elevated the quality of stories in this strip. Fine also gave Black Condor one of the more distinctive costumes of the era. Fine's skills as an artist also leant themselves to both **science fiction** and pulp adventure stories.

The character of Black Condor was revived in the 1970s when **DC Comics** brought back several Golden Age heroes that the company had acquired from Quality. The Quality heroes were revealed to exist on Earth-X, a parallel dimension where the **Nazis** had won World War II and the surviving superheroes formed an underground team known as "The Freedom Fighters." This team was featured in its own short-lived series. At this time, Richard Grey was revealed to be a mutant with the power of flight, in an attempt to make the character's origin less preposterous. The Black Condor later underwent two more revisions. In 1992, a new Black Condor, named Ryan Kendall, headlined his own series. Later, in 2006, DC created a third Black Condor: John Trujillo, a Native American with the power of flight and super strength who serves as a member of the new Freedom Fighters.

Andrew J. Kunka

BLACKHAWK. Introduced in early 1941 in *Military Comics* #1 from Quality Comics, Blackhawk was a heroic pilot who used his flying skills to battle against Nazi aggression in Europe. The character was the brainchild of **Will Eisner** (writer) and Chuck Cuidera (artist). Blackhawk was originally Polish; however, as the character evolved in his own long-running self-titled comic, he would later be described (beginning in 1968) as an American of Polish extraction. The original inspiration for Blackhawk and his adventures came from the real invasion of Poland in 1939, and the comics featuring this character engaged the reality of World War II even before the U.S. entered the war. Early on, Blackhawk's arch-enemy was the evil (and stereotypical) German, Baron von Tepp. Meanwhile, Blackhawk became the leader of an international-themed squadron of flyers opposed to the Germans, including Olaf the Scandinavian, Andre the Frenchman, Henderickson the Dutchman, Chuck the American, Stanislaus the Slav. Perhaps the most racially insensitive character from the series was the stereotypically Chinese

Chop-Chop, a sort of comic sidekick. Eisner readily admitted that the Blackhawk squadron was based on the French Foreign Legion. As others (such as **Reed Crandall**) took over writing and artistic duties due to the war, the depictions of machinery and aircraft improved, while the stores moved in new directions.

Blackhawk was a man of means, for he had his own island (located in the middle of the North Atlantic) and personal air fleet of the latest attack aircraft (the Douglas X5F, an actual but impractical design). He was able to wreak havoc on the Axis powers (both German and Japanese) throughout the war. The Blackhawk squad even had their own song: "Over land, over sea, we fight to make men free. Of danger we don't care, we're Blackhawks." It was a way to inspire others.

The series also reinforced standard patterns of thought during that time. Characters often had stereotypical aspects to them, either in dress, or speech. When Pearl Harbor occurred, the comic book reported on the attack and the need to avenge U.S. citizens, but again noted that the plan had to be a German, not Japanese, plot, for the Japanese were not that clever. The story lines often told of cowards redeeming themselves in combat, or of people who fight for the greater good without doubt concerning the reasons for fighting.

The series lasted well past the normal run of war-themed comics. As characters such as **Captain America** were retired after the war, Blackhawk continued his crusade to stamp out injustice around the globe. In that regard, the comic became a type of adventure comic with a war slant. As the war ended, the comic evolved. The Blackhawks became more like international spies fighting for right and American ideals, although they were not Americans; for a time, in "New Blackhawk Era," they even adopted superhero identities. The *Blackhawk* title, by then published by **DC comics,** was discontinued in 1968, though Blackhawk and his squadron have occasional made subsequent appearances, such as in a miniseries written and drawn by **Howard Chaykin** in the 1980s.

Cord Scott

BLACK HOLE. This graphic novel by writer and artist Charles Burns was first published in 12 separate issues by **Fantagraphics** Books from 1995 to 2004, then compiled and edited into a hefty, unpaginated hardcover in 2005 by Pantheon/Random House. Set in Seattle in the mid-1970s, the story follows teenagers in love and lust as they contract and contend with a sexually-transmitted plague that manifests its symptoms by mutating differently in each individual—some with easily concealable symptoms and some grotesque. None of the symptoms appear to be terminal, but then a series of killings begins.

The novel's opening scene signals that readers are in for a strange, twisted trip. Keith crushes on Chris, his biology lab partner, while dissecting a frog. The formaldehyde, the guts, the gaping slit—Keith passes out and has a montage of fragmented premonitions that serve as motifs throughout the book. While Keith's feelings for Chris remain unrequited, they both fall hard for other loves, both of whom are already infected. Burns alternates between Keith's and Chris's points of view, and readers sometimes

shadow other characters as they try to fit in somewhere in this network of high school acquaintances.

The unaffected teens seem carefree; they party at each other's houses and venture into the woods for bigger parties. Deeper in the woods, some diseased teens who cannot hide their symptoms live in a tent village. Some who are affected can pass for normal; they attend school and parties, and mingle with the uninfected. With its hierarchies of deformity, the novel offers a fascinating study of the Other, the ostracized, the outsider, and it certainly encapsulates the importance of looks and appearances within teen culture.

Whether in the woods or inside houses, the novel's settings are littered with waste: splinters, bits of beer bottles, sandwich and candy wrappers, molted skins, torn photos, cigarette butts, bone fragments, doll heads, broken tails, and eventually bodies and body parts. Similarly, characters cannot escape the lingering residue of their dreams of snakes with human faces, of tendril tongues, of zombies. In one of Chris's dreams, she pulls a tiny scroll from a cut on the sole of her foot; these infected bodies thus hold secrets and signs. Some of these visions seem to be a symptom of the disease, some are fueled by characters' consumption of alcohol, pot, or harder drugs, and some are induced merely by sleep or puberty.

Winner of the **Eisner**, **Harvey**, and Ignatz Awards, *Black Hole* is a virtuoso performance. Burns's use of heavily inked panels and precise, stylized feathering provides a slick, uniquely ominous look to the novel. Something dark lurks within these characters, in the woods, inside the suburban 1970s homes; readers are simultaneously repulsed by what is depicted and drawn toward the clear mastery with which it is depicted. While the plot is presented in a nonlinear manner, wavy panel borders indicate flashbacks and dream sequences and provide readers with navigational clues.

On the surface, *Black Hole*'s most obvious theme is sexually transmitted disease—perhaps AIDS. Characters acquire deformities as a result of sexual activity, yet the teens do not take steps to prevent the spread of disease. Thematically, *Black Hole* leaves readers with questions rather than answers. Is the sex drive so powerful that even mutation serves as a poor deterrent? While characters' mutations are a by-product of sexual activity, might they signify sexuality itself? Does sexual activity change the ways that these characters think and dream? To what extent is puberty a process of mutation? Do characters grow out of their deformities? Rows of yearbook portraits grace the inside front flap; the back flap features rows of portraits of the same students, now disfigured with giant boils, enlarged teeth, goiters, antler-like protrusions, and polyps. Instead of constructing mutations as science fictional superpowers (e.g., **Spider-Man, X-Men**), Burns's mutations are more exaggerations of actual conditions—dermatological conditions, dental problems, unwanted hair, absence of hair—along with assorted odd growths and duplications. It might happen to any one of us, whatever "it" is.

With its strange, frightening, but non-fatal disease, and with a killer or two on the loose, the book contains elements of a **horror** novel. However, it's also a story of first love. Chris's complete acceptance of her boyfriend's mutation—a second mouth on

his neck—leads to one of the most startling, intimate love scenes ever depicted in the medium of comics, yet it evokes the blind devotion that often accompanies first love. Keith's attraction to Eliza is based almost entirely on her mutation—a lizard tail. Both couples fantasize about running away together forever, about escaping from their world to create something new.

However, *Black Hole* does not offer a neat and tidy plot. Readers do not learn the etiology of the disease, why it affects individuals so differently, or how long it lasts. Readers are not assured of a happy ending for Keith and Eliza together or for Chris alone, although neither do these characters meet their demise. Instead, *Black Hole* offers a thick slice of a crucial time in these characters' lives as they emerge from the chrysalis of puberty and enter adulthood, which is a dangerous, alien world.

Anthony D. Baker

BLACK PANTHER. Black Panther is the alter ego used by T'Challa, king of the fictional African nation of Wakanda, in **Marvel Comics**. Black Panther was created by writer **Stan Lee** and artist **Jack Kirby** in 1966, for an appearance in ***Fantastic Four*** #52. Although not the first black superhero, Black Panther—along with other Marvel Comics characters **Luke Cage** and Blade—were significant as positive depictions of black **superheroes**.

T'Challa, as king of Wakanda, is also the head of its Panther clan. The character's primary motivation is the defense of his homeland from exploitation by the outside world. Wakanda, located in central Africa, is a technologically advanced society and the home to a massive meteoric deposit of the fictitious element vibranium, which has powerful, energetic properties as well as a tendency to cause superpowered mutations in humans. T'Challa protects Wakanda from the outside world by concealing its existence from foreign nations. Black Panther's first appearances as a guest character in *Fantastic Four* portray the character teaming up with the Fantastic Four against the sinister Ulysses Klaw, who killed T'Challa's father T'Chaka in an attempt to steal the country's vibranium deposits. With T'Chaka's death, the identity and costume of Black Panther pass to T'Challa, along with the rule of Wakanda.

Black Panther's appearances as a guest character remained sparse through the 1960s and early 1970s, in part because of the potential controversy over the character's name, which evoked the radical Black Panther Party, founded in 1966, the first year the character appeared. At one point in the early 1970s, the character was briefly referred to as Black Leopard, a change justified within the story as a simple difference in translation.

From 1973 to 1976, Black Panther starred in his own feature series, *Jungle Action*. *Jungle Action* was originally an anthology title published by Marvel Comics' predecessor, Atlas Comics, featuring characters such as Ka-Zar and Leopard Girl. Starting with the fifth issue of the revived *Jungle Action*, Black Panther was the series' most important recurring feature. The Black Panther stories in *Jungle Action*, written by acclaimed comics creator Don McGregor, were self-contained multi-issue storylines. These self-contained

stories were influential on early graphic novels, including Don McGregor's later work on the graphic novel ***Sabre***, written by McGregor and illustrated by Paul Gulacy.

Kirby's brief return to Marvel Comics in the 1970s included a number of series featuring Kirby as the sole writer, editor, and illustrator. This included a 12-issue run on a new *Black Panther* series. Although Kirby's Black Panther stories are somewhat less critically acclaimed than the previous stories by McGregor, this series is fondly remembered by fans as among the last great work produced by Kirby before he largely retired from work-for-hire comics.

Black Panther was a frequent recurring character in the 1980s and 1990s, and starred in a four-issue miniseries in 1988 written by Peter Gillis and illustrated by Denys Cowan. Don McGregor returned to the character in backup stories featured in the anthology title *Marvel Comics Presents*. Black Panther was not again featured in a regular, ongoing series until 1998, with a new series written by **Christopher Priest**.

Priest introduced a number of complex characters, such as the Hatut Zeraze. The Hatut Zeraze was the secret police force of Wakanda, led by T'Challa's adopted brother Hunter, known as the White Wolf. T'Challa disbanded the Hatut Zeraze and exiled the group, along with Hunter, from Wakanda. Also, for a time, T'Challa retired as the Black Panther due to health and mental issues, and went into hiding in New York City. The Black Panther costume was found by a troubled young police officer named Kasper Cole, who took up the Black Panther identity for several issues during the end of Priest's tenure. T'Challa does reclaim the Black Panther title, however, with Kasper Cole adopting the alter ego of the White Tiger. T'Challa, again active as a member of the **Avengers**, participated as a character in many of the Marvel crossover events of the 2000s, such as *House of M*, ***Civil War***, and *Secret Invasion*. Black Panther has starred in a further ongoing series, written by Reginald Hudlin, director of the films *Boomerang* and *House Party*, and illustrated by the popular artist **John Romita, Jr**.

The most memorable event for the Black Panther in recent years was his marriage to Storm, also a descendent of African royalty and member of the **mutant** team the **X-Men**. The two characters' relationship was dramatized in the 2006 miniseries *Storm*, written by popular African American fiction writer Eric Jerome Dickey and illustrated by David Yardin. Although the marriage of the two characters was presented as an aspect of the *Civil War* crossover event, the stories written by Dickey were composed to be accessible to a non-comics readership that might have approached the book because of its high profile author. The marriage of Storm and Black Panther captured a significant amount of public attention from the news media and entertainment press.

Currently there is an ongoing *Black Panther* series, featuring T'Challa, written by Stoker Award winning author Jonathan Maberry.

Robert O'Nale

BLACK WIDOW is the moniker used by three distinct superheroines, most popularly **Marvel Comics**' spy-adventurer Natasha Romanova (aka Natalia Romanoff), member and sometimes-leader of the **Avengers** superteam. However, the original Black

Widow, Madame Claire Voyant, appeared as early as August 1940 in *Mystic Comics* #4. Writer George Kapitan and artist Harry Sahle gave their character, one of the original female costumed heroes, the ability to communicate with the dead, shoot fire from her eyes, fly, and to apply a fatal "death touch" to her opponents. This **Golden Age Timely Comics** creation remained largely unused and unknown until her contemporary appearance in **J. Michael Straczynski** and Chris Weston's *The Twelve* where she and 11 other second-tier masked heroes awaken from accidental hibernation in modern day America.

Debuting in April 1964's, *Tales of Suspense* #52, Romanova's Black Widow began as a Russian agent and adversary for **Iron Man** as well as a *femme fatale* for Hawkeye. As written by **Stan Lee** and Don Rico (writing as N. Korok) and illustrated by Don Heck, Romanova was not originally envisioned in the skintight black leather jumpsuit and wrist-mounted "Widow's Bite" weapons that would become her trademark costume. Eventually, she defected from Russia and became an official member of the heroic Avengers and of the world intelligence organization S.H.I.E.L.D.

Romanova's origin has been revised several times. In some accounts, Romanova has had her life artificially extended since the early 1940s when she was sought as a surviving member of Tsar Nicholas II's royal line. In others, she was recruited as a child by a secretive KGB organization and raised in "The Red Room" program for enhancing abilities. These origins would lead her to marry Alexei Shostakov, the doomed Red Guardian. Romanova would eventually find romance with Hawkeye and **Daredevil**, among others.

More recently, Romanova's former handlers trained a new, younger Black Widow, Yelena Belova. Though the upstart Belova sought sole status as the Black Widow, she was coaxed into swapping identities with Romanova for a S.H.I.E.L.D. mission. She briefly regained her own appearance but was soon horribly burned on a rogue S.H.I.E.L.D. assignment to the tropical Savage Land. The villainous HYDRA organization offered to restore her beauty and grant her the mimetic powers of the Super-Adaptoid. Though her defeat as the Adaptoid seemed to kill her, Belova, was apparently revived and returned to normalcy, then enlisted by the repentant-criminal Thunderbolts program—though she was later revealed to be Romanova.

In addition to Romanova's adventures as an active Avenger and freelance superhero, ersatz versions of her have appeared in alternate dimensions. **Neil Gaiman** and Andy Kubert's *1602* have Romanova operating as a 17th-century plainclothes intelligence agent secretly working on behalf of Otto von Doom. In Marvel's re-imagined "Ultimate Universe," Romanova aided in repelling the attacking Chitauri aliens from conquering Earth. Invited to join the Ultimates superteam and wooing billionaire inventor Tony Stark (a.k.a Iron Man), this Black Widow comes to betray her teammates, murdering "Ultimate" Hawkeye's family and Stark's butler, Jarvis. Wounded later in battle, Romanova herself was killed by a vengeful Hawkeye while she attempted to escape her hospital.

In the primary Marvel continuity, however, the Romanova Black Widow remains a trusted ally of vigilantes and government organizations alike. **Science fiction** and

fantasy author Richard K. Morgan penned two miniseries featuring her, 2004's *Black Widow: Homecoming* and 2006's *Black Widow: The Things They Say About Her*. Since becoming writer of the ***Captain America*** series, **Ed Brubaker** has utilized her as a major supporting player in the life of Steve Rogers and as a supporter of the newest Captain America, Bucky Barnes, during his acclimation to the role.

A. David Lewis

BLANKETS. At nearly 600 pages, Craig Thompson's semi-autobiographical illustrated novel made a huge splash when it was first published by Top Shelf Productions in 2003. *Blankets* won **Harvey**, **Eisner**, and Ignatz Awards, as well as a top spot on many critics' lists of 2003's best graphic novels; it even inspired a CD soundtrack of nine instrumental songs to match the book's nine chapters. The novel progresses chronologically, first depicting Craig and his younger brother's close relationship, their shared love for drawing, and their upbringing in a sheltered, devout Christian household in the Wisconsin countryside. Thin, artsy, self-conscious Craig does not fit in with the farm boys and jocks at school or at winter church camp, where, when he's a senior, he meets the spirited, soulful Raina, his first love. They spend a magical, intimate two weeks together with her family when he visits her in Michigan, but the relationship thaws when they're not together. A few flashbacks connect their relationship to Craig's childhood and his relationship with his family. By the end of the novel, he has moved to the city and quietly lost his faith in Christianity.

Thompson is wonderfully adept at portraying Craig and Raina's deep but short-lived relationship. When Craig first arrives for his visit, they greet each other with a long hug depicted across two pages; the background becomes empty, the panel borders disappear, and readers sense the focused joy of the couple's reunion. In another scene, as they cuddle together inside, the couple is depicted as hovering in the snowy night woods: "Pressed against her I can hear ETERNITY—hollow, lonely spaces and currents that churn ceaselessly" (312). Sometimes Raina is depicted as celestial, with wings and a halo, the object of Craig's worship. A recurring visual metaphor sometimes appears in the backgrounds of Raina's scenes—a stylized, lily pad-shaped design deployed like a halo or a heart, perhaps symbolizing true love, purity, or heaven on Earth. At times, background lines swirl around Raina or the couple, as if these characters are at the center of the world. Through these and other figurative representations of their relationship, readers gain a rich understanding of Craig's feelings for Raina, for his idea of Raina. In less talented hands, such attention to love's magic would likely seem cloying or excessively emotive. But Thompson's visuals offer a crucial layer of sophistication; inarguably, *Blankets* is a beautiful story about falling deeply in love.

Religion is the novel's other dominant theme. In his youth, Craig is a philosophical Christian, devout and questioning in order to understand the mysteries of God. His devotion, however, is tempered by his fear-mongering Sunday school teacher and his guilt-mongering parents. His church community promotes conformity rather than acceptance. When Craig reads his Bible, readers see depictions of Biblical stories.

During his visit to Raina's family, he paints a mural in her bedroom of the couple sitting in a tree, and they discuss its Edenic symbolism. A portrait of Jesus Christ hangs in Raina's room, among posters for the Ramones and Nirvana, and Craig looks to Jesus for approval as he contends with the temptations of the flesh. While he and Raina never consummate their relationship, the conflict between the idea of lust and nudity as sinful and the idea of love as beautiful calls his belief system into question and embodies for Craig the hypocrisy of his parents' and his church's teachings. Now that his life has become more complex, his religion can no longer answer his questions satisfactorily.

Thompson enriches Craig and Raina's story with subplots and subtexts. For example, one flashback depicts Craig and his brother's molestation by a male babysitter. Raina's role in her family is particularly complex: her parents are separated, and she mediates between them. Her older sister wants to escape from any responsibility, even though she's married and has a baby. Raina cares deeply for her two adopted siblings, both of whom have special needs. In short, she keeps her own family from crumbling apart. While the book is epic in size, its scope is focused, its depth substantial and rewarding.

Anthony D. Baker

BLUE BEETLE, THE. First appearing in 1939 in Fox Publications' (later Fox Feature Syndicate) comic book series ***Mystery Men*** #1, the Blue Beetle has a long and convoluted history as a costumed crime-fighter. Created by Charles Wojtkowski (known in the comics business as Charles Nicholas), the character has had varied degrees of success as a commodity as well. The hero, with a phantom-inspired blue costume of often chunky-looking chain mail, appeared in the entire 37-seven issue run of *Mystery Men* (1939–42) and had a successful solo title that ran through issue #60 (though there was no #43) from 1939 to 1950. Joe Brancatelli has referred to this series as "one of the most intriguing strips of all time" (120). The Blue Beetle also regularly appeared in Fox's *The Big Three*. He was popular enough to have a radio program in the 1940s and had a short-lived newspaper strip drawn by eventual legend **Jack Kirby**.

The Blue Beetle on the radio was voiced by Frank Lovejoy for its first 13 installments. The actor for the remaining 35 installments was never credited. The episodes usually ran around 13 minutes long and were mostly self-contained rather than on-going or serialized like other popular radio programs of the day. These early Blue Beetle comic and radio stories revolved around policeman Dan Garret, who somehow received super powers from a vitamin known as "2X." However, the origins of the Blue Beetle, his alter-ego Garret, his powers and his costume were portrayed with great inconsistency, when attempts were made to explain them at all. For a brief time, the hero worked alongside Sparky, a kid sidekick. **Charlton Comics** eventually gained the rights to the character and launched a new eponymous series in 1954, but it was canceled in 1955. Another attempt to revive the character was made in 1964, but that series is perhaps most notable for helping Roy Thomas get his start in comics. Brancatelli refers to the series as "among the worst comics ever produced" otherwise (120). The Blue Beetle of this failed series

was Dan Garrett, an archeologist granted super powers from an ancient Egyptian scarab and resembling the original Garret (the spelling of the name sometimes moved between the two variants throughout the series) in name and basic costume appearance, but little else. The series ran for 12 issues over two years before it was canceled in 1966.

The following year brought yet another revival for the character, this time with art by another rising star, **Steve Ditko.** This Blue Beetle was the scientist and rich inventor, Ted Kord, and sported a distinctly different costume, complete with beetle-like eye goggles and a scarab design draping the hero's mask and shoulders. This incarnation only lasted five issues, however, and soon collapses along with most other Charlton superhero titles. Eventually **DC Comics** procured the rights to the character and used him again in ***Crisis on Infinite Earths*** in 1985 before offering another eponymous solo title the next year. In the DC universe, Kord was a member of the **Justice League of America** and often partnered with Booster Gold. DC killed off Kord in 2005 and introduced a new Blue Beetle, El Paso, Texas, teenager Jaime Reyes, in 2006. Reyes bonds with a mystical scarab that covers his body in an insect-like exoskeleton, giving him various powers of which even he doesn't know the limits. The scarab is eventually revealed to be alien technology, and its intentions for its host and earth were explored in the most recent Blue Beetle series, which was canceled after 36 issues. The latest Blue Beetle series dealt with issues of immigration, border trafficking, and citizenship before it was cancelled, sending Jaime to join the **Teen Titans** in their team book. Issue #26 of this series was written mostly in Spanish by Jai Nitz, making it the first mainstream super-hero comic book title in the United States to be marketed in Spanish. One of the series' writers, Matt Sturges, has lamented that the 2008 election process made less of immigration issues than he thought it might, which may have contributed to lack of interest in the innovation of the title's themes and gimmicks. The Reyes Blue Beetle has also been featured in the cartoon series *The Brave and the Bold*. The original blue Beetle has been viewed as a knock-off of the **Green Hornet**, the other Beetles likened to **Iron Man** and **Batman.** This latest incarnation is more like **Spider-Man** with its teen protagonist dealing with real-life issues and with its symbiosis themes. The most intriguing analogue in the character's history may be heroes based on the Blue Beetle, however. Night Owl I and Night Owl II from **Alan Moore** and **Dave Gibbons**'s ***Watchmen*** are based on the Garret(t) and Kord Blue Beetles, respectively. The television series *The Electric Company* featured a Blue Beetle as a villain opposed by Spider-Man, but this character has no relationship to any other Blue Beetles.

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James Bucky Carter

BLUEBERRY. *Blueberry* (aka *Lieutenant Blueberry*) is a Franco-Belgian **Western** comic book series introduced by Belgian scriptwriter Jean-Michel Charlier (1924–89) and French comic artist **Jean "Moebius" Giraud** (1938–) with the album *Fort Navajo*

(Dargaud 1965). The still-running series first appeared in the French comic magazine *Pilote*, #210 (1963) and is the most important contribution to the European Western comic tradition of naturalistic-realistic design. *Blueberry* has been translated into over 15 languages; the first English translations (by Jean-Marc Lofficier) were published in Europe during the late 1970s by Egmont/Methuen, followed by many other companies (Epic Comics, Comcat, Mojo Press, **Dark Horse Comics**) which published the series in a variety of formats and qualities up to 1993.

Blueberry is the nickname of Lieutenant Mike Steve Donovan, originally a Southerner who becomes trumpeter in the U.S. Cavalry shortly after the American Civil War. Blueberry is an atypical Western hero, defined by Maurice Horn as the "reformed outlaw." The first cycle of the series takes place in Arizona, near New Mexico, between 1866 and 1868 during the American Indian Wars. Blueberry´s first appearance in the series shows him sitting in plain clothes in a saloon, playing poker, smoking a cigar, always ready for a fistfight; his face, inspired by the actor Jean-Paul Belmondo, transports all the rebellious feelings of the late 1960s. Generally, the first cycle recalls the narration patterns of the John Ford Westerns, and the characters copy the stereotypical figures of the movies of the 1950s. Blueberry´s initial fight for the rights of the Native Americans is followed by the—artistically most interesting—gold-mine-cycle (set in 1868), which drew its inspiration from the slow narration rhythm of Sergio Leone movies (English saga-title: *Marshall Blueberry. The Lost Dutchman's Mine*, Epic, 1991). Here, the focus changes from the frontier to the gold rush, and for the first time (uncommon for the European Western tradition) Charlier excludes Native Americans from the story. The third cycle, the Confederate Gold (1869–72), containing 11 albums, is a good example of Charlier's epic qualities and shows the whole palette of Giraud´s drawing techniques, sometimes mixing different styles even in one single panel. In this cycle Blueberry emerges as an anti-hero; he survives the most severe torture, suffers degradation, is outlawed and wrongly accused of murder and betrayed even by his best friends (Jimmy McClure and Red Neck). However, all these difficulties only show Blueberry´s strength, his cleverness and his skills with fists and weapons. In the last album of the cycle (*Arizona Love*, 1990–93) Blueberry shows his soft side by falling in love with the cold-hearted Chihuahua Pearl.

Throughout the 28 issues (1963–2005), one can trace Giraud´s style as it changes from its roots in the French drawing tradition developed by his master Jijé (Joseph Gillain, 1914–80) to an identifiable personal style, especially influenced by Hollywood films and the Spaghetti Westerns. A "prequel" series (*Young Blueberry*) and a sequel (*Marshal Blueberry*, *Mister Blueberry*) have been published as well, with other artists (e.g., William Vance) and writers (e.g., Michel Blanc-Dumont), but Giraud is always represented in the main series.

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Martha Zan

BONE is a comedic **fantasy** series written and drawn by Jeff Smith. The series ran for 55 issues beginning in July 1991 and ending in 2004. For most of its run, *Bone* was published by Smith and his business partner and wife, Vijaya Smith, through their own company, Cartoon Books. For a brief period beginning in 1995, it was published by **Image Comics**. They reprinted the first 20 issues and continued with 7 issues, at which point the series reverted to Cartoon Books. Smith developed many of the characters and settings of *Bone* while a student at Ohio State University, in a single-panel strip called "Thorn" which ran in *The Lantern* student newspaper. While Smith was still a student, many of these strips were collected in a book entitled *Thorn: Tales from the Lantern*. The book only had one printing of 2,000 copies and is very rare today.

The protagonists of the series are the three Bone cousins—steadfast Fone Bone, scheming Phoney Bone, and dim-witted Smiley Bone. They are introduced shortly after they have been exiled from their hometown of Boneville as a consequence of a plot of Phoney Bone's devising. While searching for food, the three characters are followed by mysterious rat creatures. Shortly, it is revealed that the rat creatures are looking for Phoney Bone specifically, as the star on his shirt is a sign.

The Bones end up in "The Valley," where they are taken in by a young woman named Thorn and her Gran'ma Ben. Their early adventures with Thorn and Ben exemplify the light-hearted nature of the series in its first few years. As part of an annual event in the nearby village, Gran'ma Ben participates in a foot race against local cows. Phoney Bone tries to rig the race so he can become rich. Meanwhile, Fone Bone nervously expresses his romantic feelings for Thorn. The action is character-driven and largely comedic.

In the midst of these stories, Smith drops hints that ominous events may be forthcoming and that the characters might have secrets unknown to readers. For instance, a rocky past is hinted at between Gran'ma Ben and Fone Bone's seeming protector The Red Dragon. As the series continues, it grows in scope, becoming more serious and increasingly focused on plot.

The valley faces increasingly dangerous attacks from the unseen Lord of the Locusts, usually represented by his minion, The Hooded One. Thorn and Gran'ma Ben, who had seemed to be a simple country family, are revealed to be a princess and her heir. In order to defeat the Lord of the Locusts, Thorn and Gran'ma Ben travel along with the cousins to the kingdom of their ancestors, where Gran'ma Ben and her sister Briar had been princesses in their youth. Gran'ma Ben takes her rightful place as queen, and our heroes engage in a war against the forces of the Lord of the Locusts. Using Thorn's newly-developed powers and the magical Crown of Horns, they defeat the Lord of the Locusts. As the series closes, the Bone cousins depart for Boneville once more.

Even as the quest element takes over and the series enters ever-darker territory, it never completely does away with humorous aspects, introducing elements such as Smiley Bone's friendship with a rat creature cub named Bartleby. These scenes and others retain the feel of the earlier sections of the narrative, providing a stylistic through-line.

The series was published on an irregular schedule. Ostensibly it was released bi-monthly, but some issues followed a gap of three or more months, while others were released monthly. This pattern continued for the series' entire run. During 1999 and 2000, Smith took a full year off from the series to concentrate on putting together a pitch for the first attempt at an animated movie version of the series. When he returned, the next new issue (#38) featured covers by **Alex Ross** and **Frank Miller**.

Portions of *Bone* were printed (in color for the first time) in the comics section of Disney Adventures magazine, first in 1994 and again in 1997–98. Most of these were excerpts from issues of the comic book. In some cases, the reprinted material was edited to remove instances of smoking and drinking. One issue featured a completely original eight-page story, involving Phoney and Smiley Bone searching for a "buried treasure" when they are supposed to be doing Thorn's laundry. It has never been reprinted.

Following its initial run as a comic book, *Bone* has been collected into several different formats. The first collections consisted of nine volumes from Cartoon Books. These were in black-and-white, just like the original issues. In 2004, Scholastic Books began printing colorized volumes, with new coloring done by Steve Hamaker and approved by Smith. Also in 2004, the entire series was collected into a single 1,332-page one-volume edition. In addition to the paperback version, the one-volume edition was also issued in a limited edition hardcover with a run of 2,000 copies.

During its run, the series spawned two prequel miniseries. *Stupid, Stupid Rat-Tails*, published in 1999, told the story of Big Johnson Bone, an ancestor of the cousins and the founder of Boneville. The three-issue series was drawn by Smith and written by Tom Sniegoski. *Rose*, published in 2002, focuses on Rose (the future Gran'ma Ben) and Briar as teenagers. It was written by Smith and painted by Charles Vess.

A few attempts have been made to translate Bone to other media. In the late 1990s, Smith and Nickelodeon attempted to produce an animated movie. However, Nickelodeon wanted the Bones to be played by child actors, with pop songs on the soundtrack. The deal fell apart. In 2008, Warner Bros. signed a deal to do a CGI adaptation with Smith's full cooperation. Additionally, Telltale Games has released two games based on the series. The first, *Out from Boneville*, was released in 2005. The second game, *The Great Cow Race*, followed in 2006. They were both released for Windows, and the first was also released for Mac. *Bone* has won more than 40 awards, including 11 **Eisner Awards** and 14 **Harvey Awards**.

Anthony Strand

BROWN, CHESTER (1960–). Chester Brown was born in Montreal and spent his childhood in one of its suburbs. He dropped out of art school in 1978 and moved to Toronto

where he worked a day job and drew comics in his spare time. His first paid job was at the age of 12 when a local newspaper ran one of his humor strips. After having tried in vain to get **Marvel**, **DC** or the ***RAW*** anthology interested in his work, he began self-publishing a mini-comic in 1983 named *Yummy Fur*. One of the stories in it was *Ed the Happy Clown*, a surreal strip that put its protagonist in all kinds of weird situations featuring notable characters like the man who could not stop (defecating) and rat-eating pygmies. Surprisingly enough, *Yummy Fur* also included adaptations of the Christian Gospels.

Canadian publisher Vortex got interested and published a *Yummy Fur* edition in 1986 and an *Ed the Happy Clown* graphic novel in 1989—later re-issued by Drawn and Quarterly, the current publisher of Brown's work. Brown followed *Yummy Fur* with *Underwater*, another autobiographical series narrated from the point of view of an infant. It was not a critical or commercial success, but Brown has had great success with autobiographical work such as ***The Playboy*** (1992)—an intimate recollection of his relationship with Playboy paper pin-ups—and ***I Never Liked You*** (1994), in which he, in small sequences, tells stories from his childhood about the difficulty of being around girls, growing up, and the death of his schizophrenic mother when he was 16. Brown has found inspiration and advice on the execution of these self-narratives through his friendship with fellow Canadian artist **Seth** and American **Joe Matt**, who lived in Canada for a 14-year period. They frequently appear in each others' comics.

Moving to biography, Brown told the story of a Canadian anarchist in ***Louis Riel*** (2003), using his characteristic thin line and black-and-white drawings to meticulously recount the adventures of the French and English settlers in the Red River settlement in the late 19th century. Riel becomes focus of attention for the Canadian fight for independence as an English-speaking French Canadian who leads the people of the settlement to rebellion against British interests in the area. The book contains numerous maps and a long appendix that testifies to the thoroughness of Brown's research into this particular aspect of Canadian history.

A collection of Brown's early works appeared in *The Little Man'short strips, 1980–1995* (2006) and shows examples of **funny animal comics** or fantastic material where Brown fantasizes about toilet paper taking over the world or aliens with a gourmet interest in snot. It also includes everyday recollections of Brown's own life along with a strip where Brown discusses his work in depth with both his then girlfriend Kriss, Seth, and various others, following their advice and changing the comics accordingly. An enlightening look behind the scenes illustrates how Brown draws every panel on an individual piece of paper, thus enabling him to change the sequences around and edit out panels that do not work with the rest.

Rikke Platz Cortsen

BRUBAKER, ED (1966–). Born at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, Ed Brubaker began working in comics as a cartoonist, drawing and writing titles such as *Pajama Chronicles* (1987) and *Purgatory USA* (1987) for independent publishers Blackthorne Comics and Slave Labor Graphics. However, he is primarily known

for his work as a writer on titles such as ***Batman***, *Gotham Central*, and ***Catwoman*** for **DC**; and ***Captain America***, *The Uncanny* ***X-Men***, and ***Daredevil*** for **Marvel**. Additionally, Brubaker has put forth several moderately successful creator-owned titles, such *Sleeper* (2003–5), *Criminal* (2006–), and *Incognito* (2009). He has most frequently collaborated with artists Sean Phillips and Michael Lark.

In the early 1990s, Brubaker began working as a comic writer through regular contributions to **Dark Horse Comics**' series ***Dark Horse Presents***. One of these stories, the three-part novelette "An Accidental Death" (1992), garnered critical acclaim, earning Brubaker his first **Eisner Award** nomination (Best Writer/Artist Team) and helping to open the door to more mainstream work. Following that success, Brubaker's *At the Seams* (1997) was nominated for an Ignatz Award (Outstanding Graphic Novel or Collection) and showcases multiple narrators whose differing takes on a shared relationship work together to render a final story more developed than any one narrator's tale by itself.

These early successes led to steady work with DC Comics, with whom Brubaker signed an exclusive contract in 2000. Taking the helm of some of DC's mainstream superhero titles, he completed a nearly two-year run on *Batman* before teaming up with artist Darwin Cooke to revamp the Catwoman franchise. His writing on both of these titles showed Brubaker's love of film noir and pulp crime novels, and these elements in his work were popular enough with readers to merit the launch of *Gotham Central* (2003–6), a crime noir comic centered on the workings of the Gotham City Police Department.

By late 2004, Brubaker was no longer under an exclusive contract with DC and began working for Marvel Comics, where he signed an exclusive contract in 2005 that promised him regular work with the publisher while still allowing him to write *Sleeper* and *Gotham Central*. The author's work at Marvel has included a noteworthy run on *Captain America*, during which time Brubaker has **retcon**ned the death of Captain America's 1940's sidekick, James "Bucky" Barnes, who would eventually become the new Captain America after Steve Rogers was assassinated.

Brubaker's work on Captain America showcases one of the major recurring themes in his work: the mutability of characters' identities due to the uncertainty of their past. As Brubaker explained in an interview with *Newsarama*, the uncertainty of his characters' narratives can often be built around secrets from their past: "The secret buried in the past is one of my favorite plots to explore, because no matter how many times it's used, it's always different, because everyone's secrets are their own . . . I'm a sucker for stuff about characters reflecting on something from their past."

Outside of comics, Brubaker has also written scripts for films and video games. He currently lives with his wife Melanie in Seattle, Washington and maintains a Web site at http://www.edbrubaker.com/.

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Craig Crowder

BUDDHA. *Buddha* is a Japanese graphic novel first published in a *shonen* magazine marketed for male high-school students. Spanning between 1974 and 1984, *Buddha* was serialized in the magazine *Kibo-no-tomo*, which later changed to *Shonen World* and then to *Comic Tom*. The English version, specially packaged by designer Chip Kidd, was published in an eight-volume set between 2003 and 2005 by Vertical Publishing, New York. Volumes 1 (*Kapilavastu*) and 2 (*The Four Encounters*) won the 2004 **Eisner Award** for Best U.S. Edition of Foreign Material, volumes 3 (*Devadatta*) and 4 (*The Forest Of Uruvela*) won the same prize the next year, and volumes 5–8 (*Deer Park*, *Ananda*, *Prince Ajatasattu*, *Jetavana*) were nominated in the Best Archival Collection/Project category in 2006.

About 3,800 pages long, *Buddha* was penned by the "God of **Manga**," **Osamu Tezuka**, during the mature period of his career. Lore, legends, commonly accepted key events, and Buddhist scriptural texts taken from the Pali Canon are faithfully reported in a colossal account of the life of Buddha (i.e., the Enlightened One) most of whose historical existence remains unknown.

Born Prince Siddhartha, Buddha was presaged a great destiny. Bowing to pressure, he married a princess and fathered a son. He was shielded at all times from all unpleasant aspects of reality, knowing only of luxurious earthly pleasures that never succeeded in distracting him from pondering and questioning the cause of suffering and death. One day, he chanced across a Brahman who encouraged him to explore the four gates of a fort, symbolically standing for the four primary directions, whereupon he saw four determining signs of old age, disease, death, and a monk. Finally aware of the miserable reality of living, Siddhartha abandoned his worldly life as a prince, husband and father, and became a wandering monk in search of an answer to the cause of human suffering. After seven years of ascetic trial, Siddhartha's continual questioning of the Hindu extreme practice of self-mutilation led him to abandoning the physical ordeal which did not end suffering. He went on meditating and pondering on the meaning of life for many more years until he was awakened to the law of cause and effect. Becoming a true Buddha, he started to teach his discoveries to animals and people of all castes alike until he died at the age of 80.

In this biographical frame and socio-historical background, Tezuka inserts a good number of stock characters, both true and fictional, whose intricate involvements satisfy the entertainment need of the *shonen* readership. True to his "star system," Tezuka recasts some of his well-known characters in secondary roles. Saruta, a sturdy man with a huge spotted nose, who appears in every story, is now Kassapa, leader of a fire-worshipping sect; Duke Red, who first appeared in *Metropolis*, plays the role of Prince

Siddhartha's doctor. The historical king Bimbisara, whose appearance is that of the villain Rock Holmes without sunglasses, retains some of Holmes's psychological characteristics of fostering ambitions and rejecting love. More importantly, Tezuka casts one of his most recognizable and popular characters, Hosuke Sharaku, the little boy with terrible powers in *The Three-Eyed One*, in the role of Assaji, the apprentice monk, still with the bandage on his forehead that seals his third eye. While most historical characters are accurately figured, Tezuka's Assaji changes from the historical character, a noble who became one of the first five disciples of the Buddha, to a half-witted, snotty-nosed child born into a poor huntsman's family of 32 children. Tezuka also alters the historic meeting between Assaji and Sariputta by binding Assaji's ghost to Ananda who was commissioned by the Buddha to search for Sariputta.

The character creation and shift add significant narrative layers to the story; they also help support the more philosophical themes of the manga. Through the humorous Tatta, an untouchable street urchin, and the dramatic Chapra, a slave-born whose only dream is to break the bond, Tezuka not only paints an accurate portrait of Indian society at the Buddha's time, but one can also feel Tezuka's strong revulsion toward India's unjust caste system, which uses violence to oppress the poor and unfortunate. This cruel state of affairs is nevertheless counterbalanced by Tezuka's interpretation of Buddha's teachings on suffering and of his compassion for the suffering of the strong and the weak alike. Vicious characters such as Prince Ajatasattu and half-prince Devadatta are shown to suffer from loss of love just as much as Migaila, an outlaw and untouchable woman, suffers from an incurable illness until the Buddha, in his incommensurable compassion, sucks pus out of her open sores. This kind of compassion results from a true understanding of the sanctity, equality, and interconnectedness of all life forms, be it animal or human. The monk Naradatta is cursed to live like a beast because he unthinkingly causes the death of many animals in order to save one human life. Little Tatta has the special gift of getting into animals' minds, as the Buddha does to a person's soul. This interdependence is closely linked to the law of cause and effect, as shown in the downfall of the Kosalans or the condemnation of King Bimbisara at his own son's hands. It is usually said that Tezuka is not a Buddhist; he nonetheless shows deep knowledge of Buddhism with his introduction, albeit shortened and incomplete, of the most fundamental texts in the Pali Canon, the Three Cardinal Discourses, namely "The Setting Rolling of the Wheel of Truth," "Non-Self," and "The Fire Sermon."

Buddhist philosophical concepts are presented solemnly but in simple language; dramatic events are carefully balanced by hilarious details both in the text and in the drawing: common slapstick, totally unrelated and absurd images, and humorous comments on modern life in a story that took place more than 2,550 years ago. This approach, together with the representation of women in various degrees of nudity, offers shocking contrast with the seriousness of the subject matter, namely the life of a holy person. While the humor of anachronism lightens dark moments of Indian history and provides the necessary relief in a very long story, the nudity can certainly be deemed

irreverent but for the stylized drawing, which gives the female body an ethereal edge instead of conveying sexuality.

Strong and clear-cut narrative lines also give much room for various sub-stories and emotions to be fully built up. These are craftily paced by other narrative techniques—different panel shapes and page layouts, fast-moving flow, cinematic movements, boldface in dialogues and onomatopoeia, text, and drawing breaking out of the boundary of the frame, to name a few—that Tezuka invented at the beginning of his career.

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Nhu-Hoa Nguyen

BUSIEK, KURT (1960–). Born in Boston, Kurt Busiek grew up in suburban Massachusetts. An avid superhero fan as a young man, he had several letters appear in the pages of **Marvel's *The Avengers*** in the late 1970s. He did his first professional work on a back-up in ***Green Lantern*** #162 for **DC Comics**, cover-dated March 1983. However, his first major work was for Marvel, scripting *Power Man & Iron Fist* for 12 issues beginning with #90 (February 1983).

In 1985, Busiek wrote a *Red Tornado* miniseries for DC with artist Carmine Infantino. It was followed the next year by *The Legend of* ***Wonder Woman*** (promoted as the "last" story for the **Silver Age** Wonder Woman) with artist **Trina Robbins**. Over the next eight years, Busiek contributed to a variety of series, including Marvel's *Web of* ***Spider-Man***, **Dark Horse**'s *Army of Darkness*, and Eclipse's *The Liberty Project*.

Busiek reached a new level of acclaim and popularity when ***Marvels*** was released in 1994. Featuring painted artwork by **Alex Ross**, the four-issue miniseries looked at notable events in Marvel Comics history through the eyes of an average photographer. Busiek continued the theme of looking at **superheroes** from everyday perspectives in his creator-owned series with artist Brent Anderson, ***Astro City***. Published by Homage Comics beginning in 1995, the series follows an entire city, using superheroes, sidekicks, villains, and regular citizens as point-of-view characters. It has followed an irregular publication schedule due to Busiek's health issues.

In 1997, Homage also released Busiek's *The Wizard's Tale*, a high **fantasy** graphic novel. In 2000, he was one of the founders of the short-lived Gorilla Comics imprint—*ShockRockets*, his fighter-pilot miniseries with artist Stuart Immonen, was the only Gorilla project to reach completion. He returned to fantasy in 2003 for a run on Dark Horse Comics' ***Conan***. That same year, he penned *Arrowsmith*, a miniseries set in World War I on a world of magic, for DC's WildStorm imprint.

While pursuing these creator-owned endeavors, Busiek continued to write mainstream superhero comics. He began an acclaimed run on Marvel's *The Avengers* in 1998, initially with artist **George Pérez** and later talents such as **Alan Davis**. In addition to the regular series, he also wrote a 12-issue miniseries entitled *Avengers Forever*, starring

a time-displaced team and featuring art by *Arrowsmith*'s Carlos Pacheco. During this period, he also wrote ***Iron Man*** and created *The Thunderbolts*, a team of reformed super villains.

In 2001, Busiek returned to DC to create *The Power Company*, a team of heroes for hire. Two years later, he reunited with Pérez for the inter-company crossover miniseries ***JLA/Avengers***. Following an eight issue run on *JLA* the next year, Busiek signed an exclusive contract with DC in 2005.

That year, he began writing ***Superman*** and occasionally ***Action Comics***, initially in an eight-issue arc co-written with **Geoff Johns**. In 2006, he launched a new version of the undersea hero in *Sword of* ***Aquaman***. In 2008, he reunited with Thunderbolts collaborators Mark Bagley and **Fabian Nicieza** for *Trinity*, a 52-issue weekly series starring the company's signature characters Superman, **Batman**, and **Wonder Woman**.

Anthony Strand

BYRNE, JOHN (1950–). Born in the United Kingdom and raised in Canada before immigrating to the United States, artist and writer John Byrne has wielded considerable influence over American comic books, having contributed to virtually every major title involving **superheroes** during a career that has spanned four decades. Byrne broke into mainstream comics doing art for his "Rog-2000" back-up in *E-Man* (1975) and *Doomsday +1* (1975–79) for **Charlton Comics** Group. Shortly thereafter, **Marvel Comics** recruited him to take on art chores for *Marvel Premiere* (1975), *The Champions* (1977–78), and *Marvel Team-Up* (1977–79). On *Iron Fist* (1975–77) Byrne first paired with writer **Chris Claremont**, and the two would go on to produce one of the most highly regarded collaborations in modern mainstream comics for their run on ***X-Men*** (1977–81). Byrne co-plotted storylines such as "Dark Phoenix Saga" and "Days of Future Past," and created the Canadian super-heroes of ***Alpha Flight***. The foundation for the X-Men's decades-long domination of the comics' sales charts began on their watch.

Although Byrne has created his share of characters, including *Next Men*, *Danger Unlimited*, and *Babe* (all produced under **Dark Horse Comics'** Legends imprint in the early 1990s), his stated preference is to work with well-established concepts, demonstrating a particularly affinity for **Jack Kirby** creations. For example, Byrne presided as writer and artist over a five-year tenure on ***Fantastic Four*** (1981–86) that revitalized "The World's Greatest Comics Magazine" (including graduating the Invisible Girl to the Invisible Woman). Byrne also worked on Kirby co-creations such as ***Captain America*** and ***The Avengers*** for Marvel, and the Demon and the New Gods for **DC Comics**.

Byrne's ability to take familiar characters and reinvigorate them led to the highest-profile work of his career. In 1986 he led the reboot of the industry's central comic book superhero when DC recruited him to revamp **Superman**. Beginning in the ***Man of Steel*** miniseries and then continuing on into the regular monthly Superman titles, Byrne made several lasting alterations to Superman's origin and presided over the character's 50th anniversary celebration in 1988. A Byrne illustration even made the

cover of *Time* magazine when the venerable news weekly honored the milestone. Byrne would continue to refashion comics icons throughout his career, notably when Marvel assigned him to tweak the early adventures of a certain wall-crawler in ***Spider-Man***: *Chapter One* (1998–99).

Byrne has also produced memorable runs on ***Wonder Woman*** (1995–98), *Namor, the Sub-Mariner* (1990–92), and *The Sensational She-Hulk* (1989, 1991–93). In the latter, Byrne broke the proverbial fourth wall with dialogue, directly addressing readers for humorous effect. In addition to assignments such as *Legends* (1986–87), *X-Men: The Hidden Years* (1999–2001), and *Doom Patrol* (2004–6), among many others, Byrne has begun developing series for publisher IDW's Star Trek license.

Byrne has been at times an outspoken figure within the industry, particularly stirring controversy for his view of creators' rights, which expresses support for corporate interest in work-for-hire arrangements.

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Matthew J. Smith



CAGES. *Cages*, originally serialized between 1990 and 1996, and collected into a single volume in 1998, is an unusually dense and complex work of postmodern cartooning. Written and drawn by **Dave McKean**, *Cages* revolves around the lives of three artists—Leo Sabarske (painter), Angel (musician), and Jonathan Rush (novelist)—who happen to live in the same apartment building. The unnamed setting closely resembles areas of London, and the main theme has to do with the rewards and perils of creativity in the crowded metropolis. *Cages* was out of print for several years, but has recently been reissued in paperback by **Dark Horse Comics**. Praised by critics as one of the best comics of the 1990s, *Cages* provides an ambitious and haunting example of comics as a long form storytelling medium.

McKean is probably best known for his numerous collaborations with **Neil Gaiman**. He painted the covers for all 75 issues of the Vertigo series ***Sandman*** (1989–96), and designed and illustrated Gaiman's *Signal to Noise* (1992), *Mr. Punch* (1994), and *Violent Cases* (1994), as well as *Black Orchid* (1991). Gaiman and McKean have also worked together to create several well-regarded children's books, including *Coraline* (2003), *Wolves in the Walls* (2005), *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish* (1998), and *MirrorMask* (2005). Their most recent collaboration, *The Graveyard Book* (2008), reached the bestseller lists. A stop-motion animated 3-D version of *Coraline* was released in 2009, and McKean himself designed and directed the live action film version of *MirrorMask* that was produced by the Jim Henson Company and released in 2005. Although reviews were mixed, *Entertainment Weekly* gave *MirrorMask* an A-, reporting that the film was a "dazzling reverie of a kids-and-adults movie, an unusual collaboration between lord-of-the-cult multimedia artist Dave McKean and king-of-the-comics Neil Gaiman."

Cages runs to nearly 500 pages, and is McKean's longest solo work to date. The book offers an extended rumination on art and life, as well as a showcase for the artist's singular compositional skills and intense dreamscape imagery. The images are largely based on pen-and-ink drawings, but some of the pages feature ink-wash brushwork, airbrushed photography, and white-on-black woodcut-like illustrations. Much of the book is in black-and-white, with splashes of bluish-grey, but a few pages are saturated in reds, greens, and blues, to intriguing effect. While the bulk of the text consists of conversations between two or more people that take place within a tightly organized three-by-three grid pattern, the narrative occasionally dissolves into wordless imagery that often has a vaguely disorienting quality. At a few points the story gives way to menacing cityscapes or puzzling abstractions. Rather than insisting on the primacy of plot, McKean launches a full arsenal of visual firepower to force the reader to consider an emotional landscape that exists beyond the range of ordinary language. This is a book that is meant to evoke raw feelings as much as to tell any particular kind of story.

There is a particularly impressive example of McKean's manipulation and re-conceptualization of narrative about one-third of the way into the book, when the painter, Leo Sabarske, gets into a deep conversation with Karen, an attractive neighbor he was introduced to by Angel, the musician. "God, I could talk all night about my painting," Leo says, as they sip wine in a local jazz club. For the next 12 pages the dialogue is placed on hold as the music pulls them out of their cages and into a swirl of abstract figuration, musical notes, and wine glasses. In certain respects, *Cages* could be described as the love story of Leo and Karen, except that for whole chunks of the text their story takes a backstage to other dramas and conflicts. Apart from playing the saxophone and piano, Angel spends quite a few pages trying to find a rock with a specific inner vibration, one with the power to change history. Furthermore, the writer character Jonathan Rush has his own problems, namely thuggish literary critics who want to string him up for something he wrote in his last novel. This is very much London from an insider's perspective, with a local's sense of pride combined with an awareness of just how miserable life can be in a densely populated conurbation.

Perhaps the most affecting sequence involves a bit player, Edie, who talks to herself and her parrot as she waits for the husband who left five years earlier. "Kaw! Bill's not home yet," screeches the bird, as Edie's face liquefies into mute despair. Further into her monologue, the parrot relentlessly mocks her: "Bill's not home yesterday. Bill's not home day before yesterday. Bill's not home last week. How long since he came home?" The question mark in this last sentence is stranded outside the grid system, as if the world itself is asking the question. "Never even said goodbye—and you know why? He was bored shitless!" Undoubtedly she is only imagining the words coming out of the parrot's beak, but it is nevertheless difficult to think of a crueler pet in the history of comics. Abandoned in middle age, it seems likely that Edie will spend at least a couple of more decades talking to herself and burning things on the stove. The fact that Leo and Karen reach a state of ecstasy in the closing pages of *Cages* does not really offer much of a happy ending for poor Edie. McKean sympathizes with his characters, but he does not

always stack the deck in their favor. This landmark solo project offers a procession of memorable and sometimes startling images. Its portrayal of lonely Londoners is a case study in what works and does not work about modern cities. It is also an Olympian undertaking; it views its protagonists from the detached perspective of the mountaintop.

Kent Worcester

CAMPBELL, EDDIE (1955–). Eddie Campbell was born in Scotland and moved to Australia in 1986. Best known as the illustrator for **Alan Moore's *From Hell***, Campbell has been an active comic book artist, writer, and self-publisher for nearly three decades, producing a distinctive style in his stories and art that continue to evolve. Inspired by his friend, **Dave Sim**, Campbell decided to self-publish, and in 1995, he formed Eddie Campbell Comics, which collected and published the majority of his works in addition to the collected *From Hell* books. The company lasted until 2003 whereupon Campbell began publishing his back catalog with Top Shelf Productions and new work with First Second Books.

Campbell's earliest works are autobiographical, and he continues to explore this form of comics to the present day. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Campbell wrote and drew a series of semi-autobiographical comics about his alter-ego, Alec McGarry. He photocopied and distributed these pamphlets and became a key figure at the beginning of the small-press scene in Britain. He later chronicled these events in his book, *Alec: How to Be an Artist* (Top Shelf Productions, 2001). Campbell published shorter Alec stories in a variety of places, some of which are serialized in his *Bacchus* books.

Initially titled *Deadface* and published by the British company Harrier Comics (reprinted by **Dark Horse Comics** in 1990, which also commissioned new stories), *Bacchus* appeared from 1986–99, for a total of 60 issues. The main character, Bacchus, is the Roman god of wine, and the series chronicles a modern mythological tale. Dave Sim's titular character, **Cerebus**, shows up in *Bacchus* issue #1 as an independent "cross-over."

Despite Campbell's long publishing career, it was not until he started to work with Moore on *From Hell* that he achieved international recognition. Campbell drew the story, which was initially serialized in Steve Bissette's *Taboo* anthology, from 1991 to 1996, with "Dance of the Gull Catchers" appearing in 1998. Campbell's rough, black-and-white art depicting the grime and poverty of Victorian England suited Moore's obsessively researched story about Jack the Ripper. For his work on *From Hell*, Campbell won a **Harvey Award** in 1995 (Best Continuing or Limited Series), and two **Eisner Awards**: in 1993 (Best Serialized Story) and in 2000 (Best Graphic Album: Reprint).

In 2006 Campbell published his next autobiographical book, *The Fate of the Artist* (First Second Books), a detective story in which Campbell searches for the reason for his own disappearance. Ultimately, the story becomes a meditation of what it means to produce (or not to produce) art. In this work, as with others, Campbell plays with the form of comics with a postmodern sensibility in disrupting linear narrative both visually and textually. For example, he inserts a sequence of real photos of his daughter

being interviewed about his disappearance which, when juxtaposed with his trademark scratchy pen-and-ink drawings, seem all the more startling. He also intersperses a comic book strip called the "Honeybee" that further questions the role of the author in this text. This book marks one of his first forays into using color after being primarily a black-and-white artist (although he did use color for his final *Bacchus* story with Dark Horse Comics in 1995). He would continue to experiment with form and color in his next two graphic novels, both published by First Second: *The Black Diamond Detective Agency* (2007) and *The Amazing Remarkable Monsieur Leotard* (co-written with Dan Best, 2008).

Though primarily an independent writer and artist, Campbell did some work for **DC** by writing a story arc for ***Hellblazer*** (issues #85–88) and drew a one-shot ***Batman:*** The Order of the Beasts in 2004.

Wendy Goldberg

CAPTAIN AMERICA. Created by **Joe Simon** and **Jack Kirby** in early 1941, Captain America was a superhuman embodiment of American strength and valor who carried the banner of American patriotism in World War II. Indeed, though he has enjoyed a long career in the comics, the character remains most important as a propagandistic vehicle of patriotism in the 1940s. *Captain America* #1 featured Cap punching out Hitler, and continual story lines featured Cap and his teenaged side kick James Buchanan "Bucky" Barnes beating on **Nazis**, Japanese soldiers and spies, or common criminals. However, Captain America continued to appear long after the war, eventually becoming one of the longest lasting and most prominent characters in the stable of **Marvel Comics**.

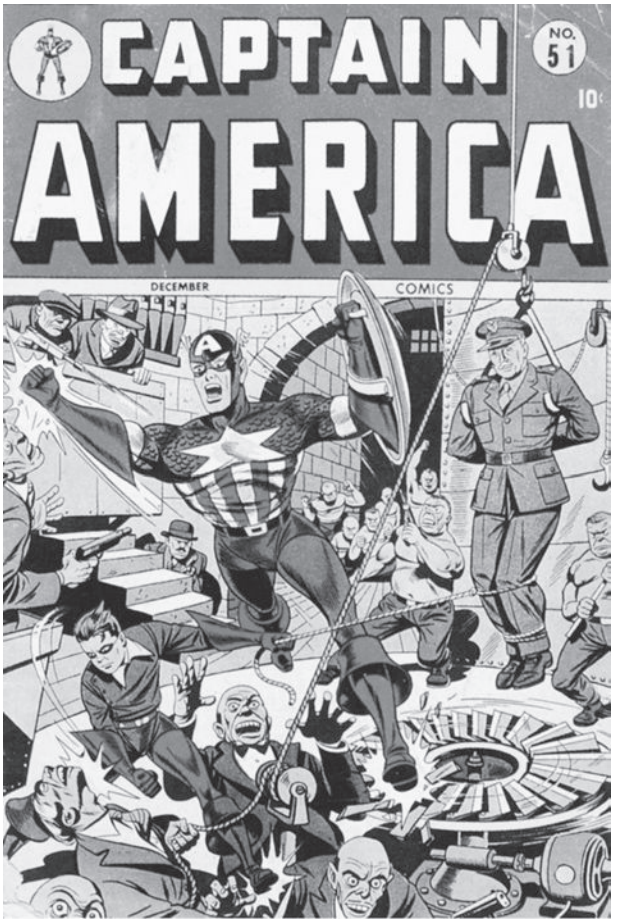
The story of Captain America is one of the success of science. Steve Rogers begins as a sickly orphan who, after seeing a newsreel of the horrors committed by the Nazis in Europe, wanted to join the U.S. army. After he is rejected at an induction center for health reasons, he is approached by an Army officer who asks if Steve still wants to serve his country. He agrees and the next day is brought to a secret lab, where Dr. Reinstein (later changed to Dr. Erskine) injects him with a super soldier serum. This serum causes Steve's body to become the epitome of physical strength and agility. Before the serum can be used on other subjects, the Nazis succeed in killing Dr. Erskine. Thus Rogers, who becomes Captain America, is the only product of the super-soldier project. One night following his patrols, Cap/Steve is discovered by Bucky Barnes, the camp mascot, and the two enter to an agreement to fight all who oppose democracy.

While Simon and Kirby were the creators of Captain America, their direct role in the comic was limited. They only executed the first 10 issues and then were replaced by others, including **Stan Lee**, who wrote some of the story lines. Cap's foes were often genetically enhanced or manipulated. Perhaps the most fearsome (and popular) foe was the Red Skull. Originally the Red Skull was an industrialist named Maxon, but later the story was changed so that the Skull was a Nazi who rose like Hitler.

Cap did not use firearms, nor would he necessarily kill an opponent. This was not the case with Bucky, who at one point shoots a fleeing Japanese soldier in the back with a rifle. The idea of fighting with honor was one that Captain America would push. It was

an unstated idea that he would not fight "dirty" like the enemies of America. The Captain America concept was an instant success, and inspired numerous imitations. However, Captain America was not the first patriotically themed superhero. For example, The Shield, from Pep Comics, preceded Cap by almost a year. In fact, a law suit was barely avoided when Kirby changed Cap's original diamond-shaped shield to an oval one in issue #2 in order to avoid comparisons to The Shield character.

Following World War II, the popularity of Cap (and many other **superheroes**) faltered, though his close connection to World War II was a special factor in his postwar decline. Captain America was thus "retired," but was later brought out to fight communists during the peak years of the **Cold War**. The fortuitously-tinted Red Skull was changed to be a communist enemy, and Bucky was killed off.



Captain America, issue #51, published in December 1945. Marvel Comics/Photofest

Though briefly revived in 1953–54, Captain America did not make a full-scale return until 1964. A storyline was introduced in which Captain America had attempted to destroy a Nazi rocket at the end of the war. Bucky was killed in the blast, and Cap fell into the Arctic waters where he was entombed in ice. Discovered by the Submariner, he is revived from suspended animation and returns to crime fighting. His attitude towards the world around him was somewhat simplistic when compared to others, both on his own and as a member (and leader) of **The Avengers**. His tendency to see the world in stark terms of good vs. evil was seen by some as a weakness, and other characters sometimes referred to Cap as an overgrown Boy Scout.

Since the late 1960s, Cap has undertaken several different life changes. He became a graphic artist (in the 1950s he was a teacher), tried to live a life of normalcy, and was romantically involved with Bernice "Bernie" Rosenthal. He was touted as a possible presidential candidate in the 1970s. He also worked with several different partners including the Falcon, Hawkeye, and a new Bucky.

In the 1990s, Cap took on a different attitude and physical appearance. He became almost grotesque in stature, as muscles seemed to abound from every surface. He also went through a spiritual crisis of sorts as he dealt with corruption in government, as well as his role as a positive symbol of democracy as opposed to negative role models like the CIA. Steve Rogers even gave up the role of Captain America, as he sought out a greater meaning as the Nomad. During that time, John Walker briefly took up the mantle of Captain America, and later changed to become another superhero, U.S. Agent.

Cap's status as a symbol of America has always been at the core of his existence, though Captain America has been used as a pop culture icon for both patriotic and derisive purposes. In Marvel's ***Civil War*** series of 2006, Captain America actually goes against the government of the United States, as he feels that the Superhero Registration Act would hinder those trying to help society. After leading an underground resistance group, which leads to further fighting (and to his arrest), he realizes that average people are paying the price for the bickering among superheroes. As he is being arraigned in court, he is assassinated. His "death"—and subsequent replacement by the more violent Bucky—provoked considerable commentary by political pundits, pop culturists, and the public in general. Even Joe Simon, one of the creators, noted that Captain America was and is an icon, and argued that his death was a blow to American society.

Cord Scott

CAPTAIN MARVEL. Introduced in early 1940 in *Whiz Comics* #2 from Fawcett Comics, Captain Marvel immediately captured the imaginations of millions of children and soon outsold every superhero, including **Superman**, during the **Golden Age** of comics. The character was the creation of Bill Parker (writer) and Charles Clarence Beck (artist). Parker's initial concept was to develop a team of six heroes, each with their own mighty power. Publisher Ralph Daigh rejected that premise as unwieldy, so Parker folded his six heroes into one being, Captain Thunder. The name was changed to Captain Marvel prior to publication because of trademark issues. Beck, who employed a cartoony and charming style, modeled the hero's appearance after Fred MacMurray, a popular film star of the era. Captain Marvel's bright red costume was emblazoned with a large lightning bolt insignia on the chest and included a white-collared cape with gold flower symbols that was held around his neck by a gold cord. This design was inspired by Beck's recent illustrations on a story about the operetta "The Student Prince." Captain Marvel's success led to a vast line of comics, merchandise, a movie serial, and a popular cast of supporting characters that further increased the hero's appeal. This success ultimately led to a decade-long lawsuit filed by the owners of the Superman franchise that doomed the Marvel franchise.

Captain Marvel's origin begins as Billy Batson, an orphaned newsboy, is summoned by a mysterious figure into a subway station. A strange subway car transports him to a subterranean cavern where he encounters a grotesque series of statues symbolizing the seven deadly sins. He approaches an elderly wizard on a marble throne who informs the boy that he has been chosen to be his successor in the fight against evil. All Billy has

to do is speak the Wizard's name, Shazam, which is an acronym for six biblical and mythological characters: Solomon, Hercules, Atlas, Zeus, Achilles, and Mercury, and he will be granted the heroes' abilities and transformed into a muscular adult. To return to the form of Billy Batson, Captain Marvel must repeat the magic word and is changed back in a flash of lightning. Billy soon thereafter found employment as a radio reporter. Captain Marvel's success was immediate as young comics readers favorably responded to the adventures of the resourceful boy who could instantly transform into the jovial, sometimes naïve, adult hero. When Bill Parker left for the army, Beck was teamed with Otto Binder, a **science fiction** author. The pair continued their partnership, producing stories of "The World's Mightiest Mortal" for the next 12 years.



John Davey as Captain Marvel and Michael Gray as Billy Batson, in the CBS television series *Shazam!/Isis Hour*, (1976–1977). CBS/Photofest

Unlike the more serious and science fiction-based *Superman* comics, the tone of Captain Marvel's adventures was more lighthearted and innocent. In many ways they were like fairy tales in which anything could happen. The demand for Captain Marvel was so great in the early 1940s that Fawcett introduced numerous allies, who collectively came to be known as the "Marvel Family," to assist the captain. In *Whiz Comics* #25 (1941), crippled teenager Freddy Freeman was given some of Captain Marvel's powers after he was mortally wounded by a villain's attack. Whenever he said "Captain Marvel" the boy became the teen superhero Captain Marvel, Jr. who wore a blue version of the Marvel costume. *Captain Marvel Adventures* #18 (1942) saw the debut of Mary Bromfield, Billy Batson's long-lost twin sister. She discovered she shared Billy's magical ability and became known as the teenage superheroine Mary Marvel when she uttered the magic word. Mary's appearance was based on that of singer Judy Garland. By 1943 the trio was so popular that the combined sales of their various comic book titles were almost three million copies a month. In 1945, Captain Marvel's solo title was selling 1.3 million copies per issue, making him the most successful superhero on newsstands. Other additions to the Marvel Family followed, such as the stalwart Lieutenants

Marvel, Uncle Dudley Marvel (a loveable con man without powers based on comedian W. C. Fields), Mr. Talky Tawny (a talking tiger), and Hoppy, the Marvel Bunny!

Captain Marvel also came to be opposed by a rogue's gallery of recurring villains. They included Captain Nazi, Black Adam (Captain Marvel's evil doppelganger), King Kull, Ibac, and the robotic Mr. Atom. Captain Marvel's two most infamous foes were Dr. Thaddeus Bodog Sivana, a creepy bald mad scientist with thick eyeglasses, and Mr. Mind, "the World's Wickedest Worm." Sivana continually battled Captain Marvel (whom he nicknamed "the Big Red Cheese") in his attempts at world conquest. He was often assisted in his schemes by his two homely adult children, son Sivana Jr. and daughter Georgina. His other two more attractive children, son Magnificus and daughter Beautia, were not villainously inclined. Mr. Mind was introduced in a 25 chapter serial known as "The Monster Society of Evil." Beginning in *Captain Marvel Adventures* #23 (1943), Mr. Mind recruits Captain Marvel's greatest adversaries as he attempts to destroy Earth, thus forming the first supervillain team in comics.

While Captain Marvel vanquished his foes in the comics pages, he lost his greatest battle in the courtroom. National Comics, publisher of *Superman*, sued Fawcett for copyright infringement. The legal proceedings continued for more than a decade as National claimed that Captain Marvel's appearance, extraordinary strength, ability to fly, and bald arch villain were too similar to the ***Man of Steel***. In 1953, Fawcett settled out of court and discontinued the entire Marvel franchise. Ironically, in 1972 National (now known as **DC Comics**) acquired the rights to Captain Marvel and introduced him to a new generation of readers. Attempts to fully integrate the whimsical Marvel franchise into the darker, grittier superhero environment of recent decades have not always proved successful. Two of the best are Jeff Smith's 2007 miniseries *Shazam! The Monster Society of Evil* and Mike Kunkel's *Billy Batson and the Magic of Shazam!*, which premiered in 2008 for DC's Johnny DC line of youth-oriented comics.

Captain Marvel has also had a strong presence in other media. He was the first superhero to be depicted on film when Tim Tyler portrayed the hero in *The Adventures of Captain Marvel* (1941), a popular 12-part film serial. From 1974 to 1977, Filmation produced a live action Saturday morning television series which featured Michael Gray as Billy and Jackson Bostwick and later John Davey as Captain Marvel. Filmation revived the hero in 1981 for the *Kid Superpower Hour with Shazam!*, an animated series employing 1940s Marvel Family style. Although Captain Marvel may not be the sales leader he was in the 1940s, the character remains a comic book icon.

Charles Coletta

CASPER THE FRIENDLY GHOST. Casper was a children's comic book character created for the Harvey Company, a second-tier comic book company with few **superhero** comics. Its children's properties flourished in the 1950s, after the imposition of the **Comics Code** limited the number and kinds of comic book titles that could be successfully marketed. Besides Casper, other successful Harvey children's characters included "Hot Stuff the Little Devil"; Little Lotta, a heavyset female child; Polka Dot, a grade

school-age girl; and **Richie Rich**, the poor little rich boy. Casper had a relatively simple backstory, as the ghost of a child. This origin, which could have upset younger readers, disappeared relatively quickly from the comics. The comic book stories generally followed a similar pattern. Casper was a lonely ghost who wished to befriend living humans, usually children. After their initial fright, Casper would usually win over the human characters, often by saving them from some danger. The appeal of the series combined a child's love of the supernatural with the feelings of being an outcast and misunderstood, feelings which are overcome through friendship, a very appealing trope for grade school-age readers. The character was adapted into theatrical animated cartoons by the Fleischer Studio in the 1940s. Although the studio had done one of the finest comic book character adaptations in history, the **Superman** cartoons, the Casper cartoons were relatively inoffensive programmers, appealing, and forgettable. As the field of comic books for children contracted in the 1970s, the Harvey Company ceased publishing comics except for a small line of reprints for the collectors' market. Eventually, rights to the character of Casper were sold to a Hollywood intellectual property holding company, paving the way for the big-budget (but largely forgettable) film of 1995.



Casper the Friendly Ghost with his magic hat. Harvey Famous Cartoons/Paramount Pictures/Photofest

Christopher Couch

CASTLE WAITING. Linda Medley's *Castle Waiting* not only presents an ongoing saga steeped in reworked folklore but also offers insight into its publishing history from the creator's perspective. Published by Medley's own Olio Press with the help of a Xeric Grant, *Castle Waiting* first appeared as a graphic novel (subtitled *The Curse of Brambly Hedge*) that quickly sold out its first printing in 1996 and was revised and reprinted in 1999. The second edition includes additional material aimed at younger readers as well as letterer Todd Klein's suggestions on children's books collected from the seven individual issues of a *Castle Waiting* series published by Olio in 1997 and 1998. Medley credits **Mike Mignola** with encouraging her not only to self-publish but to do so with a

stand-alone title to test the market (Guilbert). *The Curse of Brambly Hedge* heralds the individual issues of *Castle Waiting*, which continue the story of the famous castle and its inhabitants left behind once the former sleeping princess moves out of the castle (and story) to her new kingdom.

Characters in the graphic novel and series include both animals and humans, interacting without concern. *The Curse of Brambly Hedge* begins in a peaceful kingdom where there is unhappiness because the queen wishes for a child and follows the traditional pattern of the Brothers Grimm's *Sleeping Beauty*. Chapter Three begins a century later. The right prince arrives, manages the hedge, and kisses the princess awake. She leaves the castle and the people without a word and the people just stand there open-mouthed (for four panels). The scene switches to some of the same faces, visibly aged, who are telling this tale to Mr. Adjunct, who has come to govern the castle. His name is Rackham and he is a stork, based on the illustrator Arthur Rackham, who often depicted himself as a stork (de Vos 318). The continuing story of the inhabitants of the castle, including Rackham and Lady Jain (who is seeking refuge with her unborn child), is told in subsequent issues published in starts and stops since the second edition of *The Curse of Brambly Hedge*.

In 1999, Medley published a hiatus issue explaining her rationale for suspending publication after the first seven issues, providing information on the overall structure of the saga. She explains that the story is told in four major story arcs with *The Curse of the Brambly Hedge* providing a prologue to the remaining stories surrounding the major characters of the castle and focusing on Jain and Pindar, her child. There is a 30-year span from Jain's arrival at the castle to the planned epilogue which would unite all of the back stories. The graphic novel *Castle Waiting: The Lucky Road*, published by Jeff Smith's Cartoon Books, collects issues #1–7 published by Olio without the additional material provided in the "Stewpot" addendums provided by Medley and Klein.

Castle Waiting also returned for four individual issues published by Cartoon Books. This partial story arc, "Solicitine," is picked up again by Medley under Olio in the next three issues before returning to the main story line in the remaining two issues of this run. There was much criticism in reviews for Medley's story of the bearded nun and Medley herself was displeased; it was presented out of context because of her new relationship with Cartoon Books who "wanted a whole new storyline to start the series with a number one so they wanted me to wedge it into the one I was working on. I ended up moving that up in the timeline of the whole book, which I wish I hadn't done. I wish I had it in the right sequence because it falls right in the middle of a story that's already happening" (Epstein).

When Medley reluctantly allowed **Fantagraphics** to enter the scene several years later, they gathered the previously published material from *The Curse of the Brambly Hedge* and *The Lucky Road* with an introduction from author Jane Yolen to produce a handsome hardcover graphic novel simply titled *Castle Waiting*. Fantagraphics has also continued to publish Medley's serial presentation of the story, beginning with issue #1 containing the two final stories from the Olio run and a new story written to begin

the new story arc. They have published 15 issues to date, all written and illustrated by Medley and lettered by Klein. Fantagraphics has also released a "handmade" special edition of *Castle Waiting* that includes full-color chapter-divider plates, gilded page edges, an original dust jacket with brass protective corners, a special library card, and an original sketch and signature by Medley. This collector's item retails for $150.00 and is available through the publisher's Web site.

Often compared to the work of Rackham, William Heath Robinson and Kay Nielsen, Medley's black and white illustrations resemble medieval woodblocks and linocuts of the 1930s with her strong clean lines and hard-edged lines. Her drawings are crisp, detailed and animated, filled with humor and expressive details of both characters and setting. *Castle Waiting* is strongly character driven, blending elements from folklore to tell the story of the everyday lives of the characters and astutely chronicling the history of a community, with a great sense of fun and insight into human nature. Medley states that "on a deeper level the whole saga is really an allegory of death and rebirth, although you do not need to be aware of that to understand or appreciate the story" (Atchison). In her article on *Castle Waiting*, Rachel Hartman explores the function of home in the series.

Medley was nominated for an **Eisner Award** in 1997 for "Best Graphic Album-New" and won two Eisners in 1998 for "Best New Series" and "Talent Deserving of Wider Recognition." Klein has won Eisners for lettering in 1998, 1999, 2002, and 2003, with reference to *Castle Waiting*. Medley has received numerous nominations over the years for Lulu of the Year for this title as well.

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Gail de Vos

CATWOMAN. Since her introduction in ***Batman*** #1 (1940), Catwoman has remained one of the most alluring and notorious female characters in comics. The "Princess of Plunder" was the brainchild of Bill Finger (writer) and **Bob Kane** (artist). Their

intention was to devise a villainess with great sex appeal who could be a romantic interest for Batman. Originally a jewel thief who wore various disguises rather than a costume, Catwoman was immediately attracted to the Caped Crusader and conducted a friendly rivalry with the hero, who continued in his attempts to reform her. Bob Kane commented that the villainess was designed to intrigue both boys and girls. He stated, "We felt that she would appeal to the female readers and they would relate to her as much as Batman. We also thought that the male readers would appreciate a sensual woman to look at. So, she was put into the strip for both the boys and the girls, as a female counterpart to Batman" (107–8).

It took several issues for Catwoman's character to be fully formed. In her first confrontation with Batman and Robin she was a cat burglar known as "the Cat" and was plotting to steal a priceless emerald necklace from a wealthy cruise ship passenger. Modeled after Hollywood actress Hedy Lamarr, she frequently employed aliases and disguises to aid in her crimes. Several of her appearances during the 1940s depicted her as wearing a cat's-head mask that covered her entire head. By 1946, Catwoman began wearing a cat-eared cowl, purple dress, and green cape. Her wardrobe has often been altered and updated over the decades. The mid-1940s also saw stories increasingly revolving around the villainess's preoccupation with feline-themed crimes and accessories. She drove a customized "kitty car," "catplane," and "catboat." Her secret lair, known as the "cat-acombes" was home to numerous pet cats. Catwoman's signature weapon was her "cat-o'-nine-tails" whip. In more recent years she has been portrayed



Michelle Pfeiffer as Catwoman, and Michael Keaton as Batman, in the 1992 film *Batman Returns*, directed by Tim Burton. Warner Brothers/Photofest

as a formidable fighter with expertise in various martial arts. Unlike many of the more psychotic criminals of Gotham City, Catwoman is opposed to killing and at times has appeared ambivalent about her illegal behavior.

Batman and Catwoman have had an intensely complicated relationship dating back to their initial encounter in 1940. The two appeared immediately smitten despite their standing on opposite sides of the law. In that first story from *Batman* #1 Catwoman seductively propositions the hero to join her so that they might become the "king and queen of crime." While Batman rejects her overture, he deliberately allows her to escape from his custody. That story ends with Batman commenting on his new adversary when he says, "Lovely girl! What eyes! Say—mustn't forget I've got a girl named Julie [Madison]—Oh well, she still had lovely eyes! Maybe I'll bump into her again sometime . . ." Subsequent adventures would routinely showcase the pair's undeniable attraction for each other.

It was not until 1950 that the villainess's origin was revealed in "The Secret Life of Catwoman" in *Batman* #62. While attempting to save Batman's life, Catwoman is knocked unconscious. She soon awakens but has no memory of her criminal career. The Dynamic Duo learns that their longtime nemesis is actually Selina Kyle, a former stewardess who suffered a head injury in an airplane crash and subsequently became a thief. She joins the heroes in apprehending a former criminal associate and is later pardoned for her earlier misdeeds. Later stories showed her as the proprietor of a pet shop specializing in cats. However, she returned to her life of crime in ***Detective Comics*** #203 and #211. Catwoman then disappeared from comics for more than a decade. She was finally revived in ***Superman's*** *Girl Friend, Lois Lane* #70 (1966). She made infrequent comic book appearances during the 1970s and finally reemerged to greater prominence in the 1980s. Her origin story was revised several times during this period, most significantly in *Batman: Year One* (1987) by **Frank Miller**, who depicts Selina Kyle as a cat-loving prostitute and dominatrix caring for a young teen runaway. In 1993, her continued popularity led **DC Comics** to publish *Catwoman*, an ongoing series depicting Selina Kyle as an international thief with an ambiguous moral code. In 2001, a new *Catwoman* series was launched that showcased Kyle as both a cat burglar and the protector of Gotham's East End. In 2006, Kyle gave birth to a daughter named Helena. This was a nod to a series of 1970s and 1980s stories that took place on a parallel earth where Selina reformed from crime and went on to marry Bruce Wayne. The couple eventually had a daughter named Helena, who grew up to become a crimefighter known as the Huntress. The character was also used to great effect in recent years by Darwyn Cooke in the 2002 graphic novel *Catwoman: Selina's Big Score* and by **Jeph Loeb** and **Tim Sale** in the miniseries *Catwoman: When in Rome* (2004).

Catwoman has been featured in most media adaptations relating to Batman. Julie Newmar captivated audiences of the 1960s *Batman* television series as she stealthily enticed Adam West's Caped Crusader while wearing a skintight black cat-suit. Later episodes featured African American singer and actress Eartha Kitt as a more menacing version of the criminal. Her casting was considered daring during the racially

charged era. Former Miss America Lee Meriwether portrayed Catwoman in the motion picture spin-off of the series in 1966. In 1992, Michelle Pfeiffer played the character in Tim Burton's *Batman Returns*. Catwoman's origin was again altered for the film as Selina Kyle was introduced as a mousy secretary who is restored to life by alley cats after she is pushed from a window by her evil boss. Halle Berry took on the role in 2004's feature film *Catwoman*. The film, which was a notorious flop, had little connection to the comic book character. Berry played Patience Phillips, who gained her powers from the Egyptian cat goddess Bastet. Neither Batman nor Gotham City is mentioned in the film.

Catwoman's unique mixture of sex appeal and criminal cunning has made her one of the most recognizable characters in popular culture. She is the comics' ultimate femme fatale as she continues to fascinate both Batman and his legion of readers.

Selected Bibliography: Kane, Bob. *Batman & Me: An Autobiography*. Forestville, CA: Eclipse Books, 1989.

Charles Coletta

CEREBUS THE AARDVARK. Created by **Dave Sim** and published by his own publishing imprint, Aardvark-Vanaheim, continuously from 1977 to 2004, *Cerebus the Aardvark* details the adventures of its title character in the fictional world of Estarcion. Early issues of *Cerebus* are a humorous parody of various **Marvel Comics** titles of the time, including ***Conan the Barbarian***. As the series progressed, the tone of the book evolved to become a vehicle for Sim's philosophical explorations. At times controversial and challenging, the series has influenced a generation of comics creators. With issue #65, and until the end of the 300-issue run, Sim recruited Canadian artist Gerhard for assistance with artistic elements, including background artwork.

Cerebus is a short, grey, sword-wielding aardvark wearing a black vest and medallion necklace. He is known for his boorish behavior that stems from his personal history as a roving warrior. As a result, Cerebus acts inappropriately when confronted with polite society and is flawed when dealing with emotional intimacy. Cerebus's adventures have placed him in important positions such as the Prime Minister of Palnu (a fictional city-state) and the Pope of the Eastern Church of Tarim. Significant portions of the central storylines involve Cerebus's relationship with a blonde dancer named Jaka Tavers. The two first meet early in the series, and they encounter each other a number of times. Their relationship verges on romance, although the two never enjoy a fulfilling relationship with each other. The two angrily part ways permanently late in the series, even as Sim was dealing with personal controversy coming from the opinions he espoused in *Cerebus*.

Sim also took satirical liberties with familiar characters and historical figures, which he would incorporate within the storyline. For example, two early recurring characters include Elrod of Melvinbone, an albino with an accent resembling Foghorn Leghorn from *Looney Tunes*, who is a parody of Michael Moorcock's popular hero Elric of Melnibone, and Lord Julius, the Lord and chief bureaucrat of the city-state of Palnu,

who is depicted in a style reminiscent of Groucho Marx in the film *Duck Soup*. Another of Sim's recurring characters, the Cockroach, would often take on recognized superhero personae, such as the Moon Roach (Marvel's Moon Knight), Swoon (Vertigo Comics' **Sandman**), Wolverroach (Marvel's Wolverine) and others. Other celebrities and historical figures in *Cerebus* include F. Stop Kennedy (F. Scott Fitzgerald), the Three Stooges as acolytes for Cerebus's church late in the series, and Paul "Coffee" Annan, a character whose name refers both to Kofi Annan, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Paul Coffey, retired hall of fame National Hockey League player.

All 300 issues of *Cerebus the Aardvark* were published in comic book form, although some issues were double issues. *Cerebus* played an important role in establishing the direct market form of comic book distribution, where comics were distributed directly to specialty shops instead of obtained for resale by comic shops after being purchased new from newsstands and magazine racks. *Cerebus*, as an independent, black-and-white comic book, was unsuited to mass-market newsstand distribution, but was of interest to readers who were fans of mainstream comics. Sim republished the early issues of *Cerebus* in collected form, first with new and bonus content in the slim *Swords of Cerebus* volumes, and later in thick, squarebound trade paperbacks affectionately referred to as phonebooks, some of which extend to several hundred compiled pages. Since 2004, the full run of *Cerebus* has been compiled into 16 phonebook volumes.

The participation of collaborator artist Gerhard signified an important artistic development for the series. Prior to Gerhard's artistic participation, Sim's art often featured characters contrasted against blank or otherwise rudimentary backgrounds. Gerhard's art added a lush, illustrative quality to Sim's stories, influencing Sim artistically and noticeably improving the series' artistic reputation. Sim recognized Gerhard's artistic input by sharing both the legal rights to *Cerebus the Aardvark* and ownership of Aardvark-Vanaheim. Sim has since bought back Gerhard's half of these rights, and has publicly stated that after his death, he intends to release *Cerebus the Aardvark* into the public domain.

Cerebus has at times seen controversy. Throughout the first half of the series, Sim positions Cerebus against the Cirinists, a fascist group of women focused on the virtues of matriarchy. At the beginning of his "Mothers & Daughters" storyline, it was implied that Cerebus and the Cirinists would come to some extended, dramatic conflict. Instead, Sim took the book in an unusual and experimental direction, including an extended period, collected in the volume *Reads*, in which the *Cerebus* comic book switched to a primarily text format. Many of the readers who had become fans of the series during its peak in circulation lost interest in the book, as they were unable to connect the semi-autobiographical content to the preceding comics' **fantasy** narrative. After "Mothers & Daughters," Sim focused more heavily on themes of **religion** and the role of women in society. By the publication of *Cerebus* #265 in 2001, Sim was involved in several controversies regarding his opinions about women, centering around his rejection of **feminism.** Some readers thought then, and continue to think, that Sim espouses misogyny. However, rightly or wrongly, Sim is careful to reject such accusations. Sim

composed the essay "Tangents," a multi-part discourse on his thoughts about women, to be published in the backmatter of *Cerebus* #265, an essay that has since been republished on the Web site of *The Comics Journal*. These controversies resulted in alienating Sim from the creative community he had once been at the center of, including his proofreader, respected comics editor Diana Schutz. Sim published the last few issues and collections of *Cerebus* largely without fanfare, although many fans and readers have continued their interest in Sim's work.

Regardless of its flaws, *Cerebus the Aardvark* remains Dave Sim's masterwork, which he brags is the longest sustained narrative in human history.

Robert O'Nale

CHARLTON COMICS. Charlton Publications added comic books to its line-up in the mid-1940s as a way to keep the expensive printing presses from sitting idle in-between runs of much more profitable magazines, such as *Hit Parader* and *Song Hits*. *Yellowjacket Comics*, an anthology of **superhero** and adventure tales, was published under the Frank Comunale Publishing imprint in 1944 and *Zoo Funnies* appeared as a children's comics publication in 1945. By the following year, the Charlton Comics, Inc., name was in place. **Funny animal**, **Western**, and **romance** books were the core of Charlton's early comics publishing efforts, but they also followed the industry trends of the late 1940s and early 1950s with their own derivative **crime** (*Racket Squad in Action*), **horror** (*The Thing*), and **science fiction** (*Space Adventures*) comic books.

In the mid-to-late 1950s, as other publishers went out of business or curtailed their production, Charlton aggressively recruited talent and acquired titles, mostly romance, Western, and horror from a number of defunct publishers, including Fawcett Publications, Superior Comics, and **Joe Simon** and **Jack Kirby**'s Crestwood/Mainline Comics. The most significant acquisition was the **Blue Beetle** character from Fox Features Syndicate. Charlton was never able to capitalize on the character, as none of the three Blue Beetle titles issued over the next 10 years lasted more than 5 issues, but ownership of the name allowed Charlton to create an original Blue Beetle character as part of their 1960s emphasis on action heroes.

Noting the success of **DC Comics**' superhero revivals in the late 1950s, Charlton introduced a new superhero, Captain Atom, in 1960. When Dick Giordano took over as editor-in-chief in 1965, Charlton's action hero era began in earnest. Aside from the incredibly powerful Captain Atom, the emphasis at Charlton was on costumed heroes without super powers. In 1966 **Steve Ditko** created a new Blue Beetle with no powers, but plenty of cool gadgets. Other notables in Charlton's 1960s action hero line-up include The Question, Judomaster, The Fighting Five, and Peter Cannon—Thunderbolt.

By the mid-1960s a rejuvenated DC and an emerging **Marvel** enticed most of the major talent away from Charlton. The action hero titles were cancelled by the end of the 1960s, although a few were briefly revived in the 1970's. The 1973 appearance of *E-Man*, whose tongue-in-cheek adventures were reminiscent of Jack Cole's **Plastic Man**, sparked some fan interest, but the title only lasted 10 issues. What success Charlton

Comics did have in the 1970s came from its mild horror comics and licensed material such as *Flash Gordon*, and *The Phantom*. The company stopped producing new comic book content in 1978 and began publishing reprint material from its vast inventory.

In 1983, for about $30,000 plus royalties, DC Executive Vice President **Paul Levitz** acquired the action hero titles as a gift for Dick Giordano, then managing editor at DC. By the time Charlton Publishing closed their comic book publishing operation in 1986, **Alan Moore** and **Dave Gibbons** had already used the Charlton action heroes as the templates for their ***Watchmen*** series.

Randy Duncan

CHAYKIN, HOWARD (1950–). A distinctive visual stylist, a formal innovator, and a compelling storyteller, Howard Chaykin has synthesized a diverse array of influences—including pulp adventure, **science fiction**, the **Western**, and classic American illustration—to construct an unmistakably original body of work. After beginning his career as an assistant for **Gil Kane**, Gray Morrow, **Neal Adams**, and **Wallace Wood**, Chaykin's first major professional work was as an artist on the first issue of **DC Comics**' *Sword of Sorcery* (1973). In addition to serving as artist on a variety of titles for **Marvel** and DC in the 1970s, Chaykin also created original characters such as pulp-inspired adventurers The Scorpion and Dominic Fortune, and the swash-buckling space pirates Ironwolf and Cody Starbuck. His flair for outer space action made him a logical choice for his next major assignment, as penciler for the Marvel Comics adaptation of *Star Wars* (1977).

Despite the growing appreciation for his work, Chaykin abandoned traditional comic books in the later 1970s and early 1980s. Instead, he turned his attention to paperback cover illustration and to long-form graphic novels, including an adaptation of Alfred Bester's *Stars My Destination* (1978), and collaborations with Samuel R. Delany (*Empire* 1978) and Michael Moorcock (*The Swords of Heaven, The Flowers of Hell* 1979).

Chaykin returned to comics in 1983 with the groundbreaking science fiction **satire** for which he remains best known, ***American Flagg!*** Here, many of the interrelated themes and motifs that characterize Chaykin's mature work first come into focus: the search for authenticity in an increasingly virtual world, an ambivalence about the ways in which mass culture shapes (or warps) the imagination, a deep distrust of political authority, and an emphasis on sexuality as an essential element of human nature. In order to convey his vision of a futuristic United States whose citizens had been abandoned by its elites and numbed into complacency by a relentless barrage of puerile entertainment, Chaykin developed a sophisticated art style that favored dense, multi-tiered page layouts and that, with the assistance of letterer Ken Bruzenak, made advertisements, marquees, and sound effects an integral part of the page design.

The success of *American Flagg!* allowed Chaykin to pursue personal and experimental projects. These included the *Time*^{2} graphic novels for First Comics (*Time*^{2}*: The Epiphany* 1986, and *Time*^{2}*: The Satisfaction of Black Mariah* 1987), set in a seedy retro-futuristic underworld of jazz, gangsters, and the robotically "reincarnamated"

living dead, and *Black Kiss* (Vortex 1988), a gleefully depraved tale of sex, horror, and Hollywood. The 1980s also saw Chaykin offer iconoclastic takes on well-known characters such as **Blackhawk** (DC 1987) and **The Shadow** (DC 1986).

After this intensely prolific period, Chaykin turned his attentions to Hollywood, writing for television shows including *The Flash* and *Viper*. With a few exceptions—such as *Power and Glory* (Malibu 1994), a comic adventure miniseries about the hollowness of cheap patriotism and the superhero ideal—Chaykin did little work in comics as an artist during this time. He continued to work as a writer, however, including several collaborations with David Tischman. Most notable of these is *American Century* (DC/Vertigo 2001–3), a highly acclaimed exploration of the seamy underside of the ostensibly sunny 1950s. Chaykin returned as both artist and writer with series such as *Challengers of the Unknown* (DC 2004), a scathing satire of reactionary right-wing politics and the superficial, sensationalistic news media, and *City of Tomorrow* (DC/Wildstorm 2005), a science fiction/**crime** story that indicates Chaykin's continued interest in the hazy distinction between simulation and reality. Chaykin has maintained a high profile in the comics industry in recent years, working for independent publishers as well as for Marvel and DC.

Brannon Costello

CITY OF GLASS. Paul Karasik and David Mazzucchelli collaborated with novelist Paul Auster to adapt Auster's 1985 prose novel, *City of Glass*, and produced this groundbreaking graphic novel, originally published by Avon Books in 1994 as *Neon Lit: Paul Auster's City of Glass*. "Neon Lit," edited by **Art Spiegelman**, was to be a series of comics-format adaptations of contemporary fiction; unfortunately, *City of Glass* was one of only two titles completed (the other was Barry Gifford's *Perdita Durango*). The title was revised and republished by Picador/Henry Holt in 2004, with an introduction by Spiegelman.

By genre, the graphic novel *City of Glass* has much in common with the hard-boiled detective story and film noir, since it involves a detached private investigator, a sexy female client, surveillance, and a mystery; but it is no ordinary detective story. The protagonist is Daniel Quinn, a disengaged, young widower who writes detective novels under a pseudonym. After receiving a couple late-night phone calls intended for the Paul Auster Detective Agency, Quinn decides to assume Auster's detective identity, and he takes the case. His clients, Peter and Virginia Stillman, hire him to follow Peter's father, who is about to be released from a mental institution and who might try to harm Peter. For weeks, Quinn shadows the elder Stillman's every move and regularly updates Virginia by phone. When Quinn loses his quarry, he turns to Auster for help, but Auster turns out to be a writer rather than a detective. When Quinn reaches only the Stillmans' busy signal, he stakes out their building for months and loses himself in the process.

The novel is full of shifting or double identities. Quinn writes his detective stories under the pen name William Wilson, which is also the title of an Edgar Allan Poe story about doppelgangers. In some panels, Quinn is replaced by the narrator of his

own detective novels, P. I. Max Work. In addition to Auster's appearance in the graphic novel as a character, Auster's child in the book share's Quinn's first name and resembles Quinn's deceased son. When Quinn goes to the crowded train station to pick up the elder Stillman's trail, he must choose between two separate men who match Stillman's description. What began as a simple choice to act like a detective becomes for Quinn an abyss of mirrors and questions. By the end of the book, Quinn is naked on the floor of Peter and Virginia Stillman's apartment, unrecognizable, fading from reality into an existential dislocation: "Was the case over, or was he still working on it?" (129).

In addition to bending ideas about identity and genre, this novel stretches the concept of language to new lengths. Before he was arrested, the elder Stillman had written about the Fall of Man as a detachment of names from things; thus, the Fall of Man was also the Fall of Language. To test this theory, Stillman kept his young son Peter in complete isolation, with no linguistic contact for the first nine years of the boy's life. At the end of the book, Quinn's notebook about the case is all that's left of him; what readers know about the case is limited to what he recorded, and readers can never get closer to the facts and truths, since Quinn's notebook selectively and insufficiently depicts reality.

In an early scene about language, Peter Stillman, now a damaged adult, provides one of the most figuratively abstract scenes in comics when he tells his story to Quinn. The word balloons that contain Peter's voice emanate first from his mouth, then deeper from his throat, then from a river, from a Charon character arising with his ferry-boat from the river, from deep in the throat of the Charon character, from a cave drawing, a sewer grate, a sink drain, from an old phonograph horn, from a well, from the throat of a baby bird, from a pile of feces, a broken TV, an inkwell, a teddy bear, from a jail cell, and finally from a marionette's mouth. After being deprived of language for nine years of his childhood, Peter's disembodied voice and nonsensical language seem to have reattached to these various entities; he claims that his language is God's language, in which words reveal the essence of things. In another early scene, the lines of a New York apartment building transition into the lines in a maze, which then transition into the lines and whorls of a fingerprint on the window of Quinn's apartment. Karasik and Mazzucchelli's masterful deployment of symbolic, metaphoric images contribute to the novel's expansive, abstract nature.

The character of Auster provides clues about how to make meaning from this challenging plot. In a conversation with Quinn, Auster explains his latest essay, which proposes that *Don Quixote*'s complex layers of narration—Cervantes claims that it's a translation of a translation of a dictation—are but a test of readers' gullibility. Further, Auster claims that people will tolerate all kinds of absurdities so long as they are rewarded with amusement. With its labyrinthine plot, its existential crises, its layers of interconnections, and its violations of traditional storytelling devices, *City of Glass* offers intelligent amusement like no other graphic novel.

Anthony D. Baker

CIVIL WAR. The *Civil War* sequence (2006–7) from **Marvel Comics** was a large scale event that centered on the seven-issue limited series of that title by writer **Mark Millar**

and penciler Steve McNiven, but ultimately generated numerous tie-ins and spilled over into many Marvel titles. One of the most ambitious comics projects of recent years, the *Civil War* storyline involves battles among **superheroes** in reaction to disagreements over how to respond to the official attempt to regulate superhero activity via the Superhero Registration Act. It eventually involved almost every Marvel character and utilized the talents of numerous writers and artists within the Marvel franchise.

In the opening story arc, lesser superheroes called the New Warriors attempt to apprehend some known supervillains, largely in order to gain publicity (and better television ratings). One of the villains, Nitro, causes a powerful explosion in Stamford, Connecticut, in which over 600 people (including many students from a nearby school) are killed. This galvanizes an already-existing movement to regulate the activities of superheroes, leading to the passage of the Registration Act by Congress. According to the terms of this act, all superheroes must register with the government; failure to do so would be considered a criminal violation and the violator would be subject to detention in the "negative zone," a specially created prison located within Rikers Island, New York. As more and more superheroes refused to register because they felt the registration was a violation of their civil liberties, such prisons were eventually established in all 50 states.

The superheroes are split between those who support the regulation (**Iron Man**, Reed Richards of the **Fantastic Four**, Hank Pym), and those opposed to it, led by **Captain America**. The latter's opposition comes from his perception that the government, in registering superheroes, is acting in a manner akin to a totalitarian government like those he fought against in World War II. As the fighting over the merits of pro-and anti-registration increases, the heroes find themselves in awkward situations. People attack superheroes in public, while others who are originally on one side of the equation find themselves switching sides.

The *Civil War* storyline engages real-world current events in obvious ways. In particular, the Superhero Registration Act parallels the Patriot Act of October 2001, in that both acts give the government the right to curtail constitutionally-guaranteed freedoms, yet both were passed (in response to a perceived emergency) with almost no opposition and with virtually no debate. *Civil War* also contains a substantial amount of commentary on the role of media as a facet of the news. Do the media simply report the events, or do they have a hand in creating them? The *Civil War* storyline also mirrored the real arguments of the Iraq War and the "war on terror." While not Vietnam in its divisiveness, the war still causes strong opinion in both cases, and is a point of contention that the creators of *Civil War* noted.

In a more general sense, the story addresses fundamental moral issues and comments on the corrupting effects of power. Characters often examine their own motivations in fighting for one side or the other. They also ask why they should go on using their powers to fight evil and protect society when society might seek to punish them for those activities. Others (such as **Spider-Man**) were particularly worried that the public registration of their identities might lead to threats against their family and friends.

Most importantly, others asked what ultimately motivated them: their own glory, or the good of society. (Captain America pointedly asks this question as part of New York is reduced to rubble following a fight between pro-and anti-registration heroes.) Others question the motives of supervillains who now find themselves fighting on the side of law and order. As the war continues, Iron Man and Captain America both seek out assistance and information from criminals like Wilson Fisk (aka Kingpin), who manipulates events to his own liking. Even characters like the Watcher, **Doctor Strange**, and the **Punisher** engage in the debate, even they choose no side in particular.

The creators also tie the debate associated with the Superhero Registration Act to the wholesale imprisonment of other groups in American history. In fact, at one point, two storylines are drawn in parallel formats, with discussion of the Japanese Americans interned during World War II, as well as the violence of war from times past next to the idea of former friends now fighting. Only after a nasty fight between the two groups in downtown New York, which led to several blocks being destroyed (as 9/11 had), does Captain America realize that the toll of such fighting over the Superhero Registration Act was not worth the cost. He turns himself over to the authorities and is subsequently assassinated as he is being taken to trial.

In addition to the death of Captain America, important results of the *Civil War* within the Marvel universe include Tony Stark's rise to command the spy group S.H.I.E.L.D., and the establishment of the Fifty State Initiative, in which each state has its own superhero team. Yet the ramifications of the war rippled throughout the Marvel universe. Indeed, the story arc was so wide spread and incorporated so many different titles that it was difficult to follow in its entirety. However, Marvel eventually gathered the stories into various trade paperback collections that followed a character or theme, thus helping readers to follow the arcs.

Cord Scott

CLAREMONT, CHRIS (1950–). Best known for his work on **Marvel's *X-Men*** title *Uncanny X-Men* and its myriad spin-offs, the London-born Christopher Simon Claremont started writing comics in the mid-1970s and became one of the industry's top writers of the 1980s and 1990s, creating numerous major and minor characters who became important parts of the Marvel universe. His collaborative work on *Uncanny X-Men* with artist **John Byrne**, with whom he was paired early in his career while writing Marvel's *Iron Fist*, is considered a superb example of superhero storytelling, and his 16-year stint as *Uncanny X-Men* writer (1975–91) remains an industry exemplar of longevity on a single title. Byrne and Claremont's "Dark Phoenix Saga" arc (issues #129–38), in which Jean Grey, an established superheroine with telekinesis and telepathy, gains additional powers, temporarily driving her to chaos and eventually threatening the universe before she kills herself in sacrifice, is considered one of superhero comics' most poignant stories. So is *God Loves, Man Kills*, a graphic novel with art by Brent Anderson featuring the X-Men. Published in 1982, it examines the depths of racism and prejudice in American society. Claremont's popularity and reputation declined in the late 20th century as he left Marvel and

tried to launch the creator-owned *Sovereign Seven* (beginning in 1995) and later reprise *Gen-13* for **DC Comics** (in 2002–3). He has been praised and condemned for his ornate writing style and impressive vocabulary, and much of his decline in popularity seemed to stem from an inability or lack of desire to shore up the multiple plot lines and implied speculations with which he imbued the *X-Men* series. However, his style was a major influence on other writers. Claremont is also a novelist, having published several **science fiction** and **fantasy** books individually or with co-writers. His *First Flight* trilogy features a young pilot's star-spanning adventures. *Shadow Moon*, *Shadow Dawn*, and *Shadow Star* make up his *Chronicles of the Shadow* fantasy series of books that act as prequels to Ron Howard's film *Willow*. Claremont renewed his association with Marvel in the late 1990s, eventually to work on the *X-Men* affiliated titles with which he built his comics writing career. Among the titles he has written for Marvel are *Uncanny X-Men*, *The New **Mutants***, *Wolverine Limited Series*, *Wolverine*, *Kitty Pryde*, *and Wolverine Limited Series*, *Excalibur*, *X-treme X-Men*, *New Excalibur*, and *New Exiles*. Recently announced projects include the limited series *Genext United* and an ongoing title *X-Men Forever*, which picks up the *X-Men* series at the exact spot Claremont left the series in 1991, *X-Men* v2 #3.

James Bucky Carter



The Uncanny X-men double issue #137, story by Chris Claremont, art by John Byrne. Marvel Comics Group/ Photofest

CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED was a long-running series that published comics adaptations of classic literature from 1941 to 1971. Albert Lewis Kanter (1897–1973) published the series, which was originally titled *Classic Comics*. Born in Baranovitch, Russia, Kanter and his family were immigrants to the United States. He lived in New Hampshire and Georgia before moving to New York and getting into publishing. The first three issues of *Classic Comics* made print with Elliot Publishing. The fourth issue, published in 1942, appeared under Kanter's own business, Gilberton Company, Inc. The series retained the *Classic Comics* title for

34 issues before changing to *Classics Illustrated* in 1947. The name change may have been in response to growing anxiety over children's comic book reading habits in the late 1940s. As issue #34 states: "The name Classics Illustrated is the better name for your periodical. It really isn't a 'comic' . . . it's the illustrated or picture, version of your favorite classics." Kanter heavily promoted traditional notions of literacy by urging readers to read the original upon finishing the illustrated version. He also used painted covers, few advertisements inside the comic, and a higher selling price (15 cents rather than the going rate of a dime) to differentiate his series from other popular comics. Kanter also continually reprinted previously published issues. *Classics Illustrated* would remain under Gilberton until 1967, when Kanter sold it to Patrick Frawley's Twin Circle publishing, which continued to run the series in reprints until 1971. Many of the first issues were 64 pages in length, but later the comics were 56 pages long. In 1953, Gilberton began *Classics Illustrated Junior*, which ran for 77 issues and also ended in 1971. This line dealt mostly with comics versions of folk tales, fairy tales, mythology, and legends, whereas the former dealt primarily with novels such as *The Three Musketeers*, *Ivanhoe*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Last of the Mohicans* (the first four comics in the series, respectively), *Robinson Crusoe* (issue #10), *Huckleberry Finn* (#19), *Typee* (#36), and others. Epics such as *The Odyssey* (#81) and *The Iliad* (#77) were also published. Typically, the series published adaptations from American or British literature, salient epics from antiquity, and the work of other important European and Russian writers. Several of Shakespeare's plays were also adapted. **Science fiction** novels like Jules Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (#138), and H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (#133) were adapted as well, as were several biographies.

Issues from the series are easily identifiable. A yellow rectangle bearing the **Western**-style fonted "CLASSICS" and the cursive "Illustrated" was and remains distinctive. Internal art and page layouts were often completed by committee such that their overall form is bland, workshopped, and conservative. Many pages are filled with basic square or rectangular panels and generic lettering. A stoic realism permeates the series' art. Rocco Versaci notes some exceptions to the series' mechanical style, specifically Lou Cameron's adaptation of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (issue #13), which alters panel size and offers multiple visual perspectives. Versaci points out that many Shakespeare adaptations were particularly stilted by the "house style." The back covers included lists of available titles and a yellow order form. Though many have critiqued the series for keeping children from the source material, which was not the publisher's intent, award-winning writer Gary Giddens has commented on how the series compelled him to read source material and inspired him to write.

The series utilized many greats of comics art, including **Jack Kirby**, Joe Orlando, Graham Ingels, and George Evans. During the 1990s, several companies tried to revive the series. The Berkeley Publishing Group and First Comics failed in 1990, a year after acquiring rights and printing 27 issues. Well-respected comics artists **Bill Sienkiewicz**, Rich Geary, and **Kyle Baker** were among the artists who contributed to these issues. Acclaim Books re-colored and reprinted 62 titles from the series in 1997 and 1998.

These books were bound on cardstock rather than in the pamphlet style of the originals and also included notes on the texts from respected scholars. Most recently, graphic novel and comics publisher Papercutz has retained the rights to use the *Classics Illustrated* name. Papercutz has republished new adaptations and also may reprint some of the titles printed under Berkeley and First. Many other publishers have attempted similar adaptation work in recent years. ***Graphic Classics*** focuses on short story collections from major writers of the 19th and 20th century, such as Oscar Wilde, Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain, Bram Stoker, Ambrose Bierce, and Jack London. **Marvel's** *Marvel Illustrated* line includes versions of *The Last of the Mohicans*, *Treasure Island*, and *Man in the Iron Mask*, with other adaptations planned. Several companies publish adaptations of Shakespeare plays in the **Manga** format. CliffsNotes supports many of these titles through a relationship with Wiley publishing, which also offers Manga adaptations of *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Jack Lake Productions, Inc. has been reprinting original editions from the *Classics Illustrated Junior* series since 2003 and began reprinting *Illustrated Classics* stories in 2005.

See also: Adaptations from Other Media

Selected Bibliography: Giddins, Gary. "Seduced by *Classics Illustrated*." In *Give our Regards to the Atomsmashers*, ed. Sean Howe, pp. 78–95. New York: Pantheon, 2004; Jones, William B., Jr. *Classics Illustrated: A Cultural History*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2001; Versaci, Rocco. *This Book Contains Graphic Language*. New York: Continuum, 2007.

James Bucky Carter

CLOWES, DANIEL (1961–) is a critically acclaimed cartoonist, illustrator, and screenwriter whose graphic novels include ***Ghost World***, *David Boring*, *Ice Haven*, and *Like a Velvet Glove Cast in Iron*. The bulk of his published work initially appeared in the pages of ***Eightball*** (1989–) or in his earlier comic book series, *Lloyd Llewellyn* (1986–88). He has illustrated over 20 record covers and created the poster for the film *Happiness*. In 2007–8, his serialized graphic romance, "Mr. Wonderful," appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*, and he has produced covers for *The New Yorker*. In addition, Clowes has written screenplays for two studio movies, *Ghost World* (2001) and *Art School Confidential* (2006), both of which are based on his own comics; he is currently attached to three scripts, including one based on his superhero lampoon *The Death Ray*, which appeared in *Eightball*, issue #23 (2004). His screenplay for *Ghost World* was nominated for an Academy Award. Along with **Peter Bagge**, **Chester Brown**, the **Hernandez Brothers**, **Seth**, and **Chris Ware**, Daniel Clowes is one of the pivotal figures in the alternative comics subculture of the past two decades.

Clowes was born in Chicago, Illinois, and received his BFA in 1984 from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York. (His experiences at Pratt are refracted through the lens of satire and gallows humor in *Art School Confidential*.) In 1985, he submitted a comic

story featuring his character Lloyd Llewellyn to the Seattle publisher **Fantagraphics**, which promptly ran it in issue #13 of the Hernandez's ***Love and Rockets***. Along with Pantheon, the New York trade publisher, Fantagraphics remains Clowes's primary publisher. In addition to the stand-alone graphic novels, Fantagraphics has published several collections of Clowes's short format comics, including *Pussey!*, *Orgy Bound*, and *Twentieth Century Eightball*. Given his broad cultural influence and high-profile reputation in the comics industry, it seems likely that most of Clowes's work will remain in print for the indefinite future.

Clowes's best-known effort to date, both commercially and critically, is the existential teen drama *Ghost World*, which centers on the troubled friendship of two teenage girls, Enid Coleslaw and Rebecca Doppelmeyer. Of the two, Enid's outlook is bleaker and more despairing, and it seems likely that she serves as a stand-in for the author, who nonetheless also briefly appears in the story as a sad-looking middle-aged cartoonist at a book signing. The *Village Voice* said that Clowes "spells out the realities of teen angst as powerfully and authentically as Salinger did in *Catcher in the Rye* for an earlier generation," while *Time* magazine described the graphic novel as an "instant classic." As these reviews suggest, *Ghost World* has become one of the flagship titles of the contemporary revitalization of comics. By combining deadpan humor, vividly realized characters, and precise, super-clean linework, Clowes has helped bring comics into the contemporary bookstore, in the guise of the graphic novel. While his output has slowed down in recent years, he remains one of the most influential and closely watched cartoonists of his generation.

Kent Worcester

COLAN, GENE (1926–). Born in the Bronx, New York, Colan was a prominent comics illustrator who graduated from George Washington High School, which catered to gifted art students, and studied at the prestigious Arts Students League of New York. Just before joining the Army and becoming a member of the occupation forces stationed in the Philippines, he got his comic book start at *Fiction House*. Throughout the years Colan did a considerable amount of freelance work and when he showed his samples to **Stan Lee** at **Timely Comics** in 1946, he was hired that very day for 60 dollars a week. Colan considered Timely art director Syd Shores the one person who helped him the most in mastering his craft. When Timely was letting go of staff, Colan moved over to **DC Comics** to work on *Sea Devils* and *Hopalong Cassidy* and various war stories. Colan then returned to **Marvel Comics** to become an essential contributor to so-called Marvel Age of the 1960s, working on **Silver Surfer**, **Iron Man**, Sub-Mariner, **Captain America,** and **Doctor Strange**.

Colan's work is as readily identifiable as it is highly praised. His use of pencils is unique, bringing shadows and half-tones to such a level that his work was often challenging to ink (although Colan liked how Tom Palmer handled the chores). His highly cinematic style is influenced by his life-long love of film. Colan creates the effect of various camera angles through slanted panels and even places a focus upon the unusual

or mundane (such as a hand on a doorknob), thus giving each page a dynamic and highly dramatic sense. Still, authenticity was not lost in his style, as he was careful to use references to real life buildings and surroundings.

Colan's methodology involved reading one page of script at a time and then illustrating that page. This sometimes resulted in editorial difficulties as he might unexpectedly draw more panels (or pages) of something that happened to catch his interest and he would reach the maximum number of pages before he finished the script. For example, he once drew a multiple-page car chase in ***Captain America*** after seeing the movie *Bullitt*.

Like many others, Colan struggled to find work during the years of the decline in comics popularity in the late 1950s and early 1960s. However, once back at DC he did a variety of non-superhero genre titles (especially **romance**) and adopted the pseudonym Adam Austin so that he could also work at Marvel.

Each time he took on a different title Colan brought his creativity with him and made the work his own. He was DC's primary artist of **Batman** in the early 1980s and, although he is known as the signature artist of **Daredevil** (illustrating 100 issues), his efforts in horror such as his 70 issues of The Tomb of Dracula (where he co-created the character Blade) and mystery, for example, Nathaniel Dusk are also highly notable. He co-created **Howard the Duck** with his favorite writer Steve Gerber and also drew the ensuing newspaper strip. Colan's cover art for Iron Man 1 was featured on a U.S. stamp.

Jeff McLaughlin

COLD WAR. Comics, like most popular media, have often taken an extremely simplistic view of the Cold War. This conflict between ideologies and economic systems was shaped by complex political and historical factors but is frequently portrayed in popular culture as a battle between insidious commies and heroic Americans, positioned as defenders of freedom and democracy against the predations of the international communist conspiracy. The reasons for this are clear—the products of popular culture are, for the most part, not well suited to a sophisticated consideration of complex issues, but rather usually work through a process of reduction and simplification in order to render entertainment from conflicts between good and evil. The result is something that works much like propaganda or myth, portraying a simple, blunt ideological message. There are exceptions, or course, but for the most part, from the mid-1940s, when the Cold War began, to the early 1990s, when it effectively ended, this struggle between competing ideologies provided a stable of villains for popular heroes to confront, shaping how mass audiences would understand the complex political issues of the day. When World War II ended in 1945, the Soviet Union had been the ally of the United States and Britain, joining the forces driving the invasion and defeat of **Nazi** Germany. The alliance had always been an uneasy one, and throughout the war popular culture in general had tackled the threat of the Axis powers by demonizing the enemy. Simultaneously propaganda and popular culture worked hand-in-hand to convince the American and British public that

the Russians were just like them, allies to be trusted. This was important as much of the aid sent overseas was being directed towards the Russian front. Several comics, notably an issue of *Boy Commandoes*, published by National (the forerunner of **DC**), written by **Joe Simon** and drawn by **Jack Kirby**, celebrated the bravery of the Russian people, drawing parallels between them and ordinary Americans, When the war was over there was no longer the imperative to attack the Nazis and the Japanese, which was one of the reasons that superhero comics floundered in the immediate post-war years—there was no credible enemy to fight. There was also no reason to persist with the fantasy that the Russians had the same goals and aspirations as the Americans. However, tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, the only superpowers to emerge from the war, soon started to emerge, as both began to define their spheres of influence in Europe and South East Asia. In response to this, popular culture returned to the theme of the communist threat (which had been a popular theme in the 1920s and 1930s). The revelation that the United States had successfully developed atomic weapons, and indeed, had dared to use them in the closing stages of the war against two Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, made the emerging competition between the United States and the Soviet Union all the more terrifying. When the Soviet Union tested their first atomic device in 1949, partly aided by espionage by those involved in the Manhattan Project, the Cold War truly began. Over the next four decades popular culture would dramatize the Cold War in films, novels, television shows and comics, focusing primarily on the threat of communist domination, the infiltration of U.S. industry, culture, and politics by communist spies, the dangers of liberalism in promoting communism, and, most notably, the widespread fear of nuclear war.

The Cold War's representation in comics was typically sensationalistic. Following the decline in the popularity of superhero comics in the postwar years other genres took their place, such as **romance**, the **Western**, and **crime comics**. None of these genres were particularly well-suited to dealing with Cold War themes, but there were occasional exceptions, such as romance comics that featured stories such as "I fell in love with a communist!" In the late 1940s, adventure comics such as *Calling All Boys*, which featured stories that addressed the supposed communist menace, in one instance featuring FBI director J. Edgar Hoover on the front cover, labeling him "Crimebuster no.1." In 1961 Hoover would again appear in comics, this time in *Treasure Chest*, in a story entitled "This Godless Communism" in which he outlined the dangers of communism for young readers. From 1951 to 1956, **Quality Comics** produced *T-Man*, a comic about a U.S. Treasury agent who fought communism, which was somewhat similar to a comic from Atlas (the forerunner of **Marvel**), *Kent Blake of the Secret Service*, adopting a documentary style in telling readers of the unending battle against communists waged by the U.S. government (B. Wright, 2003, 123–26). One comic, *Is This Tomorrow* (1947), published by the Catechetical Guild Educational Society of St. Paul, Minnesota, was a phenomenal success, with four million copies being published. As this comic was produced by a church group, some copies were sold but many others were given away, mostly to other church groups. It was hysterical in its vision of America under

communism, suggesting a battle of apocalyptic proportions. This comic appeared at the same time as President Truman's address to Congress that set forth the "Truman Doctrine," which stated that the United States should oppose the spread of communism in all its forms in order to protect capitalism and democracy. The underlying assumption was that the two systems, communism and capitalism, could not co-exist in the world and that each would always seek the destruction of the other. This corresponded to the tone of *Is This Tomorrow*, which was so successful that the guild published another such warning against communist infiltration, *Blood is the Harvest*, in 1950 (Barson and Heller 2001, 156–58). Such direct attempts to manipulate and guide the public consciousness were common in magazines, pulp novels, and films at this time, and it comes as no surprise that comics were equally, if not more, blatant.

In the early 1950s, with the onset of the Korean War (1950–53), war comics had a resurgence of popularity, with titles such as *War Comics*, *Battlefield*, *Battle Front*, *Battle Action*, and *Marines in Battle*. The majority of war comics at this time were produced by Atlas Comics, which had been Timely Comics, former publishers of ***Captain America***. In a sense these new war comics were similar to *Captain America;* they were well produced, though quite brutal and occasionally racist, but without the **superheroes**. *Fightin' Marines* was published by St. John's Publishing and left no doubt that the "Commies" were a plague that had to be wiped out. National published *Our Army at War*, *Our Fighting Forces* and *Star-Spangled War Stories*, which were of better quality than most war comics of the time (N. Wright, 2000, 170–72). The best war comics to deal with the Cold War were those produced by **EC Comics**, who published intelligent antiwar comics such as such as *Two-Fisted Tales* and *Frontline Combat*. Written and drawn by **Harvey Kurtzman**, these war comics were sophisticated and thought provoking in a way that no other comics on the market were. The same was true of other EC Comics, such as *Shock SuspenStories*, which dealt with provocative themes such as murder, rape, and prejudice. Naturally, this antiwar stance, and the popularity of these comics made them unpopular with other publishers, and an easy target for politicians and those who were critical of the comics industry. In time this would help bring about the undoing of EC as a comics publisher.

In 1953 Atlas Comics saw the opportunity to bring back superheroes, no doubt sensing that the fear of communism would give the superhero back the appeal they had enjoyed at the height of the war. They released *Young Men* and *Men's Adventures*, which featured The Human Torch, The Sub-Mariner, and Captain America. Then, in 1954 each of these wartime superheroes were given back their own titles, this time fighting the communist threat. The comics had slogans such as "Captain America, Commie Smasher!" and there were supervillains such as Comrade X, and endless alien invaders, almost always revealed to be Soviet spies in disguise, intent on stealing atomic secrets. These comics tapped into the hugely popular **science fiction** films of the time, which also played on Cold War paranoia, while also reproducing the tried and tested messages learned from wartime experience, simply replacing the **Nazis** and Japanese with communists. Fawcett's Captain Marvel Jr. took part in the Korean war at times, and Simon

and Kirby even created a new superhero, modeled on Captain America, the Fighting American (1954). However, despite capturing the mood of the times, these comics were not very successful. They were old fashioned, and audiences were not particularly captivated by such fear-mongering, and the strangely up-beat imagery of troops slaughtering North Korean troops was at odds with the frustrating war of attrition described in news reports. During the Great Depression and the war, the fears that these comics played on had been real and immediate. In the 1950s the economy was booming, and when the Cold War warmed up slightly it was always somewhere far away. The threat of nuclear war was another matter, but it was continually mitigated by advertising and other forms of aspirational imagery that imagined a positive future fueled by cheap nuclear energy, promising cities on the moon, and modernist idylls of dome cities and robot servants. For every apocalyptic vision of nuclear destruction there was the promise that the space age and the atomic age would combine to create a technological utopia. Another reason for the failure of the anti-communist superhero comics of the mid-1950s was, simply, that they could not compete with the quality of comics such as those produced by EC, though this would not be a problem for much longer.

When the Korean War ended in a stalemate, the war genre faltered, but did not disappear entirely. The villains in ***Blackhawk***, previously Nazis, became Soviets. Other comics returned to World War II, commenting on Cold War fears using the earlier conflict as a backdrop. This trend was seen in National's *Our Army at War* (1959), which introduced Sgt. Rock, and later in Marvel's ***Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandoes*** (1963), which combined war stories with the dynamic excess of superhero comics. These comics treated World War II as a simple battle between good and evil, which was a reassuring political sentiment as the United States found itself becoming embroiled in the far more morally and politically ambiguous conflict in Vietnam.

With popular culture being drawn into the ideological war against communism, there was a renewed interest in the politics and values being expressed in popular entertainment. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) along with Senator Joseph McCarthy, put Hollywood on trial. One of the chief causes for suspicion was that during World War II, Hollywood had made pro-Soviet films. This was hardly much of a surprise, as the USSR had been allies of the United States and the government specifically asked for pro-Soviet films to highlight this. Comics, likewise, had provided pro-Soviet stories to help the war effort. Now, at the height of the Cold War, this was used as a pretext to attack Hollywood. Comics, while much further down the cultural hierarchy than film, and therefore less of a target, faced similar scrutiny, different only in degree.

The first wave of attacks on the comics industry came in the form of renewed controversy over the influence of comics on children. Noted psychiatrist **Dr. Fredric Wertham**, exploring the causes in rising levels of juvenile delinquency, asserted that comics were corrupting children, turning them into sex-obsessed criminal deviants. His book *The Seduction of the Innocent* (1954) made the case against comics largely based on wild accusations and poor research, but it was effective in whipping up public

hysteria. The conclusion reached by many was that the comics industry was populated with perverts and communist conspirators, seeking to pollute young minds against American ideals. This sparked Congressional hearings in 1955, presided over by Senator Estes Kefauver, yet despite later being found innocent of these charges the comics industry undertook to impose its own code of censorship, the **Comics Code**, regulated by the Comics Code Authority (CCA), which was set up by the Comics Magazine Association of America to guard against further accusations, and to head off the threat of government imposed censorship. The code effectively outlawed EC Comics, in what was partly a shameful attempt by rivals to put a competitor out of business. This had widespread implications for the comics industry, and curtailed the production of stories that were seen to be damaging to the reader's moral health. This left only the humor genre untouched. With the effective demise of **romance**, **crime**, **horror**, and **war comics**, the stage was prepared for the return of the superhero genre. In 1956, DC Comics heralded the birth of a renaissance in superhero comics with the publication of *Showcase* #4, which featured a new version of **The Flash**. The new wave of superhero comics that followed in its wake portrayed the Cold War in very strange ways indeed.

In some respects the new superheroes were all products of the Cold War, and most either expressed paranoia about the threat or communism, or else basked in the glow of optimism about the new atomic age. The comics produced by DC during this period, especially those edited by Julius Schwartz, were very much examples of the latter. In some comics the tensions of the Cold War were largely ignored, perhaps because compared with World War II this was a much more nebulous conflict, and the enemy was harder to define. Also, as it was a cold war there were no dramatic battles to participate in, only the ambiguous "police actions" and proxy wars being fought around the globe. The threat of infiltration and espionage were ever-present, but more suited to spies like James Bond than superheroes. Following the brinksmanship of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the deadly possibility of a nuclear conflict became all the more prominent in some comics, but some retreated further into innocent fantasies. Indeed, in the popular consciousness, atomic energy took on magical transformative abilities. In the early 1960s Marvel Comics published ***The Fantastic Four***, featuring a superhero team for the Sputnik era created by **Stan Lee** and Kirby. Modeled on DC's popular series ***Justice League* of *America***, *The Fantastic Four* embraced the themes of the Cold War period, with the heroes being transformed by cosmic radiation into a literal rendition of "the nuclear family." *The Fantastic Four* introduced a spirit of youthful optimism and a brash pop art sensibility that started a revolution in comics and was followed by ***The Hulk***, ***Spider-Man***, ***X-Men***, and many more. Whereas DC's comics dealt in science fiction and **fantasy**, very much product of the affected innocence of 1950s and 1960s Americana, Marvel's comics aimed to be hip and streetwise (similar to the difference between Paramount Pictures and Warner Bros. films in the 1930s and 1940s). Neither Marvel nor DC dealt particularly realistically with the issues of the Cold War, but its imagery, influence, threats and preoccupations were always in the background of their comics.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, as the Cold War became increasingly complicated, with the Soviet Union moving from purges of dissidents, to more liberal policies, and openness towards the West, then back toward oppressive neo-Stalinism, the political relationship between superpowers became murkier. Following the violence of the civil rights movement and anti-war protests, the defeat in Vietnam and the Watergate scandal, comics, like much American popular culture, became darker and more cynical, turning against the innocence of earlier comics. The result was a number of slick spy comics, such as *Nick Fury: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, by **Jim Steranko**, which responded to a darkening political situation. After a generation of the Cold War, few could see an end to the stalemate, and those who did foresee an end often predicted that it would come through a conflict of apocalyptic proportions. However, with the space race all but over and economic strains on both superpowers it was slowly becoming clear to the politicians that the Cold War was becoming a burden neither superpower could afford to sustain indefinitely. In the 1980s the sense of angst and fear that surrounded the Cold War was signaled in comics such as **Alan Moore's *Watchmen*** and **Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*** (both 1986); deconstructions of the superhero genre that placed Cold War anxieties at the heart of a sickness in society that could only be cured by revolutionary violence (although each text takes very different moral positions on this). By the 1990s the Cold War had run its course, and with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, was effectively over. In the end the Soviet Union was economically and politically exhausted, worn down by war in Afghanistan, a downturn in oil prices that had called for extensive economic reform, and by increasing internal pressures. When the Soviet Union chose to deal with these problems rather than continue with the arms race, the competition that had maintained the Cold War for decades was suddenly gone. The Cold War was over. Since the end of the Cold War comics have continued to revisit it, with the themes of atomic energy, paranoia, and nuclear war becoming touchstones for superhero comics. There is almost a sense of nostalgia surrounding the Cold War period, which, like comics from World War II, engendered extremes of ideological certainty and patriotism that have become emblematic of an age gone by. In 2003 **Mark Millar** wrote the acclaimed ***Superman: Red Son***, with art by Dave Johnson, which postulated an alternative history for Superman had the infant Kal-El landed and then been brought up in the Soviet Union. This story ironically comments on how superhero comics have represented the Cold War, offering a revised vision of Superman with inverted political sympathies.

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Chris Murray

COLLINS, MAX ALLAN (1948–). Prolific writer of mystery novels and media tie-ins, Max Allan Collins is also an acclaimed writer of comic strips, comic books, and graphic novels, most popularly known for the graphic novel ***Road to Perdition***, which was adapted to film by director Sam Mendes, with Tom Hanks in the lead role. Collins co-founded, with Lee Goldberg, the International Association of Media Tie-In Writers, whose annual Scribe Awards are given out at Comic-Con International in San Diego, California.

As a comics writer, Collins scripted the *Dick Tracy* newspaper comic strip starting in 1977, following the retirement of the strip's creator, Chester Gould. Although Gould's byline would continue on the strip for some time, Collins continued to work on the strip until 1992. With artist Terry Beatty, Collins co-created the character Ms. Tree, who was featured in books from various publishers including Eclipse Comics, Aardvark-Vanaheim, and Renegade Press through the 1980s. Collins also wrote the scripts on **DC Comics' *Batman*** series from late 1986 through 1987, in the crucial year the series was reestablishing its continuity after ***Crisis on Infinite Earths***. Collins's work on *Batman* also includes the 1996 ***Elseworlds*** story *Batman: Scar of the Bat*, which portrays historical FBI crime-fighter Eliot Ness as Batman's alter ego in a fight against legendary gangster Al Capone. *Road to Perdition* was illustrated by Richard Piers Rayner and released by Pocket Books in 1998. It is currently in print from Paradox Press, an imprint of DC Comics. Further comics in the series have been issued by Paradox Press and are illustrated by José Luis García-López. In addition, Collins wrote the English adaptation of the script to *Batman: Child of Dreams* (2003), drawn by **manga** artist Kia Asamiya.

Collins's non-comics work include various novelizations of popular films, a series of books based on the television show *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, a series of novels starring his original detective character Nathan Heller, and novel sequels to *Road to Perdition* and *Ms. Tree*. Collins is the literary executor for noted hard-boiled mystery author Mickey Spillane, and has assisted in the completion and publication of Spillane's posthumous work.

Robert O'Nale

COMICS CODE. First established in 1954, the Comics Code was an attempt at self-censorship by the comics industry, spurred by controversies over the potential negative effects of comics on America's youth in the 1950s and following the example of the film industry's 1930 Hollywood Production Code. The Comics Code had no legal authority, and adherence to the code was officially voluntary, but in practice the marketing opportunities for any comic book that did not receive the code's stamp of approval were seriously limited. Initially intended to protect young readers from lurid and ultra-violent content in comics, but eventually extended to sometimes ridiculous extremes (as when writer **Marv Wolfman** was initially denied a writing credit because his real name might evoke images of werewolves), the code dominated the industry until the 1970s, going beyond its original mission to effectively remove politically controversial material from the comics, making it very difficult for comics to participate in

the important political movements of the 1960s and 1970s and rendering them largely irrelevant to real-world political issues.

The code began to loosen its hold on the industry in the 1970s. In 1971, **Marvel**, at the request of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, published an anti-drug sequence of *The Amazing* ***Spider-Man***, which had to be printed without the Seal of Approval of the Comics Code, which forbade the use of drug-related material in comics. Politically engaged comics such as **Neal Adams**'s and **Dennis O'Neil's *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*** also appeared in the 1970s. By the 1980s, new marketing and distribution techniques made it possible for comics to be successful without code approval; new, darker, and grittier works such as **Alan Moore's *Watchmen*** and **Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*** proved the potential for comics that defied the code, and the power of the code was effectively broken. The code itself was significantly modified over the years, but could not keep up. By the early 21st century, **DC** was the only major publisher still submitting comics for code approval, and even then on a piecemeal basis.

M. Keith Booker

COMICS SCHOLARSHIP. The emergence of scholarly literature on comics dates to the 1960s and 1970s, when historians, art historians, communication arts specialists, and literature specialists began applying a range of analytic frameworks to pop-cultural artifacts, including comic strips and comic books. Pioneering comics scholars in the United States, such as Donald Ault, Arthur Asa Berger, Thomas Inge, and the British-born David Kunzle, paid close attention to the symbolic and textual elements of comics, and in particular, their storytelling conventions, visual iconography, and narrative devices. Scholarly activity exploded in the 1980s and more particularly the 1990s, as a new generation of academics (many of them long-time fans) pursued multiple lines of inquiry, from business history, cultural history, and oral history, to gender theory, poststructuralist theory, and the recovery of primary texts. A newfound emphasis on the formal dimensions of comics inspired some of the most important work from this period and continues to attract sustained attention. The field also benefited from the construction of a scholarly infrastructure, as exemplified by the founding of the Comic Art and Comics area of the Popular Culture Association in 1992; the establishment of the International Comics Art Forum in 1995; and the launching of the *International Journal of Comic Art* in 1999.

Comics scholarship continues to make inroads across the humanities. When the University Press of Mississippi started publishing comics-related titles by R. C. Harvey, Joseph Witek, and others in the mid-1980s, they had the field pretty much to themselves, at least in North America. In the past few years, the Yale, Harvard, Chicago, Michigan and Toronto university presses have all released books on cartoon history and theory. At the same time, the Internet has facilitated cross-national networks as well as online journals such as *Image and Narrative*, *ImageText*, and *Signs: Studies in Graphical Narratives*. The forward march of comics studies is similarly suggested by

the appearance of symposia or special issues on comics in peer-reviewed journals, from *Modern Fiction Studies* and *American Periodicals*, to *SCAN: Journal of Media Arts Culture* and *PS: Political Science and Politics*. The growing visibility and legitimacy of the comics medium among publishers, curators, and cultural journalists, as well as deans, chairs, and provosts, helps explain why undergraduate and graduate courses increasingly incorporate comics texts as assigned readings or course topics. The fact that a 2009 thread on the Comics Scholars Listserv addresses the question of putting together a Comics Studies minor speaks to the expanding institutional capacity and reach of an inherently interdisciplinary field.

From its inception, comics studies has been an international phenomenon. As in the United States, postwar scholarship in Britain, France, Japan, West Germany, and elsewhere drew on themes and insights from film studies, literary studies, and sociology. Meanwhile, the more recent turn to a more formalist approach that emphasizes the distinctive characteristics of the comics medium is by no means confined to the United States. The *International Journal of Comic Art* has published several special sections on early comics scholarship across the globe, from Brazil to Italy, and its coverage has provided a useful counterbalance to the inevitable Anglophone tilt of U.S.-based scholarly discourse. In addition, many writers have noted the exceptional sophistication and intellectual richness of comics studies in France and Belgium, as exemplified by such writers as Thierry Groensteen, **Pascal Lefèvre**, and Jan Baetens. Several North American theorists, including Bart Beaty, Charles Hatfield, Jeet Heer, and Gene Kannenberg, Jr., openly acknowledge their debt to the Francophone literature. The newfound interest that scholarly presses have shown in publishing works in comics studies may hopefully result in the long overdue translation of key European texts.

While the emergence of a community of comics scholars dates to the postwar years, behavioral researchers in education and psychology were publishing empirical studies on young readers and comics from the 1920s onwards. The bibliography to David White and Robert Abel's *The Funnies: An American Idiom* (1963) cites several dozen articles that appeared in specialist journals such as the *Review of Education Research*, the *Journal of Pediatrics*, *School Management*, and the *Wilson Library Bulletin* in the 1940s and 1950s. While some mid-century researchers disdained comics, and used their research to confirm the anxieties of parents and public authorities, not all peer-reviewed scholarship hoisted the anti-comics banner. Titles listed in *The Funnies* include "Comic Books are Serious Aids to Community Education" (1953), "Case for the Comics" (1944), and "Use Comic Magazines as a Learning Tool" (1947). The bibliography's earliest entry, "The Compensatory Function of the Sunday Funny Paper," appeared in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* in 1927. Prior to the 1960s and 1970s, scholars tended to treat comics as otherworldly objects that influenced and perhaps distorted the development of the young mind. Postwar comics studies took a greater interest in the objects themselves.

From the vantage point of contemporary scholarship, comics is an infinite canvas. Given the global reach of cartooning, the variety of cartoon formats, the unexplored

byways of comics history, the knotty formal issues, the range of artistic styles, and the multiplicity of genres it seems unlikely that even an army of funded researchers could drain the pool of compelling topics. Unlike the mid-century period, scholarly interest remains centered in the humanities rather than the behavioral social sciences. It is worth emphasizing, however, that some of the most thoughtful writing on comics is by freelance critics, full-time cartoonists, and other nonacademics. **Art Spiegelman**, **Eddie Campbell**, Jules Feiffer, **Trina Robbins**, and Matt Madden are only some of the prominent cartoonists who have written with insight on comics history and theory. There are few other art forms whose practitioners have played such a prominent role in conceptualizing their own activity. For more on the prehistory of comics studies, see *Arguing Comics: Literary Masters on a Popular Medium* (2004); for a sampling of contemporary comics scholarship, see *A Comics Studies Reader* (2009).

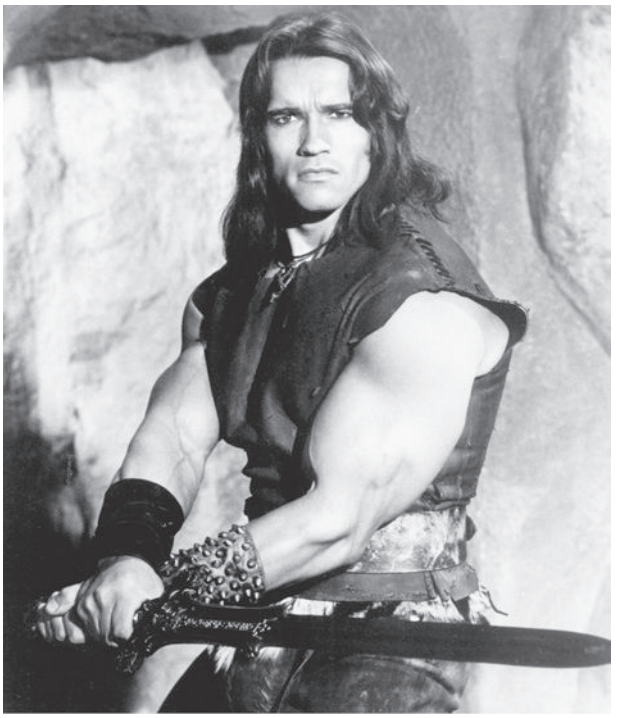
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Kent Worcester

COMIX. *See* ***Underground and Adult Comics***

CONAN THE BARBARIAN. Conan the Barbarian is a character created in 1932 by **fantasy** novelist Robert E. Howard. Originally known as Conan the Cimmerian, the character first appeared in *Weird Tales* magazine. Conan is an early example of the iconic anti-hero, while his adventures represent examples of the sword-and-sorcery genre of fantasy fiction writing. The character would appear in many forms of popular media including movies, role playing games, video games, television and, most notably, fantasy novels and comics. The popularity of the character and its continuing endurance is due in a large part to its appearance in mainstream and adult-oriented comics published by **Marvel** from the 1970s to the 1990s. In 2003, **Dark Horse Comics** began reprinting collected editions of the Marvel series as well as publishing new Conan stories based on Howard's original work.

Conan's introduction to comics began in October 1970 with the publication of *Conan the Barbarian* by Marvel Comics. This series lasted until issue #275 in December 1993. Roy Thomas wrote many issues of the series with art by Barry Windsor Smith. The *Conan* series was written for a mainstream comic book audience and features original



Arnold Schwarzenegger as Conan, in the 1982 film *Conan the Barbarian*, directed by John Milius. Universal Pictures/ Photofest

adventures faithful to the spirit and tone of the Howard stories. With the success of the mainstream series, Marvel introduced an adult-oriented series, *Savage Sword of Conan* in August 1974. The stories in *Savage* are based on Howard's work. This series lasted until July 1995 with issue #235. Another series, *The Conan Saga*, ran 97 issues from June 1987 to April 1995.

The Conan stories, regardless of medium, usually take place in what Howard envisioned as the post-Atlantean "Hyborian Age," a fictional period of history near 10,000 B.C.E. In these stories, Conan's adventures find him meeting a variety of supernatural antagonists, such as wizards and monsters, as well as wenches, princesses, and a number of other fantasy genre staples.

Themes that arise in *Conan* tales deal with materialism, greed, and amoral ugliness. Countering this world is the characterization of Conan as the essential outsider evoking the hero archetypes, yet antiheroic in that he lacks moral clarity or a firm code of honor. The sword-and-sorcery genre of fantasy writing traditionally draws heavily from various mythological conventions, but *Conan* stories often end in an ambiguity that leaves little resolved and reinforces a worldview devoid of moral dualism or ethical absolutes.

The tone and style of Conan are influenced more by the horror tales of H. P. Lovecraft than mythology or the Homeric epic. The original Howard tales and the comics that came after reflect a questioning of tradition in the overall Depression-era culture of the 1930s. Of note is that the popularity of the character peaks in the late 1970s and early 1980s (with a well-known movie adaptation in 1982 starring Arnold Schwarzenegger), with its cancellation of the comics coming during economic upturn of the mid 1990s. The character would then reappear in comics less than a decade later, in 2003, after another economic downturn.

D. R. Hammontree

CONCRETE. Writer/artist Paul Chadwick's comic is one of the most original and mature contemplations of the consequences of superhuman power on the everyday life of its bearer. From its first appearance in ***Dark Horse Presents*** #1 (July, 1986) to

the end of its run in 1995, *Concrete* tells the story of Ronald Lithgow, a middle-aged American divorcé whose human body has been replaced by aliens with a body made of living rock. Although passing comparisons can be made to **Marvel**'s Ben Grimm/Thing, Chadwick's work uses the melancholy of a man literally trapped within his own body and somewhat ostracized by society for a serious examination of the benefits superhuman ability might bestow upon an individual who wishes to explore and understand the world and the human condition. Part heroic action, part philosophical rumination, *Concrete* alternates between Lithgow's daily concerns about how best to live with himself and others, and a series of adventures that frequently return to the themes of environmental ethics and the beauty of the natural world as two causes most worthy of human concern.

Lithgow becomes Concrete during a mountain hike with his friend Michael. Aliens abduct the two men and transfer their brains into living bodies made of a substance closely resembling concrete. The two men use their newly gained abilities and wits to escape their captors, but Michael dies in the attempt. Lithgow survives to see an entire mountainside collapse as the alien ship rises from it and flies away. He is left alone in an alien body and attempts to return to human civilization.

Lithgow turns to a range of friends for help reintegrating into society. Having been a political speechwriter for Senator Mark Douglas, Lithgow asks his past employer for help managing the media reception of his new body and persona. With the Senator's help, Lithgow fabricates a story and goes public as "Concrete," a living robot produced by secret government experiments. The subsequent overexposure he receives via talk-shows and marketing campaigns permits Lithgow to hide the real truth of his origin in plain sight.

After the initial media frenzy and governmental quarantine, Concrete is left to decide what to do with the rest of his life. Since he retains his human personality and interests, Concrete decides to continue writing and to use his body to travel to locations and take on challenges too remote or too dangerous for typical human survival. Among the abilities his alien form bestows is exceptionally keen eyesight, which Lithgow uses to become an ideal observer of nature and humanity in his travels. His outdoor expeditions include swimming the Atlantic Ocean and climbing Mount Everest, but his adventures also put Concrete in the midst of human society, where he grapples with the problems of celebrity. In the *Fragile Creatures* collection, Concrete works on the set of a Hollywood movie; in "An Armchair Stuffed with Dynamite," he befriends and counsels a rock-and-roll star troubled by the pressures of fame and fortune.

Concrete frequently puts his abilities to a humanitarian end. He has in various issues saved miners trapped by a cave-in, worked to save a family farm doomed to foreclosure, and rescued a friend from a brutal kidnapping. One of *Concrete*'s more controversial story arcs is the collection *Think Like a Mountain*, in which Concrete enters a loose alliance with a group of radical environmentalists who employ the tactics of eco-terrorism to prevent the logging of an old-growth forest. Typical of Chadwick's attention to both graphical and intellectual design, Concrete bounds dramatically

across the page to protect the activists from harm at the hands of logging company security forces, only later to reflect upon what right action consists of when confronted with the complexities of deforestation and global economies. The defense of innocent life and natural resources, and the need for reflection and right action are constant themes in *Concrete*.

Concrete's home life is also a recurring source of reflection and adventure. In order to continue his career as a travel writer, the thick-fingered Concrete hires would-be novelist Larry Munro as his live-in *amanuensis* and Dr. Maureen Vonnegut as his personal physician. Munro and Vonnegut become Concrete's closest associates, and they share his true identity with few others. Although encased in a rock body, Concrete retains his human needs for sensuality and love, which he largely directs toward collecting fine art featuring beautiful women. Vonnegut, however, becomes the most immediate object of Concrete's affection and desire. The complex feelings she and Concrete have for each other in a necessarily unrequited love demonstrate a more intimate dimension of the ethical dilemmas that run throughout Chadwick's work. Alternately, Munro's occasional lack of ethical conduct in sexual relationships serve as a foil for Concrete's own exemplary behavior.

The continuity of life through family and other means is another theme that holds Chadwick's work together. Concrete makes contact with his mother to let her know that he is not dead, as the media had reported as a part of his plan secretly to become Concrete. He also attempts to contact his ex-wife Lisa, but flees upon seeing that she has remarried to a man in a wheelchair. A moment of potential jealousy over his lost life thus becomes a lesson in humility for Concrete, whose new body affords him many benefits even as it makes resumption of his old life impossible. Chadwick seems to reconcile the divide between continuities of normal human life and the life of the artist in Concrete's last story arc, *The Human Dilemma*. Concrete gives birth asexually to a child, a miniature Concrete who grows inside of him. Concrete's words at the end of "Always Fences" best express the mature sensibility and wisdom carried throughout Chadwick's series: "Every adult must eventually face the limitations of his life. We don't get to do and have everything. We play the cards we're dealt."

Tim Bryant

CONTRACT WITH GOD, A. A landmark publication, **Will Eisner**'s *A Contract with God* (1978) is frequently referred to as the first graphic novel. Regardless of the legitimacy of that claim, this collection of four interrelated short stories is remarkable for numerous other firsts in the comic book industry. Eisner's goal was to publish a literary work in the comic book format, one that did not cater to **superheroes** and their young readers, but to the adult population who grew up reading superhero tales and now needed more mature themes and stories. Unlike other comic books, it was published as a monograph by a mainstream publisher without prior serialization. Although refused by his first choice of publishers, Bantam, *A Contract with God* was published by Baronet Press in sepia tones and distributed to bookstores rather than comic book shops. The

bookstores, however, were uncertain regarding the placement of such a work. The book was republished by **Kitchen Sink Press** in 1985 and reissued again in 2001 as part of **DC Comics**' *The Will Eisner Library* imprint. Its most recent incarnation was in 2006, when it was published by W.W. Norton as one constituent of ***A Contract with God*** trilogy. Eisner had originally considered "A Tenement in the Bronx" for his title but Baronet felt that the word tenement may be not be easily recognizable outside of New York, utilizing the name of the first story instead (Andelman 2005, 288). Since its first appearance, *A Contract with God* has been published in at least 11 languages, including Yiddish, a language probably very familiar to many of the characters in these tales.

In his preface to the trilogy, Eisner cites the influence of Otto Nuchel, Franz Masareel, and Lynd Ward in creating this seminal work, which has, in turn, become an inspiration for others illustrating autobiographical and ethnographic stories. Eisner also states that he deliberately set aside what he considered the two basic working constrictions of the comic book medium: space and format. His stories are not delineated by formalized panels or by page count, but evolve naturally from the narration itself. His dramatic illustrations, evocative character sketches, and splash pages draw the reader into the lives of the (mostly) unfortunate people of Dropsie Avenue. Eisner evokes a strong sense of claustrophobia as the characters are consistently observed through architectural borders such as doorframes and window sills. "Though the melodramatic aspects of the presentation of the story certainly lend credence to a reading of the presentation as Eisner's willingness to show off his love of storm and stress—to say nothing of tipping his hat to the pathetic fallacy—it may be possible to suggest that the visuals here once more serve to demonstrate the way in which confinement is a major theme in Eisner's work, one that allows him to *define:* to define Jews as a particular kind of people, to define his memories in a kind of specific context" (Dauber 2006, 291). Claims of visual stereotypes have been made against the work but it might also be argued that Eisner used these stereotypes to underline his definition of the Jewish people and his memories of his youth (Dauber 2006, 298). At the same time, all of the characters are distinctly human, not necessarily likeable, but identifiable as individuals beyond the confines of the tenement, era, and ethnicity in which the stories are placed.

The four separate tales are connected by the setting at 55 Dropsie Avenue, a tenement in the New York Bronx's area, remembered, imagined, and revisited by Eisner in subsequent works. Frimme Hersh, the landlord in the title story, is portrayed as a pious man who, after deciding that the contract he has made with God has been nullified by the death of his adopted daughter Rachele, throws the physical contract out the window and proceeds to act out his anger and anguish against his new tenants and neighbors at the recently purchased 55 Dropsie Avenue. Eventually, he becomes remorseful regarding his behavior and convinces the reluctant rabbis to draw up a new contract. Ironically, the excitement in receiving the new contract results in Hersh having a fatal heart attack. Eisner revealed much later that Hersh's torment and pain was modeled on his own after the death of his own daughter Alice of leukemia almost a decade before the story was first published.

"The Street Singer" relates the bittersweet tale of one of the men who, during the Great Depression, gave impromptu concerts in the narrow spaces between the tenements. Eisner writes of his memory of one such singer who brought a "bit of theatrical glamour to the grim alley. The mystery of who he was has remained with me over the years. Finally, with this book about tenement life, I was able to immortalize his story" (Eisner 2006, xvi). Eddie is taken under the wing of an aging diva who promises him a singing career; however, after spending the money she has given him for clothing on drink, he realizes that he has no idea of how to find her again since neither one of them used their real names during their encounter. The third story, "The Super," is a chilling account of a young child preying on the unlikeable and detested superintendent of the building. The girl's manipulations result in the poisoning of the superintendent's dog, the stealing of his money, and even his suicide. The character of the super is based on a custodian Eisner remembers as a child. The splash page title for this tale is reminiscent of the splash pages for ***The Spirit***, and is perhaps, as Dauber (2006) suggests, an indication of the vast dichotomy between the super in this tale and that of the superhero archetype (291). Finally, "Cookalein" takes place outside of the tenements themselves but involves the dreams and the ensuing misrepresentations of some of the tenants as they vacation in the Catskill Mountains. These tenants utilize their vacation to escape their dismal existence by pretending to be something or someone else. Three of the many subplots involve Goldie and Benny, who are pretending they are wealthy in their attempts to find rich spouses, and Willie, who represents himself as much older in his attempt at sexual conquests. This is a complex and interwoven tale that is a coming-of-age story for 15-year-old Willie but involves rape, adultery, and unforeseen consequences for those pretending to be something other than themselves.

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Gail de Vos

CRANDALL, REED (1917–82). Reed Crandall was one of the most talented and prolific illustrators of the **Golden Age** of comics. A master of feathering and cross-hatching, he brought his deft technique to the pages of numerous comic book publishers. He graduated from the Cleveland School of Art in 1939 and by 1940 was employed by the **Eisner**-Iger shop where he worked on ***Jungle Comics*** for Fiction House. In 1941, he inked some of **Jack Kirby**'s art in ***Captain America*.** Upon seeing his Fiction House work, **Quality Comics** publisher "Busy" Arnold convinced Eisner to let Crandall work

exclusively for him. It was during his tenure at Quality that the comics world would come to know the quintessential Reed Crandall. While the character Firebrand failed to catch on, Crandall contributed to *Doll Man* and *Uncle Sam* then took over the comic for which he is known best, ***Blackhawk***. His expertise with the anatomy of both humans and aircraft kept him aloft on *Blackhawk* for nine years (save a two-year stint for the real Uncle Sam) until Arnold unloaded the rights to National in 1953.

Greeted by "What took you so long?" as he walked into the office of **EC's William Gaines**, he penciled numerous stories including the notable "Silent Towns," "A Kind of Justice," and the short-lived "Picto-Fiction" title, *Shock Illustrated*. The 1950s also saw Crandall on the Gilberton Company's ***Classics Illustrated*** line (1954), the Pope-approved perennial *Treasure Chest*, and some work for Martin Goodman's Atlas title *Two-Gun Kid*. Like many other Golden Age greats, he did yeoman-like work for a variety of publishers including Avon, Eastman Color, Pine, and Ziff-Davis. The 1960s continued this trend in Crandall's professional life. He brought his illustrator's talents to the distinctive painted covers of Western's *Supercar*, *Hercules Unchained*, and *The Twilight Zone* (1961–65). Concurrently, he drew "Hermit" for Leon Harvey's EC knock-off, *Alarming Adventures*, and a Dracula story for James Warren's *Creepy*. In 1965, he ventured to **Wally Wood**'s Tower Comics where he drew the adventures of T.H.U.N.D.E.R., agents *No-Man* and *Dynamo*. He also contributed to Wood's revolutionary prozine, *Witzend* and rounded out the 1960s with one of King Features' ill-fated efforts to bring their heroes to comics, *Flash Gordon*. However, the highlight of Crandall's 1960s career is his beautifully rendered cover illustrations for the Canaveral Press editions of ***Tarzan*** and *John Carter of Mars*. His last published work, "This Graveyard is Not Deserted" appeared in *Creepy* #54 (1973). Much of his 1960s output was done not in New York, but rather in Wichita, where Crandall, though himself plagued by alcoholism, had moved to care for his sick mother. After she died, he moved into the Pennsylvania home of fellow EC artist **Al Williamson**. Finally, Crandall was able to conquer alcoholism, but not the effects of age. He returned to Wichita where, unable to draw, he worked as a night watchman, short order cook, and janitor. Several strokes left half of his body paralyzed and put him in the nursing home where he died of a heart attack in 1982.

Brian Camp

CRIME COMICS. While never as strongly associated with comics as superhero narratives, crime comics have nevertheless been one of the form's most persistently popular genres. Like other cross-media genres, crime stories in comics interact with other forms of popular culture including fiction, pulp magazines, radio, cinema, and television, which have all fed the public fascination with tales of criminals, private detectives, and the police. As a form that typically combines words and images, comics have inherited elements from both literature, especially American hard-boiled fiction, and Hollywood, including 1930s gangster movies and the stylized 1940s and 1950s movies French critics identified as *film noir*. Crime comics have regularly attracted some of the most prominent writers and artists in the industry, and appear throughout the history of

comics, unlike once-popular genres (such as the **Western** or **romance comics**) largely absent in current decades. At present, crime stories, especially of the grim but visually stylish *noir* variety, are one of the few genres that can compete with superhero titles in both mainstream and alternative comics.

As a broadly defined genre, crime stories encompass traditional British whodunits, perfected by such writers as Agatha Christie, as well as American hard-boiled detective stories indebted to Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, in addition to narratives centered on the police or other crime-fighting agencies, such as Ed McBain's influential *87th Precinct* novels, which treated a squad of policemen as a collective protagonist. The crime genre also includes the *roman noir*, associated with writers like James M. Cain, Cornell Woolrich, or Jim Thompson, which often marginalizes or eliminates detectives and the police altogether in order to explore the twisted psychology of criminals and to lead readers into a sordid underworld milieu: each of these variations on the larger genre has been appropriated by comics, sometimes with little imagination, but often with creative regard for the ways in which comics might distinctively employ these models. The artwork in crime comics has especially drawn upon and extended visual sources ranging from Sidney Paget's illustrations for Arthur Conan Doyle's original Sherlock Holmes stories in *The Strand*, to the lurid covers of American pulp magazines, to the evocative shadows and canted angles of both classic and contemporary Hollywood crime films. With a few exceptions, the tone of crime comics has also borrowed heavily from the tough slang of literary and cinematic gangsters, gun molls, cops, and private eyes, as well as the nerve-rattling sound effects of screeching tires, tommy-guns, and screaming victims.

While many superhero comics invoke the conventions of crime fiction (presenting **Batman** in ***Detective Comics***, for instance) and ostensibly depict their heroes as crime-fighting upholders of the law, the fantastic elements of superhero narratives otherwise distinguish them from more realistic crime stories, which (following the model established by Edgar Allan Poe) are usually set in a recognizable world defined by human limitations and rational explanation rather than super powers or supernatural events. However, writers have often located superhero storylines in a crime fiction milieu, as when characters like **Marvel's Daredevil** or **The Punisher** battle underworld mobs. Any survey of crime comics must therefore acknowledge that many **superheroes** solve crimes perpetrated by villains who are obviously criminals, though it seems reasonable to place such examples outside of the (flexible) borders of the genre. Still, a number of comic books and graphic novels function as innovative genre hybrids, blending crime narrative conventions with other genres, and thus often illuminating the elements of both genres.

Perhaps because of their full arrival only in the late 1930s, comic books have rarely imitated the classic ratiocinative detective story, pioneered by Poe and perfected by Doyle, Christie, and their many imitators between the 1890s and 1930s. Structured as a puzzle, the whodunit relies on a principle of fair play, providing readers with the clues necessary to match wits with a genius detective. Tales encouraging readers to solve

mysteries were often used as back-up material in early comic books, such as the "Who Dunnit?" series in ***Crime Does Not Pay*** (Lev Gleason, 104 issues, 1942–55) or "Let's Play Detective" strips in **Timely**'s (the forerunner of Marvel) superhero anthology *All Winners Comics* (1941–47), which provided solutions in upside-down panels. The generic gimmick of having the reader guess along with the detective was briefly reprised for Mark Evanier and Dan Spiegle's *Whodunnit?* (Eclipse, 3 issues, 1986–87), but has rarely structured major comics stories, more often preoccupied with sustaining action than with unraveling mysteries. Perhaps confirming this preference, and in contrast to their rich history in other media, sporadic adaptations of the Sherlock Holmes stories into comic books have been largely undistinguished and short-lived: among the longer running series, *Cases of Sherlock Holmes* (Renegade and Northstar, 20 issues, 1986–90) was an oddity that reproduced the Holmes tales as text, accompanied by black and white illustrations (influenced by the 1940s films starring Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce) by artist Dan Day; arguably, the best Holmes-derived comics series, Gary Reed and Guy Davis's punk-era *Baker Street* (Caliber, 10 issues, 1988–92), featuring a female team, only alludes to the great detective and his world. Perhaps the most successful use of the fair play detective story in comics appeared long after the literary models inspiring it: Mike W. Barr's *Maze Agency* (Comico, Innovation, and Caliber, 28 issues, 1988–97) was modeled upon the once extremely popular detective stories featuring and "by" Ellery Queen (writing partners Frederic Dannay and Manfred Lee). Each issue provided a discrete case for its main characters (private eye Jennifer Mays and amateur sleuth Gabriel Webb) to solve along with readers, while the series maintained forward momentum through a developing romance between the crime-solving team. For the most part, however, crime comics have preferred the grittier and perhaps less playful forms of the genre.

Rather than borrowing from the Golden Age of detective fiction, then, **Golden Age** crime comics drew upon more immediate sources, such as the Warner Bros. gangster cycle of the early 1930s, pulp magazines like *Black Mask* (home to the innovators of the hard-boiled style), and Chester Gould's influential *Dick Tracy* newspaper strip, which began in 1931. Though largely forgotten today, other newspaper strips like *War on Crime* (which provided heroic accounts of FBI agents) were reprinted in the early comic book ***Famous Funnies*** in 1936, and **Jerry Siegel** and **Joe Shuster** were creating their own G-Man strips for comic books like *New Comics* and ***More Fun Comics*** before they introduced **Superman** in 1938. (The 1936 appearance in *Funny Pages* of the masked detective The Clock, created by George Brenner, perhaps initiated the blurring of superhero and detective figures in comics most successfully embodied a few years later by **Batman**, and in the following decade by **Will Eisner's The Spirit.**) Prior to Batman's arrival in #27 (1939), the first two years of *Detective Comics* indeed centered on detectives, including the tough Slam Bradley, another creation of Siegel and Shuster who lasted well beyond many of the other early gumshoes soon displaced by the growing roster of superheroes rapidly dominating comic books.

Indeed, the displacement of the comic book detective (otherwise prevalent in fiction, on radio, and in the movies) by superheroes may have encouraged publishers to turn their attention to the more guilty pleasure of stories dramatizing the lives of criminals. Led by publisher Lev Gleason's highly successful *Crime Does Not Pay* under the editorship of Charles Biro and Bob Wood, crime comics of the 1940s regularly revisited the exploits of notorious gangsters, such as John Dillinger, from previous decades. While the title of Gleason's comic, like many of its imitators (*Crime Can't Win*, *Lawbreakers Always Lose!*, *Crime Must Pay the Penalty!*), alerted readers to the outcome of its stories, Golden Age crime comics relied upon the subversive appeal of fast living criminals being more exciting and glamorous than honest but dull cops. Like films regulated by Hollywood's Production Code, crime comics countered their lurid pleasures with final moral messages. They also frequently made claims to truth: Gleason also published *Crime and Punishment* (74 issues, 1948–55), featuring "true criminal case histories." The claim was reinforced by comics throughout the period: *All-True Crime Cases* (Atlas, 26 issues, 1948–52) asserted on the top of every page that "crime can't win" while also reassuring readers on every page's bottom that its stories were "from official police files." *Crime Must Pay the Penalty!* (Ace, 45 issues, 1948–55) promised "True Cases of Actual Crimes" and *Real Clue Crime Stories* (Hillman, 1947–53) offered "Police Facts!" Unlike the later practice of assuring audiences that stories and characters are not based on actual events or people, crime comics regularly claimed (with spurious evidence) that they were only slightly altered reports from the crime-ridden world of their readers. While authors and artists clearly borrowed stories from newspapers, their reliance on generic conventions suggests that detective novels and movies were a more likely source of material than police files.

While the early crime comics published by **EC**, *Crime Patrol* (10 issues, 1948–50) and *War Against Crime* (11 issues, 1948–50) were in the Gleason mode, again promising "real stories from police records," EC's retooling of their crime stories along the lines of their **horror** titles led to *Crime SuspenStories* (27 issues, 1950–55) which shifted the focus off of gangsters and detectives, and onto on the gnawing guilt, lust, and greed that led ordinary people to commit violent acts before they faced the typically ironic ends that guided many EC stories. With stories and art by many of the company's legendary figures, especially George Evans, **Reed Crandall**, Jack Kamen, Jack Davis, and Johnny Craig (who provided most of the comic's eventually notorious covers), EC's crime comics were among those that alarmed the child psychiatrist **Dr. Fredric Wertham** and led to the adoption of the industry's self-regulation under the **Comics Code** in 1954. While the crackdown on comics is often recalled as a response to horror comics, crime comics were the explicit focus of a number of the code's prohibitions: sympathy for or glamorous depiction of criminals was forbidden, and the code warned that "the letters of the word 'crime' on a comics magazine shall never be appreciably greater than the other words contained in the title. The word 'crime' shall never appear alone on a cover." Moreover, "restraint in the use of the word 'crime' in titles or subtitles shall be exercised." Perhaps because of its title, *Justice Traps the Guilty* (Prize/Headline, 92 issues, 1947–58), spearheaded by **Joe Simon** and **Jack Kirby**, managed to survive a few years after the

institution of the code, but it effectively pushed most crime stories into the background of superhero or Western comics, where "crime fighting" remained a secondary concern. However, it is worth noting that, before the imposition of the code, one of the earliest works that might be identified as a graphic novel, *It Rhymes with Lust*, written by Arnold Drake and Leslie Waller (as "Drake Waller"), and drawn by **Matt Baker**, was published as a black-and-white "picture novel" by St. John in 1950. Although unsuccessful at the time, in retrospect it and a follow-up, *The Case of the Winking Buddha* (by Manning Lee Stokes and Charles Raab), pointed toward longer crime stories produced in comics form for adult readers in later decades.

The **Silver Age**, while a renaissance for superhero comics as well as other genres, was a low point for the horror and crime comics targeted by Wertham and the Comics Code. Later one-shots like Kirby's *In the Days of the Mob* (Harvey, 1971) harkened back to earlier models, but otherwise crime comics tended to be off-shoots of popular television programs such as *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.* (Gold Key, 5 issues, 1967), *I Spy* (Gold Key, 6 issues, 1966–68) and *Adam-12* (Gold Key, 10 issues, 1973–76). The steady return of crime comics would be facilitated by the direct market, and the independent comics it supported, as well as the creation of mature lines by mainstream publishers, such as DC's Vertigo and Paradox Press imprints. The rise of alternative comics in the 1980s, when mainstream publishers were almost exclusively devoted to publishing superhero titles, provided new space for crime comics by diverse creators, many of whom would eventually carry their work in the genre into mainstream titles. Among these, writer **Max Allan Collins** and artist Terry Beatty's *Ms. Tree* (Eclipse/Aardvark/Renegade, 50 issues, 1983–89), inspired by Mickey Spillane's notorious Mike Hammer novels, was one of the rare tough female private eyes in comics (when such figures had become extremely popular in crime fiction). Perhaps the most striking independent crime comic was David Lapham's self-published *Stray Bullets* (El Capitan, 32 issues 1995–2005), channeling both the *roman noir's* existential despair, and the visual style of *film noir*, with an inventive, fragmentary continuity. Lapham also published the historical mystery *Murder Me Dead* (El Capitan, 9 issues, 2000–1) before turning to crime-tinged mainstream work. Other notable independent comics included the bluntly titled *Shut Up and Die!* (Image, 3 issues, 1998) with grimly ironic stories by James D. Hudnall, illustrated in starkly contrasting black and white art by Kevin Stokes, and *Ginger Fox* (Comico, 4 issues, 1988), an average mystery set in Hollywood, written by Mike Baron but illustrated in an outrageously distorted style by the Pander Brothers. Another Hollywood story, *The Score* (Piranha Press, 4 issues, 1990), written by Gerard Jones and illustrated by Mark Badger was one of the more suspenseful comics of the era. Another original contribution to crime comics was writer **Greg Rucka** and artist Steve Lieber's *Whiteout* (Oni, 4 issues, 1998) and its sequel *Whiteout: Melt* (Oni, 4 issues, 1999–2000), which fully exploit their setting in Antarctica, as U.S. Marshal Carrie Stetko investigates crimes as brutal as the weather. Other notable independent crime comics were the products of the prolific rising star **Brian Michael Bendis**, whose series *Fire* (Caliber, 2 issues, 1994, significantly revised when collected) *Jinx* (Caliber and Image, 16 issues,

1994–98), *AKA Goldfish* (Caliber, 5 issues, 1995–96), and *Torso* (Image, 6 issues, 1998–99), the last based on an actual unsolved series of murders in Cleveland in the late 1930s, were all innovative in their presentation of sparse, intentionally repetitive dialog with bleak, elemental images. The retroactive designation and appreciation of many Hollywood crime films as *film noir* has allowed many contemporary crime comics (such as Bendis's) to be understood in similar terms, though none seem as indebted to this legacy as **Frank Miller**'s influential, highly stylized ***Sin City*** (**Dark Horse**, 1991–98), rendered in deep black shadows with most images only partially illuminated. Perhaps more fully than many of his peers, Miller's series acknowledges and accepts the importance of style over story, though his grim tales of battered men and beautiful women are solidly in the tradition he invokes his well.

While alternative crime comics thrived, mainstream publishers also found ways to reanimate the dormant genre. A few miniseries effectively took up the form of the police procedural: *Underworld* (DC, 1987–88, written by Robert Loren Fleming, art by Ernie Colon) and *Cops: The Job* (Marvel, 1992, written by Larry Hama and former cop Joe Jusko, art by Mike Harris and Jimmy Palmiotti) were unusual forays into realism from both companies. Cops also came to the fore in more ingenious series: DC's *Gotham Central* (40 issues, 2003–6) written by **Ed Brubaker** and Rucka, and subtly illustrated by Michael Lark, offered an often beleaguered cop's-eye point of view of a city dominated by a costumed superhero and supervillains, creating an especially vivid character in Police Detective Renee Montoya, whose outing as a lesbian was made as dramatic as the superheroics now relegated to the background of the story. At Marvel, *Alias* (28 issues, 2001–4) by writer Bendis and artist Michael Gaydos, functioned in a similar way. The narrative centers around private investigator Jessica Jones; the fact that she was once a minor member of the superhero team **The Avengers** allows her access to her former world despite her loss of powers, and allows her encounters with characters in the lower tiers of Marvel's pantheon during gritty crime investigations, which in turn offers a clever walk along the border of the two genres. The series mutated into *The Pulse* (14 issues, 2004–6) to focus on investigative journalism. In many ways, *Alias* was the Marvel universe version of Bendis's simultaneous series *Powers* (**Image** and later Icon, 2001–), illustrated with sharp geometrical precision by Michael Avon Oeming. Chronicling the adventures of homicide detective Christian Walker and his partner Deena Pilgrim, *Powers* consistently poses the question of what role the police could play in a world of (outlawed) superheroes. Finally, **Alan Moore's** *Top 10* (DC/America's Best Comics, 12 issues, 1999–2001) was a witty send-up of both the superhero genre and the team-driven police procedural: in his Neopolis, everyone is a superhero, and so maintaining the peace is a complex negotiation of bizarre and often hilarious powers.

Formed in 1993 as a division of DC, Paradox Press released a series of digest-sized black and white comics (usually in three volumes) that were also notable contributions to the crime genre, despite somewhat disappointing sales: both the 1930s gangland saga ***Road to Perdition*** (1998), written by Max Allan Collins with art by Richard Piers Rayner, and ***A History of Violence*** (1997), written by John Wagner and illustrated by

Vince Locke, were later adapted into successful films, but earlier Paradox Press titles, including *La Pacifica* (1995, written by Joel Rose and Amos Poe, with art by Tayyar Ozkan), *Family Man* (1995, written by Jerome Charyn, art by Joe Staton), *Hunter's Heart* (1995, written and illustrated by Randy Du Burke), and *Green Candles* (1995, written by Tom DeHaven, illustrated by Robin Smith), were all solid efforts as well. The excellent Irish mob tale *Skreemer* (DC, 6 issues, 1989) by Peter Milligan, Brett Ewins, and Steve Dillon anticipated the creation of DC's "mature reader" Vertigo line, which has since featured strong crime stories, including writer Brubaker and penciler Michael Lark's *Scene of the Crime* (4 issues, 1998–99). Undoubtedly the most successful Vertigo crime comic has been writer **Brian Azzarello** and artist Eduardo Risso's ***100 Bullets*** (100 issues, 2000–9), which slowly developed an intricate plot out of what initially appeared to be an intriguing gimmick, the offer to a series of desperate characters of an untraceable gun and bullets by the mysterious Agent Graves. Risso's striking art is among the few examples of an appropriately *noir* style that incorporates color successfully.

The first decade of the 21st century has continued to produce a steady stream of *noir* comics, often in the form of graphic novels indebted to cinematic precursors: Matt Fraction's *Last of the Independents* (AiT PlanetLar, 2003) evokes both classic Hollywood Westerns and heist films, aided by Kieron Dwyer's widescreen, sepia-toned illustrations. David Lapham has continued to reinvigorate the thriller in his graphic novel *Silverfish* (2007, DC/Vertigo), and Kevin Golden's *Fishtown* (2008, IDW), originally a Xeric Award–winning web comic, is a simultaneously sensitive and troubling depiction of a senseless teenage murder. Joe Kubert's *Jew Gangster* (ibooks, 2005) is an oddly nostalgic look at a brutal past. Brubaker and Sean Phillips's *Criminal* (Icon/Marvel, 2006–) continues the tradition of the *roman noir*, focusing on marginal figures caught up in desperate situations they cannot control, and a variation on the formula such as Jason Aaron and R. M. Guéra's *Scalped* (DC/Vertigo, 2007–), set on a fictional South Dakota Oglala Dakota Indian reservation, relies upon a rich evocation of its grim setting and social realities. Whereas a 2009 series of "noir" interpretations involving many of Marvel's main characters seemed to misunderstand the style being appropriated (with muted but still colorful comics), other work points to sustained quality in crime comics: in 2009 Darwyn Cooke released *The Hunter* (IDW), the first of his adaptations of Richard Stark's series of Parker novels, just before the new "sub-imprint" Vertigo Crime released its inaugural graphic novels, *Filthy Rich* by Brian Azzarello and Victor Santos, and *Dark Entries* by prominent crime writer Ian Rankin and Werther Dell'Edera. Once again, while always shared with other media, the crime genre is central to comics.

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Corey K. Creekmur

CRIME DOES NOT PAY. *Crime Does Not Pay*, the first **crime comic** book series, was published by Lev Gleason from 1942 to 1955 and was loosely based on the successful

MGM documentary movie series of the same name. The creative talents behind this title were Bob Wood and the gifted Charles Biro.

The first issue appeared in June of 1942 and on the cover Biro depicted an orgy of violence. The main image, in the middle of the cover, depicted two large hands with one hand driving a knife completely through the other. Down the left side of the cover, underneath the heading "True Crime Cases," were mug shots of violent, well-known killers, and above it all was the title, *CRIME* in huge letters occupying one-third of the page, while *Does Not Pay* appeared in very small letters beneath it. It was such covers that helped launch the crime genre and make it so popular that *Crime Does Not Pay* would eventually claim a readership of six million people.

Crime Does Not Pay was one of the earliest comic books to target an adult audience. Biro and Wood hoped the graphic realism of their lurid illustrated tales would draw in readers of the popular true crime and detective magazines, and pulps. The subject matter included beatings, shootings, stabbings, burnings, torture, dismemberment, and sadism. No crime, save sexual violence, was prohibited. The sequential art of *Crime Does Not Pay* delivered these tales to a graphic degree never before seen in comic books.

The stories were sensationalized tales of real-life gangsters, including Baby Face Nelson, John Dillinger, Pretty Boy Floyd, and many others. Each story was published under the moral pretense that "crime does not pay." As Mike Benton observed, "the violent lives of these homicidal psychopaths could be excitingly detailed as long as they ended in punishment," and since they all ended in punishment, "it was like buying a 10-cent ticket to a public execution!" The theme of all *Crime Does Not Pay* stories was that these criminals were acting pathologically, incapable of learning any lesson or reforming their behavior. It was never suggested that lack of opportunity, environment, or social forces such as poverty, class, or race played a role in them becoming criminals. They were all simply unremorseful moral degenerates; this is what led to their demise at the hands of the law.

Biro developed the fan favorite "Mr. Crime" to serve as the narrator who introduced and commented on each story. Since there were no recurring characters, the role of Mr. Crime was important as it was the only element that tied the stories together. Something of a precursor to **EC**'s Crypt Keeper, Mr. Crime was a ghoulish figure with a top hat and fangs. He was essentially crime incarnate and was constantly on the lookout for "new talent" and referred to the criminals in the stories as his pupils.

Crime Does Not Pay was edited and drawn by Biro, but as the title developed many other artists, including Rudy Palais, Fred Guardineer, George Tuska, Bob Fujitani, and Dan Barry, were brought in and proved capable of rendering hard edged, realistic violence the way Biro intended. Biro was successful in making *Crime Does Not Pay* not only the first comic book of its kind, but one of the best-selling newsstand publications of all time. Ultimately *Crime Does Not Pay* met its end as a result of such books as **Fredric Wertham's** *Seduction of the Innocent* and the investigations of the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency. The sanitized *Crime Does Not Pay* lasted only a few issues and was cancelled in 1955.

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John F. Weinzierl

CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS. A 12-issue maxi-series published by **DC Comics** in 1985, *Crisis on Infinite Earths* was written by **Marv Wolfman** and penciled by **George Pérez** (with inking by Mike DeCarlo, Dick Giordano and Jerry Ordway). Planned earlier but released to mark the company's 50th anniversary, the series sought to revise and calibrate the entire fictional universe in which DC **superhero** comics took place, streamlining the company's previously confusing parallel universes and multiple earths. By in effect starting over, DC rendered many of its "pre-Crisis" characters and storylines "unofficial," and sought to welcome new, presumably more mature readers to relaunched narratives that no longer demanded extensive background knowledge. While the attempt to erase or ask fans to simply forget decades of DC stories was perhaps always doomed to failure, the popular success of the series ironically inspired subsequent company-wide "crises" that would regularly shake things up at both DC and **Marvel**. Indeed, as Geoff Klock emphasized, "The irony of *Crisis* was that its methodology, in simplifying continuity, was used to make superhero comics all the more complex, convoluted, and rich: any attempt at simplifying continuity into something streamlined, clear, and direct . . . only results in another layer of continuity." As Klock's study of mainstream comics in its wake shows, the legacy of *Crisis* has been the exact opposite of its intentions: "Retroactive changes, re-imaginings, reinterpretations, revisiting origins, and revisions became major storytelling tools" of superhero comics only after DC's attempt to control their proliferation (21).

The roots of the ambitious *Crisis* project lay in a groundbreaking **Silver Age** story, "Flash of Two Worlds," written by Gardner Fox under influential editor Julius Schwartz, for *the **Flash*** #123 (September 1961), which introduced the concept of the "multiverse" to DC comics when Silver Age Flash, Barry Allen, met **Golden Age** Flash, Jay Garrick, on the parallel world subsequently designated Earth-Two; the story thus provided a narrative explanation for the publication history of the same character (with different identities) in two eras. The popularity of the story encouraged the revival of other Golden Age characters for regular encounters with current characters, especially in annual "crossovers" of the Silver Age **Justice League of America** and the Golden Age **Justice Society of America**, starting in *Justice League of America* #21 and #22 (1963) with "Crisis on Earth-One!" and the follow-up "Crisis on Earth-Two!" However, 20 years later the proliferation of "infinite" earths, populated by multiple versions of even major figures like **Superman**, led to confusion and the need for clarification, especially as comics writers and long-term fans began to increasingly rely on the notion of "continuity" (only loosely adhered to by earlier writers) to link most of the comics produced by the company into a vast text of interconnected narratives.

While DC had frequently employed "team-ups" and "cross-overs" to link characters and storylines (and to increase sales of less popular titles through "guest appearances" by more popular characters), the plan to clean up decades of increasingly convoluted explanations and narrative contradictions demanded a story that would fix the chronology of dozens of titles, including hundreds of characters, published by the company over the past half century. Wolfman's considerable achievement was to trace a coherent narrative thread centered around new characters (free of the weight of past stories)—the Monitor and Anti-Monitor, representatives of cosmic order and chaos; Harbinger, the Monitor's space-and-time-traveling aide; and Pariah, a scientist from a doomed parallel universe forced to witness the destruction of subsequent universes—through what might have simply been an encyclopedic summary of the fates of major and minor characters. As the Anti-Monitor begins to destroy earths (an act that resembles blank pages, the ultimate horror in a comic book), Harbinger recruits DC's pantheon of heroes to help save at least one of these, and at least one incarnation of major characters. Recognizing that the collapse of the multiverse into a single Earth would require the elimination of many older storylines, Wolfman made the most of what was then a relatively rare decision in mainstream comics: to kill prominent, popular characters. Most boldly, the deaths of Barry Allen, the Silver Age Flash (in #8) and Supergirl Kara Zor-El (in #7) made good on the promise to dramatically alter the DC universe, and genuinely shocked and moved fans, who were not yet jaded by the regular killing and resurrection of characters in mainstream comics. Wolfman's ability to locate such moments within a sweeping tour through the entire DC universe was perfectly matched by the drawings of Pérez, who was already known for his ability to pack dozens of recognizable characters into single panels, and to weave telling details into graphic representations of epic battles.

Despite DC's best efforts to impose and maintain order on its creations, subtle resistance to the revised narrative arose quickly: DC launched the series *Secret Origins* (1986) with the well-known story of "the original" Golden Age Superman, which it claimed had passed "from the collective memory of virtually all mankind," whereas the problem was of course exactly the opposite. Alan Brennert's poignant Deadman story "Should Auld Acquaintance Be Forgot," which slipped quietly into the holiday special *Christmas with the Super-Heroes* 2 (1988), dared to suggest that the demand to simply forget the existence of Supergirl might be unenforceable. By 1990, when, in issue #24 of his radical revision of *Animal Man*, **Grant Morrison** retrieved the banished Psycho Pirate, "the only character in the DC universe who remembers the multiverse that existed before the events of *Crisis on Infinite Earths*," the "pre-Crisis" DC universe had roared back with a vengeance, as writers increasingly made continuity and its creative possibilities a central narrative device rather than a guiding rule for organizing their stories. By the time of the miniseries *Zero Hour: Crisis in Time* (1994) a renewed attempt by the company to simplify its narratives seemed desperate, and fodder for later writers to undermine. Later DC series have also echoed *Crisis on Infinite Earths* in style and title: ***Identity Crisis*** (2004), *Infinite Crisis* (2005–6), and *Final Crisis* (2008) all echo the original series even as they undermine its efforts. Indeed, writers like Morrison,

in series like 52 (2006–7), have welcomed the return of the multiverse, reveling in, rather than resisting, the dizzying complications and contradictions it brought back into play.

Notably, *Crisis* motivated both DC and comics fandom to produce a series of published guidebooks and annotations for the series, a practice regularly taken up ever since (especially on the Internet) for any series with dense references to previous continuity. On the heels of the last issue of the series, Wolfman and Pérez produced a *History of the DC Universe* (2 issues, 1986, later reprinted in a single volume) that summed up the streamlined continuity as narrated by Harbinger. With DC's approval, in 1986 ICG (Independent Comics Group) also published two comic books, written by Lou Mougin and **Mark Waid**, that were extensive reference works for the series: *The Official Crisis on Infinite Earths Index* and *The Official Crisis on Infinite Earths Cross-Over Index*. (Waid, just beginning a prolific career writing and editing superhero comics, had already provided a detailed preview of the series in the fan magazine *Amazing Heroes* 66, in 1985.) These unashamedly scholarly resources were later incorporated into the 2005 *Compendium*, which was included with the *Absolute Edition* of *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, DC's elaborately reproduced edition of the series.

Selected Bibliography: Klock, Geoff. *How to Read Superhero Comics and Why*. New York: Continuum, 2003.

Corey K. Creekmur

CROW, THE. A graphic novel by artist and writer James O'Barr, *The Crow* is probably now best known as the basis for Alex Proyas's 1994 film starring Brandon Lee. Originally published by Caliber Comics of Detroit in a comic book series, the book was collected in three trade paperbacks by Tundra in Northampton, Massachusetts, and then released as a graphic novel. The story is a revenge fantasy in which Eric Draven and his new bride are killed in their Detroit apartment by a vicious gang of inner city criminals. Draven returns from death, accompanied by a spirit helper in the form of a crow, to exact revenge. O'Barr conceived of the series after his fiancée was killed by a drunk driver. An orphan raised by adoptive, working-class parents, O'Barr exhibited artistic talent at a young age, and was also an excellent student who attended Wayne State University as a pre-med major. A voracious reader of everything from **science fiction** to symbolist poets, O'Barr also loved comics, and drew science fiction and **Conan**-inspired sword and sorcery comic stories before The Crow. Although O'Barr himself was not inspired by it, the Goth subculture embraced his novel, both before and after it was adapted into a film. Cyberpunk science fiction and screenplay writer John Shirley brought the book to the attention of Hollywood. Subsequently, the tragic accidental shooting death of Lee during the filming brought massive public attention to the film, which was relatively well-received by critics for what had been considered a cult film. Indeed, the visual inventiveness of the film brought Proyas, an unknown at the time, to Hollywood stardom.



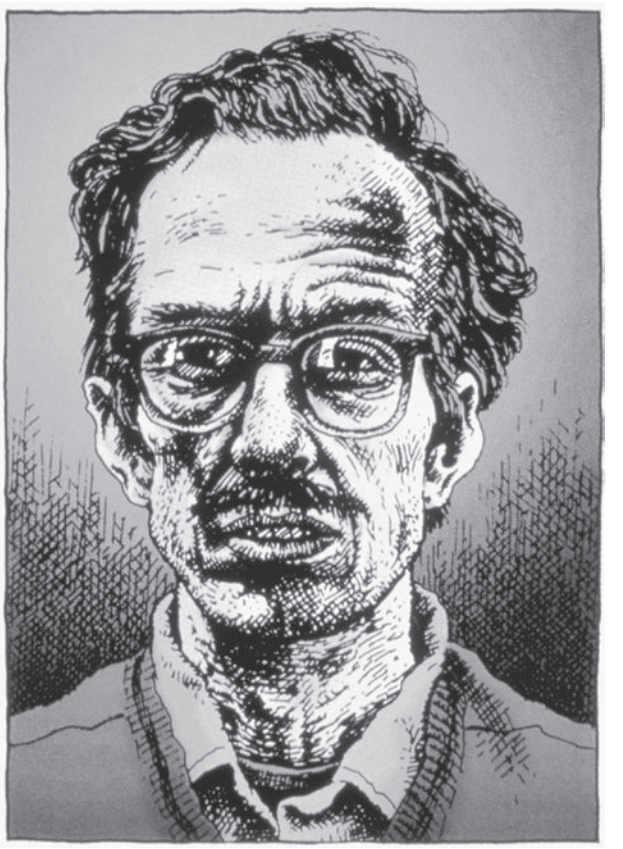
Brandon Lee as Eric Draven, in the 1994 film *The Crow*, directed by Alex Proyas. Buena Vista/Photofest

O'Barr began drawing *The Crow* comics when he was stationed in Germany as a member of the U.S. Marines, still attempting to cope with his girlfriend's senseless death. The comics would not be published until 1989, but they became an immediate success, setting new sales records for black-and-white comics and helping to open bookstores to black-and-white graphic novels aimed at adults. O'Barr's Crow has been cited as an inspiration for **Neil Gaiman**'s reboot of **DC's Sandman** character, and his heavily toned and crosshatched artwork inspired countless imitators. O'Barr's own artistic sources included **Will Eisner's** graphic novels (the book includes an homage, a sign for Eisner Glass), **manga**, and the **EC horror** and science fiction comics. O'Barr declined to produce a sequel to *The Crow*, but oversaw series of other Crow comics produced by **Kitchen Sink Press** and **Image Comics** by other artists and writers.

Christopher Couch

CRUMB, ROBERT (1943–). Robert Crumb (a.k.a R. Crumb) is the leading creator of **underground comics** and one of the most prolific, controversial, and influential artists in the history of American comics. At first closely associated with the late 1960s counterculture through work for underground newspapers and comic books such as ***Zap***, Crumb has continued an active career for half a century, producing and contributing to an astonishing number of publications, including his magazine ***Weirdo*** (1981–93). In addition to his own often autobiographical comics, he has illustrated work by other writers, including stories for **Harvey Pekar's *American Splendor***. Since the late 1970s, he has regularly collaborated on comics with his second wife Aline Kominsky-Crumb

(1948–) chronicling their marriage and the raising of their daughter Sophie (1981–) in the South of France, where they have lived since the late 1980s.



Self-portrait of Robert Crumb (1986). Sony Pictures Classics/Photofest

Born in Philadelphia, as children Crumb and his brothers created their own comics, inspired by Disney and other **funny animal** publications. By 1962, while creating greeting cards in Cleveland, Crumb began to submit comic strips and drawings to various publications, including **Harvey Kurtzman's** *Help!* In 1967, Crumb relocated to San Francisco, where he found himself at the epicenter of the countercultural revolution that included young artists who recreated comic books as "**comix**," taboo-breaking works of social **satire** linked to the hippie movement. Crumb became an immediate star, and many of his characters, such as the hipster **Fritz the Cat** and guru Mr. Natural, became key icons of the era. Crucially, Crumb challenged the common view of comics as industrial publications for children: indulging in sexually explicit fantasies, Crumb's comics, in a style echoing earlier eras, fully demonstrated the use of the medium for individual self-expression. The audacity and often brutal honesty of Crumb's work galvanized his peers, whose work led to the explosion of underground comics within which Crumb remained the key figure.

While some of Crumb's comics affirmed the counterculture, his idiosyncratic take on the world also began to emerge: after an animated film was made of *Fritz the Cat*, Crumb killed the character in protest. As his sexual fantasies became more explicit, Crumb's aggressive relationship with the growing women's movement (which he often parodied) was highlighted. His comics, which often centered around the domination of large-legged, big-bottomed women, generated an ongoing debate over Crumb's misogyny (which he has embraced as often as denied). Similarly, Crumb's use of racist stereotypes is sometimes viewed as evidence of his own racism, even though he has also produced respectful tributes to the early African American musicians he admires. While Crumb's ongoing work has remained autobiographical (often in collaboration

with his wife) and controversial, he has also explored a number of historical subjects, often in an increasingly detailed, realistic style, including his illustration of the first books of the Bible.

Since his emergence as a major figure in the late 1960s, Crumb has attained a status shared by few living cartoonists, especially those who have almost never worked in mainstream culture. Most of Crumb's work has been collected in *The Complete Crumb Comics* a 17-volume (to date) series by **Fantagraphics**, supplemented by a 10-volume set of Crumb's *Sketchbooks*. Though now out of date, *The R. Crumb Coffee Table Art Book* (Little, Brown & Co., 1997) offers a solid overview of "Crumb's Whole Career, from Shack to Chateau!" Crumb's work continues to appear in comic books as well as limited-edition publications, and has been the subject of critical studies, guidebooks, museum exhibitions, and two documentary films, Terry Zwigoff's well-received *Crumb* (1994) and an earlier BBC production *The Confessions of Robert Crumb* (1987).

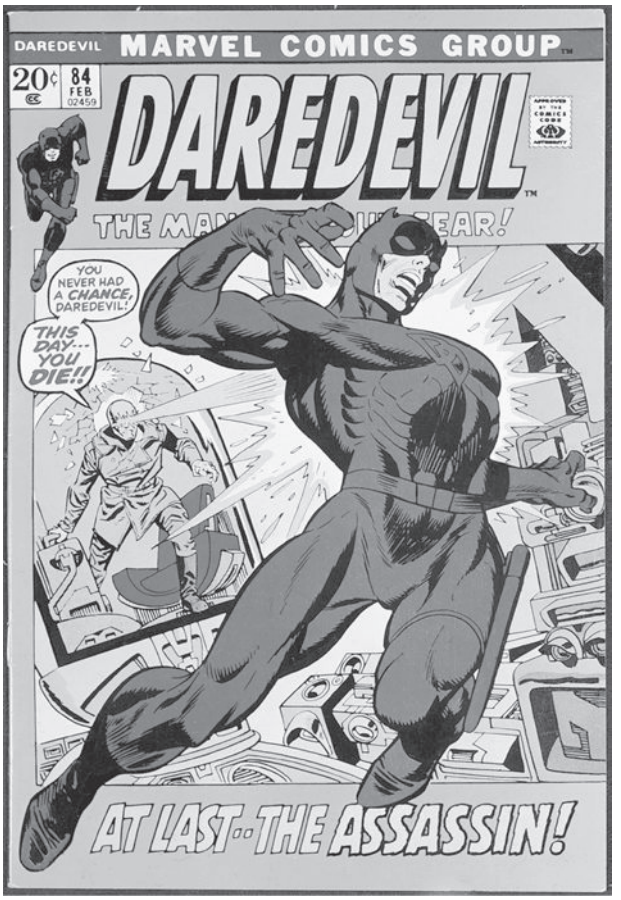
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Corey K. Creekmur



DAREDEVIL. The red-clad, acrobatic alter ego of blind lawyer Matt Murdock is a **Marvel** superhero co-created by **Stan Lee** and Bill Everett for *Daredevil* #1, cover-dated April, 1964. Pushing a man out of the way of a passing truck, Murdock loses his eyesight when some of the truck's cargo spills on his face. At the same time, however, the radioactive fluid grants him super-acute senses of smell and touch, as well as superhuman hearing—which also endows him with a highly sophisticated "radar sense." Despite never being one of Marvel's best-sellers except for brief periods, the series has been in continuous publication ever since and reached its 500th issue in 2009. The property was made into a Hollywood film starring Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner in 2003. Marvel's Daredevil is not to be confused with the character of the same name who appeared in Lev Gleason's comic books in the 1940s and 1950s.

"I wanted something for Bill Everett to do," Lee recalls his impetus for Daredevil's creation. Recognizing that it was the flawed nature of Marvel characters such as **Spider-Man** and the **Fantastic Four** that readers found appealing, Lee was looking for another hero with a "flaw." He says he was nervous at first to introduce a superhero who could not see, for fear of offending blind people. Those fears soon turned out to be unfounded, however, as Lee says that he began receiving letters from charities reporting of blind people who loved the idea of a blind superhero. Everett left the series after the first issue. He was followed, in quick succession, by pencillers Joe Orlando, **Wally Wood**, Bob Powell and **John Romita, Sr.** With *Daredevil* #20 finally released in 1966, artist **Gene Colan** began a run that lasted for almost seven years, until issue #100—but even after Colan left, he has occasionally returned for shorter stints and guest shots, most recently in 2007. Lee, meanwhile, continued writing the series until issue #50.



Daredevil, issue #84, released February 1972, penciled by artist Gene Colan who worked on the series from 1966 to 1973. Marvel Comics Group/Photofest

In early issues, Daredevil is a swashbuckling hero who uses a line extending from his modified billy club to swing around the cityscapes of Manhattan and keeps up his witty banter, not at all unlike Spider-Man; among his first antagonists, incidentally, are the Spider-Man villains Electro and Ox. However, *Daredevil* also introduced its share of new villains early on: The ganglord calling himself The Owl is equipped with razor-sharp claws and a mechanism that allows him to fly; the Purple Man's skin produces a substance that lets everybody in proximity do his bidding; Mr. Fear's preferred weapon is his "fear gas," which causes fear and panic in his victims; the Stilt-Man uses mechanical stilts to outgrow and stomp on his adversaries; and the Gladiator is the owner of a costume shop, but has delusions of being an arena warrior in ancient Rome, bearing a menacing pair of buzz saws. As Murdock, meanwhile, Daredevil has been accompanied by his own cast of supporting characters. Notably, *Daredevil* #1 introduces Murdock's hapless law-firm associate and best friend Franklin "Foggy" Nelson, as well as their beautiful secretary Karen Page, only the first of many romantic interests for the protagonist.

In 1979, the series was joined by a creator whose work would go on to define the character for decades to come: **Frank Miller** arrived with *Daredevil* #158, as a penciller at first, drawing the book alongside writer Roger McKenzie and inker Klaus Janson. With issue #168, Miller became the writer. In his first issue, he introduced Elektra, a dark-haired femme fatale Murdock had dated during his college years, who is now a deadly ninja assassin. Miller also took existing characters and imbued them with new dimensions and depth. He put his stamp on the villain Bullseye, a psychopathic killer who can turn any object into a deadly weapon, as well as on investigative reporter Ben Urich, who, in Miller's hands, quickly became one of the most compelling supporting characters in comics. Notably, Miller also "stole"

the corpulent, bald-headed Kingpin, created by Lee and Romita as a Spider-Man villain, and made him Daredevil's arch-nemesis. Formerly a crimelord who used his massive proportions to trounce his enemies, the Kingpin was now a brutal, Machiavellian schemer, perfectly at home in the hard-boiled film noir setting Miller had been shaping the series into; and Murdock himself was established as a Catholic by Miller.

Miller's influences at the time included the work of his predecessor Jim Shooter and filmmakers Orson Welles and Fritz Lang, but also comics pioneer **Will Eisner**. As interviewer Peter Sanderson put it in a question to Miller in 1981, "[A]part from darkness, shadows, a big city with a lot of crime and seaminess, rain, sewers, torn pieces of paper, a good-humored optimistic hero who often finds himself in funny situations, a former girlfriend who is now on the outside of law, and an arch villain who controls all crime in the city, are there any similarities between your Daredevil and **The Spirit**?"

Whereas most superhero comics at the time were filled with caption boxes narrating the action, Miller's stories applied a much more visual, "cinematic" approach to storytelling. His and Janson's work became increasingly expressionist, reflecting the characters' interior in their surroundings. Miller left *Daredevil* in 1982, after three commercially successful and critically acclaimed years. He has since returned to the character for select projects, notably for the "Born Again" storyline, illustrated by David Mazzucchelli, that ran through issues #227 through #233 in 1986. In it, the Kingpin learns Daredevil's secret identity, given up for drug money by Murdock's former girlfriend Page, whom Miller re-introduced as a porn actress and heroin addict. The Kingpin sets out to tear down Murdock's life, piece by piece, while Miller, in turn, deconstructs the hero, stripping away all the surplus elements and boiling the character down to his essence.

Between 1986 and 1991, Ann Nocenti wrote the series. Her stories, most of which were illustrated by John Romita Jr., continued to be more psychologically slanted than the usual superhero fare of the time. Later writers replicated the surface qualities of Miller's work, but not its spirit. From 1996 through 1998, there was an effort to return the character to his swashbuckling roots, but sales continued to decline even after this reversion to a less grim version.

In 1998, *Daredevil* was relaunched with a new issue #1 by editors Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti. "Guardian Devil," an eight-part storyline written by acclaimed independent filmmaker Kevin Smith and drawn by Quesada, was, in many ways, a sequel to "Born Again." It picked up themes and threads introduced by Miller and successfully recaptured the spirit and urgency of the Miller stories. For the first time in years, *Daredevil* returned to being one of Marvel's best-selling series. Between 2002 and 2009, the title was written first by **Brian Michael Bendis** (with artist Alex Maleev), and later by **Ed Brubaker** (with artist Michael Lark), and both periods remained firmly rooted in the work Miller and Mazzucchelli had done in "Born Again."

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Marc-Oliver Frisch

DARK HORSE COMICS. As one of the major independent comic publishers in the United States, Dark Horse Comics, Inc. was established in 1986 by Mike Richardson. Richardson's company evolved from his previous venture as owner of Pegasus Books, a comic book store in Portland, Oregon. Over the years, the company's strategy has been both profitable and provocative, establishing trends, talent, and styles that would be emulated by other companies, including the larger publishers, **Marvel Comics** and **DC Comics**.

While Paul Chadwick's ***Concrete*** (1988) proved to be the first critical success for the company within its first year, Dark Horse Comics' impact on market share emerged by the end of the 1980s and throughout the 1990s as it picked up several popular intellectual property licenses from previously established **science fiction** and **fantasy** franchises. These included *Aliens*, *Predator*, *Star Wars*, *Terminator*, *Conan* and many others. Each newly-launched series developed the franchise's mythology, telling more stories and creating new characters and plotlines that often picked up where the movies or books ended. Dark Horse was able to widen interest among readers as it pulled several crossovers including the popular *Aliens vs. Predator* series, which would later spawn two movies. Just as often, these comics work to bridge gaps within the narrative universes of franchises. For example, **Joss Whedon** has relied on Dark Horse to expand the universes created in his television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Firefly*.

In tandem with these celebrated series, Dark Horse has also produced numerous new series that have proved popular among readers, including ***Grendel*** (1992), ***Hellboy*** (1994), *Oh My Goddess!* (1994) and *The Goon* (2003). Along the way, Dark Horse also began translating and reprinting several popular **manga** series including *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), ***Lone Wolf and Cub*** (2000), and *Akira* (2000). The company has been a breeding ground for creators' new and dynamic ideas. **Frank Miller** (***Daredevil, Batman: Dark Knight Returns***) published his ***Sin City*** series starting in ***Dark Horse Presents*** #51 (1991) and also teamed up with **Dave Gibbons** (***Watchmen***) for a miniseries called *Martha Washington: Give me Liberty* (1991), which spawned several sequels over the next decade.

By 1992, Dark Horse Comics expanded its company into other realms of entertainment, including several subsidiaries such as Dark Horse Entertainment (1992) to deal with its film and television properties, DarkHorse.com (1995) to provide a presence on the web, M Press and DH Press (2004) for non-comic book publications, and Dark Horse Indie (2005) to produce independent films. During this time, Dark Horse released several movie adaptations including *The Mask* (1994), *Timecop* (1994), ***Mystery Men*** (1999), *Hellboy* (2004), *Sin City* (2005), and several others. In July, 2007,

Dark Horse joined forces with the social networking site, MySpace.com, to relaunch its first series *Dark Horse Presents* as *MySpace Dark Horse Presents*, an exclusive online and ongoing web-comic anthology featuring new and rising talent. Collections of these web-comics are later released as bound books. In recent years, Dark Horse has also acquired the rights to republish old serial comic publications including **Tarzan** and Little Lulu. The strength of Dark Horse Comics lies in its ability to diversify its interests. It does toy with **superheroes**, but that alone does not sustain or represent the publisher.

Lance Eaton

DARK HORSE PRESENTS. *Dark Horse Presents* was an anthology series published by **Dark Horse Comics** from July 1986 to issue #157, Sept 2000. The series featured various Dark Horse publications and properties. The content in *DHP* reflected the varied publication history of Dark Horse Comics.

Dark Horse Comics began in 1986 during the independent "Black and White explosion" (named because majority of the material was printed in Black and White). This era (not to be confused with the breakout of **Image Comics** in the mid 1990s) saw the advent of various independent creators and publishing houses thanks to direct marketing of books to comic retailers and independent book sellers.

DHP was the publisher's first publication and showcases the work of independent creators. The early years of *DHP* are most notable for featuring Paul Chadwick's ***Concrete***; a comic about the adventures of an otherwise normal individual whose brain is encased in an alien body similar in substance to concrete. The success of *Concrete* led to a continuing series of the same name. Another *DHP* fan favorite was *Boris the Bear*, a satirical take on the current comic book and superhero related fads of the day. Other characters featured in the early *DHP* issues were The Mask (introduced as the Masque), Flaming Carrot, and the American.

By 1988, Dark Horse looked to diversify its publications content beyond independent artists, seeking out licensing agreements with established characters and properties from other forms of media. *DHP* began to feature Twentieth Century Fox motion picture properties beginning with *Aliens* (issue #24, November 1988), *Predator* (issue #35), and finally *Alien vs. Predator* (issue #36). These Fox franchise titles would eventually branch off into their own respective series, miniseries, and specials. With the success of the *Aliens* and *Predator* franchises, *DHP* continued to feature a mix of independent and studio licensed properties such as **Joss Whedon**'s *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*. DHP also featured other established cross-media properties such as ***Tarzan*** and *The Terminator* (based on the James Cameron movie).

By the early 1990s, Dark Horse had an established reputation as a publisher of independent work, preceding the Image Comics revolution a few years later. *DHP* would feature early appearances of **John Byrne**'s *Next Men* (#54), Art Adams's *Monkeyman & O'Brien* (#80), **Mike Mignola**'s *Hellboy* (88–91), Evan Dorkin's *Milk and Cheese* (#100, 101), and Shannon Wheeler's *Too Much Coffee Man* (#95). Possibly the most notable feature in DHP was **Frank Miller**'s neo-noir style ***Sin City*** work

beginning with issue #51 in 1991 and lasting to issue #62 (in which the entire issue was devoted to this title). The first series of DHP was canceled in 2000.

In 2007, *MySpace Dark Horse Presents* (*MDHP*) began as an exclusively on-line monthly title, with content later available in collected trade paperback editions. *MDHP* again spotlights independent creators as well as established names.

D. R. Hammontree

DARK KNIGHT RETURNS, THE. *The Dark Knight Returns* (1986) is one of the most influential **Batman** stories ever written, as well as a landmark in comics writing in general. **Frank Miller**'s re-imagining of **DC Comics**' icons Batman and his alter-ego Bruce Wayne, **Superman,** the Joker, and even **Green Arrow** established the tone and character of DC Comics in general and of Batman specifically for the two decades since its publication. Originally released as a four-part miniseries from March to June 1986, *The Dark Knight Returns* tells the story of a middle-aged Bruce Wayne who is unable to accept his life after Batman. Following an escalating wave of violent crimes perpetrated by the **Mutant** gang, Wayne reassumes the mantle of Batman to fight for Gotham City.

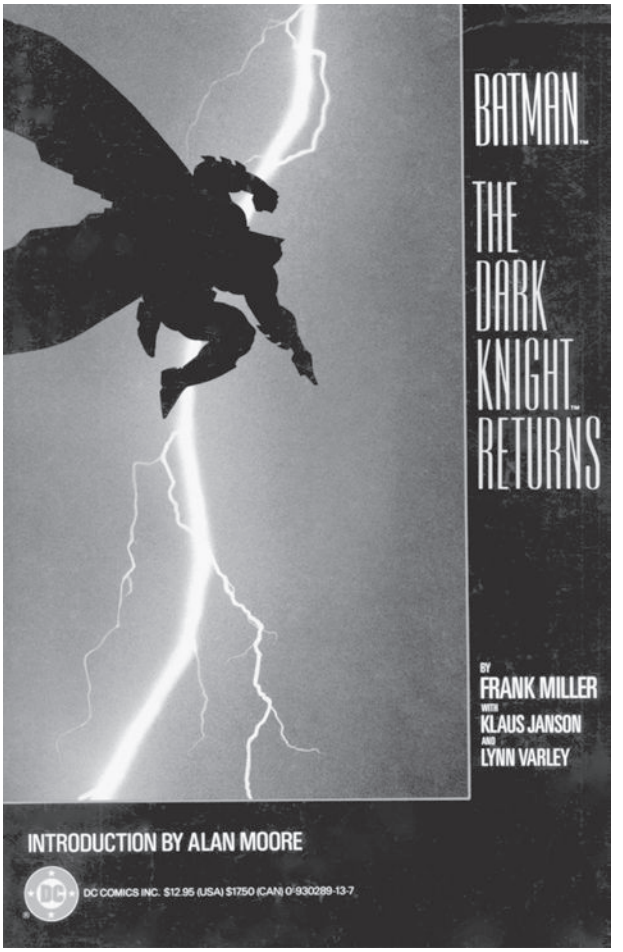
Set in a dystopian Gotham some 10 years after Batman's retirement, the first installment (also titled "The Dark Knight Returns") chronicles the initial challenges faced by a much older Batman attempting to deal with a different world than the one he left. Diminished physical abilities and a changed political climate serve mainly as a backdrop for Batman to hunt and capture one of his classic foes, Two-Face.

The next installment, "The Dark Knight Triumphant" pits Batman head-on against the Mutant gang, which he manages largely to eliminate. The Mutant leader, younger and in far better physical condition, hands the aging Dark Knight a severe beating, from which he is rescued by the intervention of 13-year-old Carrie Kelly, who becomes the new Robin. Learning from this encounter that he can no longer "fight like a young man," Batman arranges for the Mutant leader to escape from prison, and challenges him to a fight in front of the remaining members of the Mutant gang. After defeating their leader, Batman becomes the new icon for the Mutant gang, who now call themselves the "Sons of Batman" and fight crime in his name.

In "Hunt the Dark Knight" Batman faces his arch-nemesis the Joker, who awakes from his catatonic state in **Arkham Asylum** upon hearing of Batman's return. Following the Joker's killing sprees on a late-night talk show and at the Gotham Fair, Batman finally resolves to break his vow against killing and breaks the Joker's neck. Ultimately unable to bring himself to kill even his most deadly and deranged enemy, Batman merely paralyzes the Joker, who manages somehow to kill himself by worsening his neck injury. The police force, now headed by Ellen Yindel after James Gordon's retirement, arrives just in time to find Batman standing over the Joker's corpse.

"The Dark Knight Falls" finds Batman hunted by not only the police, but also by the United States government, which sends **Superman** to apprehend his old friend for breaking a vaguely discussed truce between the government and **superheroes**. The

resulting showdown between DC's two flagship heroes ends when Batman, using superior intellect and strategy, defeats Superman, and then lapses into a death-like coma caused by chemicals of his own devising. Robin and the remaining Sons of Batman dig him up later, and they retire to the caves beneath the now-destroyed Wayne manor to begin planning and training for new campaigns against crime and injustice.



Batman: The Dark Knight Returns, story and art by Frank Miller (1986). DC Comics Inc./Photofest

Although its narrative occurs outside of the established DC continuity, *The Dark Knight Returns* helped establish a grittier, darker style of comics that would prevail, not only in DC's various Batman titles, but in the industry as a whole. Frank Miller's noir tone greatly influenced major Batman writers like **Jeph Loeb** and **Chuck Dixon**. It also paved the way for events like the death of the second Robin, Jason Todd, as well as Barbara Gordon's/Batgirl's paralysis and brutalizing at the hands of the Joker. The dark, nightmarish Gotham City of *The Dark Knight Returns* greatly influenced the look of both Tim Burton's and Christopher Nolan's Batman films, particularly Nolan's *Batman Begins*, which very self-consciously adapted scenes from Miller's *Batman: Year One*.

Along with **Alan Moore's *Watchmen***, which appeared the same year, *The Dark Knight Returns* also contributed to a growing unease with the traditional representations of superheroes in popular culture. Miller's Batman remains a dedicated crimefighter, but Miller's narrative also questions just how much Batman may be responsible for inspiring the various criminals he opposes, such as the Joker, Two-Face, or even the Mutant gang. His willingness to ignore the law and endanger a young girl as his sidekick casts all of his triumphs in a somewhat unstable light.

Miller seems to reserve most of his criticism, however, for Superman, who appears as a naïve and somewhat bumbling "yes" man, now become the tool of American hegemony. Seeming to represent America itself, Superman takes orders from a very Ronald

Regan-esque president and fights Russian troops and other communist armies in Third World countries, evoking United States **Cold War** activities in the Middle East and in Central and South America. In a moment chillingly prophetic of the September 11th terrorist attacks, conflicts between the United Sates and its Cold War opponents result in a plane crashing into one of Gotham City's twin towers.

The artwork of *The Dark Knight Returns* serves as well as the narrative to question the traditional superhero story. Miller's stylized penciling, Klaus Johnson's inking, and Lynn Varley's pale coloring suggest the ugly world hidden behind the historically bright colors and clean lines of comic-book artwork, hinting at a disturbing world always lying beneath the bright and upright adventures of superheroes.

Miller has written several other Batman stories in the vein of *The Dark Knight Returns*. His *Batman: Year One* (1987) retells Batman's origins, and details his early successes and mistakes. *The Dark Knight Strikes Again* (2001–2), the sequel to his original masterpiece, finds Batman reuniting the **Justice League of America** to fight global dictators Lex Luthor and Brainiac. The ongoing series *All Star Batman and Robin*, which debuted in 2005, reintroduces Robin and seems even more than *Batman: Year One* to set the stage for the events of *The Dark Knight Returns* and *The Dark Knight Strikes Again*.

Grant Bain

DAVIS, ALAN (1956–). Alan Davis is a British comics artist and writer. He is best known for drawing **Marvel** UK's "Captain Britain" strip alongside writer **Alan Moore** and for co-creating the **X-Men** spin-off *Excalibur* with **Chris Claremont**. Davis is renowned for his storytelling skills and his clean, robust pencil style in the mainstream superhero tradition of John Buscema and **Neal Adams**.

Davis's first professional work, pencils and inks for the "Captain Britain" strip, was published in 1981, in Marvel UK's *Marvel Super Heroes* #377. Davis had been recruited by editor and fellow creator Paul Neary, who became his mentor. In 1982, Davis was joined on the strip by writer Moore, resulting in a critically acclaimed three-year run. In 1985, Davis stayed on for a new *Captain Britain* series, initially written by Jamie Delano. Between 1982 and 1987, he worked on a number of comics for various British publishers, also providing scripts for some of them. Among others, Davis also drew the Moore strips "Marvelman" in **Quality Comics**' *Warrior* and "DR & Quinch" in Fleetway's *2000AD*.

Davis's first published work in the United States appeared in **DC Comics'** ***Batman*** *and the Outsiders* in 1985. Davis left the series along with writer Mike W. Barr to work on ***Detective Comics*** in 1987, but quit after a few months, later citing "editorial differences." Davis has since returned to DC for various projects, notably drawing the 1990 special *Batman: Full Circle*, writing and drawing the 1998 miniseries *JLA: The Nail* and its 2004 sequel *JLA: Another Nail*, and illustrating the 2001 miniseries *Superboy's Legion*.

Thanks to writer Chris Claremont's urging, Davis had drawn stray issues of Marvel's ***New Mutants*** and *Uncanny X-Men* since 1985. After leaving DC in 1987,

he co-created *Excalibur* with Claremont, a series uniting Captain Britain with several X-Men characters in a U.K.-based superhero group. Davis left *Excalibur* in 1989, but returned to the title as its writer and artist from 1991 to 1993. In 1994, Davis invented *ClanDestine* for Marvel, a series about a British family of **superheroes** that he wrote and drew. However, due to disputes with editorial, he left after only eight issues. In 1995, Davis committed to work for other publishers, but much of it was derailed before publication. In 1997, he returned to Marvel, relaunching ***Fantastic Four*** with writer Scott Lobdell. From 1998 through 2000, Davis wrote both *Uncanny X-Men* and *X-Men*, also drawing the latter. In 2004, he reunited with Claremont for another year-long stint on *Uncanny X-Men*. Other Marvel projects in the 2000s include a brief run drawing ***Avengers***, as well as writing and drawing the miniseries ***Killraven***, *Fantastic Four: The End* and, returning to his 1994 creation, *ClanDestine*.

Recent updates on Davis's web site suggest that medical complications in his wrist resulting from an accident at the age of 13 are affecting his work, but Davis refers to his condition as "more of an annoyance than a disability." As of May 2009, he continues work on several Marvel projects.

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Marc-Oliver Frisch

DC COMICS. Perhaps the oldest continuing publisher of comic books in the world, DC Comics is the publishing home of some of the most important characters in American pop culture, such as **Superman**, **Batman**, **Wonder Woman**, and others. Currently owned by the media conglomerate Time Warner, DC operates under a variety of imprints and publishes a diverse line of comic books and graphic novels.

The company now known as DC Comics was founded in 1934 as National Allied Publications by Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, a cavalry veteran, adventurer, and pulp writer. National, as it was then known, published titles such as *New Fun* (later ***More Fun***) and *New Comics* that showcased original comic strips. Wheeler-Nicholson was only a modestly successful businessman, so he sought outside assistance for funding to expand his publishing line to a third title. This outside help was in the form of Harry Donnenfeld and Jack Liebowitz, who operated Independent News, a pulp magazine publisher and distributor. Together, in 1937, they published the first issue of ***Detective Comics***, and formed a separate business partnership, Detective Comics, Inc., to publish it. Before long, Wheeler-Nicholson sold out his share of ownership in Detective Comics, Inc., as well as National Allied Publications, leaving Donnenfeld and Liebowitz in charge. For much of its history, DC was an independent company, largely owned by Leibowitz and Donnenfeld. In 1967, DC was purchased by Kinney National

Services, which subsequently purchased Warner Brothers in 1969, and formed Warner Communications in 1972, with DC as a subsidiary.

The years leading up to World War II were crucial years for National Allied Publications and Detective Comics, Inc. Donnenfeld and Liebowitz consolidated the ownership of both companies into a single publishing entity, National Comics. By 1940, National began branding its books with a precursor of its familiar bullet logo reading "A DC Publication." After consolidating the companies, however, the company was referred to as Detective Comics, or DC.

In mid-1938, DC issued the first number of a title that was to become an unexpected runaway hit: ***Action Comics***, featuring the debut of Superman, created by **Jerry Siegel** and **Joe Schuster**. The release of *Action Comics* #1 inaugurated what collectors refer to as the **Golden Age** of comics. The success of Superman as a character was largely a product of young comics readers promoting the book via word-of-mouth. By mid-1939, National hoped to recreate the success of Superman by soliciting a young creator, **Bob Kane**, to create a similar costumed hero. The result of this was Batman, whose first appearance was in *Detective Comics* #27.

The popularity of Superman and Batman inspired a flood of imitators and super-powered characters in comic books. Inspired by the success of Superman and Batman, another veteran of periodical publishing, Martin Goodman, founded **Timely Comics** in 1939. Timely Comics published unique characters such as Human Torch, Submariner, and **Captain America**, and would later be known as **Marvel Comics**. Other publishers, however, tested National's protective attitude toward its copyrights. Victor Fox, an accountant at DC, supposedly took note of the profitability of Superman and quickly left the company to start a rival publisher with a similar character, Fox Comics. Fox contracted with **Will Eisner**'s Eisner-Iger studio to create the title *Wonder Comics*, featuring the **superhero** Wonder Man. Donnenfeld and Liebowitz, alarmed by what they felt were excessive similarities to their character Superman, successfully filed a legal injunction preventing the character from appearing again.

Although the lawsuit against Fox Comics was swiftly resolved in DC's favor, it was the precursor to a longer and more controversial legal battle between DC and Fawcett Publications, over the character **Captain Marvel**, created by C. C. Beck. DC's lawsuit against Fawcett would eventually succeed; however the legal battle, which started in 1941, would last over a decade. DC asserted again that Captain Marvel infringed on its own Superman. Fawcett, however, was profiting from the character and was seen as a new publishing rival for DC. Fawcett fought the lawsuit until it became unprofitable to do so and ultimately lost his legal battles with DC.

After World War II, DC continued to expand its operations. In 1946 DC purchased ***All-American Comics***, a publishing operation founded by DC's Jack Liebowitz and publisher Max C. Gaines. Prior to this, *All-American* and DC operated as an informal partnership between separate companies, and many readers were unaware that the two companies were separate. Max Gaines left the partnership to found **EC Comics**, while the consolidation of DC and *All-American* brought in characters such as **Green**

Lantern, **The Flash**, **Wonder Woman**, and the **Justice Society of America**. DC consolidated other areas of their publishing and distribution ventures, ultimately creating one company, National Periodical Publications, although it continued to publish books as DC.

Through the late 1940s and early 1950s, comics were coming under scrutiny from public health authorities, such as Dr. **Fredric Wertham**, whose book *Seduction of the Innocent* would ultimately lead to a public backlash against comics, which included public hearings led by U.S. Senator Estes Kefauver, devoted to pursuing the question as to whether comic books—specifically **crime** and **horror** comics—inspire juvenile delinquency in children. DC escaped heavy scrutiny, although the company did face some negative criticism. Wertham specifically refers to the characters Wonder Woman, Batman, and Robin as potential negative influences on children in *Seduction of the Innocent*. DC also came under fire for its hiring of psychological professionals on its advisory board; which, as some accused, amounted to DC paying for psychological authorities to publicly advocate and testify on DC's behalf. With the outcome of the hearings came the creation of the **Comics Code**, which effectively established self-censorship in comic books for decades.

Meanwhile, in 1946, Harry Donnenfeld hired Julius Schwartz to perform editorial and writing duties on several DC titles. Schwartz was an influential voice in **science fiction** and **fantasy** fan culture in the United States. He participated in the publishing of fanzines in the 1930s, and was an agent for, and friend of, noteworthy writers such as Ray Bradbury and the reclusive H. P. Lovecraft. At DC, Schwartz added science fiction titles to the publishing roster such as *Strange Adventures* in 1950 and *Mystery in Space* in 1951. In 1954, Schwartz revived and revamped the original Flash character into a more sleek, modern look for DC's anthology title *Showcase* #4, thus initiating what collectors recognize as the **Silver Age** of comics, which lasts from the 1950s into the 1970s. The Silver Age of comics is significant as the rebirth of popularity for superhero comics after the backlash that led to the establishing of the Comics Code. Schwartz became one of DC's most important editors, eventually becoming the chief editor of all of the *Superman* titles, along with various other titles published by DC.

In 1960, inspired by the 1940s Justice Society of America, DC released ***Justice League of America*** #1. The title attracted readers because it featured virtually all of DC's superhero roster as a unified team. *Justice League of America* was another hot seller for DC, which is rumored to have inspired Martin Goodman of Marvel Comics to respond with his own superhero team title, ***Fantastic Four***.

In the 1970s, comics readers were becoming older and more sophisticated, and were becoming less interested in the campy style of Silver Age comic books. Among DC's attempts to create more realistic, socially relevant content was the *Green Lantern*/***Green Arrow*** run beginning in *Green Lantern* #76. Edited by Julius Schwartz, written by **Dennis O'Neil** and drawn by **Neal Adams**, this series featured the two superheroes' exploration of American culture, including stories about environmentalism, **race** and racism, labor issues and **religion**. One two-issue storyline

dealt with drug abuse, featuring Speedy, Green Arrow's young sidekick, dealing with a heroin addiction.

In the 1980s, DC began publishing influential work by British comics creators who were writing comic books with a refined, literary approach. Among these creators was **Alan Moore**, who revived sales on what was a relatively minor title, *Saga of the* ***Swamp Thing***. Moore wrote the horror title in a way that would be palatable to adult readers, particularly adults who were not lifelong readers of comic books. DC, in response to Moore's success, saw a developing market for gritty, sophisticated adult comic books.

Following the popularity of *Swamp Thing*, Moore planned on using characters acquired by DC from **Charlton Comics** in 1984 for the miniseries ***Watchmen***, illustrated by **Dave Gibbons**, released in 1986. Unfortunately, Moore and Gibbons's proposed storyline would have either killed off or rendered useless all of the Charlton characters Moore planned to use. As a compromise measure, Moore and Gibbons crafted new characters that corresponded to the qualities of the original Charlton characters. Collected as a graphic novel, *Watchmen* remains one of DC's most popular titles, and has been adapted into film by director Zack Snyder.

Also in 1986, writer/artist **Frank Miller**, riding a wave of popularity for his work on Marvel's ***Daredevil***, created a four-issue miniseries exploring Batman in his old age, *Batman:* ***The Dark Knight Returns***. This miniseries captured public attention and was another major seller, both in its individual issues and as a collected paperback sold through traditional bookstores. *The Dark Knight Returns* also touched off a wave of interest in Batman culminating in the 1989 *Batman* film, directed by Tim Burton. Meanwhile, the success of the *Batman* film also stimulated a revived interest in comics as a form of American popular culture since Burton borrowed liberally from the Batman mythos in a retro set design, 1940s-era characters like Vickie Vale and the Joker, and an intensely surreal, manic world view that had been rarely seen since the incursion of the lighter, Silver Age versions of comic heroes in the 1960s.

The year from 1985 to 1986 also featured a major event in continuity for DC superheroes, ***Crisis on Infinite Earths***. Written by **Marv Wolfman** and illustrated by **George Pérez.** *Crisis on Infinite Earths* enabled DC to completely revamp its aging, frequently cumbersome and contradictory continuity to allow for new readers. Whether DC was successful in attracting new readers with this event is unclear, but *Crisis* established a pattern for later DC events such as *Infinite Crisis* and the corporate crossover, ***Avengers/JLA***.

In 1993, in an attempt to capitalize on the success of its adult-themed comic books, DC created a new publishing imprint, Vertigo Comics. Titles that had been previously published under the DC imprint, featuring adult themes such as *Swamp Thing* and the popular ***Sandman*** written by **Neil Gaiman**, were moved to the imprint. Many Vertigo titles have become extremely popular in their collected paperback format, including *Sandman*, *John Constantine:* ***Hellblazer*** (a spinoff from *Swamp Thing*), and ***Preacher***, written by **Garth Ennis** and illustrated by Steve Dillon.

In 1999, DC acquired WildStorm, an independent publisher founded by the artist **Jim Lee**. WildStorm was affiliated with **Image Comics**, a publisher founded in the early 1990s by several artists who sought a publishing vehicle for creator-owned projects. WildStorm's primary titles included series such as *WildC.A.T.S.* and *Gen13*, which were action-oriented superhero titles. Other titles brought in to DC with the acquisition included ***The Authority***, which would have a successful and popular run with writer **Warren Ellis**, and ***Astro City***, a science fiction title by **Kurt Busiek**. After the merger with DC, WildStorm established an imprint, America's Best Comics, devoted solely as a vehicle for projects by Alan Moore including ***Promethea*** and ***League of Extraordinary Gentlemen.***

DC continues to keep pace with current trends in comics publishing. In 2004, DC and WildStorm started CMX, an imprint for **manga.** In 2007 and 2008, DC operated the imprint Minx, which published graphic novels marketed towards primarily female young adult readers, which has since ceased publication. DC also operates Zuda Comics, a web-comics publishing group that also releases books in print form. DC currently claims to publish almost 1,000 issues of comics per year, along with graphic novels, manga, and character **merchandising and licensing.** In September 2009, immediately after it was announced that the media giant Walt Disney Company was acquiring rival Marvel comics, Time-Warner announced a reorganization in which it would take more direct control over DC Comics (refigured as DC Entertainment), overseeing the publishing company under a new division that will report directly to Warner Pictures. **Paul Levitz**, who had been president and publisher at DC since 2002, announced that he was leaving that post to become contributing editor and overall consultant for the newly-formed DC Entertainment and return to his career as a writer of comics. Diane Nelson, formerly head of Warner's direct-to-DVD unit, was named as president of DC Entertainment.

Selected Bibliography: Jones, Gerard. *Men of Tomorrow: Geeks, Gangsters and the Birth of the Comic Book*. New York: Basic Books, 2005.

Robert O'Nale

DC: THE NEW FRONTIER. Written and illustrated by Darwyn Cooke, *DC: The New Frontier* is a six-issue miniseries published by **DC Comics** in 2004 about the dawn of the **Silver Age** of **superheroes** in the late 1950s.

Ostensibly, the plot of the story follows the new heroes of the Silver Age—**The Flash, Green Lantern**, **Green Arrow**, and Martian Manhunter—as they band together to fight a giant living island intent on devouring all life on the planet Earth, but the story is rich with characters and subplots involving classic DC publications such as *The Losers*, *The Challengers of the Unknown*, *Blackhawks*, and ***The Justice Society of America*** as well as historical events and personages from the time period. The plot begins as a hodgepodge of fragmented narratives about different characters, and only slowly brings these disparate threads together for the last climactic battle against the island. The island itself

appears in the first illustrated panel on the first page of the first issue, where a team of soldiers have been sent to extract a scientist carrying vital data, who had crash landed in the Pacific. On the island they encounter prehistoric monsters, manifestations of the island's malevolence, and are wiped out after successfully transporting the scientist's notes off the island. The narrative threads that follow establish the growing distrust between superheroes and the government, as most of the vigilante "mystery men" who fought crime during World War II are hunted down by the police or co-opted as covert agents for government agencies. A lot of *The New Frontier* is dedicated to showing the bristling of ideologies as **Wonder Woman** confronts **Superman** over his complacency to serve the government, The Flash evades capture by the authorities, and Martian Manhunter attempts to hide his extra-terrestrial origin from the rest of the world. Meanwhile, mysterious attacks by dinosaurs become more frequent in coastal areas, and psychic disruptions generated by the island cause more and more people around the world to succumb to madness. The heroes are united as they investigate these occurrences, some, like **Batman** and the Martian Manhunter, by following the ravings of the cults and artists who have been influenced by the island's evil, and some like Superman and Wonder Woman, who are directly attacked by monsters. Meeting at Cape Canaveral, Florida, the heroes form a plan of attack to defeat the island, and under Superman's leadership disregard their ideological clashes for the greater good of humanity. In the ensuing battle, Hal Jordan assumes the mantle of the Green Lantern, having previously been bequeathed a magic power ring from a dying alien but having been unsure of his right to use his new power. Meanwhile, The Flash uses shrinking technology developed by Ray Palmer (later to become the Atom) to destabilize the island molecularly, ending its threat to humanity and ushering in the dawn of a new heroic age.

The title of *The New Frontier* comes from John Fitzgerald Kennedy's acceptance speech to the office of President of the United States in 1960, and is meant to invoke the idealism and hope of that speech. The speech itself ends the story, and is framed by the last few pages of the sixth issue of *DC: The New Frontier*, which depict familiar DC characters and scenes that would appear throughout that decade. The story functions partly as a historical allegory of the Silver Age of comics, which began roughly around 1954 and picked up momentum through the early 1960s. *DC: The New Frontier*'s depiction of government distrust for heroes has a historical analog; for example, in the 1954 hearings about comic book violence held by the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on the Judiciary and prompted by psychologist **Fredric Wertham's** publication of *Seduction of the Innocent*. Similarly, the island's appearance and mode of operation recall those of the demons and supernatural forces in Lovecraftian-style **horror**, one of superhero comic's chief competitors in that time period. The conspicuous absence of superhero stories about the Vietnam or Korean wars is also manifest in the ideological clash between Wonder Woman and Superman: Wonder Woman bristles at the government, which co-opts her for covert missions but ignores her overt message of equal rights to all people and sexes, and she is forced to retire as a spokesperson for America so that she does not expose the government's agenda.

DC: The New Frontier comes at the end of a long line of superhero narratives questioning the place of the superhero in modern society, such as *Squadron Supreme*, ***The Dark Knight Returns***, ***Watchmen***, *The Golden Age*, and ***Kingdom Come***. It owes much of its atmosphere to *The Golden Age*, which also depicted superheroes prosecuted by the government for their vigilantism. The presence of nuclear threats and the covert missions that the superheroes undertake for their government in *The New Frontier* are akin to those in both *The Dark Knight Returns* and *Watchmen*, and its themes of the need for superheroes and what harm they could pose for society are familiar from *Kingdom Come*, yet, *DC: The New Frontier* is deliberately set before all of these other works, and solves its problems not to take a step forward in comics, but as a retrospective of what has already been accomplished by the medium.

Among its historical references, *DC: The New Frontier* includes depictions of Walter Cronkite, Edwards Air Force Base, Edward R. Murrow, and even an extended narrative involving the early civil rights movement. The work itself is rich as both a comic book narrative, and that of a period piece about the 1950s. Cooke himself, whose previous work included animation on the *Batman* and *Superman* animated series of the late 1990s, drew the characters of *DC: The New Frontier* in a style reminiscent of **Jack Kirby**, one of the greatest illustrators and creators during the Silver Age of comics, even dedicating the last issue to him. The series itself won the **Eisner Award** for best finite/limited series in 2005, and the 2006 collected edition *Absolute DC: The New Frontier* won for best reprint graphic album and best publication design in 2007. An animated film, *Justice League: The New Frontier*, produced by Bruce Timm (creator of the aforementioned *Batman* and *Superman* animated series) based off of *DC: The New Frontier* was also released in 2008.

Jackson Jennings

DENNIS THE MENACE. A long-running U.S. comic, not to be confused with the equally long-lived (but very different) British comic of the same title. While working at home in October 1950, cartoonist Hank Ketcham was interrupted by his wife Alice, who burst into his studio to declare, "You're son is a menace!" Their four-year-old son, Dennis Lloyd Ketcham, had "demolished" his room when he was supposed to be napping. Ketcham was inspired by his wife's exasperation to create *Dennis the Menace*, one of the most popular newspaper comics to emerge during the postwar era. The single-panel feature captured the attention of readers during the baby boom years, who could relate to Dennis's mischief and his harried parents' attempts to contain his antics. *Dennis the Menace* debuted in only 16 newspapers on March 12, 1951, but currently appears in more than 1,000 newspapers in 48 countries, and has been translated into 19 languages. In 1952 Ketcham was named the "Outstanding Cartoonist of the Year" by the National Cartoonists Society.

Henry King Ketcham was born in Seattle, Washington in 1920 and dreamed of being a cartoonist from childhood. In 1938, he moved to Hollywood in search of a job in the animation industry. From 1939 to 1942 he found employment at the Walt

Disney Studios where he served as an assistant animator on *Pinocchio*, *Bambi*, *Fantasia*, and many Donald Duck cartoons. During World War II he served in the U.S. Navy and earned extra income as a freelance cartoonist for magazines such as *The Saturday Evening Post*. When the war was over, Ketcham relocated to New York City and soon became a successful magazine cartoonist whose work appeared regularly in *The New Yorker*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Liberty*, and *Collier's*. He was noted for his ability to compose single-panel gags.

Dennis the Menace is a comics feature concentrating upon Dennis Mitchell, a mischievous "five-ana-half" year old boy with tousled blonde hair and an ever-present cowlick. He has button eyes, a freckled face, and is usually seen wearing a striped shirt and overalls. Dennis's constant companion is Ruff, his faithful dog. In creating his comic, Ketcham devised detailed histories for all his characters. Dennis's parents, Henry and Alice Mitchell (who were named after Ketcham and his own wife), were a typical 1950s suburban couple. Henry, who wore horn-rimmed glasses, worked for an aeronautical engineering company; Alice had studied diet and nutrition at a state university but left the workforce to raise her son. The Mitchells were neighbors with George and Martha Wilson, an older childless couple. Mr. Wilson was a retired postal worker. Where Mrs. Wilson adored Dennis, her husband displayed a gruffer attitude towards the boy's shenanigans. Other recurring characters included Joey McDonald, a younger boy who often acts as Dennis' sidekick; Gina Gillotti, a young Italian girl on whom Dennis has a secret crush; and Margaret Wade, a little red-haired girl with glasses whose bossy nature annoys Dennis. This cast was fully developed by the mid-1950s and changed little over the following decades. In 1970, Ketcham attempted to integrate his feature with the inclusion of Jackson, a black boy new to the neighborhood. Unfortunately, Ketcham depicted Jackson in the style of Little Black Sambo in that he had huge lips and wide eyes. Within days of Jackson's debut there were protests from readers around the nation, condemning Ketcham for reviving such a racist stereotype of African Americans. Jackson was soon retired from the feature.

Ketcham's philosophy for *Dennis the Menace* was that the comic should remain positive and upbeat. Dennis is not presented as a malicious or mean-spirited child, but rather as a spunky, curious, all-American boy whose unrestrained vigor often leads him into trouble. While commenting on Dennis's continued popularity, Ketcham remarked, "He makes people smile and laugh when they read his words and see his actions, which expresses an innocence shared universally by five-year-olds. Some things fortunately never change" (Ketcham 2005, xix). The artwork of *Dennis the Menace* further emphasizes Ketcham's philosophy. Long-recognized as one of the most proficient draftsmen in comics, Ketcham meticulously composed his panels and filled them with realistic elements in a seemingly loose and spontaneous style. He was also known for employing numerous assistants over the years to help draw and write gags for Dennis. By the 1990s Ketcham had mostly retired from the feature. Marcus Hamilton was assigned to draw the daily panel and Ron Ferdinand took over the Sunday

page. During this period Ketcham wrote his autobiography, *The Merchant of Dennis*.

Dennis the Menace also found success beyond the newspaper pages. From 1959 to 1963, Jay North starred as Dennis in a popular television situation comedy. More than 50 million Dennis collections and comics have been sold since 1952. In the 1970s a *Dennis and the Bible Kids* comic book series was sold through Christian bookstores. Dennis returned to television in 1986 in a popular animated program. In 1993, a feature film starring Mason Gamble as Dennis and Walter Matthau as Mr. Wilson premiered. It was followed by a direct to video feature, *Dennis the Menace Strikes Again*, starring comedian Don Rickles as Mr. Wilson. *A Dennis the Menace Christmas* followed in 2007 with Robert Wagner as Mr. Wilson.



Jay North as Dennis and Joseph Kearns as Mr. Wilson, from the CBS television series *Dennis the Menace* (1959). CBS/Photofest

While Ketcham portrayed an optimistic world in his comic, his own life was often marked by hardship and tragedy. In 1959, his wife Alice died of a drug overdose. He and his son then moved to Switzerland. Dennis was eventually sent to a Connecticut boarding school and later served a tour of duty in Vietnam. Upon returning from the war, Dennis Ketcham suffered post-traumatic stress disorder and became estranged from his father. Late in life Hank Ketcham claimed to regret having burdened his son when he chose to name his character after him. Hank Ketcham died on June 1, 2001.

Dennis the Menace continues as a popular feature on the comics page. In 2005, **Fantagraphics** Books launched *Hank Ketcham's Complete Dennis the Menace*, a multi-volume series reprinting all of Ketcham's panels. In the forward to the first book, Patrick McDonnell, creator of the comic strip *Mutts*, captures the appeal of Ketcham's creation when he writes, "Dennis has all the qualities of a great comic strip character: innocence, curiosity, and an anarchic free spirit. Dennis was all boy, back when a kid was allowed to be a kid . . . It wasn't a satisfying day if he didn't make a mess—always coming home covered in dirt."

Selected Bibliography: Ketcham, Hank. *Hank Ketcham's Complete Dennis the Menace, 1951–1952*. Vol. 1. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2005.

Charles Coletta

DETECTIVE COMICS. *Detective Comics* is the longest continuously published comic book in American history and is best known as the title that introduced **Batman** in its 27th issue (cover-dated May 1939). Published by Detective Comics (a partnership between National Allied Publications and Harry Donenfeld, the book's printer) beginning in May 1937, the title began as an anthology series featuring stories influenced by "hard-boiled" detective fiction and pulp magazines which were popular during this era. However, none of the characters appearing in the early issues captured the imagination of the public. Its two most noteworthy characters were The Crimson Avenger, a pulp-influenced hero, and Slam Bradley, a tough private eye created by **Jerry Siegel** and **Joe Shuster**, who later gained fame in 1938 with their hero **Superman**.

After the **Man of Steel's** debut in ***Action Comics*** #1, the superhero genre took flight and comics publishers began to search for other costumed crimefighters who would attract a large readership. Editor Vin Sullivan met with a young cartoonist named **Bob Kane** who promised to create a worthy successor to Superman. Together with writer Bill Finger, Kane developed Batman as a grim avenger who battles evil throughout Gotham City. The Dark Knight was based partly on Zorro, as portrayed by Douglas Fairbanks in the 1921 film *The Mark of Zorro*, and partly on *The Bat Whispers*, a 1930 crime thriller featuring a villain who wore a bat costume. Sullivan purchased the character, who was initially known as the Bat-Man for several issues, and the hero appeared in his first adventure, "The Case of the Chemical Syndicate," in *Detective Comics* #27. The popularity of Batman was almost immediate, despite Kane's somewhat crude drawing style. In *Detective Comics* #33 Bill Finger contributed one of the most famous stories in comics history. Titled "The Batman and How He Came to Be," the tale revealed Bruce Wayne, Batman's alter ego, to be a wealthy playboy who had been traumatized as a child by witnessing the murder of his parents at the hands of an anonymous thug.

Succeeding issues of *Detective Comics* began to develop Batman's world more fully. Several of the most prominent members of his rogues' gallery of foes made their initial appearances throughout the 1940s, such as Hugo Strange (issue #36), Clayface (issue #40), The Penguin (issue #58), and Two Face (issue #66). The most important addition to the series came in *Detective Comics* #38 (cover-dated April 1940) when Robin, "The Boy Wonder" was introduced as the Caped Crusader's young sidekick. Sales nearly doubled with Robin's arrival. His popularity soon led to the trend of many **Golden Age superheroes** acquiring their own teen companions. During the 1950s the title became increasingly lighthearted as the dark stories of the 1940s were replaced by often inane **science fiction** and gimmicky tales. Issue #327 (1964) is a landmark in that it revamped Batman into a more serious character again. In 2008, the series reached its milestone 850th issue. In 2009, *Detective Comics* came to be headlined by Batwoman, rather than Batman, with the Question as a second feature.

Over the years, the series was home to several ongoing backup features, such as The Elongated Man and Roy Raymond, TV Detective. The most notable of these was "The Martian Manhunter," which was introduced in *Detective Comics* #225. The importance of *Detective Comics* to the comics industry is perhaps best seen in that, by 1940, a logo containing the letters "DC" began appearing on all of National's publications. Years later the company's name was officially changed to **DC Comics** in honor of its flagship publication.

Charles Coletta

DITKO, STEVE (1927–). Born in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, Steve Ditko left the steel factories of western Pennsylvania behind in order to pursue a career as a comics illustrator, ultimately becoming one of the most important artists in comics history. While many other artists breaking into the comics field did so in order to provide a steady paycheck until they could break into advertising or other visual design fields, Ditko's end goal was comics. After leaving Pennsylvania for New York City, Ditko studied at New York's Cartoonists and Illustrators School, where he studied under such **Golden Age** artists as Jerry Robinson. Ditko began illustrating comics professionally in the 1950s, illustrating comics of varied genres for **Charlton**, Atlas (which would become **Marvel**), and a variety of smaller publishers. Although Ditko is best known for his work in monster, **science fiction**, and **superhero** comics—as well as his later, self-published, Objectivist themed works—his first published story, "Paper Romance," was a **romance** that appeared in *Daring Love* #1 in 1953. From there, Ditko went on to greater fame as the co-creator of Marvel Comics' **Spider-Man**, and as a prominent illustrator on **Doctor Strange.** Ditko also created a handful of other characters, including the Creeper, Hawk and Dove, and Shade, the Changing Man for DC Comics, and the Question and Captain Atom for Charleton Comics.

A Ditko comics page is distinctive—rarely is any other artist's work described as reminiscent of Ditko. His use of hands, in particular, stands out, whether in Spider-Man's web-slinging or Doctor Strange's ritual spell-crafting motion. Still, it is Ditko's page design that sets him apart as an artist. Ditko mixed tight, almost claustrophobic panels tinged with panic and discomfort with expansive, surreal designs that leant an otherworldly nature to his art. This is most notably seen in his work on Doctor Strange and in the character of Eternity, a humanoid silhouette that contained no anatomical definition or musculature but, instead, a vast, expansive space scene.

Ditko eventually cut most of his ties with the mainstream comics industry, originally leaving Marvel Comics over a dispute regarding direction of *Amazing Spider-Man*. He worked on superhero comics for **DC Comics** and Charlton throughout the 1970s, and continued to freelance for Marvel and DC, and his work also appeared in comics from Eclipse and **Dark Horse**. His primary focus had changed, however—Ditko became a devoted supporter of the Objectivist philosophy of Ayn Rand, and much of his later work expressed Objectivist leanings, most notably in his creation of Mr. A, a character whose name is taken from the law of identity, which posits that an object is the same as

itself, or that "A = A." Still living in New York City, Ditko has become a reclusive figure, refusing requests for interview and publicity, preferring to let his work speak for itself.

Ed Cunard

DIXON, CHUCK (1954–). Chuck Dixon was born in 1954 and grew up in Philadelphia, where he developed his passion for reading and writing comics. His first professional publishing experience came in 1977, when he wrote several miscellaneous stories for pulp magazine GASM, under the auspices of Country Wide Publications. Since then, Dixon has written for **Marvel**, **DC**, **Dark Horse**, and Devil's Due Publishing (DDP), as well as smaller comics companies like CrossGen, Bongo, Eclipse, and First Comics.

Dixon's first major comics publications came in 1985, when Marvel Comics editor Larry Hama offered him a run on *The Savage Sword of* ***Conan***. He followed his *Conan* work by writing issues of *Tales of Terror* and *Airboy* for Eclipse Comics in 1986, and in 1987 began collaborating on Carl Potts's *Alien Legion* under Marvel's Epic Comics imprint. During the late 1980s, Dixon also adapted J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* to a three issue series for Eclipse.

Dixon is probably best known for his work during the 1990s on various ***Punisher*** titles and *Robin*, *Nightwing*, and other **Batman**-related series. DC editor **Dennis O'Neil** hired him to write a Robin miniseries, and its popularity led to more recurring employment on later Robin titles as well as work on **Green Arrow** and Birds of Prey. He was a major contributor to most major Batman storylines of the 1990s, including *KnightFall*, *Cataclysm*, and *No Man's Land*. He was instrumental in developing the recurring character Bane, who broke Batman's back during the *KnightFall* storyline.

Often focusing on the psychological lives of his characters, Dixon has written some of the most influential detective stories in the Batman universe. While crafting stories that appeal to adults as well as children, Dixon is firm in his belief that comics should retain their appeal to younger readers. "As much as anyone might want to hold on to their childhood fantasies by having their favorite **superheroes** grow up along with them," Dixon wrote on his Web site, "it is wrong to want it to be so. If **Spider-man** uses foul language then it becomes a part of him and can never be taken away or **retconned** out of existence." Aside from writing comics, Dixon has contributed articles to *SKETCH* magazine on creating villains and talking to editors. He also publishes other comics-related articles and film reviews on his web site Dixonverse.net.

After leaving DC to work on various other titles, such as Bongo Comics' *The Simpsons* and IDW's *Transformer* series for Free Comic Book Day, Dixon returned in 2004 to pick up work on the defunct character Richard Dragon and work once more on several series of the Batman family, including *Nightwing* and *Batman and the Outsiders*. His return to DC also signaled his return to their Wildstorm imprint, for which he worked on *Claw: The Unconquered*, the graphic adaptation of the film *Snakes on a Plane*, and a comic book version of the film *Nightmare on Elm Street*. In June 2008, he severed his affiliation from DC Comics, though the reasons for his departure remain unpublicized.

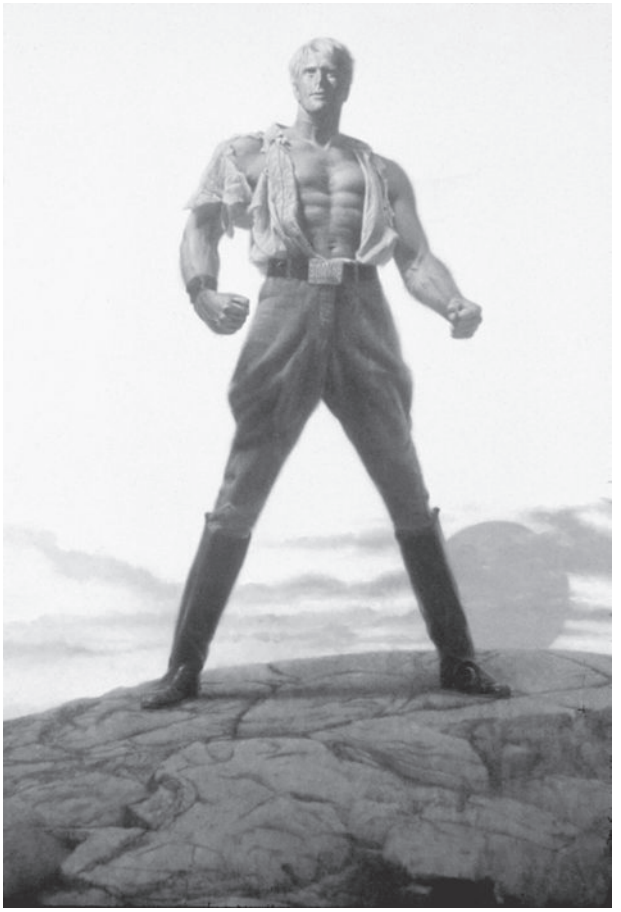
Grant Bain

DOC SAVAGE. Among the most legendary and influential pulp characters of all time is Doc Savage, the Man of Bronze. Doc Savage was created in 1933 by the editors of Street and Smith Publications, popular publishers of pulp fiction. The majority of Doc Savage's adventures were written by Lester Dent under the house name of Kenneth Robeson. Doc Savage is an acknowledged influence on **superhero** comics, in particular **Superman**.

Doc Savage, otherwise known as Clark Savage, Jr., was an adventurer and renaissance man, a scientist and inventor, and an expert on virtually any topic. Savage was impressively muscled, with bronze skin, golden hair, and gold-flecked eyes. Savage was joined in his adventures by a group of compatriots who specialized in their own unique areas, adding to the diverse storytelling possibilities. These included Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Blodgett "Monk" Mayfair, an industrial chemist so nicknamed for his ape-like appearance; Brigadier General Theodore Marley "Ham" Brooks, a well-dressed attorney who wielded a Damascus steel blade dipped in anesthetic hidden within a cane; and Patricia "Pat" Savage, a cousin of Doc Savage who shares many of his physical characteristics. Savage had a number of other regular associates in his adventures, although in later stories they were increasingly absent as Doc Savage was increasingly the focus of his stories. Savage was independently wealthy, due largely to his ownership of a Mayan gold mine, which bankrolled his increasingly fantastic adventures and inventions. Savage's primary base of operations was on the 86th floor of a major skyscraper in New York City, and at times his Arctic Fortress of Solitude.

Savage's original adventures were published by Street and Smith from 1933 until 1949; in the final Doc Savage story, Savage battled Satan deep within the Earth. Doc Savage was a radio feature for several years in the 1930s and 1940s, some of which featured stories written by Lester Dent. Savage was an infrequent backup character to Street and Smith comic books, primarily featuring the **Shadow**, although Savage never entirely succeeded as a comic book feature. Comics featuring Doc Savage were also subsequently published by Gold Key, **Marvel**, **DC**, and **Dark Horse**.

Doc Savage experienced a renaissance in 1964, when the publisher Bantam Books reprinted the original Street and Smith pulp stories in mass-market paperback format. Bantam kept the paperback editions of Doc Savage stories in print until the 1990s; these editions are still popular with collectors. The cover art for these paperback editions was created by the illustrator James Bama, who revised Savage's appearance from the original look of the character on the cover of the Street and Smith pulps. In the original pulps, Savage vaguely resembled the actor Gary Cooper and is dressed in a white shirt—frequently ripped—and khaki slacks. Bama's revision of Savage was based on Steve Holland, a brawny actor who portrayed Flash Gordon on television in the 1950s. Bama's Savage wore a pair of jodhpurs and featured a closer-cropped hairstyle with a distinctive widow's peak, with a broader, more muscular physique, more gruff, square features.



The 1975 film *Doc Savage: The Man of Bronze* was directed by Michael Anderson and starred Ron Ely as Doc Savage. Warner Bros./Photofest

In 1975, the character was filmed as *Doc Savage: The Man of Bronze*, produced by legendary **science fiction** filmmaker George Pal and directed by Michael Anderson, with Ron Ely, who portrayed **Tarzan** on television in the 1960s, in the title role. The film was not received enthusiastically, however, and planned sequels were scrapped. Since then, there have been few attempts to bring the character back to public attention. In 1985, a new Doc Savage series was created for National Public Radio. Although it was short lived, it is generally regarded as a faithful adaptation of the original pulp series. The Bantam paperback editions are long since out of print; however, the original Street and Smith pulp novels have recently been returned to print in oversized magazine-format volumes by the small press imprint Nostalgia Ventures.

Along with The Shadow, Doc Savage is a major influence on the early superhero comics. A number of Doc Savage's attributes were referenced in the character Superman. For example, both characters possessed the given name Clark; Savage's nickname, "the Man of Bronze," was mimicked in Superman's nickname, "the **Man of Steel**," and both characters had Fortresses of Solitude in the Arctic. Earlier incarnations of Seigel and Schuster's Superman, prior to publication as a comic book character, strongly resembled Savage.

Many comic book superheroes bear some influence from Doc Savage, whether consciously or not. The Doc Savage character has also influenced a variety of other film, television, and fiction characters. Various characters in men's adventure fiction, such as Nick Carter and Mack Bolan, were influenced by Doc Savage. The character Indiana Jones was also influenced by Savage. The film *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension* starring Peter Weller was an obvious homage to Savage, as is the Cartoon Network series *The Venture Brothers*.

Robert O'Nale

DOCTOR STRANGE. Created by **Stan Lee** and **Steve Ditko** in 1963, the Master of the Mystic Arts and Sorcerer Supreme of the **Marvel** Universe first appeared in ***Strange Tales*** #110. Doctor Strange has appeared in several self-titled series as well as multiple generations of Marvel's *Strange Tales*, sharing its split-book format at different times with the Human Torch, Nick Fury Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. (*See* ***Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos***), and the teen duo Cloak and Dagger. Although typically a solo hero, Doctor Strange has joined several organizations: the original Defenders, the Nightstalkers, the New **Avengers**, the Ultimate Knights, and the Illuminati. Doctor Strange's exploits are characterized by supernatural phenomenon beyond the abilities of most **superheroes** and encounters with the most powerful and abstract of entities, including personifications of Eternity, Nightmare, and Death. Often deferring mundane crimes to less cerebral heroes, Strange frequently makes crossover appearances in other comics as a sort of deus ex machina figure who supplies information or assistance against supernatural threats or overpowering odds.

The unique status Doctor Strange enjoys as a superhero who fights at the level of the supernatural is accentuated by the artistry of his original creators. Ditko's surreal artwork is credited with creating the otherworldly feel essential to the title's adventures both on Earth and across other dimensions of existence. Lee's ingenious fabrication of mystical invocations, with which Strange summons magical power, is the literary invention that makes Doctor Strange such a memorable and idiosyncratic character. Strange's utterance "By the Vishanti" refers to the collective of three god-like beings—Agamotto, Hoggoth, and Oshtur—imagined by Lee to be the source of Strange's mystical power. Strange's alliterative exclamation "By the Hoary Hosts of Hoggoth!" is perhaps his most well-known catch-phrase.

Unlike most superheroes, Strange obtains much of his power by calling upon a mystical source beyond himself. His abilities are virtually limitless, but some of the most commonly featured are astral projection, protective shields, eldritch beams, and mystic bonds. Strange supplements these abilities with his own psychic powers—such as telepathy—and a few magical devices. The Eye of Agamotto, a round disk worn upon on his chest, supplies him additional mystical energy and, when opened, permits him to see truly beyond illusions and deceptions. His Cape of Levitation, which is clasped together at his chest by the Eye of Agamotto, moves not by magic, but by Strange's own thoughts. This ability has been used in several stories as a means of escape for Strange when he has been unable to use his magic because his mouth and hands were bound.

Doctor Strange first acquires his magical abilities through tutelage under the original Sorcerer Supreme, the Ancient One. Having been a capable, but arrogant neurosurgeon, Dr. Stephen Strange loses the use of his hands in a car accident and falls into a state of alcoholism and self-pity. His life is saved when he seeks the Ancient One, a wise mystic and healer who resides in a hidden enclave in the Himalayan Mountains. Although reluctant at first to learn from the Ancient One, Strange proves his worthiness by thwarting a plot to murder the Ancient One by Baron Mordo, who becomes

one of Strange's long-standing rivals. When the Ancient One dies years later, to save the collective souls of all humanity, Strange assumes the full mantle of Sorcerer Supreme and guardian against all mystical threats to the Earthly realm.

Dormammu, an evil sorcerer from the Dark Dimension, is Strange's original nemesis and rival for supremacy in mystical abilities. Taking a devilish appearance, Dormammu's head is wreathed in flames, which indicate his dominion over his homeworld, the Dark Dimension. Together with Dormammu's niece, Clea, Strange eventually defeats Dormammu in defense of Earth. Clea becomes Strange's apprentice and wife, but they separate when she returns to the Dark Dimension to become its guardian. Following the diabolical theme set by Dormammu, Strange's subsequent adversaries have included vampires, demons, and evil sorcerers from alternate dimensions.

Strange's stories frequently return to the question of his supreme responsibility over the fate of humanity, for whose sake he must sacrifice his personal happiness and compromise his integrity. Typical of his failed relationship with Clea, Strange has brief friendships but shares few lasting bonds with others due to the weight of his responsibilities. He resides in a Greenwich Village mansion, his "Sanctum Sanctorum," with his faithful servant Wong. However, when the realm of human existence is threatened by the elder god Shuma-Gorath, Strange destroys the protections on his home to repel the threat. In alliance with Kaluu, a black magician and former adversary of the Ancient One, Strange uses black magic and permits the deaths of innocents before vanquishing Shuma-Gorath and rejecting the ways of black magic once again.

Strange continues to be a morally ambiguous character, at times assuming powers for himself that rightly belong to others, at other times withdrawing from conflicts well within his powers to allay. He robs allies of their mystical powers, including Victoria Bentley and Jennifer Kale, only to repent of his actions later. After the **Civil War**, Strange goes into seclusion in Antarctica, but returns to lead the New Avengers. When the crime syndicate of Hood threatens his home, Strange resorts again to black magic to defend himself, only to leave Earth in order to contemplate the morality of his actions and his worthiness as Sorcerer Supreme. As with many Marvel titles, these negotiations between exercising power to achieve good consequences and reflecting on the negative effects of one's actions on one's character are a hallmark of Doctor Strange's continuing adventures.

Doctor Strange has appeared in several cartoons, the 2007 animated feature *Doctor Strange: The Sorcerer Supreme*, and the 1978 made-for-TV movie starring Peter Hooten in the title role.

Tim Bryant



EARTH X. Published from 1999 through 2003, the *Earth X* trilogy proved to be both a reinterpretation of the **Marvel** Universe and dystopian future story about the end of the Marvel Universe, written by Jim Krueger and **Alex Ross** partly as a response to **DC Comics'** ***Kingdom Come*** (1996), for which Ross served as the artist. Much more exhaustive than that venture, this trilogy was broken down into three story arcs of 14 issues named *Earth X*, *Universe X*, and *Paradise X*. Though originally aimed to explore the mainstream continuity of the Marvel Universe, it deviated significantly enough to be deemed an alternate Marvel Universe.

While Ross did all the covers, the artwork was drawn by John Paul Leons and inked by Bill Reinhold in the first series, *Earth X*. However, for *Universe X* and *Paradise X*, the list of penciler extended to include Brent Anderson, Dougie Braithwaite, Jackson Guice, Steve Pugh, Ron Randall, Steve Sadowski, Thomas Yeates, and Steve Yeowell. Additionally, the series was unusually text-laden with often two to six pages of text in the appendix of each issue. These pieces carried on conversations among main characters that followed up with different pieces of the chapter or set the scene for the next chapter.

The narrative begins in the near future with one X-51 (also known as Machine Man) being transplanted to the moon by Uatu, the Watcher of Earth. X-51 soon learns that he has been brought there to play the role of Watcher since Uatu has been unexpectedly blinded. On Earth, a destitute and disillusioned **Captain America** rallies together the last of the world's heroes to fight against the boy known as the Skull, the last telepath alive, who is controlling most of the world's superheroes to do his bidding. Scott Summers looks to revive the **X-Men** while Mr. Fantastic, dressed as Dr. Doom, helps the Inhumans' King Blackbolt find their hidden child on Earth. The entire human population

has mutated after being exposed to the mysterious Terrigen Mists, and the mutation has caused humans to cease reproducing.

X-51 learns from Uatu that Earth was a chosen home for the Celestials, god-like beings who use planets to plant a seed that will inevitably become another Celestial, but in doing so, the entire planet will be destroyed. According to Uatu, Earth and its entire people are mere insects fertilizing the planet so that a Celestial will be born, and the time for harvesting is quickly approach. X-51 works together with other Marvel heroes, including Mr. Fantastic, Cyclops, Blackbolt, Captain America, and **Iron Man** to ruin the Celestials' plans. Through the sacrifice of Blackbolt and Iron Man, they stall long enough to beckon the only force strong enough to fend off the Celestials: Galactus, the world devourer. With the Celestials vanquished from Earth, Galactus eradicates the embryo. It is explained that this Galactus was Franklin Richards, Mr. Fantastic's son, who had achieved the highest but disempowering mutation level (the power to be anything someone else imagines). Thus, Mr. Fantastic must give up any hold on his son so that Franklin as Galactus can serve as a balance to the Celestial's existence. At the conclusion of the first arc, Mr. Fantastic has found a way to counteract the human mutation and hopes to return people back to themselves.

Universe X and *Paradise X* pick up shortly after the first birth of a human in years by Him and Her, artificially created beings. The child is a reincarnation of Mar-Vell, also known as **Captain Marvel,** who teams up with Captain America to find sources of power in hopes of defeating the being known as Mistress Death in order to return the heroes back to the world. Meanwhile, the Tong of Creel reassemble Absorbing Man, who initially seeks to wreak havoc but is eventually convinced to turn himself into vibranium in order to preserve the Earth from destruction. The final piece of the series has the characters struggling to understand the larger ramifications of a world without death. By this time, X-51 traverses the multiverse spreading the word about the Celestials' seeds. In the end, Mr. Fantastic becomes the new replacement for the god-being known as Eternity and erects a barrier around the universe to keep the Celestials from ever returning.

The power of the narrative derives from the way in which Krueger and Ross lace together a great deal of Marvel lore into a coherent piece that links so many of the different and slightly-contradictive myths and traditions, from the Norse Gods of Asgard, to the existence of the devil-being Mephisto, to personified death, Mistress Death; they even include tangential universes within the Marvel Universe, including the Microverse, and the Negative Zone. Many major character narratives are rewritten or augmented to make the story work in some very large ways, thereby creating one succinct Marvel universe. Wolverine's new origin consists of him being part of the oldest intelligent race on Earth, predating humans and even the Celestials. The Norse Gods were a race of beings who had achieved the highest mutation, and thus when they encountered humans who believed they were gods, turned into Odin and the rest. Uatu, the Watcher, no longer watches to record but rather to serve the needs of the Celestials. Major Marvel characters (**Fantastic Four,** Captain America, **Spider-Man**)

have important roles, but second-string or even third-string characters play pivotal parts in this saga, including Absorbing Man, Belasco, Nighthawk, and Machine Man. Additionally, the *Earth X* series provides a deeply nuanced explanation as to how and why this Earth contains so much power and potential.

Though the series officially ended in 2003 under some speculation that it was truncated due to sales, an *Earth X Companion* trade paperback was released in 2008 which included sketches, covers, character profiles, and a short comic on Nick Fury.

Selected Bibliography: Ross, Alex, and Jim Krueger. *Earth X Trilogy Companion*. New York: Marvel, 2008.

Lance Eaton

EC COMICS. Originally founded by Maxwell Gaines, EC was an American publishing company widely-known for producing **horror**, **crime**, **science fiction**, and **satire** comics under the direction of Maxwell's son **William M. Gaines** during the late 1940s and 1950s. EC titles, such as the popular ***Tales From the Crypt*** series, were at the center of the mid-century controversy over censorship and juvenile delinquency in the comic book industry. Crippled by new restrictions instituted by the **Comics Code** Authority, EC discontinued all of its comics titles after 1954 with the exception of the groundbreaking satire comic, *Mad*, which was transformed into a magazine and thus moved outside the purview of the code.

Before forming his own comic book publishing company, Max Gaines distinguished himself as an industry pioneer through his work in the development of the eight-by-eleven, four-color saddle stitch newsprint magazine that would later become the modern comic book. In 1946, Gaines began producing titles such as *Picture Stories from the Bible* under the name Educational Comics, specializing in **religion**, **history**, and **funny animals.** Unfortunately, a weak distributor and an unenthusiastic market saddled the company with debt, and when Max Gaines was killed in a boating accident in 1947, his son William reluctantly assumed control of the family business.

William Gaines worked closely with editors **Al Feldstein** and **Harvey Kurtzman** to transform EC into "Entertaining Comics." They made the company profitable by pushing the boundaries of popular commercial trends in comics, by directing their content to older teen and adult readers, and by promoting quality storytelling and photo-realistic artwork. Their "New Trend" line specialized in horror (*Tales From the Crypt*, *The Vault of Horror*, *The Haunt of Fear*); science fiction (*Weird Science*, *Weird Fantasy*); crime (*Crime SuspenseStories*, *Shock SuspenStories*); **war comics** (*Two-Fisted Tales*, *Frontline Combat*); and humor (*Mad*). Endings with a surprise twist became known as an EC trademark, along with gruesome portrayals of murder and deception that underscored the terrors hidden behind the white picket fences of the American Dream. EC's *Contes Cruels* horror aesthetic flaunted extreme acts of brutality, while their absurd satires ridiculed Hollywood stars and parodied beloved children's characters. Unlike other **Cold War**-era comics, those published by EC openly engaged contentious issues including

racism, war, political corruption, and child neglect with established authority figures generally serving as the targets of moral outrage. As a result, the youth market quickly embraced EC's approach, particularly the horror titles, allowing the publisher to thrive financially and to attract talented artists such as **Wally Wood,** Johnny Craig, and Joe Orlando.

The 1954 Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency was the turning point that signaled the decline of EC Comics. The comic book industry had been subject to challenges from parents, teachers, and community leaders in the past, but the Senate hearings, combined with **Dr. Fredric Wertham**'s study condemning the psychological influence of comics on child development, led to the wholesale self-censorship of the medium. William Gaines was the only comic book publisher to testify before the subcommittee and his famously defiant, unapologetic defense of horror and crime comics proved to be as detrimental to the industry's survival as the bloody images themselves. With the formation of the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA) and its Comics Code later that year, participating publishers agreed to adhere to strict standards concerning the details of graphic images, the moral substance and resolution of the plot, character development, and appropriate language use. Gaines initially refused to join the CMAA, but he had difficulty selling EC comics without distributors and stores willing to stock them.

It was outrage over the CMAA's efforts to remove the image of a perspiring black astronaut in the reprinted *Weird Fantasy* #18 story "Judgment Day" (for EC's "New Direction" line) that ultimately led Gaines to abandon comic book publishing altogether. After unsuccessfully experimenting with a form of illustrated pulp fiction that he called "Picto-Fiction," Gaines managed to keep the company afloat by turning *Mad* into a bi-monthly, black-and-white magazine. He remained involved with the creative development of *Mad Magazine* until his death in 1992. **DC Comics** continues to publish U.S. and foreign editions of *Mad Magazine* and extends that publication's signature parody to audio recordings, board and computer games, and a sketch comedy show. In addition, since the late 1970s, various publishers including Russ Cochran Publisher Reprints, Gladstone Publishing, and Gemstone Publishing have reprinted the EC Comics "New Trend" and "New Direction" titles in hardbound volumes and in comic book form.

Selected Bibliography: Geissman, Grant. *Foul Play!: The Art and Artists of the Notorious 1950s E.C. Comics!* New York: Collins Design, 2005; Hajdu, David. *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic Book Scare and How it Changed America*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008; Jacobs, Frank. *The Mad World of William M. Gaines*. Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart Inc., 1972; Wright, Bradford W. *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

Qiana J. Whitted

EDUCATIONAL COMICS. Rather than constituting a single genre, "educational comics" encompasses a large constellation of related (and somewhat overlapping) categories.

These include local and global **history** comics, "true fact" comics, illustrated adaptations of novels and plays, instructional comics, propaganda and psychological warfare comics, religious education and proselytizing comics, advertising and industrial public relations comics, political campaign comics, health education comics, biography and autobiography comics, development education comics, educational fotonovelas, benefit/cause comics, comics-illustrated brochures, cartoon-illustrated nonfiction picture books, infotainment, and classroom-based edutainment. "Educational comics" include some of the most-widely circulated and most-respected comics ever made, and educational cartooning has attracted the talents of some of the most artistically ambitious and celebrated comic book creators. Such comics are read all over the world.

A definition of educational comics as simply those comics that deal in "facts" instead of "fiction" only goes so far, as comics have combined factual and fictional elements in many ways. People recognize even a comic that retells a well-known work of fiction as educational if the comic attempts to reliably convey the essence of that earlier work. In the clearest case, the distinguishing features of an educational comic include certain didactic purposes of the individuals and institutions that created and distributed it; the presence of specific textual cues that enable readers to recognize these publications as both educational and as comics; and the particular uses which those who buy and those who read these comics make of them. Since the motives for creating and consuming comics are inescapably mixed and complicated, a categorization of comics that partly depends on identifying these motives will necessarily remain fuzzy. The quality of being educational can be found to some degree in any comic book.

Like educational projects in other media, people usually commission educational comic books to promote a particular, predefined message (for example, "don't smoke," or "be grateful for the steel industry"). Increasingly, cartoonists have been using the comics as a medium to freely explore topics as artists. Ideally, educational comics contribute to deeper, fuller and richer shared understandings of the world.

History

The distinction between educational and other uses of cartooning arose relatively recently in the long history of "narrative illustration," which traces back to Paleolithic drawings. Consequently, a review of the early ancestry of the comic book (such as Egyptian hieroglyphics, Mayan codices, adaptations of Bible stories using illustrated and captioned panels, and so forth) could be inserted here with little further discussion.

In 1933, Harry Wildenberg and M. C. Gaines convinced several companies to publish reformatted Sunday comic strips as smaller, saddle-stitched booklets with covers on heavier stock as advertising premiums, thus establishing the basic American comic book format. By the 1940s, the American comic book industry was booming, and many innovations for exploiting the new medium's educational possibilities date from those years.

Gaines, a former school principal, formed his own comic book publishing company in 1942, "Educational Comics," through which he published *Picture Stories from the Bible*, *Picture Stories from American History*, *Picture Stories from Science*, and *Picture Stories from*

World History. (After M. C. Gaines's death in 1947, his son **William Gaines** inherited the company and changed the company's name and focus to "Entertaining Comics." It would ultimately come to be known simply as "**EC**.")

George J. Hecht published the first fact-centered, continuing comic book title on the newsstands, *True Comics*, in 1941. The commercial success of *True Comics*, which parents often chose for children as an alternative to more thrilling fare, sparked a genre of comics based on real people and actual events, including *Real Life Comics*, *Real Heroes*, *Picture News*, and similar titles.

In 1941, Albert Kanter began publishing the series that would become ***Classics Illustrated,*** adapting literary classics to comic-book format. His competitors launched similar, but short-lived series. The series became an instant hit, and the first 26 titles sold 100 million comics by 1946. Unlike other comics, which were sold like magazines, *Classics Illustrated* titles were reprinted like books. The series eventually reached 169 titles.

In 1946, Malcolm Ater set up a company to create educational comics. One of his first commissions, a comic about Harry S. Truman for the Democrats in 1948, had a circulation of three million copies. Through this successful comic, Ater won credit as the originator of the "political comic." In the 1950s, the average circulation for Ater's political comics supporting candidates (including pro-segregation candidates in the South) was 650,000 to 700,000 copies. The average for his "industrials" (for U.S. Steel and other corporations) was 1,000,000 copies.

During World War II, pioneering comic book artist **Will Eisner** began applying his talent to educational projects for the military. Through American Visual Corporation, which he founded in 1948, Eisner spent several decades producing educational comics for government, business, and military clients. Eisner distinguished two types of "instructional comics": "technical instruction comics" (which explain how to perform a specific procedure, such as unpacking an M234 nuclear warhead) and "attitudinal instruction comics" (which condition attitudes toward tasks.) Eisner's best-known publication in these years was *PS Magazine* (subtitled *The Preventive Maintenance Monthly*), created for distribution to those who operated and maintained Army equipment. Virginia Commonwealth University has web-posted issues from the first one in June 1951, until December 1971, Eisner's years as its art editor: http://dig.library.vcu.edu/cdm4/index_psm.php?CISOROOT=/psm.

Propaganda and Psychological Warfare

During the early years of the **Cold War**, America's entertainment comic books were both a propaganda liability, exporting evidence of racism and gangsterism in the United States, and a propaganda asset, spreading American cultural influence. At the same time, the American government sponsored its own comic books and strips and psychological-warfare leaflets that served as anti-communist propaganda weapons.

The United States Information Agency (USIA) published millions of copies of propaganda comic books. This cartoon war was not one-sided, but cartoonists in the Soviet Union put their anti-capitalist messages into single-panel images, not comic books.

In China, the Communist victory in 1949 led to a big increase in propaganda comic books (small booklets with one illustrated panel per page), and these comics became important tools for educating the Chinese people about communism. By 1963, more than 560 million copies had been circulated.

Religion

Hearing about the communist Chinese cartoon-format propaganda booklets inspired Southern Californian Jack T. Chick to use cartoon tracts for evangelical purposes. Chick published his first tract in 1960. Chick Publications has produced a few full-sized comic books and many small-format, giveaway tracts, such as *This was your Life*. He has distributed over 750 million copies in over one-hundred languages.

Catholics began publishing and distributing their own comic books for distribution through Catholic schools in 1942 with *Timeless Topix* (later shortened to *Topix*). *Treasure Chest* followed, beginning in 1946. Cold War anticommunist comic books began with *Is This Tomorrow?*, published by the Catechetical Guild in 1947, which demonstrates the overlap between religious and political comics publishing.

In 2009, the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations' 155-year-old publishing arm, Beacon Press, announced plans to publish a line of graphic novels that pertain to its mission of promoting social justice through liberal political activism. The first would be a graphic novel adaptation of Octavia Butler's novel *Kindred*, followed by several nonfiction graphic novels.

The Indian publisher Amar Chitra Katha has published hundreds of comic books based on Hindu and Buddhist religious traditions, mythology, history, and **folklore**. After a slow start in 1967, the circulation of Amar Chitra Katha comic books eventually surpassed 100 million copies in more than 20 languages. The founder of this series, Anant Pai, was inspired to create this series when he noticed a young Indian television game show contestant was more familiar with Greek mythology than Indian mythology, and then saw that his nephews and nieces made up stories about children in England, like those in the British books in India's libraries, rather than stories about Indian children.

Recently, under new ownership, Amar Chitra Katha has announced plans to move into television animation and to distribute their comics by subscription to mobile phone users. They have also begun a new series of comics telling the life stories of famous living persons of India, starting with N. R. Narayana Murthy, a founder of Infosys Technologies.

Comics are also used to promote Islam. In the Arab world, successful comics often exist as features in governmental or quasi-governmental children's magazines, and so their pedagogical functions (either religious or secular) are frequently prominent. In the 1990s, nongovernmental Islamic organizations expanded their publication of children's magazines, Since 2006, Dr. Naif Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa's Teshkeel Media Group in Kuwait has produced a comics series called *The 99* based on Islamic archetypes and designed as "edutainment" to promote multicultural understanding.

Underground Comix

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, counter-culture artists reinvented the comic book as a medium for uncensored personal expression. The American **underground comics**, or "**comix**" publishers had various connections with educational comics. Last Gasp, for example, was originally founded to sell *Slow Death*, a comic Ron Turner assembled to benefit the Berkeley Ecology Center; Rip Off Press published Larry Gonick's *Cartoon History of the Universe* series; and **Kitchen Sink Press** published *Corporate CRIME Comics*, and other "political" titles.

By the late 1970s, many of the cartoonists of the underground comix movement (including **Jaxon, R. Crumb, Art Spiegelman,** Bill Griffith, Jay Kinney, Justin Green, Spain, Joyce Farmer, Greg Irons, **Trina Robbins,** R. Diggs, Diane Noomin, Aline Kominsky-Crumb, Dan O'Neill and others) were exploring nonfiction cartooning of various kinds, and doing so with undiminished commitment to artistic freedom. **Art Spiegelman's *Maus*** has been the most celebrated achievement to come out of this movement.

Cartoonists inspired by the underground comix movement have taken this kind of personally-grounded, nonfiction cartooning further; prime examples include **Harvey Pekar** (most famous for his ***American Splendor*** series), Seth Tobocman and Peter Kuper (cofounders of *World War 3 Illustrated*), Roberta Gregory, and David Collier.

EduComics, the educational comic book company founded by Leonard Rifas in 1976, is also an outgrowth of the underground comix movement. EduComics has published titles including *All-Atomic Comics* and Keiji Nakazawa's *Gen of Hiroshima* and *I SAW IT*. Nakazawa's *Gen of Hiroshima* were the first Japanese **manga** republished in American comic book format. EduComics also created several titles in collaboration with sponsoring organizations, and in 1999 began exploring the combination of graphic narrative and computer-generated "information landscapes" with *The Big Picture: visualizing the global economy* (a comic to support protests against the World Trade Organization.) An unrelated "EduComics" company published one language-learning comic in 1982 and disappeared; a third unrelated "EduComics" company operated for a while in Korea, creating web-based educational comics on various subjects.

Manga

Educational uses for manga (comics) in Japan have ranged from government-sponsored manga on Japan's legal system, to manga-format "infomercials" delivered as newspaper supplements, to thick "study comics" on various subjects. Unusual educational uses of manga have included sharply-expressed editorials drawn in comics-format, and proselytizing comics for the cult that later released sarin nerve gas in Tokyo's subway.

With manga's global popularity, "manga-style" comics have appeared around the world, including *The Manga Messiah* (a proselytizing comic), manga adaptations of Shakespeare plays, and biography manga. The San Francisco company No Starch Press,

in partnership with Ohmsha in Japan, has been publishing a series of manga titles about statistics, physics, calculus, electricity, and similar topics.

Controversies

The earliest controversies over educational comic books in the 1940s and 1950s included questions about how faithfully they communicated the heart and soul of the books they adapted, about how commercial considerations were causing them to accentuate violence or suppress mature themes, and about whether children were using them as a gateway to reading, or as a substitute for reading. The reputation of educational comics also became entangled in questions about whether comic books in general promote or retard literacy. In *Seduction of the Innocent*, **Fredric Wertham** singled out comic book adaptations of classics for special scorn, writing "Comic books adapted from classical literature are reportedly used in 25,000 schools in the United States. If this is true, then I have never heard a more serious indictment of American education, for they emasculate the classics, condense them (leaving out everything that makes the book great), are just as badly printed and inartistically drawn as other comic books and, as I have often found, do not reveal to children the world of good literature which has at all times been the mainstay of liberal and humanistic education. They conceal it" (36).

Legitimacy

After the success of Spiegelman's *Maus* (which won a special Pulitzer Prize in 1992), the "graphic novel" won a quickly-accelerating recognition as a "legitimate" medium. New graphic novels now receive critical attention from reviewers at the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times*, from *Publishers Weekly*, National Public Radio, and wherever serious books are discussed. In recent years educational comics in the format of graphic novels have served as the leading edge for comics in general to find acceptance in bookstores, schools, and libraries. In the United States, sales of comics and graphic novels to schools and libraries rose from around $1 million in 2001 to $30 million in 2007.

Series

A number of established book publishers have added lines of nonfiction comics, joining those comics publishers (such as **Fantagraphics** or Drawn and Quarterly) that also publish serious comics. Pantheon Books published *Maus* (which Spiegelman had originally serialized in his ***RAW*** Magazine), and went on to publish other important nonfiction graphic novels including Marjane Satrapi's ***Persepolis*** (2003.) By 2006, a Pantheon Web site expressed a hope for an end to the booming interest in graphic novels "if a 'boom' means watching every book publisher on the planet madly scramble to start a Graphic Novel imprint regardless of love for (or understanding of) the medium, and paying over-inflated prices for substandard work—simply because they heard it's the 'hot new thing that all the kids are into' [. . . .]" The new competitors did succeed in bringing out additional valuable titles.

Hill & Wang publisher Thomas LeBien, for example, began publishing nonfiction graphic novels in 2006 with *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation* by Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colón, which succeeded in both the trade and educational markets. That title was followed by *After 9/11*, also by Colon and Jacobson, *The U.S. Constitution* by Jonathan Hennessey and Aaron McConnell, *The Stuff of Life* (about genetics) by Mark Schultz, Zander Cannon and Kevin Cannon, and more.

Individuals

A number of individuals have played noteworthy roles in the rise of educational comics. Even a short and incomplete list serves to demonstrate some of the diversity of educational comics

The leftist Mexican cartoonist rius (Eduardo del Río) has been one of the world's best-known educational cartoonists. Beginning with his series *Los Supermachos* (1964–68) and continuing with *Los Agachados* (1968–76), rius perfected a super-quick style of cartooning (using sketchy drawings and pasted-in found illustrations) which enabled him to research, write, and draw a weekly comic book almost single-handedly.

Some of rius's influence is apparent in the Writers and Readers series of For Beginners documentary comics, which are cartoon-illustrated, square-bound books, focusing on an individual (such as Jacques Lacan or Noam Chomsky) or on a topic (such as architecture or zen.) For example, they published rius's *Marx for Beginners* in 1976. Rius's influence can also be seen in the work of Larry Gonick, the wittiest and most popular specialist in educational comics working in the United States.

Larry Gonick authored the preposterously ambitious and yet fully satisfying *Cartoon History of the Universe* series, and has authored or co-authored "Cartoon Guides" to various subjects which frequently have been assigned as supplementary textbooks. His subjects have included genetics, computers, physics, statistics, sex, and chemistry. Unlike many educational cartoonists, Gonick was attracted to comics' potential as a nonfiction medium from almost the beginning of his career in the 1970s. In addition to his comic books and comics-format books, Gonick has also drawn educational comic strips, comics-format magazine features, comics-format posters, and storyboards for animation.

Scott McCloud created a very effective and influential book about how comics work, written and drawn in comics format, called *Understanding Comics* (1993.) He followed it with similar books titled *Reinventing Comics* (2000) and *Making Comics* (2006.) His clients have included The National Cancer Institute, The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, The Xerox Palo Alto Research Center, and, most famously, Google, for whom he created *The Google Chrome Comic* (2008).

Rick Geary has drawn adaptations of classic literature for the revived ***Classics Illustrated*** series. He may be best known for his specialty in creating comics-format dramatizations of famous 19th-century (and, more recently, 20th-century) murder cases, originally under the title *A Treasury of Victorian Murder*. Geary's graphic novels make outstanding use of many of the visual resources of educational cartooning, seamlessly

combining caricature, illustration, maps, and diagrams to clearly communicate the details of such tragedies as *The Murder of Abraham Lincoln* (2005).

Joe Sacco combined his loves for journalism and comics in comics-format books of foreign reporting that have earned wide recognition. Sacco's book ***Palestine*** was originally serialized in comic book format by **Fantagraphics** from 1993 to 2001. Over the course of this series, he refined his cartoony style into one that provided tremendous, convincingly realistic detail about how places looked. He also found ways to arrange words on his pages to achieve originality and attractiveness without sacrificing readability. The first collected volume of *Palestine* won an American Book Award in 1996. Fantagraphics also published Sacco's *Safe Area Goražde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992–1995*, in which Sacco reported on his experiences in that area.

Historian Paul Buhle, perhaps the only academic cheerleader that the underground **comix** movement had during its peak years, has edited, written or instigated a variety of progressive graphic novel projects, with a special emphasis on commemorating those who have fought for their ideals. Buhle edited *A Dangerous Woman*, a graphic biography of Emma Goldman, drawn by Sharon Rudahl, co-edited *Wobblies!: A Graphic History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (2005) and edited *The Beats: A Graphic History* (2009), and *Students for a Democratic Society: A Graphic History* (2009), mostly written by **Harvey Pekar** and mostly drawn by Gary Dumm. Buhle also co-wrote and edited *Studs Terkel's Working: A Graphic Adaptation* (2009), and worked on and introduced *A People's History of American Empire: A Graphic Adaptation* (2008), by Howard Zinn and drawn by Mike Konopacki.

Jim Ottaviani, a former nuclear engineer, has developed a specialty in writing comics about science history. These have included *Two-Fisted Science: Stories About Scientists* (1997) illustrated by various artists, and *Dignifying Science: Stories about Women Scientists* (1999), which was drawn by 11 women cartoonists, including some who have also worked on his other titles, Donna Barr, Colleen Doran, Linda Medley, and Anne Timmons. His first collaborator was comic book artist Steve Lieber. Topics of his other comics include the physicists, paleontologists, primatologists, and, most recently, in *T-Minus: The Race to the Moon* (2009), those engineers and astronauts who made the moon landing possible.

Organizations

Because educational cartooning typically exists in connection with other activities, encompasses such a wide variety of projects, and confronts so few specific challenges, no organization appears to be devoted exclusively and comprehensively to educational comics. Organizations do exist for people who create, publish, teach, or study educational comics, but only as part of a wider mission in which other kinds of cartooning have a greater role. The groups that exist around the educational use of comics work to recruit new cartoonists to the field or offer to provide art services.

Leif Packalén's "World Comics," based in Finland, promotes the use of comics for development education in the Global South. Rather than focusing on professionally-drawn

comics, World Comics teaches activists how to write and draw their own locally-based, comics-format wall-posters, even if they did not have previous drawing experience. Packalén and Ghanaian cartoonist Frank Odoi created a manual on educational cartooning, now out of print, that republishes samples of activist-drawn comics about health, agriculture, the environment, human rights, and other topics from around the world. More recently, Packalén has collaborated with Sharad Sharma to create *Grassroots Comics: A Development Communication Tool* (2007), a manual for teaching people to communicate their own community's issues using comics format. *Grassroots Comics* can be downloaded from the web at http://www.worldcomics.fi/grassroots_comics.pdf.

Rox35 Comix, founded by Len Cowan and Nate Butler, encourages the use of comics as a tool for evangelism by offering training courses and consulting. Rox35 Comix maintains a Web site which posts evidence supporting their argument that comics are "the world's most widely-read form of popular literature." COMIX35 offers three-day seminars for professional and amateur Christian communicators to share specifics on how to produce a comics-format tract. (http://www.comix35.org/aboutus.html.)

Fewer organizations advertise services to create custom-designed professional-quality comic books today than in the 1950s. Custom Comics Services advertises itself as the "largest producer of educational and promotional comic books" for clients in the United States. They claim to have helped their customers reach 200 million readers since 1985. Their Web site lists 20 ideas for how groups can use educational comics, and 22 types of groups that might use comics. http://www.customcomicservices.com/index.html.

The Internet

The Internet has become a relatively inexpensive medium for making educational comics available. Web designers have experimented with a variety of file formats. People often web-post comics that also exist in print versions as .pdf files. For example, see Nick Thorkelson's *Economic Meltdown Funnies* (http://economicmeltdownfunnies.org/) or Greg Palast and Bobby Kennedy's *Steal Back Your Vote* (http://www.gregpalast.com/sbyv/download-the-comic-book.html) or Greenpeace Southeast Asia's *Nuclear Meltdown* (http://www.greenpeace.org/seasia/en/news/new-comic-book-gets-youth-invo). The web has also made it possible to share old and out-of-print educational comics using this format. Ethan Persoff's Web site posts many examples as "COMICS WITH PROBLEMS" at http://www.ep.tc/.

Other sites use .gif or .jpg files to share educational comics. Comics theorist/cartoonist Neil Cohn has web-posted .jpg excerpts of two contrasting ways of telling how photosynthesis works using comics: expository style or narrative style. http://www.emaki.net/blog/2007/03/photosynthesis.html. Jorge Cham's web-comic "Piled Higher and Deeper" not only conveys information, but also takes graduate school as its setting, making it doubly-related to "education." Cham uses .gif files. http://www.phdcomics.com/comics/aboutcomics.html.

The Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History's web-comic "The Secret in the Cellar" uses a motion comic slideshow in a Flash Player with limited animation. http://anthropology.si.edu/writteninbone/comic/XPlayer.html.

Libraries

Libraries have had an institutional bias in favor of graphic novels, but a longstanding bias against collecting educational comic books, which typically entered the world as cheaply-printed ephemera. Sol Davidson, who wrote a doctoral dissertation on comics in 1959, has catalogued close to 2,500 educational comics according to the Dewey Decimal System, and has donated them to the University of Florida Libraries. The Sol & Penny Davidson collection of "special purpose comics" includes a wide range of comics that were designed to educate, propagandize, or sell goods and services.

Conclusions

Educational comics have been the most diverse of any type of comics, in their publishers, distribution strategies, level of artistic competence, messages, formats, styles, and readerships. Because of this enormous variety, any short survey of educational comics must be incomplete. Educational comic book stories have expressed some of the best and worst the human imagination has had to offer, as have entertainment comics.

Several factors suggest that educational cartooning will continue to mature and develop. Information is accumulating faster than individuals can sort through and absorb it, so vital facts must be translated into popularly-accessible terms to successfully compete for public attention. Cartooning has repeatedly demonstrated its power as an attractive, appealing, clear, quickly-grasped, affordable, flexible, and effective means to facilitate changes in attitudes, knowledge, and behavior. Further, nonfiction comic books have evolved into a medium of great artistic power and subtlety. Consequently, cartooning, together with maps, diagrams, graphs, and other tools, holds a firm place in the "visual language" we increasingly rely upon to understand our world and our choices.

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Leonard Rifas

EIGHTBALL is a critically acclaimed comic book series written and drawn by **Daniel Clowes.** Launched by **Fantagraphics** in 1989, the series quickly became a signature title of the independent comics movement of the 1990s.

In certain respects, early issues of *Eightball* resembled Clowes's first solo comics humor anthology, *Lloyd Llewellyn* (1985–89), which was also published by Fantagraphics. This is particularly true of the figure work and page compositions, which were spare, angular, and a little awkward in places. Both anthologies offered showcases for Clowes's unsparing wit and mordant humor. Unlike *Lloyd Llewellyn*, however, *Eightball* was not built around a stable set of characters but instead embraced a wide range of scenarios and formats, from extended story arcs to biting one-page cartoons. While Lloyd Llewellyn the character could be described as a hero, albeit a flawed one, few if any of the personalities on display in the early *Eightball* stories could be considered worthy of emulation.

Over time, Clowes's approach to creating comics became more ambitious, a development that was reflected in this eclectic comics anthology. In particular, his pages became visually richer and at the same time more understated. By the end of the 1990s he had matured into one of the most accomplished and multilayered graphic storytellers of his generation. Despite its irregular publication and scathing approach to comics conventions, as well as the comics subculture itself, *Eightball* has enjoyed a major influence on the look and feel of modern cartooning. Virtually all of Clowes's published work remains in print, and his contemporaries routinely cite him as a central influence. Along with his contemporaries **Chris Ware, Seth, Chester Brown,** and the **Hernandez Brothers**, his best work arguably sets a gold standard for a certain kind of panel-based narrative art.

Twenty-three issues of *Eightball* have appeared to date. The most recent, "The Death Ray," was published in June 2004. Although Clowes is reportedly working on a new issue, the series appears to be on semi-permanent hiatus. Four collections of graphic stories that originally appeared in the series have been published: *Lout Rampage!* (1991), *Orgy Bound* (1996), *Caricature* (1998), and *Twentieth Century Eightball* (2002). These collections largely feature stories from the series earlier issues, when the humor could be crude, scattershot, and occasionally nihilistic. Representative titles include "Hippypants and Peace Bear," "Why I Hate Christians," and "I Hate You Deeply." His five-page story "On Sports" (1994) memorably explores the "sexual undercurrent in sports:" "The language of football, for example, makes this very clear. The object of the game is to enter your opponent's 'end-zone' as often as possible employing a variety of 'backs' and 'ends' (including those that are 'split' and 'tight') who attempt to 'find the hole' so as to 'penetrate' as 'deeply' as possible into their opponent's 'territory.'" If anything, Clowes's discussion of baseball ("a stylized form of oedipal sexuality") is even more vivid.

Even as Clowes sought to perfect the comedic short story, he experimented with long story arcs that could be consolidated into full-length graphic novels. The first and most openly parodic of these titles is *Pussey!* ("Torn from the pages of *Eightball!*"), which tracks the pointless journey of a witless superhero illustrator from "naïve fanboy" to "respected professional" and finally "pathetic has-been." Along the way, Dan Pussey encounters

a number of comics personalities, from **Stan Lee** ("Dr. Infinity") to **Art Spiegelman** ("Gummo Bubbleman"). His final words? "They preserved my work in plastic bags." In retrospect, Clowes's graphic novel *Like a Velvet Glove Cast in Iron* (1993) presents a key turning point in the artist's development. As a parody of a hopelessly bad movie project, *Velvet Glove* sounds on paper very much like the artist's other projects from this period, with their focus on the entertainment industry as a playground for human foibles. Yet the story has an unsettlingly ambiguous quality, and Clowes seemed to be reaching for a new level of seriousness in his work.

After completing *Velvet Glove*, Clowes turned to his next major project, ***Ghost World,*** which remains his best-known work to date and which was also serialized in the pages of *Eightball*. Released as a graphic novel in 1997, *Ghost World* tells the story of best friends from high school who drift apart during the summer after senior year. A film version, starring Thora Birch, Scarlett Johansson, and Steve Buscemi, and directed by Terry Zwigoff, was released in 2001. The film received numerous awards, and the screenplay, by Clowes and Zwigoff, was nominated for an Academy Award. Clowes and Zwigoff subsequently collaborated on *Art School Confidential* (2006), a studio film starring Max Minghella, Sophia Myles, and John Malkovich. Clowes's script is loosely based a short story that originally appeared in *Eightball* in 1991.

Building on the success of *Ghost World*, Clowes used the pages of *Eightball* as a launching pad for a pair of graphic novels that narrate the struggles of forlorn anti-heroes—*David Boring* (2000) and *Ice Haven* (2005). Both books were published by Pantheon. Clowes's bitter 2004 take on the superhero myth, "The Death Ray," may also be adapted as a movie.

While the early stories that appeared in *Eightball* were mainly intended to generate knowing laughs, the more recent material has a decidedly sophisticated and self-questioning edge. The development of the series not only tracks Dan Clowes's maturation as a cartoonist and illustrator; it also reflects the growing ambitions of the independent comics scene. Whether another issue of *Eightball* will ever appear seems highly uncertain. The same cannot be said of its wider cultural influence.

Kent Worcester

EISNER AWARDS. The **Will Eisner** Comic Industry Awards, commonly referred to simply as the Eisner Awards, have been given annually since 1988 for outstanding achievement in comics art. Named for pioneering comics artist Will Eisner, the awards are given in a wide variety of categories, such as Best Single Issue/Single Story, Best Serialized Story, Best Continuing Story, and Best Graphic Album, as well as specific individual awards such as Best Writer, Best Writer/Artist, and Best Colorist/Coloring. One of the awards is a Hall of Fame Award that gives recipients entry into the comic industry's hall of fame. Nominations for the awards are made by a five-person panel; winners are then chosen by a ballot of comics professionals. The awards are presented at the Comic-Con International Convention held each summer in San Diego, California.

M. Keith Booker



Comic book artist Will Eisner, in his Tudor City studio (1941). Photofest

EISNER, WILL (1917–2005). William Erwin Eisner was a comic book creator, graphic novelist, teacher, entrepreneur, and advocate for comics. Eisner's pioneering body of work influenced generations of creators and encouraged acceptance of intellectually adult comics. His collection ***A Contract with God*** *and Other Tenement Stories* (1978) is often cited as the first graphic novel, a designation that, while not entirely accurate, appropriately encapsulates Eisner's influence on the form's development.

Eisner's first work was a pirate strip for *Wow* Comics, in 1936. Shortly thereafter, he organized Eisner and Iger Studios, with partner Jerry Iger, to produce new material for the booming field. Eisner's creations during this period included **Blackhawk**, Doll Man, Uncle Sam (the **superhero**), and Sheena, Queen of the Jungle.

In 1939, publisher of **Quality Comics**, Everett Arnold, offered Eisner the chance to create a comic book supplement for the Des Moines *Register and Tribune* syndicate; Eisner was offered **The Spirit**, a masked detective character. Eisner sold his interest in the studios to Iger in order to concentrate on the new comic. Debuting in June, 1940, Eisner's ***Spirit*** stories brought genuine sophistication to comics, including psychologically insightful character studies, urban **crime** and corruption tales, humor, **horror,** and the first comic book media **satires,** riffs on bestsellers and movies. The initial run of *The Spirit* ended in 1952. Eisner concentrated on **educational comics,** most significantly the U.S. Army's *P*S, The Preventive Maintenance Monthly*. Eisner served as its artistic director from 1951 until 1971.

Expanding on *A Contract with God*, Eisner continued to develop the graphic novel form. In his last years, he adapted stories from novels or myths, including the West African epic *Sundiata* (2002); he fought anti-Semitism in *Fagin the Jew* (2003) and *The Plot: The Secret Story of* The Protocols of the Elders of Zion (2005).

Eisner was also a pioneer theorist of the comics medium. Teaching at the School of Visual Arts in New York, his important lectures formed the basis of three seminal

works of comics art theory: *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985), *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative* (1996), and *Expressive Anatomy for Comics and Narrative* (2009). The most prestigious awards in the comics industry, given annually since 1988, are the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards, known as the **Eisner Awards**.

Christopher Couch

ELFQUEST. A cult **fantasy**/adventure comic book series created in the 1970s by Wendy and Richard Pini, *ElfQuest* had rather inauspicious beginnings. Pulled by its creators from *Fantasy Quarterly* after a disappointing debut in March 1978, subsequent issues of the comic appeared at newsstands every four months in an oversized, black-and white, self-published format costing twice or even three times as much as **Marvel** and **DC Comics** of the same period. It was a fantasy title, moreover, introduced at a time when ***Conan the Barbarian*** was the only successful example of that genre. Legend even has it that when the Pinis first attempted to sell the idea to Marvel and DC, one corporate executive replied, "Nobody wants to read about a bunch of elves." Despite this rough start, the *ElfQuest* property survived beyond the Pinis' own imprint (WaRP Graphics) and has expanded over the course of three decades, evolving into numerous editions, sequels, and formats published alternately by WaRP, Marvel, Apple, and, most recently, DC Comics.

The story of *ElfQuest* centers around a community of hunter/warrior elves, the Wolfriders, and their struggles to survive on a hostile Earth-like planet inhabited by trolls and primitive humans. The Wolfriders are led by their chief, Cutter, whose quest begins when the elves' forest home, the Holt, is destroyed by fire set by a neighboring tribe of humans bent on revenge. The Wolfriders' wandering and often perilous journey in search of a new home takes them far from the ashes of their former Holt, through musty troll caverns, across burning deserts, over snowy mountain passes, and eventually to the very heart of their original home, the Palace of the High Ones, a crumbling ruin of the extraterrestrial ship that brought their first ancestors to the planet 10,000 years earlier.

During the course of their adventures, the Wolfriders encounter various other communities of elves, including the gentle Sun Folk, the ancient Gliders, and the militant Go-Backs. There are also trolls, humans, and other species along the way—both friendly and hostile—so that what began as the story of the Wolfriders, a single community of elves and their wolf companions in search of a new home, becomes a much larger story of coexistence, as many different tribes, species, and cultures discover one another and eventually realize that, in order to survive this hostile world, they must learn to accept one another despite their differences. These are the major themes of *ElfQuest*, a healthy acceptance of change, growth, and difference, along with an explicit sexuality that harkens back to an earlier late-1960s counterculture.

At the peak of the comic's popularity, monthly issues of *ElfQuest* sold 100,000 copies worldwide. It became the most popular comic book among female readers in the

United States, and thus represents one of the most successful American **underground** comic titles of all time. Several works of prose fiction also use the *ElfQuest* title, as do role-playing games and, announced in July of 2008, an upcoming feature-length film produced by Warner Brothers.

See also: Underground and Adult Comics

Patrick Scott Belk

ELLIS, WARREN (1968–). A prominent British comics writer, Ellis began his career in 1990 with contributions to the various British weekly comics such as *Deadline*, *Doctor Who Magazine*, *Speakeasy*, and *Judge Dredd*. Soon after, he started working for **Marvel Comics**, **DC Comics**, and **Image Comics**, and he has contributed to numerous well-known Marvel titles, especially in the ***X-Men*** sequence. However, it was his work with artist Bryan Hitch on DC/Wildstorm's *Stormwatch* and ***The Authority*** that propelled him to fan-favorite status. Since then, he has continued to work for Marvel, DC, and Image, but has also worked a great deal with Avatar Press on creator-owned titles such as *Gravel*, *Doktor Sleepless*, and *Anna Mercury*. Ellis has long championed the use of collected editions and helped to convince comics publishers that it was a viable publishing model. Much of his work remains available and still in print via collected editions. Ellis published his first conventional novel, *Crooked Little Vein*, in 2007. He has also written for television and the video game industry.

His most important works are his longer form ones. These are the previously mentioned *Stormwatch* and *The Authority* (which deal with a much more realistic take on the political and cultural impact of **superheroes** coupled with large-scale, over-the-top action), ***Transmetropolitan*** (which details the career of gonzo journalist Spider Jerusalem in a not-too-distant, postmodern future as he fights political corruption), and ***Planetary*** (an intriguing look at superhero fiction of the past century via the members of the Planetary Foundation in their role as archaeologists of the impossible).

Ellis has also published many shorter form works as either stand-alone graphic novels or as limited series that vary from 3 to 12 issues in length for a wide variety of publishers. The most important of these works are *Ocean* (2004–5), *Orbiter* (2003), and *Global Frequency* (2002–4). In addition, the ongoing series *Fell* began in 2006 and continues of this writing in 2009.

Some common themes inherent in Ellis's work include the erosion of societal taboos, the characteristics of subcultures, a strong utopian desire in spite of dystopian trends, information overload, the personal and cultural impact of technology, and post-humanism, though these serious themes are often treated with an outrageous sense of humor. He has called himself "the last modernist" due to the fact that his themes and execution have more in common with modernists than his contemporary postmodernists. *Stormwatch*, *The Authority*, and *Planetary*, in particular, are concerned with the creation of what Ellis terms "a finer world."

Ellis has long been a proponent of utilizing the Internet to not only market his work, but also to interact with other creators. He has written an ongoing web-comic (*Freakangels*), as well as *Come In Alone*, a weekly column for the Comic Book Resources Web site that dealt with the theoretical underpinnings of comics as a medium. Ellis maintains a robust Internet presence and has hosted various on-line communities for creators from a wide range of media. A writer very much in the tradition of H. G. Wells, Ellis uses fiction as a tool to both examine and comment upon the present.

Will Allred

ELSEWORLDS. A **DC** imprint adopted in 1991 to identify stories that dramatically diverged from the DC universe's established continuity. The tag line read "In *Elseworlds*, heroes are taken from their usual settings and put into strange times and places—some that have existed or might have existed, and others that can't, couldn't or shouldn't exist. The result is stories that make characters who are as familiar as yesterday seem as fresh as tomorrow."

The secret origin of the *Elseworlds* imprint begins in August of 1960 with the publication of "Mr. and Mrs. Clark (**Superman**) Kent" in *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane* #19, a simple story exploring the life of Superman and Lois if they were ever married. The distinguishing feature from this particular yarn, however, was that it was billed upfront as an "imaginary story," unlike previously published narratives which included improbable events by later revealing them as dreams or fantasies. Under Mort Weisinger's run as editor in the 1960s, the imaginary tale was a regularly occurring feature in Superman comics, delivering such stories as "The Death of Superman" in *Superman* #149, "Lois Lane, the Supermaid from Earth" in *Superman* #159, and "The Amazing Story of Superman Red and Superman Blue" in *Superman* #162. While the stories mostly explored possible future scenarios—Superman getting married, dying, having children—a few such as "Lois Lane, the Supermaid from Earth" rewrote the origin of several characters, establishing the possibility for exploring drastically alternative histories of DC's major characters.

During the same period, alongside the inception of imaginary stories, came the concept of parallel earths. **The Flash**, **Green Lantern**, and The Atom had all been resurrected in the mid-1950s and early 1960s after cancellation, with new identities, new costumes, even in some cases new powers, and no connection to the previously published characters bearing those names; but in 1961 the editor for DC's ***Justice League of America***, Julius Schwartz, and the title's current writer, Gardner Fox, conspired to bring back the original defunct characters from the 1940s and 1950s. In *Flash* #123 (September of 1961) Barry Allen, the Flash introduced in 1954, met Jay Garrick, the Flash created in 1940. Both were explained to reside in alternate realities vibrating in the same space at different frequencies, allowing DC writers to team-up of versions of the same character. This storytelling tactic became wildly popular and spawned several subsequent narratives such as 1963's "Crisis on Earth One" in *Justice League of America* #21 or 1966's "The Bridge Between Earths" in *Justice League of America* #157,

eventually ending up as a yearly feature for the book. By creating an explanation for the existence of disparate versions of the same character, Fox conventionalized alternity for comic books. The next decade would see a blending of imaginary stories and parallel Earths: a parallel Superman would even marry Lois Lane in 1978's ***Action Comics*** #484.

Alternate realities gave credence and relevance to imaginary stories, building a fanbase and allowing narratives to develop apart from what was considered a marketable approach to a character. Thus, in **Alan Moore's *Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow***, published as two parts in 1986's *Superman* #423 and *Action Comics* #583, Superman's retirement holds emotional impact since, indeed, the version of Superman that had been published throughout the 1970s and 1980s was about to be replaced by the reconceived Superman from a different reality appearing in **John Byrne**'s 1986 miniseries ***The Man of Steel***. The convention had become so ingrained that **Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns***, a miniseries also published in 1986 telling the seemingly final story about **Batman**'s retirement, could feature a future with a Superman who never retired and was not perceived to be the same Superman from Moore's contemporary *Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow* without eliciting confusion from DC's fanbase.

The *Elseworlds* concept is the final step in the development of alternate reality in comics; it takes the characters of the DC universe and expands upon the possibilities of their origins, futures, and fundamental characters. The first *Elseworlds* tale (retroactively labeled as such in subsequent editions) was a 1989 one-shot called ***Gotham by Gaslight*** written by Brian Augustyn and illustrated by **Mike Mignola**, which featured Batman fighting Jack the Ripper in the 1880s, his parents having been gunned down by carriage robbers years before. Batman's costume was redesigned with a Victorian slant, and he even discusses his parental issues with Sigmund Freud. Fundamentally, however, the character's core identity remains the same: Batman still dedicates his life to fighting crime due to the traumatic experiences he had as a child. This formula would be repeated in the pages of comics published under the *Elseworlds* imprint, and in subsequent stories Batman has shaken hands with Harry Houdini, fought Lovecraftian monsters, drank blood as a vampire, met Hitler, fought Hitler, and rooted out church corruption as a Catholic priest.

While the caped crusader has the lion's share of the titles, *Elseworlds* didn't stop at Batman. Superman, The Green Lantern, Flash, **Wonder Woman**, and a cavalcade of DC's supporting characters have appeared in *Elseworlds* tales. Some noted *Elseworlds* books are *Superman:* ***Speeding Bullets***, where Superman's rocket lands in Gotham and he becomes Batman after the tragic death of his parents, Thomas and Martha Wayne; *The Golden Age*, which pits the heroes of the Justice Society against modernity and the growing anti-hero public policy of the United States Government; *JLA: The Nail*, which muses about a DC universe without there ever having been a Superman; ***Superman: Red Son***, which posits the life Superman would have led if he landed in the Soviet Union; and the most critically acclaimed of all *Elseworlds* tales, ***Kingdom***

Come, which shows an aging Justice League recalled to a violent, modern world that they hardly recognize.

DC regularly published stories with the *Elseworlds* imprint throughout the 1990s, with 1994 seeing every major superhero annual run an *Elseworlds* tale for its respective hero. By 2005, however, the imprint sputtered to a halt; 2000–4 had seen a steady stream of *Elseworlds* tales including *JLA: Age of Wonder*, *JLA: Another Nail* (a sequel to *JLA: The Nail*) and the aforementioned *Superman: Red Son*. Only a few publications since then have had the label, most notably *Batman: Year 100* published in 2006. The idea of alternity explored in these tales, however, found widespread acceptance and has become a staple of comics publishing. ***All-Star*** *Superman*, *All-Star Batman*, ***DC: The New Frontier***, and *Superman: Secret Identity*, while not true *Elseworlds* tales, explore alternative versions of DC characters, *DC: The New Frontier* even winning the **Eisner Award** for best limited series in 2005, and *All-Star Superman* for best new series in 2006, and best ongoing series in 2007. Beyond these new series, however, is also the general acceptance of the *Elseworlds* tales as canon in DC's 2006 52 and its sequel, *Countdown*. In these series several *Elseworlds* characters, including the Russian Superman from *Superman: Red Son* and the Vampire Batman from ***Batman and Dracula:*** *Red Rain*, make appearances as parallel versions of DC's heroes from alternate worlds, bringing many of the *Elseworlds* tales into continuity with regular DC publications.

Jackson Jennings

ENNIS, GARTH (1970–). Garth Ennis was born in Holywood in Northern Ireland. Although he has written for many established titles like *Judge Dredd* and ***The Punisher***, Ennis is best known for his original series *Hitman* (1996–2001) and ***Preacher*** (1995–2000). He has most frequently collaborated with artist Steve Dillon, as well as with John McCrea, and Glen Fabry.

Ennis began writing comics at the age of 19, beginning with *Troubled Souls* (1989), and *For a Few Troubles More* (1990). His break came with his run on *Judge Dredd* (1991–95) and the **DC** series ***Hellblazer*** during the same time. From there Ennis began work on DC's *The Demon* (1993–95), in which he introduced Tommy Monaghan, who would later star in Ennis's own series *Hitman*. Ennis has subsequently worked on various Punisher miniseries between 1995 and 2006, but his general disdain for superhero characters has led to his most successful work with his own creations.

His best-known work to date, *Preacher*, tells the story of Jesse Custer, a reluctant preacher imbued with the voice of God. Custer teams up with his on-again-off-again girlfriend Tulip and an Irish vampire named Cassidy to track down God, who has quit his post in heaven. The series is a mixed satire of religion and American culture, as well as a story of super-powered characters who refuse to be **superheroes**. The religious satire recalls Ennis's earliest efforts, *Troubled Souls* and *For a Few Troubles More*, which turn a darkly humorous eye upon the Troubles of Northern Ireland.

While hearkening to his earlier religious satire, Ennis's wary portrayal of superhuman individuals also dovetails with *Hitman* (which Ennis was also writing while working on

Preacher) and his ongoing series *The Boys* (2006–). *Hitman* features ex-marine turned contract killer Tommy Monaghan, who after gaining x-ray vision and light telepathy decides only to accept contracts to kill super-powered individuals or supernatural creatures. The series crosses over into many major DC titles like ***Superman*** and ***Batman***. *The Boys* began its run in 2006 under Wildstorm, but was cancelled after six issues, and is now published by Dynamite Entertainment. *The Boys* follows the exploits of a group of CIA agents assigned to monitor and, if necessary, kill or intimidate superhuman beings. *Hitman* and *The Boys* continue the tradition of earlier landmarks like **Allan Moore's *Watchmen*** and **Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns***, which consistently undermine popular notions of superheroes and heroism.

Ennis's work has earned him several awards, most notably **Eisner Awards** in 1998 for *Hitman*, *Preacher*, *Unknown Soldier*, and *Blood Mary: Lady Liberty*, and again for *Preacher* in 2001. He was also nominated twice for an Eisner Award in 1993 and 1994 for his work on *Hellblazer*. Ennis won the Comics Buyer's Guide Award for "Favorite Writer" five years running, from 1997–2001. *Preacher* was also nominated for a host of Eagle Awards in 1999, and won for "Favourite Colour Comic Book."

Grant Bain

EPILEPTIC. *Epileptic* was originally published serially in six volumes from 1996 to 2003 as *L'Ascension de Haut Mal* at French creator-owned publishing house L'Association. In the series, comics artist David B. (born as Pierre-François Beauchard) depicts the autobiographical story of his family's constant struggle with his brother's illness, epilepsy. In contrast to the straight-forward title of the English publication *Epileptic*, the original title *L'Ascension de Haut Mal* not only refers to the described illness, but has a more ambiguous tone when translated literally as "the rise of the great evil."

Author and artist David B. studied applied art in Duperré, France, has produced comics since 1986 at various French publishing houses, and has received several awards for *Epileptic* (Pantheon Books), including the French *Alph' Art* Award for comics excellence in 2000, and the *Max-and-Moritz-Preis* for the best international publication in 2008. He was also cited as European Cartoonist of the Year in 1998 by *The Comics Journal*.

The story of *Epileptic* spans from the author's childhood (as a five-year-old) through his adolescence and adulthood. When his brother Jean-Christophe has his first epileptic seizure at the age of seven, the whole family embarks on a troublesome journey from Western medicine to macrobiotic communities, to acupuncturists, to different gurus back into the secluded heart of the family seeking to cure, or at least cope with, the illness. In a struggle to represent this story in retrospective, David B. adds flashbacks from his grandparents and great-grandparents to his personal experience of these events in order to paint a more accurate picture of his family's psychology. Historic events, such as World War II, and accounts of recent conversations between David B. and his parents are equally woven into the fabric of *Epileptic* and create a narrative that is based solely on the artist's subjective understanding of the events. The author constructs a meta-narrative

in which he often rewrites the **history** of his family, only to let his parents question his narrative decisions in a fictional account.

While *Epileptic* can easily be described as an autobiographical **adult comic**, genre borders are more fluid than in other contemporary European comics such as ***Persepolis*** by Marjane Satrapi and recent American publications such as ***Blankets*** by Craig Thompson, or ***Fun Home*** by Alison Bechdel. It is not solely the author's life that is on display but the depiction of the illness itself that takes the form of an enemy which cannot be fought as conventionally as any other physical opponent. In any case, young Pierre-François, who will become David in the course of the narration, armors himself with unique narrative techniques, as when historical figures such as Genghis Khan accompany the young protagonist in his ferocious battle scenes against epilepsy, which take upon the corporeal form of a dragon-like creature. After various dream-like clashes, the protagonist realizes that such incidents cannot be won and chooses new allies to cope with the illness; a whole array of literary figures, fable animals, and even deceased relatives enter the narrative and discuss the family's problems with him. This introduction of **folklore** and mythology provides the author with another possibility to cope with the events displayed in the comic book.

In addition to the changing supportive figures in the course of the narration, the understanding of the protagonist also evolves; while Pierre starts out as a naïve and impulsive boy who questions every single event and every occurrence, he turns slowly into an adolescent and eventually into a grown-up, accepting and even ignoring his brother's epilepsy coldheartedly. The use of dialogue in *Epileptic* gives a good account of this evolution of the character: while conversations remain unchallenged in the earlier passages of *Epileptic*, later captions—obviously provided by the narrator/protagonist—comment rather ironically on the disputes in the family.

Although the narrative patterns and the emotional storytelling techniques in *Epileptic* are absorbing enough, David B. has achieved international acclaim primarily for his unique graphic style. Resembling the black-and-white American **Alternative Comics** of the 1970s, David B. creates a perfect *chiaroscuro* with his large black-and-white pages. Black shadows and night-scenes do not always represent a form of danger but offer a sanctuary for the young protagonist. Thus the seemingly clear-cut distinctions between black and white do not present simple answers to the questions raised; they force the reader to add his own solutions to the problems displayed.

Another interesting feature of David B.'s graphic technique is the ever-changing imagery. He introduces his readers into a world that ranges from centuries-old symbolism to expressionist patterns complete with arabesque ornaments. Very often this change in graphic style takes place abruptly from one panel to the next. Thus, the subjective experience of little Pierre suddenly alters; what was a normal person in one panel turns into a grotesque demon in the next one. In such a way the characters' emotions like hate, anger, and disillusion are expressed very figuratively: when affected by these feelings, they turn into deformed beings. It is especially this technique that allows David B. to mix his reality with his dreams, blending one into the other and vice versa, and thus

cope with Jean-Christophe's epilepsy. Similar to the use of folklore and mythology, David B. seeks refuge in art itself. Thus the references to his own work do not only act as autobiographical accounts but also provide the much needed sense of purpose for the young protagonist.

What makes *Epileptic* a masterpiece of European comic narration is its complexity and ambiguity. David B. leads his readers with his very personal memoir into an emotional grey area. In the end it is still unclear how his brother's life will evolve. *Epileptic* is not an enclosed narration that begins and ends, but rather represents a constant struggle which does not stop after the comic book is already concluded. A fitting frame for the whole comic is provided by David B.'s younger sister Florence Beauchard, who gives her own personal account of the family's history in the fore- and afterword of the comic.

See also: Memoir/Slice-of-Life Themes

Daniel Wüllner

ESPIONAGE. The espionage genre in literature derives from 19th-century British fiction and parallels the rise of governmental intelligence agencies in the business of protecting military secrets for national security. The genre received a particular impetus from public preoccupation with the Dreyfus affair, a French political scandal in the 1890s involving state secrets between France and Germany. The scandal involved a conspiracy and subsequent government frame-up along with espionage and counter-espionage. The affair exposed the public to the complexities of international relations. The drama and intrigue of international espionage was a theme seen in late Victorian-era detective fiction, most notably in the Sherlock Holmes story "The Naval Treaty" (1893). Espionage themes would be further developed with Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907).

During World War II and the **Cold War**, spy fiction became a popular genre, exemplified by the James Bond adventures written by Ian Fleming in the 1950s and 1960s, to the Tom Clancy novels of the mid-1980s. The spy genre was also popular in television and film. The advantage of espionage fiction is that is a malleable format that may incorporate elements of (but is not limited to) action/adventure, political intrigue, romance, and military genres as well. Popular products coming out of the spy genre, such as the James Bond movies, have had wide-ranging cultural influences, while others, such as the 1960s television series *The Man from UNCLE*, become products of their time and work on a nostalgic, campy level.

After the Cold War and into the post-9/11 era, the espionage genre focused more on military intelligence gathering, anti-terrorism tactics, and the role of technology in espionage work, along with global finance and communication. Popular interest in the spy genre is still prevalent as demonstrated by the fiction and films of the *Bourne Identity* series and recent *Mission Impossible* movies.

The inclusion of espionage as a storytelling device in comics parallels the popularity of the genre in popular media, as spying and espionage tales make their way into various

genres of comics including detective, **crime** fighter, **war**, and **superhero**. Specifically, war and superhero comics in the late 1930s often included some type of espionage. American comics of the late 1930s saw mystery men battling spies and saboteurs on a regular basis. Given the spy genre's links to detective and military fiction, espionage was common in existing comic stories. The inclusion of espionage themes arises with the growth of the mass-market comic book in the mid 1930s, continues with the resurgence of the superhero genre in the 1960s, and becomes a standard storytelling convention by the modern era.

Golden Age espionage emerges with the pre-war and World War II–era **mystery men**/superhero comic genre. In these tales, espionage was used as a standard plot device given the political realities of the time. Pre-war books lumped spies and fifth columnists in with petty crooks, or simply had these very same crooks unknowingly work for some underground society sympathetic to the thinly veiled Axis powers. Typically, heroes of the time were either working for the government in securing the home front, lying low and waiting for fifth-columnist plots to be uncovered, or else on a search-and-destroy mission against America's enemies.

During the war, aside from selling war bonds, the superheroes mainly stayed stateside to combat domestic sabotage since it was inadvisable from a narrative point of view for them to fight on the front, which would have made the Allied victory too easy. As these costumed mystery heroes were relegated to fight fifth columnists and spies stateside, their adventures continued very much as before. These spies and saboteurs were out to either steal state secrets and/or interfere with war production. Japanese or German "Ratzi" spies were easy targets for heroes with such extraordinary abilities, who may have been more than able to defeat the Axis on their own. Nevertheless, beyond supporting the war effort, many costumed heroes kept fighting stateside on the home front.

Initial Golden Age comics featured self-contained stories, so little time was devoted to detailed plots. Radio and movie serials were more popular than comics for the presentation of lengthy, complex spy stories. Such movie serials as ***Batman***, Green Hornet, and the Masked **Marvel** could do more with their plot lines than a single issue of a comic, as their characters battled secret underground domestic organizations sympathetic to the Axis powers (mainly Japan). Still, very few storylines in either the comics or the serials went beyond stopping the thugs or the spies they worked for from blowing a storage depot or munitions works.

Fawcett Comics produced two noteworthy war-era heroes who made it a mission to stop sabotage at home: Spy Smasher and Bulletman. Both characters would fight enemies of America, usually in the form of **Nazi** fifth columnists. Captain Midnight, a comics character that gained popularity in radio (originally published by Dell Comics and later by Fawcett) would also work to defeat Nazi masterminds, with the limitation that he had to be back by midnight of course. With the end of the war and without an immediate threat to fight, these espionage fighters languished into relative obscurity. Spy Smasher briefly became Crime Smasher, but the character did not take off.

Captain America's origins begin with fifth-column espionage, as Nazi infiltrators killed the doctor who developed the "super soldier" serum tested on Private Steve Rogers. Spy smashing was Captain America's main line of work during the war. Cap's main antagonist, the Red Skull, would serve as the ring leader of a Nazi-inspired U.S.-based underground criminal and espionage organization. After the war, and with the subsequent decline of the superhero comic, Captain America, like many other superheroes, would briefly fight off communists and the occasional supernatural villain before the comic and the character would be put on ice (in this case both figuratively and literally) until the early 1960s.

Blackhawk, first seen in August 1941 in **Quality Comics**' *Military Comics*, was the name given to a group of international military pilots. Although the cast was international, the book has been criticized by contemporary critics for its use of ethnic stereotypes (seen in many comics from the 1930s and 1940s). Their mission objectives were mainly to prevent spies from stealing secrets or otherwise stopping nefarious Axis plots that threatened the Allied cause. A mix of military fiction/adventure and the spy genre, the initial *Blackhawk* stories focused on very realistic war themes and promoted the ethic of vigilante wartime justice. The *Blackhawk* stories ran until 1953, although the property would be revived various times by **DC** from the 1970s onward.

The **Silver Age** of comics would also reflect the changing face of the spy genre. As the spy genre changed in popular literature, so too did espionage themes in popular comics. A well-known espionage-themed comic from this era was Antonio Prohias's *Spy vs. Spy*, a satirical spoof of Cold War espionage featured in *Mad Magazine*. Introduced in 1961, *Spy vs. Spy* was a comic strip featuring two identical spies, both wearing trench coats and narrow brimmed hats. Their features are identical save that one is colored black, while the other is white. In the Warner Brothers tradition of cartoons, all *Spy vs. Spy* tales involved the two agents attempting to outdo the other in creative ways. While the white/black connotation may have given readers some idea of political or national affiliation, little preference was give to which color "won" in each strip. In the end, *Spy vs. Spy* was a humorous look into the absurdities of Cold War politics and espionage. The strip continues to today in *Mad*.

The influence of James Bond was seen in many comics of the 1960s. T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents, developed by artist **Wally Wood**, was a team of United Nations–chartered adventurers tasked to take on various underground organizations bent on world conquest, such as the forces of "the Warlord" and "S.P.I.D.E.R." (Secret People's International Directorate for Extralegal Revenue). The espionage genre conventions in the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents would be seen again in the 1980s *G.I. Joe* stories.

Marvel comics, following up on the popularity of the James Bond novels and subsequent films, also led in the integration of espionage themes into its larger continuity by introducing S.H.I.E.L.D. into its storylines by 1965. As a covert government-run espionage organization, S.H.I.E.L.D. featured **Nick Fury.** S.H.I.E.L.D. was originally an acronym for "Supreme Headquarters, International Espionage, Law-Enforcement Division", though that would later be changed to "Strategic Hazard Intervention,

Espionage Logistics Directorate". The acronym is a play on those used to represent covert organizations such as SPECTRE (Special Executive for Counter-intelligence, Terrorism, Revenge, and Extortion) from the James Bond novels and films and U.N.C.L.E. (United Network Command for Law and Enforcement) from the 1964 television series *The Man from U.N.C.L.E. Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* ran for 18 issues from June 1968 to 1971. Another series, *S.H.I.E.L.D.* 1973 had a short-lived run of 5 issues in 1973, while other S.H.I.E.L.D.-themed series had sporadic runs in 1983, 1988, and 1989 to 1993.

Marvel comics also introduced the terrorist organization with HYDRA in 1965, based on similar goals of world domination and the like typical of the James Bond SPECTRE archetype. A year later, AIM (Advanced Idea Mechanics), a HYDRA splinter organization was introduced. AIM was composed of members of the scientific community who also shared the goal of world domination, or at least the overthrow of most world governments.

A future S.H.I.E.L.D. agent introduced in 1964 as a Soviet Spy was the **Black Widow**, Natalia Romanova (mistakenly introduced as "Romanoff"). She first appeared in an ***Iron Man*** feature in *Tales of Suspense* #52 written by **Stan Lee** with art by Don Heck. By 1966, the character had defected to the United States, and in 1970 was featured in her trademark black skin-tight cat suit. The Black Widow would go on to join the **Avengers** while also appearing in several **Daredevil** adventures.

Espionage themes were not confined to governments and international agencies. By the 1970s, corporate espionage began as a storytelling device. In 1974, *Brave and the Bold* #110 teamed up Batman and Wildcat in "A Very Special Spy" written by Bob Haney with art by Jim Aparo. In this story Wildcat/Ted Grant is a public relations executive of the "Tryton" company, which is accused of stealing the formula for a "miracle fuel additive." The story progresses to find Batman and Wildcat investigating the intrigue surrounding the development of the "miracle-2000" additive and the industrial/corporate espionage surrounding its development. In the issue, much is made of Batman probing into the past "not of a man . . . but a corporation" as readers are introduced to the world of industrial and corporate espionage. Batman even pays a visit to the offices of the "Bureau of Industrial Espionage." Stories of corporate espionage usually fall short in originality, mostly following the theme of the theft of ideas or so-called secret formulas. Such plotlines also veered away from any larger criticism of corporate America. For comics writers, the safer bet was to focus on the familiar forms of international espionage and covert operations. Overall, the 1970s would see a variety of criminal and/or terrorist organizations' plots vanquished by various heroes.

The 1980s would see some espionage themes come into their more action/adventure-oriented team books. *G.I. Joe* (1982), written by Larry Hama and published by Marvel, was a highly successful adaptation based on the popular line of action figure (*G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero*) toys. In this comic version, *G.I. Joe* is a military task force organized to protect the national interests of the United States against domestic extremists. These main antagonists comprised the secret paramilitary

organization, Cobra Command, led by the aptly named Cobra Commander. Cobra's mission involved the standard genre themes of dismantling the world's governments and amassing wealth and power.

In 1987, an overlooked spoof on the spy genre, *The Trouble with Girls*, was published by Malibu and Comico. Running until 1991 with a four-issue follow-up series published by Marvel in 1993, *The Trouble with Girls* followed the adventures of Lester Girls, the essential average-man who finds himself in a variety of genre-related situations. The underlining theme of this satirical look at the genre is that Lester Girls has no desire to be embroiled in these situations and would rather be left alone.

While Marvel Comics set the tone with its brand of Silver Age espionage themes, in the modern age DC also devoted many of its series to covert operations. Of note is John Ostrander's work on *Suicide Squad*, running 66 issues from 1987 to 1992, with a second (albeit short-lived) series in 2001. The Suicide Squad was a group of incarcerated supervillains who agreed to work as covert, black ops government agents. The team was a mixture of petty criminals from previous DC books, notably Deadshot and Captain Boomerang. The team also included underused heroes such as Vixen, Nemesis, and Nightshade. The intelligence agency Checkmate was a spin-off of *Suicide Squad* and was originally intended as an elite covert operations agency. Following the events in 2006's *Infinite Crisis*, specifically the *OMAC Project*, Checkmate became a United Nations–chartered metahuman monitoring force. Another covert organization seen in the DC universe is the DEO (Department of Extranormal Operations), which also functions in a similar role as the present Checkmate.

DC also created special operations teams from its mainstream titles. The ***Justice League*** *Elite* was an attempt to integrate some members of the popular Justice League into secretive covert, black ops missions. The idea never really caught on, as DC had the Suicide Squad essentially doing the same thing. The team was composed of **The Flash**, **Green Arrow**, and a number of lesser known DC properties.

In 1994 *Wetworks*, an original **Image Comics** publication created by Whilce Portacio and writer Brandon Choi, featured a superhuman black ops team battling supernatural threats. It put more emphasis on action-oriented art than on story development, as was common with many artist-oriented Image books of the mid-to-late 1990s. *Danger Girl* (1998) was yet another spoof on the James Bond theme and was known more for J. Scott Campbell's fetish art (featuring an inadequately or tightly clothed team of women, a staple of many Image-era comics) rather than any of its story elements.

One significant contribution to the development of the adventure/espionage genre came in 1999 with **Alan Moore's *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen***. This series revisits the late-19th-century origins as a team of Victorian-era literary characters is formed to work for British intelligence in opposition to underground criminal organizations, led by Professor Moriarty of *Sherlock Holmes* fame. The list of literary characters that form this organization is quite varied but the team is mainly composed of Mina Harker (*Dracula*), Captain Nemo (from the novels of Jules Verne), Allan Quatermain (*King Solomon's*

Mines), and Dr. Henry Jekyll. They would take on antagonists such as Moriarty or Fu Manchu.

As the comics transitioned into the new millennium, other established spy themed characters developed, taking on more covert sexual and violent themes. The Black Widow adventures of 1999 became more complex and featured adult-oriented themes published under the "Marvel Knights" or "MAX" imprints. The modern Black Widow stories would also break away from the Cold War binary and bring more complexity to the adventure/espionage world of Marvel Comics. Yelena Belova was introduced as the new Black Widow. A covert assassin rather than a secret agent, Belova served as an antagonist to Romanova as the two vied for recognition of the "Black Widow" title, now appointed by the Russian Federation (in a similar way that the United States owns Captain America). The Romanova Black Widow presently takes on the role of adventurer/hero more than espionage agent.

Other espionage-related successes of the 2000s include *Queen & Country* from Oni Press. The first installment lasted from 2001 to 2004, while other series continue to be published from 2006 onward. Written mainly by **Greg Rucka** (also the writer of *Checkmate*), *Queen & Country* follows exploits of member of MI6, the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). An ongoing narrative was developed around protagonists operative Tara Chace. The series is also heavy on character development, the inner workings and bureaucracy of the organization, and as the expected espionage genre adventure and intrigue.

D. R. Hammontree

EUROPEAN COMICS. Visual storytelling by means of static images is an age-long tradition in Europe, dating back to the appearance of such images on such media as stone (Trajan's Column), cloth (the Bayeux Tapestry), wood (narrative paintings), plaster (frescoes in churches), or parchment (illuminated manuscripts). The arrival of the new Gutenberg printing press made the multiplication of visual sequences (through popular prints, broadsheets, chapbooks) considerably easier, but on the other hand text and images got separated because each needed to be printed with a different technique. It was only thanks to the new printing techniques of the 19th century that artists and printers no longer had to cope with such resistant materials as wood or metal, or with the mirroring of their images: they could now draw and write directly on paper and obtain good reproductions. This technical freedom would foster (in the long run) looser linework and the incorporation of text within the drawings. Also, the number of prints that could be produced increased to meet the growing demand for news, education, and entertainment, as the masses became literate. The comic strips of that age explored humor, adventure, and **fantasy**, and were primarily distributed as popular prints or incorporated in the new illustrated magazines (e.g., *Le Chat Noir*, *Blanco y Negro*, *Comic Cuts*, *Illustrated Chips*). Book publications of comics (e.g., by Rodolphe Töpffer, from 1833) were still relatively scarce. Itinerant vendors sold millions of popular prints from such big production centers as Épinal in France (6,800 titles) or Neuruppin in Germany

(about 10,000 titles). These publications did not look like today's comics because text and pictures remained separated for mainly cultural reasons. Though sometimes longer stories (e.g., by Töpffer, Doré, or Busch) were published, the majority remained short humorous stories (no longer than a few panels or one page). The majority of the early humor comics were destined for an adult readership. Before the 1890s, the number of reappearing characters was rather limited, the most popular example being the British *Ally Sloper* with his own line of merchandising. On an international scale the most influential comics artist was arguably the German Wilhelm Busch, whose devilish rascals *Max und Moritz* (1865) boasted gags about ferocious children (similar to for instance, America's longest-running comic strip *The Katzenjammer Kids*, from 1897). Comics in popular prints and illustrated magazines circulated in various countries and were imitated or copied with or without permission (only in 1886 did the Berne Convention establish recognition of copyrights among sovereign nations). In the early 20th century, comics in Europe were produced more so for children, and a growing number of children's magazines (*L'Épatant*, *La Semaine de Suzette*, *Corriere dei Piccoli*, *De Kindervriend*, *TBO*, *Film Fun*, *ABC-zinho*) invaded the press stands. The more artistic vein of visual stories found an outlet in artists' books (such as Frans Masereel's expressionistic wordless books). Slower than in the United States, European newspapers started including comic strips, not only in their supplements (e.g., a full page of *Zig et Puce* in *Dimanche-Illustré* in France), but also in the dailies themselves (in the form of one-tier strips). Like their American colleagues, European syndicates (e.g., the Danish PIB and the French Opera Mundi) started to foster the distribution of comic strips to various publications and national markets. Although some American comics with balloons were reprinted in European publications, many others were adapted to the European model: thus the balloons were erased and replaced by captions. The polarization between the visual system and the verbal system was well rooted in the European way of thinking, and publishers wanted to persuade parents that reading comics could be considered as an educational activity. However, in the 1920s wordless comics also grew popular, and the Scandinavians in particular specialized in this type of comic (e.g., Anderson's *Adamson*, Mik's *Ferd'nand*). For the Copenhagen PIB syndicate, this was also a way of dealing with international distribution in the multilingual context of Europe. In the first decades of the 20th century, the majority of European artists continued making comic strips with captions, but change was coming even before World War II. New popular comics with balloons were launched (e.g., in France with Alain Saint-Ogan's *Zig et Puce*, in Sweden with Elov Persson's *Kronblom*, in Belgium with **Hergé**'s *Tintin*), and new comics magazines (the Italian *Topolino* and *L'Avventuroso*, the French *Journal de Mickey*, the Belgian *Spirou* and *Bravo*, the Serbian *Politikin zabavnik*, the Hungarian *Hári János*) reprinted American comics with balloons, often in full color. Some new magazines such as Britain's *The Dandy* and *The Beano* were almost completely filled by local artists who worked in the more visual style without captions. The old-style popular prints and children's magazines were thus replaced by these new publications and their success was immediate and growing: only the outbreak of World War II could interrupt

this remarkable evolution, because after 1945 there was an even greater increase in indigenous comics creations in various European countries and a decrease of imported U.S. comics. In Eastern Europe, the Soviet domination of Comintern was in general not very favorable to the development of comics—only in Tito's Yugoslavia was the situation slightly more favorable. Propaganda comics took a large part of the comics markets with the Comintern. Until the 1970s, indigenous comics blossomed not only in newspapers but also in specialized comics journals: *Spirou* and *Tintin* in Belgium; *Tom Poes Weekblad*, *Pep*, and *Tina* in the Netherlands; *Eagle* and *Girl* in Great Britain; *Pilote* in France; *Fix und Foxi* in West Germany; *Mosaik* in East Germany; and *Plavi vjesnik* and *Politikin zabavnik* in Yugoslavia. Among the dominant types of European stories (often inspired by American comic strips) was the adventure comic in a realistic style: including **Westerns** such as the Italian *Tex Willer* (1948), historical comics such as the Spanish *El Capitán Trueno* (1956), **science fiction** stories such as the British *Dan Dare* (1950) or the Belgian *Blake et Mortimer* (1946). Famous artists in this vein are Pellos, Marijac, Giffey in France; Jijé and Jacobs in Belgium; Bellamy and Hampson in Great Britain; Kresse in the Netherlands, Blasco in Spain; Caprioli, Canale, Galep, and Molino in Italy; Coelho in Portugal; Maurović and Radulović in Yugoslavia; Ernő Zórád in Hungary; and Grzegorz Rosiński in Poland.

The second popular type of comics was humorous adventure in a more caricature-based style, including such series as *Sjors en Sjimmie* (Piët, 1938), *Suske & Wiske* (Vandersteen, 1945), *Lucky Luke* (Morris, 1947), *Pepito* (Bottaro, 1951), and *Astérix* (Goscinny & Uderzo, 1959), and *Tytus*, *Romek i A'tomek* (Chmielewski, 1957). A third popular type was the **animal** comic; famous examples include *Rupert* (Tourtel, 1920), *Babar* (de Brunhoff, 1931), *Tom Poes* (Toonder, 1941), *La Bête est morte* (Calvo, 1944). After the 1945 liberation, the genre developed further with scores of new titles: *Pif le Chien* (Arnal, 1948), *Petzi* (*Rasmus Klump*, Hansen, 1951), *Fix und Foxi* (Kauka & van der Heide, 1952), *Zvitorepec* (Muster 1952), *Chlorophylle* (Macherot, 1953), *Moomin* (Jansson, 1954), *Bamse* (Andréasson, 1973). The fourth popular type of comic at this time was the gag comic: famous short gag series are Franquin's *Gaston Lagaffe* (1957), Roba's *Boule et Bill* (1959), and Smythe's *Andy Capp* (1957). Within each group, series were specially destined for boys or girls—in the middle of the 20th century, several girls' comics magazines were popular, particularly in countries like Great Britain, France, and Spain. Though some standardization (like a fixed number of pages for a particular publication format) set in, comics took various shapes: from big tabloids to small pocket-size formats, from black and white printings on low quality paper to glossy colorful publications (e.g., *Eagle*). While most comics were published in the upright format (with vertical, or portrait, page orientation), in countries like the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, and Poland the oblong format (or landscape format with horizontal page orientation) was largely used.

The success of comics among children continued to worry educators, parents, and politicians. Though the European comics of the 1950s were less **horror**-orientated or violent compared to their American counterparts, in various European countries

protests were raised against this medium. Consequently, some governments began to regulate comics: for example, in France the law of July the 16 1949, and in Great Britain, The Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act in 1955. In other countries, such as Italy and West Germany, authors and publishers started self-censoring to prevent governmental involvement. Though these regulations constricted (sometimes severely, as in France) authors and publishers, they could not really hinder the spectacular development of comics in Europe. At that time children could not yet choose between an enormous variety of entertainments and were still eager to wait every week for the next installment of their favorite comics magazine. Up until the 1960s, clearly most European comics were destined for a juvenile public, but some series, such as ***Tintin*** or *Astérix*, offered several layers, which made them interesting both to children and adults. Moreover, as the kids grew up, they wanted more material adapted to their age and taste, and so from the 1960s on European comics once more became interested in the older segments of the market. At first a lot of these **adult comics** would feature elements that were "forbidden" in children's comics, such as explicit violence and sex. In Italy, *Diabolik* (by the Giussani sisters, 1962) was published in an unusual pocket-sized format, and in contrast to the children's comics the protagonist was a "bad guy." Guido Buzzelli's fantastic *La rivolta dei racchi* (1967) with its sarcastic metaphor about class struggle typified also a heightened political awareness. The days of the one-dimensional classical hero seemed over: the new protagonists (***Blueberry***, *Corto Maltese*) looked and acted quite differently. New gag comics no longer featured central characters that kept reappearing, but ordinary people (e.g., Reiser, Bretécher). Also, the feminist movement had repercussions in the comics: from the 1960s on, more and more young attractive women became protagonists (*Barbarella*, *Modesty Blaise*, *Tiffany Jones*, *Valentina*). As in the United States, **underground** magazines started in various European countries offering an alternative to mainstream comics (for example, Britain's "comic comics" line, the Dutch *Tante Leny Presenteert*), but they were mostly short-lived. More influential were such new magazines for teens and adults as *Linus* in Italy; the re-vamped *Pilote*, *Charlie Mensuel*, *L'Écho des Savanes*, *Métal Hurlant*, *Fluide Glacial*, and *(A SUIVRE)* in France; *Frigidaire* in Italy; *2000 AD* in Britain; *El Vibora* in Spain; *De Vrije Balloen* in the Netherlands; and *Relax* in Poland.

As the 20th century continued, more and more titles were published, and the market expanded on a quantitative and qualitative scale. Thanks to comics with more artistic ambitions, the perception of comics in society was changing as well, with new trends continuing from the 1960s on: associations of comics specialists and fans (*Club des bandes dessinées*, *Het Stripschap*), festivals (Lucca in Italy, Angoulême in France), fanzines about comics (*Stripschrift*, *Linus*, *Phénix*), academic studies by scholars (a.o. Fresnault-Deruelle, Barbieri, Groensteen, Morgan, Barker) and academic journals (*Deutsche Comicforschung*, *European Comic Art*, *SIGNs*, *Studies in Comics*), specialized training schools (*Saint-Luc* in Brussels, 1968, *Scuola del fumetto* in Milan, 1979, *École européenne supérieure de l'image* in Angoulême, 1995), and specialized comics shops (*Lambiek* in Amsterdam, 1968, *Forbidden Planet* in London, 1978). These trends continued to evolve in the following

decades, culminating in the creation of comics museums (in Brussels, Angoulême, Lisbon, Groningen, Lucca). In the same period, comics developed commercially by introducing more and more merchandising and spin-offs, such as animation series or games. The publishing houses that started on a small scale as a family enterprise merged into bigger international conglomerates. For instance, three important francophone publishers (Dargaud, Lombard, and Dupuis) became part of Média-Participations and today they occupy more than one-third of the French comics market. Not everybody was pleased with the tremendous concentration of media ownership and its consequences (decreasing variety in products): artists and fans founded small publishing houses as an alternative to mainstream publishing, such as L'Association in France and Frigo in Belgium. Often, these small, alternative publishers loathed the practices of mainstream publishers (e.g., continuing a series after the death of the original author; ruthless merchandising, etc.) and advocated a freer artistic approach.

Though Japanese **manga** already arrived in Switzerland and Italy in the late 1970s, it is only from the 1990s on that various local European comics markets (especially in Italy, France, Spain, and Germany) were flooded with translated Japanese comics. Though again, the situation can differ very much from country to country: for instance in the Dutch region (the Netherlands and Flanders) manga are still rather absent because very few are translated.

This all makes the situation nowadays in Europe quite complicated. While some series (*Lucky Luke*, *Tex Willer*, *Dylan Dog*, *Astérix*, *Mortadelo y Filemón*, *Storm*, *Thorgal*, *XIII*) are internationally distributed and read, many other series still remain a national or even regional phenomenon. In the former Yugoslavia, the Croats, Serbs, and Slovenians create their own comics; in the Flemish North and the francophone South of Belgium, to a considerable extent, different comics are produced and consumed. In some countries (such as France or Belgium), comics may form an integral and respected part of the national and even official culture, while in other European regions (such as Greece or the Baltic countries) comics remain a marginal cultural form. In general, one will find more comics in Western Europe than in the former East-European sector (with the exception of the former Yugoslavia, which once had a vibrant and profitable comics culture). After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the Soviet Union comics markets of former Communist Bloc countries changed very quickly: new publishers (with titles from around the world) entered the markets, but almost none of them lasted; at the same time an alternative comic scene produced many fanzines such as the Polish *Produkt* (1999–2004) and the Slovenian *Stripburger* (1992–).

In general, European comics culture was never isolated from American or East-Asian production. Even in the 19th century, many North American comics were created by artists with German roots (Dirks, Feininger), while the French artist Georges Ferdinand Bigot founded a bilingual French-Japanese comics magazine *Tobâé* (1887) in Japan. Similarly, after the disaster of World War II various Italian artists (such as Hugo Pratt) emigrated to Argentina; various British comics authors (**Neil Gaiman**, **Dave Gibbons**, Simon Bisley, **Alan Moore**, **Grant Morrison**) worked from the 1980s on for

the American comic book industry and were responsible for some outstanding comic book miniseries such as ***Watchmen***. Europe, meanwhile, attracted important artists from other continents, such as the work of the Argentines Muñoz and Sampayo (*Joe's Bar*, *Alack Sinner*), the American leader of the underground, **Robert Crumb** (*Dirty Laundry Comics*), the Iranian Marjane Satrapi (***Persepolis***). In addition, artists moved between various European countries: Belgium from the 1950s until the 1970s became a kind of comics Eldorado for artists from other countries (e.g., Martin from France, Rosinski from Poland, Andreas from Germany); from the 1970s onwards, France became a leading country for **adult comics** that utilized the talents of a similar range of European artists. Remarkably, Italy in the postwar period became the world's biggest producer of Disney comics by local artists such as Bottaro, Carpi, Cavazzano, De Vita, and Scarpa. Meanwhile, in the Netherlands local artists created their own *Donald Duck* stories. European artists sometimes felt inspired by the American **superheroes** too, but this genre never met the same success in Europe as in the United States.

Though the Spanish syndicates (*Creaciones Editoriales*, *Bardon Art*, *Selecciones Illustradas*) exported a sizeable number of comics in the 1960s and 1970s, European publishers were in general not very efficient in exporting their creations to other continents. While North American and Japanese characters such as **Batman**, The Peanuts, Astro Boy, or Dragonball became known worldwide, only a very limited number European comics such as *Tintin*, *Tex Willer*, *Astérix*, and *Les Schtroumpfs* (*the Smurfs*) were known and read outside Europe (and those that were known often owed much of their profile to spin-off animated television series). Europe consists mostly of rather small-ish markets in indigenous languages. Furthermore, the United States and Japan had an advantage in that they had a much more extensive secondary market for their comics, in the form of exports of their comics and spin-off adaptations (animated or live-action) for television or film. Nevertheless, very few foreign publishers are directly involved in Europe: most of them work with local firms (e.g., the Italian publisher Panini translates not only manga but also typical American superhero comics from **DC** or **Marvel**). Indeed, the comics market is still very volatile with publishing firms changing ownership quite frequently. The independent publishers are rather small, with exceptions like L'Association producing a considerable number of comics each year.

Comics magazines still exist in many countries, but their role is far less significant than decades ago. By the end of the 1970s, the album (similar to American trade paperback compilations) market had taken over. Overall, readers showed that they preferred to buy a complete story rather than wait for short episodes in weeklies or monthlies. Yet, contrary to cinema or literature, "one-shots" remain the exception: the majority of comics publications since the early 20th century have built upon the idea of a series based around a limited number of protagonists (contemporary popular series are, for instance, *Thorgal*, *XIII*, *Titeuf*). Notwithstanding this dominance of series, in recent years the number of one-shots for adults seems to be growing. The variety of styles and themes is wider than ever, the old popular types (adventure, **humor**, **animal**) have been joined by newer trends such as the graphic novel (with subgenres like autobiography). Among the

100,000 titles produced in Europe in the last three decades, only a minority has been recognized as proper personal and artistic work: some titles that the critics have praised include *C'était la Guerre des Tranchées* (*It Was the War of the Trenches*, Tardi, 1982–93), *Partie de Chasse* (*The Hunting Party*, Bilal & Christin, 1983), *La Fièvre d'Urbicande* (*Fever in Urbicand*, Schuiten & Peeters, 1983), *Fuochi* (*Fires*, Mattotti, 1984), ***Cages*** (**Dave McKean**, 1990–96), *Trazo di Tiza* (*Streak Of Chalk*, Prado, 1992), ***From Hell*** (**Alan Moore** & **Eddie Campbell**, 1999), *Prosopopus* (De Crecy, 2003). All those works are remarkable for their visual styles, narrative devices, and themes. Additionally, the autobiographical comics of Gimenez (*Paracuellos*, 1977), Baudoin (*Éloge de la poussière*, 1995), David B. (*L'Ascension du Haut Mal*, *Epileptic*, 1996–2003), Neaud (*Journal*, since 1996), Peeters (*Pilules Bleues*, *Blue Pills*, 2001), and Goblet (*Faire semblant c'est mentir*, 2007) were critical successes.

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Pascal Lefèvre

EX MACHINA. Launched in 2004, *Ex Machina* is a comic book series written by **Brian K. Vaughan** and published under **DC**'s Wildstorm imprint. The first issue of *Ex Machina*—published three years after the 9/11 attacks—concludes with a striking image. Mitchell Hundred, ill-fated former **superhero** and newly-elected Mayor of New York City, stands amid the rubble of Ground Zero, lamenting that "If I were a real hero, I would have been here in time to stop the *first* plane." Looming majestically in the night, there stands one of the Twin Towers. With this, Vaughan and artist Tony Harris set the tone for their ongoing, creator-owned series; the image of the lone surviving tower initiates an alternative history, one step removed from reality, while Hundred's regret is indicative of the title's explorations of memory, power, and the boundless inspirational and imaginative potential of the superhero genre. Fuelled by Vaughan's dialogue and wit, as well as Harris's photorealistic linework, the series interrogates the place of comic books in a post-9/11 landscape, in which the meaning and validity of the term "hero" is under great scrutiny.

Hundred gains his powers under circumstances that remain clouded in mystery for much of the series. In his duties as a civil engineer, he comes into contact with a strange device connected to the Brooklyn Bridge; in the aftermath of a flash of energy that traumatizes the left side of his head, Hundred becomes aware of a burgeoning ability to communicate with machines. Not only do machines "speak" to him, but Hundred's voice can make any mechanized item—ranging from simple ones, like light switches and combination locks, to the more complex, such as guns, vehicles, and computers—do his bidding. Given the way his fondness for comic book adventures influenced his upbringing and shaped his outlook on the world, Hundred decides to use his abilities to benefit the city that he so loves. He adopts the identity of "The Great Machine"—the name gestures to the hero's origins as well as the series title (*Ex Machina*, from "deus ex machina": "god from the machine"), though Hundred claims he was inspired by Jefferson's use of the phrase to describe society. What follows is one disaster and error-filled adventure after another: malfunctioning jet-packs, damage to public property, the placing of innocent bystanders in danger, horrible beatings and numerous self-inflicted injuries—The Great Machine's career as a super-hero is an absolute failure. A disillusioned Hundred gives up on costumed adventuring, though he is compelled to become The Great Machine once more during the 9/11 attacks on New York, where he manages to ground the second plane aimed at the World Trade Center. Hundred then translates his immense popularity into political capital

and electoral success in the next mayoral election (he runs as an independent). The series tracks Hundred's attempts to bring about meaningful change and prosperity by way of political power, all while wrestling with both the shadows and the allure of his super-heroic past.

The back stories of Hundred and The Great Machine are pieced together incrementally in flashback sequences that punctuate the narrative. Indeed, the entire series is framed as a retrospective: the first issue begins with a somber Hundred seemingly addressing readers directly: "This is the story of my four years in office, from the beginning of 2002 through godforsaken 2005. It may look like a comic, but it's really a tragedy." The book's continually-advancing present is thus also readers' recent past, meaning that the book's alternative history is infused with a healthy measure of retrospective clarity and irony. Debates over the potential disastrousness of an invasion of Iraq, for instance, are particularly resonant. Various real-world events are integrated into numerous storylines: the blackout that hit New York and much of the East Coast in the summer of 2003 is caused by Hundred's malfunctioning powers; chaos during the city's anti-Iraq war protests claims the life of a supporting character; the Republican National Convention in 2004 has Hundred juggling terrorist threats and his political alliances.

Ex Machina's defining thematic feature is its reflexivity: from its inception, the series has explored the political, cultural, and moral relevance of telling stories about superheroes. The meta-dramatic elements of the book reach a critical mass in issue #40, as Vaughan and Harris write themselves into their own story as applicants for a graphic novel biography that Hundred wishes to produce. At its best, *Ex Machina* thrusts various archetypes of superhero comics (otherworldly origins, secret identities, archnemeses) into otherwise realistic scenarios involving human frailties and fallibilities, political machinations, and brutal, explicit violence. By interweaving hot-button political issues with the rich, often strange political history of New York City, and the well-established tropes of superhero comics, the series strikes a provocative balance between the fantastic and the real. Even as readers learn that Hundred's powers might be linked to alternative timelines and witness flashbacks to The Great Machine battling Jack Pherson (his chief enemy and opposite, who possesses the ability to command the animal kingdom), storylines are simultaneously steeped in contentious matters such as gay marriage, the censorship of publicly-funded art exhibitions, alternative energy, and the legalization of marijuana. According to Vaughan, the series is slated to run for approximately fifty issues. Hundred's earliest experiences with his powers and some of his misadventures as The Great Machine are detailed in *Ex Machina Special* #1 and #2 (with art by Chris Sprouse), and *Ex Machina Masquerade Special* and *Ex Machina Special* #4 (with art by John Paul Leon).

J. Gavin Paul



FAMOUS FUNNIES. The birth of the modern American comic book industry begins with the publication of *Famous Funnies*, the first successful 10-cent newsstand monthly comic book, in 1934. At the end of the 19th century, newspaper comic strips were a national phenomenon that attracted a mass audience and served as circulation builders. Publishers, such as William Randolph Hearst, quickly sought to capitalize on the comic strips' appeal by repackaging them into a hardcover book format that collected popular features like *The Yellow Kid*, *Little Nemo*, *Buster Brown*, *Happy Hooligan*, and *The Katzenjammer Kids*. Some of these publications were produced in black and white; others were in full-color. By the 1920s, many of the most successful newspaper strips incorporated long-running storylines, and this further increased the public's interest for publications reprinting this material. In 1929, George Delacorte, founder of the Dell Publishing Company, produced another precursor of the comic book. Titled *The Funnies*, this weekly publication was a 24-page tabloid that sold for a dime. It imitated the Sunday newspaper comics sections and contained strips such as *Deadwood Gulch*, *Frosty Ayre*, *My Big Brudder*, and *Clancy the Cop*. *The Funnies* remained in publication for 36 issues but was ultimately discontinued when it failed to earn a profit. Historian Ron Goulart described the title as "more a Sunday comics section without the rest of the newspaper than a true comic book." Eastern Color Printing attempted a similar publication, *Funnies on Parade*, in 1933. Not available on newsstands, it was a promotional item created for Procter & Gamble. Customers would receive the book only after sending in a coupon.

The Eastern Color Printing Company's place in comics history is due largely to two of its employees—Harry L. Wildenburg and Maxwell C. Gaines. Wildenburg, a sales manager, originated the concept of using comics as an advertising premium.

He secured a deal with Gulf Oil to create a tabloid-sized comic book giveaway that would be available at its gas stations. Eventually Wildenburg and his associates realized that the Sunday comics pages they had been using for promotional materials could be reduced so that two pages could fit on the standard tabloid-sized paper. Later the pages would be assembled and stapled into a convenient pamphlet. Gaines, a commission-only salesman, worked to interest other companies to advertise using comic books. Among those child-oriented businesses that distributed these free books were Kinney Shoes, Canada Dry, and Wheatena. The print runs for these 64-page color comics generally ranged between 100,000 and 250,000 issues. By the end of 1933, Eastern had sold more than 30 million pages of comics through these promotions. Gaines was then inspired to sell these comics to children directly. He and Wildenburg approached the F. W. Woolworth Company, one of America's original five-and-dime stores, as a possible outlet for their comics. However, the company declined, stating that the proposed 10-cent cover price was not a good value for its customers. In 1934, the Wildenburg and Gaines convinced the American News Company to distribute a monthly comic book to newsstands across the nation. Their first comic was called *Famous Funnies* and was an immediate sales triumph. They printed 200,000 copies of the initial issue and were pleased when they sold 90 percent of the books. Although Eastern Color lost more than $4,000 on *Famous Funnies* #1, the title began to net a profit within a year.

At first *Famous Funnies* contained reprints of popular newspaper comic strips. These features included *Mutt & Jeff*, the successful daily comic strip that debuted in 1907; *Toonerville Folks*, a comedy strip that premiered in 1913 and showcased the conductor and passengers of the rickety Toonerville Trolley; and *Hairbreadth Harry*, a comic melodrama that had appeared in newspapers since 1906. Other popular strips featured in the first issue of *Famous Funnies* included *Dixie Duggan*, *The Bungle Family*, *Nipper*, and *S'Matter Pop?* The comic's cover also boasted that "games—puzzles—magic" could be found within its pages. Except for an original two-page text story, there was no original content in the earliest issues.

Over time, the contents of *Famous Funnies* changed as features were added or removed from the book. Cartoonist Victor E. Pazmino, who signed his work "VEP," contributed numerous gag cartoons and later a feature about a traveling, verse-speaking sailor named Seaweed Sam. Nearly all of the comic book's covers during its first seven years were drawn by Pazmino. During the third year of its publication, *Famous Funnies* acquired several popular comics strips from the Associated Press syndicate, such as *The Adventures of Patsy*, *Dickie Dare*, *Oaky Doaks*, and *Scortchy Smith*. Later, *Joe Palooka*, *Buck Rogers*, and *Big Chief Wahoo* were added to the roster. Unfortunately, many of these strips suffered in terms of presentation. To fit the new comic book standard format, the newspaper strips were usually enlarged, colored, and re-lettered. Word balloons and captions were edited; panels were redesigned so as to better fit the pages. While the arrangement of the strips may not have been ideal, for many readers, *Famous Funnies* was the only means by which they might view this material.

Famous Funnies had published 46 issues by the time ***Action Comics*** #1, which included the debut of **Superman**, appeared on newsstands. The editors of *Famous Funnies* attempted to compete with the rising popularity of the **superheroes** by showcasing more dramatic and **science fiction**-oriented material. In 1939, the **Western** strip *Lightnin' and the Lone Rider*, a Lone Ranger knockoff, was added. It was signed by "Lance Kirby," who later gained fame as the legendary **Jack Kirby**. The title struggled somewhat during the 1940s as it largely continued to concentrate on comic strip reprints. One of the few highlights from late in the run of the series came in 1950 with issue #209. That issue carried the first of a series of Buck Rogers covers by legendary artist **Frank Frazetta**. *Famous Funnies* ceased publication with issue #218 (1955). By that time, its size had been cut in half. Except for *Buck Rogers*, it no longer contained any reprinted material. Ironically, its final cover prominently displayed a television, the new popular medium of choice. The legacy of *Famous Funnies* is that it standardized the modern comic book format and demonstrated that comics deserved a place on American newsstands. Its success helped to spark an entire industry.

Charles Coletta

FANTAGRAPHICS. Fantagraphics is the largest publisher of **alternative comics** in the United States and has, for more than three decades, influenced the American comics industry through its publishing of comics and graphic novels, as well as magazines and books about comics. The company was founded in 1976 by Gary Groth and Mike Catron. Kim Thompson joined in 1977 and subsequently became co-owner together with Groth, as Catron left to work for **DC Comics**. Fantagraphics moved around a bit initially, but after a while they found a permanent home in Seattle. The press started publication with the pre-existing fanzine *The Nostalgia Journal* which was sold to Groth and Catron in 1976. They started publishing with issue #27, then soon switched to the magazine format and changed the name to *The Comics Journal* with issue #32; Thompson was added to the editorial board with #37. *TCJ* became renowned for its lengthy interviews, scathing reviews, and most importantly for always treating comics as a serious art form at a time when most criticism was fan-based. Today, more than 30 years later, *TCJ* is still published monthly and is the biggest, longest running and most respected American magazine about comics.

Fantagraphics has also published other magazines, including *Amazing Heroes* (1981–92), mainly focusing on mainstream comics, and *Nemo: The Classic Comics Library* 1983–89), focusing on reprinting classic comic strips, accompanied by essays and reviews on the same theme.

A few years into publishing *TCJ*, Groth and Thompson started looking for comics to publish. Their first hit was ***Love and Rockets***, by the **Hernandez Brothers**; Gilbert and Jaime were soon followed by other successful comics, such as *Hate* by **Peter Bagge** and ***Eightball*** by **Daniel Clowes**. Today Fantagraphics Books publishes hundreds of comics and graphic novels a year, and has given several generations of alternative American comics' artists both a start and a publishing home; their artists and writers include Jessica

Abel, Ho Che Anderson, Ivan Brunetti, Charles Burns, Dave Cooper, Kim Deitch, Roberta Gregory, Bill Griffith, Paul Hornschemeier, Tony Milionaire, Anders Nilsen, Gary Panter, Johnny Ryan, **Joe Sacco,** Stan Sakai, **Chris Ware**, and Jim Woodring.

Fantagraphics has also introduced many international comics artist to American readers, including the French Jaques Tardi, David B., and Lewis Trondheim, the Italian Lorenzo Mattotti, the Spaniard Max, the Austrian Thomas Ott, the Swedish Max Andersson, and the Norwegian Jason. Another vital part of the company's publishing is compilations of classic comics, like *Popeye*, *Prince Valiant*, *Pogo*, *Krazy Kat*, *Feiffer: The Collected Works*, *The Complete* ***Crumb*** *Comics*, ***Dennis the Menace***, and *Peanuts*. One part of Fantagraphics' publishing that goes under another banner altogether is their erotic and pornographic comics, which are labeled the Eros Comics Line. This was introduced in the beginning of the 1990s, when Fantagraphics was close to bankruptcy, and it actually helped save the company.

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Fredrik Strömberg

FANTASTIC FOUR. Created by **Jack Kirby** and **Stan Lee** in 1961, The Fantastic Four were born as **Marvel Comics**' response to the success of the **superhero** team book, ***The Justice League of America.*** Like the JLA, the Fantastic Four would team up every month to take on the latest threat to humanity, but unlike their rivals at **DC**, the Fantastic Four could also be found fighting among themselves. A family of explorers and "imaginauts," at times beset by decidedly un-heroic foibles and faults, the team represented a shift in comic book writing that would pave the way for a more realistic, character-driven style of storytelling. The approach proved successful, with *The Fantastic Four* being one of several **Silver Age** Marvel titles still published monthly into the 21st century.

Like many Marvel Comics characters, the Fantastic Four's origin is rooted in **Cold War** paranoia: Driven by a desire to beat the Soviets into space, team leader and scientific genius Reed Richards, his fiancée Susan Storm, her brother Johnny Storm, and Reed's college pal and pilot Benjamin Grimm take a test flight in an experimental space ship. The shielding on the vessel proves inadequate, and the foursome is bombarded by cosmic radiation from which they gain incredible powers. Reed gains the ability to stretch his body and limbs; Sue gains the power to become invisible; Johnny picks up the ability to fly as his body becomes engulfed in flames; and Ben winds up with superhuman strength and durability as his skin takes on a rock-like texture and appearance. Ben's displeasure with his monstrous new aspect notwithstanding (a long-running motif in the book), the four immediately pledge to use their newfound abilities for the good of mankind.

Adopting the aliases Mr. Fantastic, the Invisible Girl (later the Invisible Woman), the Human Torch, and the Thing, the team breaks with the prevailing **superhero** tradition of the time by never taking on secret identities, even eschewing colorful superhero costumes

until the third issue. By the fourth issue, the comic's cover boldly proclaimed it to be "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine!," an aggrandizing claim used on and off on *Fantastic Four* covers ever since.

Lee and Kirby would create the comic monthly without any fill-in writers or illustrators for 102 consecutive issues, establishing a record for longevity of a book's creative team at Marvel, a record that would stand until **Brian Michael Bendis** and Mark Bagley's 111 issue run on *Ultimate* ***Spider-Man.*** In the process of completing their historic run, Lee and Kirby set the parameters of what a Fantastic Four story could be. Filled with dynamic tales of **fantasy** but told with the creators' fealty to everyday realism, *The Fantastic Four* became one of Marvel's main outlets for publishing **science fiction** stories. The pages of the comic burst with cosmic energy (shown through the iconic illustrative technique known as "Kirby dots"), strange alien races, unstable molecules, time travel, and parallel universes. At the same time, Kirby's experience working on the **romance comics** of the 1950s is evident in the family dynamic of the book, most often played out in Reed and Sue's sometimes rocky relationship and eventual marriage, and Johnny and Ben's quasi-sibling rivalry. This juxtaposition of larger-than-life epics and the everyday realism of characters' relationships accounts for no small part of the book's successful beginnings.



Fantastic Four issue #60, March 1967, written by Stan Lee. Marvel Comics Group/Photofest

Kirby ended his collaboration with Lee on the book in 1970, when he left Marvel to work for competitor DC. The book nevertheless continued to have wide popular appeal while showcasing some of the best talent the industry had to offer. The pens of writers such as Roy Thomas, Gerry Conway, and **Marv Wolfman** joined Lee's in fulfilling the writing chores on the book, and the seemingly monumental task of following Kirby's groundbreaking work penciling the title was undertaken by artists such as **John Romita, Sr.**, John Buscema, Rich Buckler, and **George Pérez**. These writers and artists generally stayed within the framework established by Lee and Kirby for the book, and

the inking of Joe Sinnott, who had inked most of Kirby's pencils on the book, helped establish a visual consistency with Lee and Kirby's run.

By the early 1980s, with the book's sales flagging in comparison to 1960s numbers, **John Byrne** helped to revitalize the franchise. Coming on as a regular writer and penciler (and usually inker as well), Byrne was able to make significant changes to the team while still showing fealty to the spirit of the comic. Among the larger changes he made during his five-year run was altering the composition of the team, replacing the Thing with She-Hulk as a permanent team member (though the Thing would later return to the team after several years appearing in his own solo title). Additionally, Byrne made changes to Sue Storm's character. Where her early portrayals had often been sexist, presenting Sue as a stereotypical damsel in distress, Byrne strengthened the character, giving her more of a leadership role on the team and even having her change her alias to the Invisible Woman as an indicator of her growth as a character.

After Byrne's departure from the book in 1986, *The Fantastic Four* would continue to feature the writing and art of creators of note. Writers such as Roger Stern, Tom DeFalco, Steve Englehart, and **Mark Waid** have all had stints on the title, and artists the likes of Jerry Ordway, Sal Buscema, Keith Pollard, Mike Wieringo, and writer/artist **Walt Simonson** have drawn it.

For the nearly 50 years since their creation, the Fantastic Four have remained some of the most prominent pop culture icons to ever come out of American superhero comics. In addition to introducing some of Marvel's most popular characters—Doctor Doom, Galactus, the Silver Surfer, the Skrulls, the Inhumans, the Black Panther—the Fantastic Four franchise has also branched out into many other media. There have been two major motion pictures released about the Fantastic Four, Tim Story's *Fantastic Four* (2005) and his 2007 effort, *4: Rise of the Silver Surfer*, as well as an unreleased film from 1994. Additionally, there have been several animated television shows bearing the team's name: *Fantastic Four* (1967–68), *The Marvel Action Hour: The Fantastic Four* (1994–96), and *Fantastic Four: World's Greatest Heroes* (2006–7). Add to these representations the hundreds of video games, toys, and other merchandise endorsements, and it seems a near certainty that the Fantastic Four will continue to be a significant part of comics and popular culture for decades to come.

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Craig Crowder

FANTASY. In comic books of the fantasy genre, heroes face enemies of immense power in imaginary worlds where magic or other supernatural elements are present. Most fantasy comic books fall into one of seven subgenres: fantasy derived from myths, legends or fairytales; epic or high fantasy; historical fantasy; planetary **romance**; heroic fantasy or sword and sorcery; contemporary fantasy; and post-apocalyptic fantasy. These subgenres are not mutually exclusive and some works contain elements of a number of subgenres.

Arthurian tales, which began appearing at the dawn of American comic books, have been especially prominent among those based on myth and legend. In 1936 "King Arthur" by Rafael Astarita was serialized in two-page installments in *New Comics*, the second title published by **DC**, then National Allied Publications. An adaptation of the King Arthur story appeared in ***Classics Illustrated*** for the first time in 1953. **Al Feldstein** and **Wally Wood** did their own take on Arthurian characters in two issues of **EC**'s *Valor* in 1955. Scores of comic books have utilized Arthurian characters and concepts, though a number of these works have strayed far from the traditional lore. In the twelve-issue DC maxi-series *Camelot 3000* (1982–85) the Arthurian cast is reincarnated in the year 3000. Beginning in 1984, Matt Wagner spent 15 years crafting two 15-issue series, *Mage: The Hero Discovered* and *Mage: The Hero Defined*, about a reborn King Arthur operating in a contemporary urban environment and wielding a magical baseball bat rather than a sword. **Marvel** UK's early 1990s series *The Knight of Pendragon* featured modern-day personifications of the "Pendragon force" protecting the environment from evil corporations and black magic. The various Lady Pendragon series and specials from **Image Comics** alternate between the adventures of Queen Guinevere, who, after Arthur's death, takes up Excalibur and fights to preserve Camelot, and a modern-day novelist who finds Excalibur's sister sword, Caliburn, becomes the Lady Pendragon, and ushers in an age new age of magic.

Beowulf has also been adapted to the comics medium. DC's six-issue *Beowulf, Dragon Slayer* (1975–76) is very loosely based on the poem, as Beowulf moves on from battling Grendel and his mother to fighting Dracula, and by issue #5 he is contending with space aliens. A First Comics graphic novel issued in 1984 is a more straightforward retelling of the events in the poem. Three of the most notable versions of Beowulf have appeared more recently. The three volumes of Gareth Hinds' *Beowulf* (2007) mirror the structure of the poem. Portions of Francis Gummere's translation of the original poem are melded with Hind's inspired visual narrative in a way that not only expand on events only suggested in the poem, but also captures the spirit of the poem. *Beowulf: Gods and Monsters* (2005–6) is a sequel in which Beowulf not only survives his first battle with the dragon, but is an immortal being living in modern-day Manhattan and going by the name Wulf. In some respects Wulf is a standard comic book hero, albeit one who uses a sword to fight a dragon, but he is also a believable extrapolation of the hero in the poem. The publisher, Speakeasy Comics went out of business before the story was completed. Alexis Fajardo's 2008 graphic novel *Kid Beowulf and the Blood-Bound Oath* is the first in a planned series of tales about Beowulf and Grendel as brothers adventuring across the globe and encountering other characters of myth and legend.

Stan Lee and **Jack Kirby** re-imagined Norse mythology in a five-page "Tales of Asgard" backup feature, first in ***Journey into Mystery*** #97 (1963) and then in ***Thor*** when the title changed with #126. Thor often operates as a straightforward **superhero**, but adventures of the Asgard supporting cast are more firmly rooted in the mythic fantasy milieu. Balder the Brave had his own miniseries from 1985 to 1986. The Warriors Three, Hogun, Fandral, and Volstagg appeared in their own adventures in a couple of

issues of the anthology book *Marvel Fanfare* and were featured in the 2005 miniseries *Thor: Blood Oath*.

DC presented a faithful but extremely condensed adaptation of Richard Wagner's four-cycle Ring opera in a four-issue miniseries from 1989 to 1990. **Dark Horse**'s *The Ring of the Nibelung* (2000–1), with **P. Craig Russell**'s delicate yet stunning artwork, consists of a separate miniseries for each opera and more fully conveys the spectacle of opera.

A less ambitious and less faithful treatment of mythology can be found in the mash-up of history and multiple mythologies presented in a couple of *Xena: Warrior Princess* series. Between 1997 and 1998, Topps published eight different miniseries with original stories, first by Roy Thomas and then by Tom and Mary Bierbaum. Beginning in 1999, Dark Horse began a 14-issue series more closely tied to the *Xena* television series continuity.

High fantasy, or epic fantasy, has its own complex internal mythology. The stories, which often span years or generations, take place in an imaginary world populated by larger-than-life figures—such as kings, dragons, wizards, demons, that inspire wonder or fear. High fantasy usually deals with archetypal themes such as a spiritual quest, death, and renewal and self-sacrifice.

Some of the earliest notable high fantasy appeared in independently published comics. In the 1968 issue of his prozine *witzend*, **Wally Wood** began his "Wizard King" saga of young elf Odkin striving to save his society from Alacazar the wizard. At first "The World of the Wizard King" was an illustrated text story, but in the early 1970s Wood began reworking the material in comic book format and eventually completed the tale in a 1978 graphic novel, *The Wizard King*.

Wendy and Richard Pini published their first stories of heroic elves in the anthology *Fantasy Quarterly* in 1978 and the next year began self-publishing their ***ElfQuest*** title. The original series ran for 21 issues, and was followed by a number of sequels with other publishers and eventually back with the Pini's WaRP Graphics imprint. At first *ElfQuest* seemed like a mainstream adventure tale, but as the series progressed the violence became more intense and the omnisexual elves more frequently enacted the values of the sexual revolution.

In the early 1980s, DC introduced two original epic fantasies: *Arion, Lord of Atlantis* and *Amethyst, Princess of Gemworld*. Arion, an immortal sorcerer in ancient Atlantis, first appeared in a backup feature in the *Warlord* title, had 35 issues of his own title starting in 1982, and was featured in a 1992 six-issue miniseries, *Arion the Immortal*. After the first 12-issue *Amethyst* series, a well conceived and executed fantasy adventure, there was not much storyline left to sustain the second series in 1985 or the 1987 miniseries. Marvel tended to stick to pure sword and sorcery, but they did offer up a mediocre high fantasy with *The Saga of Crystar, Crystal Warrior* from 1983 to 1985. The fantasy was derailed by superhero guest appearances to boost faltering sales.

Much of modern fantasy literature and fantasy gaming flows from the works of J.R.R. Tolkien. In 1989, Eclipse Comics whet the appetite of fantasy fans with a

three-issue limited series adapting *The Hobbit*, the precursor to Tolkien's grand epic, *The Lord of the Rings*, but the anticipated *Lord of the Rings* adaptation never materialized.

One of the most successful fantasy comics is Jeff Smith's ***Bone***, which ran from 1991 to 2004, published mostly through Smith's own Cartoon Books. Early on, *Bone* is more like a **funny animal** comic than fantasy, but as more of the back story is revealed, partly in the spin-off miniseries *Rose*, the story becomes a darker fantasy with epic scope. *Bone* was reissued by Scholastic Books in 2004 and has become a staple in school and public libraries.

Quite a few comic books have used the classic fantasy setting of Frank L. Baum's *Oz*. From 1986 to 1993 Eric Shanower added new characters and adventures to the Oz mythos in five short graphic novels that involve suspense and many narrow escapes, but there is also a charm to his work that makes the books suitable for all ages. In Caliber Comics' *Oz*, which ran from 1994 to1997, the familiar settings and characters are adapted to a dark fantasy epic of the struggle between good and evil. In 1997, tales of the Caliber version of *Oz* were continued in Arrow Comics' aptly named *Dark Oz*.

Cartoonist Mark Oakley's *Thieves and Kings*, which began in 1994, seems to be a fully conceived quest tale, but he has been meandering in the telling of the tale and he is only about halfway through the planned 100 issues. In the late 1990s a number of high fantasy titles were published through Image Comics. The would-be epic quest of *Age of Heroes* had a short run from 1997 to 1999. Beginning in 1999, the heroes and rogues in *Tellos* fight to thwart the plans of the evil Malesur and a stalwart band of heroes in *Warlands* contend with Malagen and his vampire army. Neither title lasted past 2002.

One of the most intriguing epic fantasies was CrossGen's *Scion*, which began in 2000 and ended abruptly in 2004 with the demise of the publisher. The story combines romance and politics, as a prince and princess from opposing dynasties fall in love but also fight for the freedom of the "lesser races." Drabel Brothers Productions has shown a particular interest in fantasy literature and in recent years they have acquired the rights to many of the major fantasy novel series. They have partnered with a variety of publishers to release comic book adaptation of titles such as George R. R. Martin's *The Hedge Knight*, *Dragonlance: The Legend of Huma*, and Raymond E. Feist's *Magician*. After an aborted 2005 adaptation of Jordan's prequel novel *New Spring*, in 2009 writer **Chuck Dixon** began adapting Robert Jordan's massive "Wheel of Time" saga starting with *Eye of the World*.

Historical fantasy is set in a fictionalized version of the real world that blends fantasy elements with characteristics and events of a particular historical period.

Crusader Sir Richard of Warwick, dubbed The Golden Knight, battles sorcerers and sea monsters in the pages of Fox's *Fantastic Comics* (1939–41). In the pages of DC's *Brave and Bold* in the late 1950s, The Viking Prince and The Silent Knight progressed from rather standard Norse and medieval adventures to facing sorcerers, dragons, and witches. When Roy Thomas went to DC he created *Arak, Son of Thunder*, featuring a Native American warrior, as a substitute for the ***Conan the Barbarian*** title he had left behind at Marvel. Arak roamed the world having tomahawk and sorcery adventures

for 50 issues, from 1981 to 1983. An unpublished Red Sonja story was retooled as the Adventures of Marada in the Roman Empire. The sensual Marada began fighting wizards and demons in *Epic Illustrated* #10 (1982) and the full tale was collected in a *Marada the She-Wolf* graphic novel in 1985.

The protagonist of planetary romance, sometimes referred to as "sword and planet," fantasy, is usually an earthman transported to another world, where he often uses primitive weapons, especially swords, to battle evil forces wielding super science or supernatural powers. The essence of these tales is an exotic setting and high adventure. Arguably, Flash Gordon is primarily a **science fiction** character, but there has always been a strong fantasy component to his adventures on the planet Mongo. Planetary romance was introduced to comic books in 1941 with a long Flash Gordon run in *King Comics*. Flash Gordon made a number of appearances in Dell's *Four Color Comics* from 1945 to 1953. Harvey, King, **Charlton**, and Gold Key all took turns producing Flash Gordon comic books from 1950 to 1980. **Al Williamson**, who had been a fan favorite artist on Flash Gordon in the 1960s, returned to the character for two issues with Marvel in 1995.

Planetary romance is most strongly associated with the Edgar Rice Burroughs's characters John Carter and Carson Napier. The eternally 30-ish Carter, who magically travels between Earth and Barsoom (Mars) by "dying," debuted in a pulp magazine in 1912, but did not appear in comic books until 1952 with the first of three appearances in Dell's *Four Color Comics*. Carter's Barsoom adventures were adapted in backup features that ran in DC's ***Tarzan*** and *Weird Worlds* titles from 1972 to 1974. In 1977, Marvel began a 28-issue run of *John Carter, Warlord of Mars*. Carter teamed with Burroughs's most famous creation, Tarzan, in Dark Horse's 1996 miniseries *Tarzan/John Carter: Warlords of Mars*. In 1972, Carson of Venus began running as a backup feature in *Korak, Son of Tarzan*.

Burroughs's creations spawned a number of imitators. When Gullivar Jones, Warrior of Mars, began his short run as the lead feature of *Creatures on the Loose* in 1972, most readers assumed he was a John Carter pastiche, but he was actually adapted from a 1905 novel, years before Burroughs created John Carter. Christopher Hanther's *Tandra* is an inventive Burroughs-style tale of an earthman transported to a primitive planet. The 15 issues of the Tandra saga were spread out from 1976 to 1993 and covered 20 years in the lives of the characters. Roy Thomas and Tim Conrad adapted Robert E. Howard's 1930s planetary romance novel *Almuric* in Marvel's *Epic Illustrated* magazine in 1980, and Thomas wrote a four-issue sequel for Dark Horse in 1991. In DC's 1986 *Lords of the Ultra-Realm*, Earthman Michael Savage is transported to another world where seven Princes of Light and seven Princes of Darkness vie for control of the realm. In 1987, Eclipse offered two planetary romances, *Hotspur* and *Lost Planet*.

The majority of fantasy comic books fall into the category of heroic fantasy, also known as "sword and sorcery." Heroic fantasies are generally simple tales of adventure in which the protagonist, often a roguish anti-hero, encounters a menace and kills said menace.

The 1930s pulp magazine stories of Robert E. Howard are the wellspring of heroic fantasy in comic books. Gardner Fox and John Giunta borrowed liberally from Howard's Conan material when they created Crom the Barbarian for *Out of This World* in 1950. In classic sword-and-sorcery fashion, Crom rescues beautiful, scantily clad women and battles giant serpents and spiders. Like Conan, Crom conquers a kingdom with his sword, but is uncomfortable within the confines of civilized life. After Crom's three adventures, there was no significant sword and sorcery activity in comic books until 1970, when Wally Wood crafted four short sword and sorcery tales for Marvel's horror anthology *Tower of Shadows*. Each story featured a different protagonist and the third, featuring a barbarian named Vandal battling a sorcerer, was titled "Of Swords and Sorcery!" Earlier in the year, in another Marvel horror anthology, *Chamber of Darkness*, a Roy Thomas and Barry Smith story titled "The Sword and the Sorcerers!" had featured Starr the Slayer, who looked almost exactly like the Smith-drawn Conan would look when he debuted later in the year.

The sword and sorcery genre in comic books is virtually synonymous with Conan the Barbarian, adapted to comics by Marvel beginning in 1970. Created by Howard, Conan first appeared in *Weird Tales* magazine in 1932. A mighty barbarian from the harsh northern land of Cimmeria, Conan leaves his homeland and cuts a bloody swath through the civilized world, eventually seizing the throne of the most powerful nation of the time. With adventures full of drinking, wenching, and disemboweling, Conan was an improbable hero for a mainstream publisher that still carried the **Comics Code** seal of approval on all of its comics. However, 1970 was an uncertain time in the comic book industry and in an attempt to adapt to changing tastes publishers were flooding the market with new, experimental material. After a slow start, it was not long before Conan was outselling many of the superhero titles.

For the first 10 years of the run, Roy Thomas, the writer of Marvel's *Conan the Barbarian* had a good grasp of the character, and his encyclopedic knowledge of Howard's body of work allowed him to adapt many of the tales of Howard's other heroes into Conan stories. Barry Smith provided the artwork on most of the first 24 issues; John Buscema took over as penciler with issue #24 and created the definitive version of the Cimmerian. The *Conan the Barbarian* title ran for 275 issues, from 1970 to 1993. After a brief run in *Savage Tales*, Conan became the star of his own black and white magazine, *Savage Sword of Conan the Barbarian*, which ran for 235 issues, from 1974 to 1995. There was also a *King Conan*, later renamed *Conan the King*, title that ran for 55 issues, from 1980 to 1989. Seven of Marvel's graphic novels issued between 1985 and 1992 were Conan novels.

However, by the mid-1990s the Conan franchise seemed to be losing steam. From 1994 to 1995 the only on-going, regular format Conan comic book was *Conan the Adventurer*, a title taken from the animated cartoon that was running at the time. In 1995, Marvel restarted the *Conan* title and tried to recapture the success of *Savage Sword of Conan* with *Conan the Savage*. Both titles were cancelled the following year. Marvel

filled the void with eight Conan miniseries from 1997 to 2000, but Conan would not appear in a regular series again until Dark Horse Comics took over the property.

The popularity of the Conan title prompted Marvel to try their luck with other Howard sword-and-sorcery characters. *Kull the Conqueror*, the first of three books with that title, appeared in 1971. Kull and other Howard characters made appearances in the Marvel magazines *Savage Sword of Conan* and *Savage Tales*. In 1975 there were three issues of *Kull and the Barbarians* featuring Kull, Red Sonja, and Solomon Kane. Red Sonja got the first of her three Marvel titles in 1976.

Riding the sword and sorcery wave they had started, Marvel expanded beyond the Howard characters and tried novelist Lin Carter's Conan imitator, Thongor, with an eight-issue run in *Creatures on the Loose*, beginning with #22 in 1973. Brak the Barbarian, created by John Jakes, appeared in a backup feature in four issues of *Savage Tales*. Other publishers soon introduced their own imitators. *Dagar the Invincible*, with a cover blurb that proclaimed tales of sword and sorcery, was published by Gold Key from 1972 to 1978. Dax the warrior stories, intricately rendered by Estaban Maroto, appeared in a dozen issues of the Warren magazine *Eerie* beginning in 1972. Two other heroic fantasy series, *Haxtur* and *Hoggarth*, followed. In 1975, Atlas published four issues of *Ironjaw*, a disfigured barbarian who was surlier than most, and DC began a 12-issue run of *Claw, the Unconquered* about an otherwise typical barbarian who was cursed with a powerful, but willful, demon hand. Claw returned in 2006 in two miniseries.

With so much Conan and Conan-like material on the market, comic book publishers were soon looking for sword-and-sorcery heroes who broke the sullen-eyed barbarian mold. **Gil Kane**'s sword and science fantasy *Blackmark* was published as a paperback by Bantam in 1971, and in 1974 reprinted as a backup in first four issues of *Savage Sword of Conan*. Disappointed with the sales of the first book, Bantam decided not to publish the sequel Kane had already produced, and the work was not seen until it appeared in a 1979 issue of *Marvel Preview* magazine. **Howard Chaykin**'s Ironwolf debuted in the final three issues of *Weird Worlds* from 1973 to 1974. Chaykin returned to the character for the 1992 graphic novel *Ironwolf: Fires of the Revolution*. Perhaps *Ironwolf* is more space opera than fantasy, but the stories have the look and feel of heroic fantasy. Some of the most notable alternatives came from two of the titans of the heroic fantasy genre: Fritz Leiber and Michael Moorcock. Leiber's mismatched sword and sorcery rogues, the hulking barbarian Fafhrd and the dapper Gray Mouser, made their first comic book appearance in a 1972 ***Wonder Woman*** story penned by science fiction novelist Samuel R. Delany. The following year, DC launched *Sword of Sorcery* featuring Leiber's duo. The title only last five issues, but writer **Dennis O'Neil**, and artists Chaykin, **Walt Simonson**, and Jim Starlin offered up some excellent adaptations and original stories. Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser did not appear in comics again until a 1991 miniseries from Marvel's Epic imprint adapted seven Leiber short stories, this time with Chaykin writing and **Mike Mignola** providing the art.

Moorcock's brooding and introspective champion Elric could hardly be farther removed from the lusty Conan. After a couple of guest appearances in *Conan the*

Barbarian, and a 1973 one-shot from Windy City Publications, a more fully realized Elric emerged in 1982 when Marvel issued the graphic novel *Elric: The Dreaming City* by Roy Thomas and P. Craig Russell. The following year Thomas and Russell began a short run of an Elric comic for Pacific Comics. From 1985 to 1988 Thomas worked with Russell and other artists in adapting Elric novels in four miniseries published by First Comics. In the later half of the 1980s, First Comics also published adaptations of the adventures of Corum and Hawkmoon, other aspect of Moorcock's eternal champion. In 1997, Russell both wrote and drew a miniseries adapting the final Elric novel for Dark Horse. Moorcock himself wrote a 1997 eternal champion series and a 2007 Elric graphic novel for DC.

It did not take long for the conventions of heroic fantasy to become so well established in comics fandom that they could be parodied. When **Dave Sim's *Cerebus the Aardvark*** began in 1977 the title was clearly a play on *Conan the Barbarian*. A more straightforward but still hilarious parody of Conan and his ilk can be found in the numerous ***Groo the Wanderer*** titles by Sergio Aragones and Mark Evanier. Groo was first published by Pacific in 1982, and since then there have been one-shots, graphic novels, and series from Eclipse, Marvel, Image, and Dark Horse.

The sword-and-sorcery craze began to calm some after the 1970s, but interesting material continued to appear. Gil Kane revisited heroic fantasy in 1987 with the DC one-shot *Talos of the Wilderness Sea*. Around the same time Arrow Comics began *The Realm*, about four teenagers transported to a Dungeons and Dragons style world. The Realm series and the spin-off *Legend Lore: Tales of the Realm* were taken over by Caliber Comics. An interesting entry in the genre was *Ironwood* (1991–95) from **Fantagraphics** porn imprint Eros. *Ironwood* is one of the few Eros comics more concerned with story than with sex, although the setting does allow for some intriguing fantasy creature couplings.

The "Freebooters" strip in Barry Windsor-Smith's beautiful *Storyteller* anthology of the late 1990s features settings reminiscent of his Conan artwork and a main character who could well be an aging Conan who has indulged in too much carousing over the years. The most popular heroic fantasy of the late 1990s was probably the erratically published and never finished *Battle Chasers* by fan favorite Joe Madureira. There was a dearth of fantasy material in 2001 when CrossGen launched *Sojourn*. The relationship between housewife-turned-warrior Arwyn and rogue Gareth develops on a long quest to gather the pieces of a mystic arrow that can defeat Mordath and his army of orcs.

In the late 1990s, the short-lived Cross Plains Comics mined some of Howard's non-Conan material, including the Pictish king Bran Mac Morn. In 1990 Dark Horse published miniseries featuring Mac Morn and Howard's Cormac Mac Art. More recently they have become the comic book home of Howard's fantasy characters. Their *Conan* title began in 2004 and has been accompanied by half a dozen limited series featuring the mighty barbarian. *Conan* was re-launched in 2008 as *Conan the Cimmerian*. Also in 2008, Dark Horse began a Kull miniseries and a Solomon Kane miniseries. *Robert E. Howard's Savage Tales* anthology featuring a variety of Howard's

adventure characters is planned. Red Sonja, meanwhile, has become a cottage industry at Dynamite Entertainment. An on-going *Red Sonja* series began in 2005 and has been supplemented by a number of limited series and specials. In 2007, Dynamite launched the *Savage Tales* anthology with Red Sonja in the lead story.

A handful of sword and sorcery comic books are derived from fantasy gaming. Two titles that began in 1986, *The Adventurers* and *Redfox*, were not based on specific games but were definitely inspired by Dungeons and Dragons–style gaming. Comic books based on *Magic the Gathering* began in 1995 from Armada and then from Dark Horse. In the late 1980s, DC began publishing a number of titles—*Dragonlance*, *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons*, and *Forgotten Realms*—based on concepts licensed from TSR, Inc. From 1997 to 2004, British publisher Black Library serialized eleven different stories based on the Warhammer game universe. Many of the stories are science fiction, but the adventures of the elf warrior Darkblade are solidly in the fantasy genre. In 2006, Boom! Studios began publishing a line of Warhammer comics.

There is often a fantasy element in superhero stories. Superhero universes have always had plenty of magic-wielding characters, both good and evil, but conventions such as costumes and code names firmly situate the stories in the superhero genre. However, some superhero titles veer, at least temporarily, closer to pure fantasy. In the 1983 miniseries *Sword of the Atom* and three specials over the next five years, DC's shrinking superhero has an odd adventure reminiscent of planetary romance. Conveniently trapped at the same diminutive size as the lost race he encounters deep in the Amazon jungle, Ray Palmer adds a few Conan-style accessories to his costume and fights a variety of jungle creatures and enemies with a sword. **Hulk** had a similar adventure in a 1971 issue written by Harlan Ellison. Hulk is shrunken to sub-atomic size and has the first of a number of encounters with a green-skinned sub-atomic race. He defends the kingdom from an evil warlord and marries the Empress Jarella, but she was later killed, a tragedy that is echoed years later in the 2006 *Planet Hulk* storyline. Planet Hulk is essentially a planetary romance as Hulk finds himself on an exotic and hostile alien world. It is also a very traditional barbarian hero story arc as Hulk fights his way from gladiator slave to king. The 2008 sequel, *Skaar, Son of Hulk* (because Skaar is born on the planet rather than transported there) is a straightforward heroic fantasy with Skaar wielding both sword and a form of ancestral magic.

Contemporary fantasy is often closely related to horror because it presents the unknown aspects of the world we think we know. A few previously mentioned series, such as Mage, and most of the planetary romances are contemporary. Some of the best contemporary fantasy in comic books has come from DC's Vertigo imprint. The ***Sandman*** series (1989–96) written by **Neil Gaiman**, often deals with people in what we consider the real world encountering Dream and other members of The Endless. Since 2002, in the on-going Vertigo series *Fables* and various spin-offs, Bill Willingham has been spinning stories about the characters of fairytales, **folklore**, and fables who fled their homelands and migrated into our real world. *Neverwhere*, a 2005 nine-issue limited series written by Mike Carey with art by Glenn Fabry, adapts Gaiman's novelization of

a 1996 BBC television series he also wrote. Average guy Richard Mayhew ceases to exist for the regular world and enters into the fantastical and often frightening world of London Below.

Post-apocalyptic narratives in comics often veer into fantasy. Set on a devastated, conquered, or otherwise radically altered Earth at some point in the future, these narratives allow heroes a number of opportunities for adventure, as when former Skywald and Marvel artist Jack Katz became one of the first independent publishers when he blended elements of fantasy and space opera to create his post-apocalyptic epic *First Kingdom* (1974).

In 20 issues of *Amazing Adventures*, beginning with #18 in 1973, and in a graphic novel sequel in 1983, **Killraven** leads a band of humans attempting to free Earth of 2018 from Martian conquerors, leading to a number of fantasy-like adventures. Such tales indicate the flexibility of the fantasy genre, which partly accounts for its ongoing popularity over the years.

Randy Duncan

FELDSTEIN, AL (1925–). Albert B. Feldstein is an American cartoonist who edited *MAD* magazine for three decades, from 1956 to 1985. While attending New York's selective High School of Art and Music, he began working in Jerry Iger's workshop, where he erased pencil lines, drew backgrounds, and inked leopard spots onto clothing for *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle*. He attended Brooklyn College by day and Art Students League classes by night before entering military service. Serving in Special Services during World War II, he created posters, slide presentations, and a base comic strip called *Bafy*, while working on the side by painting women on airplanes. After his 1945 discharge, he returned to Iger's shop, and then wrote and drew teenage titles (*Junior*, *Sunny*) for Fox Feature Syndicate.

Feldstein was contracted to draw teenage comics for **EC Comics** before publisher **Bill Gaines** decided the market had changed. Feldstein instead drew **Western** and **romance** titles like *Saddle Justice* and *Moon Girl*. He soon dropped most drawing duties to focus on writing and eventually took over editing most EC publications. In 1950 EC replaced **crime** titles with **horror** and suspense. Known for shocking twist endings, the stories addressed controversial topics including domestic abuse, racism, and misguided patriotism. Feldstein was editing seven horror, suspense, and **science fiction** titles in 1951, generating more revenue than fellow EC editor **Harvey Kurtzman's war comics**, and by 1952 held creative authority over most Gaines publications. EC's *MAD* comic book, under founding editor Kurtzman, inspired numerous imitators including EC's own *Panic* which Feldstein wrote and edited. *Panic* courted controversy and became banned in Massachusetts over an issue mocking Christmas. The U.S. Senate's 1954 Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency hearings shook the comic book industry, devoting special attention to Gaines and EC, and led to the elimination of suspense and horror titles. Feldstein worked on the last EC comic book, *Incredible Science Fiction*, in 1955. *MAD* remains the only EC publication still in print, transformed from comic

book into magazine. Financially troubled, Gaines dismissed Feldstein in 1956. Feldstein's sporadic employment after leaving EC included scripting *Yellow Claw* for **Stan Lee** at Atlas Comics, until Kurtzman left EC and Gaines rehired Feldstein to edit *MAD*. As opposed to the singular voice *MAD* enjoyed under Kurtzman, Feldstein's *MAD* employed dozens of new cartoonists and writers. The publication achieved million-copy monthly circulation by the end of 1958. After Gaines sold *MAD* in 1960 but remained as publisher, Feldstein negotiated a percentage of gross profits for himself.

Under Feldstein, *MAD* became a nationally recognized lampoon of American culture, and yet Gaines resisted key changes Feldstein wanted in the magazine (including color pages, paid advertising, a television series). After Feldstein's 1985 retirement and Gaines's 1992 death, *MAD* implemented many of those changes. Feldstein retired to Deer Haven Ranch in Livingston, Montana, to paint fine art, including *EC Revisited* paintings sold through Sotheby's. In 1993, Feldstein was inducted into the **Will Eisner** Hall of Fame. In 1999, Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Montana, awarded him an honorary Doctorate of Arts.

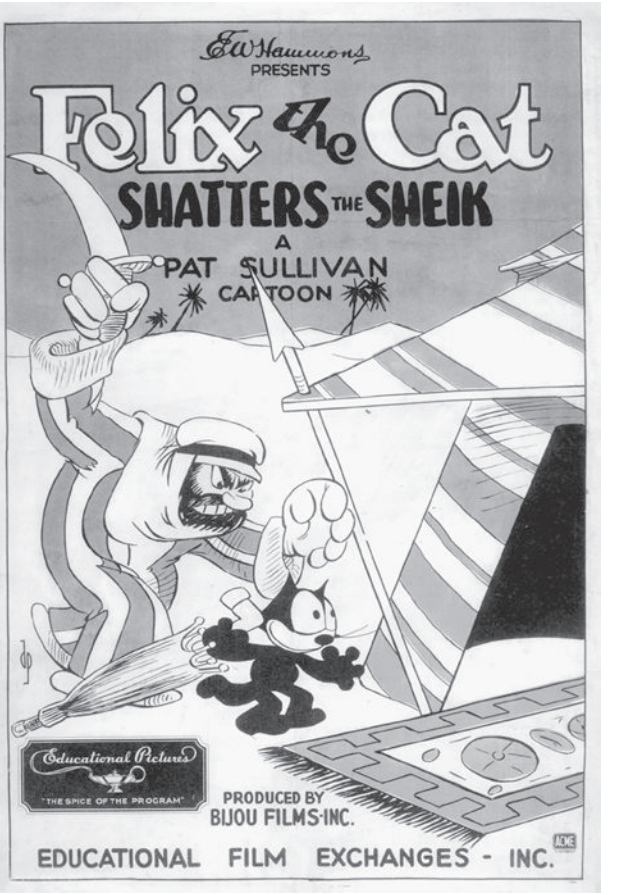
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Travis Langley

FELIX THE CAT. One of the most popular cartoon characters in early cinema, Felix the Cat made his first appearance on November 9, 1919, in a short film titled *Feline Follies* under the name Master Tom. The feature, distributed by Paramount Pictures, proved to be a success and led to a second film, *The Musical Mews*, released a week later. A third film, titled *The Adventures of Felix* and released only a month later, marked the first occurrence of the Felix name. These early short films initiated an enormously successful, nearly decade-long theater run. The whimsical Felix's unique features, from the simplicity of his black and white appearance to his famous, ponderous walk and his detachable, metamorphosing tail, combined with the films' topical and witty content, transformed Felix into a cultural phenomenon both in the United States and overseas. Felix merchandise was ubiquitous, the cat was used to advertise a host of products, and he even inspired several hit songs.

Patrick Sullivan, a cartoonist and businessman from Australia, was credited during his lifetime as Felix's creator. In recent decades, however, Otto Messmer's role in

Felix's creation has been increasingly acknowledged, with claims that he, rather than Sullivan, was responsible for Felix. Messmer was Sullivan's main cartoonist, and was indeed instrumental in Felix's creation and development. Among Messmer's many contributions was the weekly *Felix* comic strip, which, although credited to Sullivan, was entirely Messmer's work. The strip first appeared in England in *Daily Sketch* on August 1, 1923, and continued on a weekly basis for 12 weeks. In the United States, King Features began syndicating the 12 strips starting that very month. Eventually, over 60 newspapers would run the strip worldwide. A daily strip was added beginning in May 1927. The weekly strip had a lengthy run until September 1943, but it was never particularly successful. Apparently, many readers interpreted the strip as mere advertisement for the films. The comic was also not in keeping with readers' tastes, given that only one other strip at the time, *Krazy Kat*, was centered on a **funny animal** while most dealt with themes such as domestic life. In addition, the busy Messmer re-used and re-worked several elements and plotlines from the Felix films for the comic.



A poster for the 1926 cartoon *Felix the Cat Shatters the Sheik*, directed by Otto Messmer and featuring Felix the Cat. Educational/Photofest

Felix's popularity began to wane in the late 1920s, largely because Sullivan delayed Felix's transition from silent film to sound. When the transition finally did occur in 1929, the results were disastrous. Attempts to revive the character onscreen following Sullivan's death in 1933 were unsuccessful. Messmer continued working on the comic strip until 1943, and thereafter worked on monthly comic books for Dell Comics, but he retired from drawing the Felix comics in 1954. His assistant Joe Oriolo replaced him. Oriolo transitioned Felix to the small screen, where the cat starred in many short cartoons. More recently, Oriolo's son, Don, has continued to pursue various projects involving Felix, among them a 1991 feature film. Although those attempts at reviving the character's initial success have thus far failed, Felix the Cat still remains a cartoon icon.

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Denis Yarow

FEMINISM. Though often thought of as a thoroughly masculine realm, comic books and graphic novels have, in fact, often provided venues for the expression of feminist ideas. Probably the first feminist character in comics was psychologist William Moulton Marston's 1941 creation, **Wonder Woman**, who made her debut at a time when the word "feminist" was still used only to describe women who had advocated for suffrage in the early 20th century. Wonder Woman's message was that girls were as good as boys, and that women were the equals of men. Marston created her, as he wrote in *The American Scholar* in 1943, because "It seemed to me . . . that the comics worst offense was their blood-curdling masculinity . . . not even girls want to be girls so long as our feminine archetype lacks force, strength. . . . Women's strong qualities have become despised because of their weak ones." It would take almost 30 more years before feminism entered comics again.

Towards the end of the 1960s and through the 1970s, the mainstream comics industry attempted to keep up with changing trends in the country, and among their potential readers, by modernizing their stories. Comics artists introduced African American protagonists, wrote stories about drug addiction, and tried to deal with the new Women's Liberation movement. Unfortunately, as the majority of comics writers were straight white men, the results were often embarrassing.

None of the mainstream editors and publishers seemed to have a grasp on what feminism was actually about, or even what it was called. At **Marvel** comics, **Stan Lee**, who has the writing credits on the 1970 **romance** story, "No Man is My Master," calls the movement "female freedom." His protagonist, Bev, breaks up with her boorish boyfriend because he insists on making choices for her ("My chick's gotta like what I like") and drags her to a boxing match against her will. She dates a series of wimps who cannot make up their minds about anything, until a "Female Freedom" meeting makes her realize, "I *misunderstood* the whole thing! *Female Freedom* isn't about *dates*—or *romance!* It's for *job equality*—and things like *that*" (emphasis in this and the following quotes is in the original). She then goes back to her original boorish boyfriend.

Meanwhile, over at **DC** comics, in "Miss Peeping Tom," from Young Romance, 1973, Tina tries to join her high school camera club, only to be told by the room full of boys: "Photography is a *man's* field!" "All girls are good for is *knittin'* an' *neckin'*!" Tina and her friend Beverly take their cause to the principal's office, where Beverly says, "If Tina won't be allowed to join the camera club only because she's a girl—*women's lib* might picket the school!" A promising beginning, but, in order to qualify for the club, Tina must take candid shots of Steve Anderson, captain of the weight-lifting team. She falls for him, he eventually falls for her, and the original message of the story is forgotten.

In 1975, with a cover depicting a kissing couple in front of a background of Women's Liberation symbols, **Charlton Comics** presented "Call Me Ms." In the story, Kay, who

prefers a career to romance, says, "I guess I was what they called a woman's libber." Yet by the story's climax, having met her true love, she decides, "I'll keep my job . . . but my marriage will always come first!"

In 1970, editor Stan Lee brought women's liberation to Marvel's **superhero** line with ***The Avengers*** #83, titled "Come On In . . . the Revolution's Fine." On the cover, Valkyrie, a new superheroine in long blonde braids and metal brassiere, stands, along with Wasp, Scarlet Witch, **Black Widow**, and Medusa, over the fallen (male) bodies of the Avengers superhero team. She says, "*All right*, girls—that finishes off these *male chauvinist pigs!* From now on, it's the *Valkyrie* and her *lady liberators!*"

In the 1960s, Marvel comics superheroines had often been titled "Girl," as in Invisible Girl or Marvel Girl. It took Stan Lee five years after the creation of the Lady Liberators, but in 1977, he used the title "Ms." for the first time, when he came up with a superheroine called Ms. Marvel. If Lee's attempts at feminism seem either clueless of just funny today, he was at least trying. One would think that the more politically hip genre of **underground** comics, or **comix**, would do a better job of getting it right, but unfortunately this was not so. In the early 1970s the predominantly male underground comix movement was producing books that often graphically sexually objectified women, and all too often depicted women in terms of violent misogyny. Reacting to this situation, in 1970 cartoonist **Trina Robbins** joined the staff of the West Coast's first Women's Liberation newspaper, *It Ain't Me, Babe*, contributing a none-too-subtle propaganda strip, "Belinda Berkeley." Later that year, with the moral support of the newspaper staff, she produced the world's first ever all-woman comic book, *It Ain't Me, Babe*, published by Last Gasp.

At this time there were exactly two women cartoonists living in the underground comix mecca, San Francisco: Robbins and Willy Mendes. Both contributed to *It Ain't Me, Babe*, after which, excluded from the male underground cartoonists' books, they went on to produce their own comic books, both solo and together. Mendes produced *Illuminations* in 1971, Robbins's solo book was *Girl Fight Comics*, 1972, and both Mendes and Robbins, along with Santa Cruz cartoonist Jewelie Goodvibes, produced *All Girl Thrills* in 1970.

In 1972, a group of eight women consisting of Robbins, Michelle Brand, Lee Marrs, Lora Fountain, Patti Moodian, Sharon Rudahl, Shelby Sampson, Aline Kominsky, Karen Marie Haskell, and Janet Wolfe Stanley, met at Patti Moodian's San Francisco home to form the Wimmen's Comix Collective, and to put together *Wimmen's Comix*, the second all-woman comic book to come out of San Francisco. True to the democratic principals of the women's movement, the collective had a rotating editorship, so that no one person ever had complete control of the book. By 1982, this changed to an even more democratic rotating editorship with two women sharing editorial duties on each book. At regular meetings, the group reviewed submissions together and made collective decisions, although the editors had final say on what was accepted.

Wimmen's Comix lasted 20 years and is still the longest surviving all-woman anthology comic book. The ever-growing list of contributors drew comics on subjects that

male cartoonists would never touch: abortion, menstruation, sexual harassment, rape, domestic violence, incest, lesbianism. The book inspired other women cartoonists to publish. In 1976, Roberta Gregory self-published the first lesbian comic book, *Dynamite Damsels*, followed by Mary Wings's self-published *Come Out Comics* in 1977, and *Dyke Shorts* in 1978. Among the many well-known women cartoonists whose work first saw publication in *Wimmen's Comix* are **Phoebe Gloeckner** and Melinda Gebbie.

Actually, *Wimmen's Comix* was not the first ongoing all-woman comic anthology; a comic book with the outrageous title of *Tits & Clits* preceded it to the newsstands by two weeks. *Tits & Clits*, published under the name Nannygoat Productions, was the product of two Southern California women, Joyce Farmer and Lyn Chevli, working under the pseudonym, Chin Liveley.

While *Wimmen's Comix* dealt with every subject of interest to women, *Tits & Clits* was all about sex. Farmer and Chevli, reacting to the sexism that they saw in male-dominated underground comics, intended their self-published comic books to reflect sexuality from a feminist point of view, while being just as controversial as the male underground comix. Because the book's name was getting the two cartoonists into trouble—it was not being reviewed and the title could not be printed in mainstream media—they changed it to *Pandora's Box* for one issue, after which they threw caution to the winds and reverted to the original title.

In 1973, Farmer and Chevli produced one of the most important and unjustly forgotten feminist comic books, *Abortion Eve*. The subject of abortion had been dealt with as early as the first issue of *Wimmen's Comix*, in "A Teenage Abortion," by Lora Fountain, but *Abortion Eve* was the first entire comic book to deal with the subject. Drawn by Farmer, and written by Farmer and Chevli, the story featured four women, all with names that were variations on Eve—Eva, Evelyn, Evita, and Evie—who meet at an abortion clinic. They each have different reasons for terminating their pregnancies, and the book reads like a turgid soap opera while at the same time educating readers about abortion, which had just become legal. *Abortion Eve* was the second comic book to be published by Farmer and Chevli as Nannygoat Productions.

In 1978, Robbins, a single mother who was fed up with slick women's magazines glamorizing motherhood and child-rearing, decided to show the reality of motherhood by editing an anthology, *Mama! Dramas*. The book, published by Edu Comics, featured stories by seven women cartoonists who were also mothers. The subject matter included co-op playgroups and alternative schools, and focused on the real problems of single mothers and welfare mothers.

By 1979, there were enough women drawing **alternative comics** that the British publisher, Hassle Free Press, was able to put together a trade paperback anthology, edited by Robbins, titled *The Best of Wimmen's Comix and Other Comix by Women*. The book reprinted the work of 20 women.

By this time, the idea that women could create their own comics and tell their own stories was spreading overseas. In 1977, Suzy Varty edited *Heroine*, the first all-woman comics anthology in England. In France, Les Humanoids Associates, publishers of

Metal Hurlant (published in the United States as ***Heavy Metal***) came out with the all-woman anthology comics magazine *Ah! Nana*. The title is a French pun. *Nana* is French slang for girl, and *anana* is French for banana. The magazine, which lasted from 1976 to 1978, included comics from women all over Europe and also the work of American cartoonists Shary Flenniken, Robbins, Mary K. Brown, and Sharon Rudahl. Meanwhile, the Wimmen's Comix Collective was returning the favor, including comics by French, Italian, British, and Canadian women in *Wimmen's Comix*.

In 1981, in conjunction with the first ever exhibit of feminist cartoons at the UBC Fine Arts Gallery in Vancouver, Canada, curator Avis Lang Rosenberg edited *Pork Roasts*, a selection of comics from the show. Included were both men and women from the United States, Canada, Germany, India, France, England, New Zealand, Argentina, Mexico, and Italy. Among the American women cartoonists in the book were Nicole Hollander, Debra McGee, Lee Marrs, Betty Swords, Etta Hulme, Trina Robbins, Joyce Farmer, Ellen Levine, and Martha Campbell. Feminist comics and comics by women had gone international.

Reacting to the 1990 Webster Decision passed by the Supreme Court, which put abortion laws into the hands of individual states, Trina Robbins and Liz Schiller, treasurer of the Oakland, California, National Organization for Women (NOW) put together *CHOICES*, a benefit book on abortion, with all profits going to NOW. After two alternative comics publishers turned down the project, Robbins and Schiller formed Angry Isis Press to self-publish the book, which sold over 10,000 copies. The pages were divided among both men and women artists, with 23 women and 18 men contributing.

In the early 21st century, feminist comics and comics by women again went international, when Robbins curated a series of exhibits of American women cartoonists throughout Europe. The exhibits began in Germany in 2002, moved to Portugal and Spain, and finally later that same year, opened in the Secession Gallery in Vienna, Austria. Instead of an exhibit catalogue, the Secession Gallery printed a graphic novel anthology titled *Secession*. Edited and scripted by Robbins, the book contained work by 25 women cartoonists all writing on the same theme: what it is like to be a woman cartoonist. Upon its return to the United States, the exhibit traveled to San Francisco and New York.

Meanwhile, mainstream comics, in regard to feminism, had not progressed since Valkyrie and her Lady Liberators in the 1970s. Mainstream superhero comics, aimed at a primarily young male audience, often presented female characters in a hypersexualized manner. Through the years, women characters in comics, as drawn by mainstream male cartoonists, increased their breast size as their costumes grew briefer.

In the 1990s, women fans of mainstream comics, unhappy with such representation, began to use the Internet as a tool of feminist comic criticism. Such Web sites as Sequential Tart, a webzine formed in 1998, and the more recent Girl-Wonder.org, started in 2005, provide a space for women comics readers, focus on women's issues in comics, and work to make the comics industry a more positive place for women both as comics creators and readers.

Primarily because television employs living human women rather than artists' fantasies, representation of superheroines or action heroines on the small screen has been

more positive, and thus has attracted many more female fans. Two such examples that were then adapted for comics are Xena, Warrior Princess, and Buffy the Vampire Slayer, whose respective self-titled television programs had considerable success in the 1990s. A San Francisco lesbian bar held "Xena Nights" once a week, showing *Xena* on a large-screen television set to an overflow crowd of women. When Topps Comics published a Xena follow up, and when **Dark Horse** published a series of Buffy-related comics (many directly involving Buffy creator **Joss Whedon**), both heroines were rendered in the same realistic style as their real life models, rather than hypersexualized in the traditional comic-book way, and both books gained a large female following.

Another element too often found in superhero comics is the use of the death or injury of women characters as a plot device to stir the male hero into action. In 1999, a group of comic fans created a Web site titled "Women in Refrigerators," a term coined by writer **Gail Simone**, to list and criticize the death and disempowerment of women in comic books. The term refers to an incident in ***Green Lantern*** #54, 1994, in which the title superhero discovers the body of his girlfriend stuffed into a refrigerator.

Similarly, Girl-Wonder.org, which has since grown into a collection of sites dedicated to female characters and creators in mainstream comics, started as a single site advocating for better treatment of female characters. Girl-Wonder was named for Stephanie Brown, a superhero character who served as Batman's sidekick, Robin, for several issues; then she was tortured to death by a power drill, in a long drawn-out graphic sequence spanning a number of issues.

In 2008, Girl-Wonder.org added The Convention Anti-Harassment Project to its site. This is a grass-roots campaign designed to deal with sexual harassment at comic conventions. It was the sexually threatening atmosphere at a convention that inspired the formation of the international nonprofit organization, Friends of Lulu. In 1994, at Wondercon, a San Francisco comic convention, a group of women, incensed when the convention sponsored a look-alike contest for the pornographic comic character Cherry Poptart, met to form an organization for women in the industry. The following summer, the newly formed organization held its first meeting at the San Diego comic convention. Editor, blogger, and journalist Heidi MacDonald provided the name, based on Marge Henderson Buell's **Golden Age** girl character, Little Lulu, who was always trying to break into the neighborhood boys' clubhouse. Friends of Lulu is open to both men and women. They have published a number of books, including *How to Get Girls (into your store)*, a guide for comic store owners, *Broad Appeal*, an anthology of comics by members, and *The Girls' Guide to Guy's Stuff*, featuring the work of 50 women cartoonists on the subject of men. Since 1997, Friends of Lulu has presented Lulu Awards to men and women in the industry. The Lulu of the Year is given to the creator (male or female), whose work best exemplifies Friends of Lulu's mission statement; the Kimberly A. Yale Award for Best New Talent, named for a comic book writer and Friends of Lulu founding member who died in 1997, is awarded to a woman who has worked in the comic industry for less than two years. The Women of Distinction Award is open to women who work in the comic book field as something other than

writers and artists. The Female Cartoonists Hall of Fame is self-explanatory. Previous winners of the hall of fame award include pioneering cartoonists **Marie Severin** (**Doctor Strange**), **Ramona Fradon** (**Aquaman**), Dale Messick (Brenda Starr), and Hilda Terry (Teena).

The first issue of *Wimmen's Comix*, in 1972, included the work of eight women cartoonists. When the last issue hit the stands in 1992, there were more women drawing comics than ever before. *Wimmen's Comix* had opened the door for them. Today it would be almost impossible to count the number of women drawing comics in the United States, but despite their vast numbers, women cartoonists have not achieved true equality. Although the numbers have risen, still very few women work as artists or writers for the high-paying mainstream superhero books. Most women comics creators are either self-published, or they are published by small independent presses that pay either very little or nothing at all. In comparison, large numbers of male artists and writers are employed by mainstream comics for a decent living wage. This means that while men are paid to do what they like best, draw and write comics, most women comics creators must have a day job and squeeze their creativity into nights and weekends.

Women comics creators have also traditionally had a hard time getting their work distributed. Most comic shops in the United States are owned or managed by male superhero fans, who cater to other male superhero fans. Comic books that differ from traditional superhero comics, especially comics that are obviously by and for women, are given short shrift. If the owners or managers order any copies of these books at all, they are usually very few, and they don't reorder once the few comics are bought. Thus, the audience for whom these books were intended often never sees them. Add this to the fact that comic shops, full of young men, with posters of hypersexualized superheroines on the wall, are so intimidating to potential female fans that they often will not go inside. The lack of women and girls in comic book stores has led to the oft-repeated (but untrue) notion that girls don't read comics.

A bright spot of hope for women comics fans is the arrival of Japanese **manga** comics in the United States in the late 1990s, and the popularity of graphic novels, starting at about the same period. At least half of all Japanese comics are aimed at girls (shojo manga), and previously comic-deprived girls and young women are reading them in volume, proving at last that when they are given comics they like to read, girls will read comics. Manga and comics in graphic novel format can be carried in bookstores and libraries, rather than merely in comic shops, and unlike the latter, bookstores and libraries are female-friendly places.

As long as there is a never-ending supply of boys and young men, there will always be superhero comics. However, organizations like Friends of Lulu, Web sites like Sequential Tart and Girl-Wonder.org, along with manga and graphic novels, are finally forging a new road for women and feminism in comics.

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John Wesley Shipp as Barry Allen, a.k.a. the Flash, in the 1990 short-lived, live-action television series by the same name. CBS/Photofest

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Trina Robbins

FLASH, THE. The Flash is the name give to a number of **superhero** characters, published by **DC Comics**, with a "super speed" ability to run at a high velocity. "Speeders" as they are commonly known, are a fixture of the superhero genre. The Flash is an early example of a specialized superhero with a specific extraordinary ability. The character has also crossed over into other media including animated cartoons and a 1990 live-action television series.

Seen as a second tier DC hero (behind **Superman**, **Batman**, and **Wonder Woman**, i.e. characters that did not undergo drastic changes during the **Silver Age**), the Flash, in its various incarnations, has a multifaceted history deeply embedded in the DC mythos. It is because of the character's status as a second tier hero (along with others such as **Green Lantern**, the Atom, and Hawkman) that substantial changes to the character were possible over time.

There are three incarnations of the Flash that are best known to comic fans: Jay Garrick, Barry Allen, and Wally West, each representing a specific "age" of comic books—Golden, Silver, and Modern (*see also* Ages of Comics).

The first Flash, Jay Garrick, debuted in *Flash Comics* #1 in January 1940. Garrick is a college student who receives his abilities by inhaling "hard water" (later "heavy water") vapors. After a brief stint as a college football player, Garrick eventually decides to become a mystery man. The Jay Garrick Flash is known for his metal-winged helmet,

styled after that of the Greek God Hermes. Garrick was also a charter member of the **Justice Society of America** (first seen in ***All-Star Comics*** #3).

Like many **Golden Age** heroes, Jay Garrick's solo adventures were unremarkable as the character was initially relegated to fighting petty thugs, spies, and the occasional jewel thief or mad scientist. Later adventures would feature villains such as the Fiddler, the Shade, and Vandal Savage. It was with the Justice Society that some of the Flash's villains began to take shape. With the success of *Flash Comics*, Jay Garrick's role in the JSA began to diminish. *Flash Comics* lasted to issue #104 (February 1949), then became a victim of the postwar Superhero downturn.

Less than a decade later the Silver Age revival of comics began, and a second Flash was introduced in *Showcase* #4 (September–October 1956). This Flash is police scientist Barry Allen who, while working in his chemical lab, is struck by lightning. The combination of chemicals and lightening imbues Allen with super speed abilities. Taking inspiration from comic book character Jay Garrick (later revealed to be living on a parallel Earth), Allen takes on the role of the Flash. The initial reception of Barry Allen in *Showcase* led to the revival of *Flash Comics*, now titled *The Flash*, with issue #105 dated February–March 1959. Five issues later, Kid Flash, Wally West (who somehow received his abilities in an accident similar to Allen's) was introduced to readers. The Silver Age Flash adventures would showcase the artistic talents of Carmine Infantino, who had also worked on the later *Flash Comics* adventures.

It was with *Flash* #123 (September 1961) that the concept of the multiverse was introduced to DC readers. "The Flash of Two Worlds" featured the Golden Age and Silver Age Flashes meeting for the first time. Allen, while performing a magic trick, vibrates into the dimensional reality of "Earth-Two", the reality where Garrick and other Golden Age DC heroes exist. The multiverse concept would quickly become a mainstay in DC continuity, as a means for crossover appearance and team-ups not yet realized. The multiverse was seen in many issues of ***Justice League of America*** and was a means for not only creative storytelling but in introducing established properties from other comic companies (such as **Quality** and Fawcett) to a larger mythos.

The Barry Allen adventures continued through the Silver Age with innovative plot lines involving time and multi-dimensional travel. The Barry Allen Flash also had an extensive Rogues Gallery of villains, including: Captain Cold, Captain Boomerang, Mirror Master, Pied Piper, and the Trickster (among others). By the mid 1980s, as the DC universe continuity began to confuse more than clarify, and the decision was made to do away with the multiverse concept, with the Barry Allen Flash playing a key role in the revamp. *The Flash* ended its run with issue #350 (October 1985), in which Allen travels to the near future to live with wife, Iris. Shortly thereafter, Allen would be featured in ***Crisis on Infinite Earths***. As one of the few individuals with the ability to traverse the multiverse under his own power, Allen is captured by the Anti-Monitor. The Flash would soon sacrifice his life to weaken the Anti-Monitor in *Crisis* #8 (November 1985). Although the character would appear in various forms time and again (in one case as the very bolt of lightning that imbued both himself and Wally West with abilities),

Barry Allen essentially stayed dead, making way for West to become the next Flash. A third *Flash* series would begin with issue #1 in June 1987.

Many early writers of the series would focus on character-driven stories. Some of the influences' of the short-lived *Flash* television series made their way into the look of the Wally West Flash. Writer **Mark Waid** introduced the concept of the "Speed Force," an energy field that speeders may tap into to gain their abilities. Such an explanation gave some legitimacy to origin stories involving chemicals or heavy water as the catalyst for gaining similar abilities. Jay Garrick was also reintroduced in this series as a member of West's extended Flash family. West would have a love interest, Linda Park, who would keep him grounded in reality rather than taken away by the Speed Force. The third Flash series ran monthly until March 2006 and has been on and off hiatus since that time for creative and promotional purposes, usually replaced by limited-series and one-shots. *The Flash: Rebirth* miniseries (the latest Flash comic) concluded in February 2010 and is likely to be followed by a regular monthly *Flash* series.

Bart Allen was also introduced in the third *Flash* series as Impulse, the 30th-century grandson of Barry Allen. Bart Allen would later become Kid Flash and finally take up the responsibility of the Flash after the disappearance of Wally West at the end of 2006's *Infinite Crisis*. Bart Allen's run as Flash would be short lived, as the character was killed at the end of his own maxi-series *Flash: The Fastest Man Alive*. As of 2009 the Flash characters, including Wally West, Barry Allen, and Bart Allen seem to be resurfacing again after the events of *Final Crisis* as a fourth Flash series is in development featuring a multi-generational lineup.

D. R. Hammontree

FOLKLORE IN COMICS. Folklore, made up of traditional customs, superstitions, myths, folktales, legends, riddles, proverbs, rituals, motifs, dances, and songs that have been adopted and maintained within a given community by processes of repetition not reliant on the written word, permeates popular culture, both consciously and subconsciously. The world of comic books is no exception. Comic book creators borrow themes, archetypes, and ideas current in traditional and contemporary folklore to construct their own narratives, histories, heroes, villains, and legends. Folklore is in the public domain and thus freely available for anyone to mould, meld, or mediate in any format. Banks and Wein state that "the use of folklore in popular literature provides an arena where the reader connects with the writer. Here they can experience together a sense of community through shared beliefs and history, thereby creating a community of the comic world" (1998). These folklore references are often transparent and well-known, such as in the case of ***Thor***, where the name of the Norse god, his magic hammer, and some of his attributes are used to establish a new universe for him and his adventures. Others are more oblique, such as the characterization of the **Swamp Thing** as the Green Man of folklore, the continuous references to the "trickster" in relation to John Constantine, the hero quest of Dream and the central role of Hecate in ***Sandman***.

One of the most obvious uses of folklore is straight **adaptations**, wholesale reproductions, of traditional tales either as short stories or as graphic novels. While some of these adaptations are intended for younger readers, the vast majority are designed for the same age audience as were the original oral tales, young adults and adults. *Little Lit: Folklore & Fairytale Funnies*, the compilation by **Art Spiegelman** and Françoise Mouly, offers both reworkings of traditional tales and graphic retellings of 11 folktales and nursery rhymes; Papercutz's collection of four tales in *Tales from the Brothers Grimm*; **Will Eisner**'s *The Princess and the Frog* and *Sundiata: A Legend of Africa* are examples of titles for readers of all ages, while Eric Shandower's *Age of Bronze* series of the Trojan War and the retellings of *Beowulf* and *Bearskin* by Gareth Hinds are for an older audience. Derek McCulloch and Shepherd Hendrix explore the traditional ballad in ***Stagger Lee***, demonstrating both the depth of their research and their creativity in bringing the ballad alive in the comics format. Charles Vess and the myriad of authors in *Book of Ballads* introduce traditional English and Scottish ballads to this same unconventional audience.

Recently there has been a renaissance of creative reworkings of the traditional tales, where the new narratives extend the story established in the traditional tales by placing the newly created story in a different time and setting or playing with genre. Vess, for example, introduced **Spider-Man** to the world of Scottish myth in the 1990 graphic novel *Spirits of the Earth*. *Seven Sons* by Alexander Grecian and Riley Rossmo moves the seven identical Chinese brothers of the traditional tale to the New World to explore additional themes of racism and settlement issues of the early American West, while Shannon and Dean Hale rework the fairytale in *Rapunzel's Revenge* so their spirited heroine and everyman Jack are sharing adventures in a **fantasy** set in a similar location. Rapunzel uses her long hair very differently in this rendition. Jewish folktales have also received a similar relocation with Steve Sheinkin's *Rabbi Harvey* series of short stories, in which the title character either retells a folktale to help the community or is an actor in a reworked tale. Other examples include Zenescope's series *Grimm Fairy Tales* and the two **Marvel** limited series, ***X-Men*** *Fairy Tales* and *Spider-Man Fairy Tales* where characters and folktales are included in the larger frame story of the series' universes. Terry LaBan and Rebecca Guay, in the ***Elseworlds*** **Green Lantern** title, *1001 Emerald Nights*, incorporate the story of the title character with those of the classic world of the Arabian Nights. The **Dark Horse** book series of *Monsters, the Dead, Witchcraft* and *Hauntings* includes an extensive variety of folklore references and retellings of tales; and the ongoing DC/Vertigo series *Fables* introduces famous fairytale characters into contemporary settings.

Besides the reworking of entire tales, there are a wide variety of new (and not so new) narratives incorporating both well-known and lesser-known characters, motifs and themes in the narratives which both enhance reading appreciation for the conversant reader as well as provide introductions to those not as familiar with folklore. In ***Captain Marvel*** Shazam gets his powers and name from the acronym for Solomon (wisdom), Hercules (strength), Atlas (stamina), Zeus (power), Achilles (courage) and Mercury (speed). Other stories

incorporate traditional characters and have them interact with other folklore characters in totally different environments and situations from their familiar haunts. Publications as diverse as **Neil Gaiman's** *Sandman*, Linda Medley's ***Castle Waiting,*** and Bill Willingham's *Fables* and *Jack of Fables* exemplify this pattern. In all of these titles, archetypes and characters from nursery rhymes, folk and fairytales, and classical mythology intermingle on the same stage. Two very recent series that integrate traditional characters in contemporary settings are *Greek Street* by Peter Milligan, and Davide Gianfelice and Nathan Edmondson and Christian Ward's *Olympus*.

There are also plentiful examples of reworked folklore as part of ongoing storylines. This is particularly evident in **Mike Mignola's *Hellboy***; *Usagi Yojimbo* by Stan Sakai, with traditional Japanese characters such as Kitsune and the Kappa; and in less noticeable samples such as Mat Johnson and Warren Pleece's *Incognegro*. In this latter story, the main character escapes captivity by emulating the traditional actions of the trickster Brer Rabbit in the briar patch. Mignola has continuous references to folklore motifs and tales throughout the entire series, embracing folklore from all parts of the globe.

Numerous folklore characters have found themselves in a multiplicity of comic books, particularly Baba Yaga, who manifests herself in *Hellboy*, *Fables*, and *The Books of Magic* while the lesser-known Russian character, Koshchei the Deathless, can be found in *Hellboy* and **DC's** *Suicide Squad*. The world and characters of faerie also find themselves in the comic book worlds of *Sandman* and *The Books of Magic*, as well as in Mike Carey and John Bolton's *God Save the Queen*. The Monkey King of Chinese mythology plays an important role in Gene Yang's award winning ***American Born Chinese*** and also in *Xin: Legend of the Monkey King* and *Xin: Journey of the Monkey King*. Other characters, usually less familiar ones, play singular roles in the comic book world. The archaic Gibborium, mighty beings from the Bible, are the infamous enemies of the ***Runaways*** series; urban legends, Bigfoot and the Golem coexist in Grecian & Rossmo's *Proof* series; and urban legends and legendary monsters are the underpinning for both Gilbert **Hernandez**'s *Sloth*, and Jeremy Love's *Bayou*. These types of appearances are too numerous to list but provide hours of entertainment for readers of comic books and folklore.

Historically, in the world of comics, "what adventure comics get from mythology is a ready-made pool from which to select stories about gods and heroes, who, like many epic heroes in the Western tradition, may be divinely empowered. It is the act of selection that is the key, for, lacking the subtlety of most familiar mythologies, traditional comic narrative is based on the conflict between Good and Evil, both understood in absolute terms" (Robinson 2004, 5). This is the most evident change in the use of folklore by comic book creators as the stories, motifs, themes, and issues are now exploring and illuminating a wider base of conflicts and arguments than in previous decades. The intersection between the world of folklore and the world of comic books has never been stronger. However, the productive use of material from folklore in comics may in the future be limited by the fact that many in modern society are no longer conversant with traditional folklore and may not recognize the allusions, reworkings, and adaptations.

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Gail de Vos

FRADON, RAMONA (1926–). Ramona Fradon is an award-winning, groundbreaking woman cartoonist, who in the 1950s was the only woman drawing for mainstream comic books. She attended Parson's School of Design for one year in 1945, before going on to the Art Students' League, where she studied from 1945–48. In 1952 she drew her first comic art, a **war** story, for **Timely Comics**, later to become **Marvel Comics**; later that same year she drew a four-page Shining Knight story for **DC Comics**.

Fradon became the regular artist for DC on ***Aquaman*** from 1953 through 1960, co-creating and designing the character Aqualad. In 1960 she left comics for three years, returning in 1963 to design the character Metamorpho and to draw four issues of the comic book of that title. She left the field of comics again, taking time off to raise her daughter, then returned to DC in 1973, drawing, among other titles, ***Plastic Man*** (1975) and *Super Friends* (1976–80). For Marvel she drew the **Fantastic Four** and The Cat, a character whom she also designed.

Fradon retired from comic books in 1980, becoming the regular artist for the newspaper strip *Brenda Starr* upon creator Dale Messick's retirement. Fradon drew the strip until 1995, when the art was taken over by June Brigman. Among the titles that Fradon has worked on since her retirement from Brenda Starr is the cover of *Dignifying Science*, a graphic novel collection about women scientists written and published by Jim Ottaviani (2003), and a story for *Radioactive Man*, published by Bongo Comics (2007).

Although Fradon is one of the rare women who can draw **superhero** action comics, she has not been enthusiastic about working in that genre. She has said in interviews that she prefers drawing "goofy" comics like *Radioactive Man*, *Metamorpho*, and *Plastic Man* over traditional superhero stories. In a 1988 interview with Andy Mangels in *Amazing Heroes* magazine, she said, "I was really not interested in drawing super heroes—male fantasies, you know? People hitting each other or scheming to take over the world. . . . Something that has always jarred my eyes is to see the kind of heaviness and ugliness about most (male) comic art." In a 2000 interview with Katherine Keller on the Sequential Tart Web site, she comments, "with the superheroes it was these cardboard figures punching each other, that's about the only interaction that ever went on."

Fradon received the Inkpot Award at San Diego's Comicon in 1996, and in 1999 she was inducted into the Women Cartoonist's Hall of Fame by Friends of Lulu, an organization that promotes participation in comics by women. In 2003 she received

the Cartoon Collector's Lifetime Achievement Award; she was inducted into the **Will Eisner** Hall of Fame in 2006.

In 2007, Fradon wrote *The Gnostic Faustus: the Secret Teachings Behind the Classic Text*, published by Inner Traditions. The book is her unique study of the Faustus myth.

Trina Robbins

FRANK BOOK, THE. *The Frank Book* collects visionary cartoonist Jim Woodring's "Frank" stories from his *JIM* and *FRANK* comics, *Tantalizing Stories*, and other publications between 1991 and 2001, along with related covers and art. These episodic, mostly black-and-white, nearly wordless comics typically chronicle a day in the life of Frank, a bipedal, short-tailed, buck-toothed animal resembling a cross between Bugs Bunny, Mickey Mouse, and **Felix the Cat**. According to Woodring, who once worked in the animation industry, *Frank* is his idea of "a pure cartoon," with "a cartoon character who lives in a cartoon landscape with other cartoon characters in a situation where forces could be explored outside of any . . . [c]ultural or . . . [s]ocial context" (Groth 2002, 85). The everyman Frank explores with curiosity and occasional understanding the wonders and horrors of an idyllic-looking but violent and amoral world in which characters' desires for self-gratification contend with their instincts for self-preservation, yielding slapstick antics and harrowingly tragic consequences. Inspired by, yet transcending, such diverse visual sources as animated cartoons, **funny animal** comics, and Surrealist paintings, the ethereal and symbolic stories of *The Frank Book* provide a voyeuristic glimpse into a familiar but ultimately mysterious and alien place that follows its own rules, and where things are not always what they seem, much like Lewis Carroll's Wonderland.

Frank's early years furnish many of the distinctive elements of his idiosyncratic stories. As Woodring explains in his afterword to *The Frank Book*, he first drew Frank in 1989 "out of the impulse to create a *sui generis* cartoon character; not a cat, or a mouse, or a beaver, or any other kind of creature, but a generic anthropomorph, beholden to nobody and with no expectations to fulfill" (351). In 1990, Frank made his first appearance in the comic book *BUZZ* after editor Mark Landman invited Woodring to do a comic "that looks normal but isn't" (Woodring 351). That four-page story, included in the appendix to *The Frank Book*, features many of the hallmarks of the *Frank* stories: an absence of dialogue or narration, which heightens the narrative's ambiguity and otherworldly feel; violence (in this case, inadvertent); an inscrutable, transcendent power; and Frank and his swinish foil, Manhog, a would-be usurper and the personification of animal appetite and human sin. Weeping over the death of a worm in an apple in his debut, Frank shows more empathy than in most tales, including the **Harvey Award**-winning *Frank in the River* (1992), Woodring's longest color story and the first comic in *The Frank Book*. There, in an apparent pastiche of "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" from Disney's *Fantasia*, an indentured Frank butchers a horde of river monsters before his clones dispose of Manhog and Frank earns his freedom.

Subsequent stories, which this volume presents more or less chronologically by publication date, continue to expand the cast of characters, both friends and foes to Frank. In "Frank Acquires Pupshaw," a downtrodden Frank, bereft of a mantelpiece ornament, comes across a yard sale where he adopts his pet and steadfast protector Pupshaw, who later spews out mini-Pupshaws that skeletonize the thieving Manhog. Two of Frank's greatest adversaries join the resurrected Manhog in "Frank's Faux Pa": Frank's counterfeit father (hence the title) and the diabolical brain-looter Whim, the inventor of the Whim-Grinder, a hand-held device that deforms Frank's head and alters his personality and perception. Other prominent acquaintances include Frank's "Real Pa," identical in appearance to his fake one; Lucky, Whim's long-faced lackey; the geometrical Jerry Chickens, alternately sources and targets of mayhem; and Pupshaw's anagrammatic suitor Pushpaw, who literally transforms the landscape in the formally inventive story with his name. The transgressive, shape-shifting tricksters in this entourage—Pupshaw, Pushpaw, and Whim—help to lend the stories their archetypal aspect. The *Frank* characters encounter a procession of strange entities, some from other dimensions or straddling the material and spiritual worlds, such as the radially symmetrical Jivas, immortal essences of once-living beings that resemble elaborately patterned spinning tops. Woodring includes elliptical explanations of many of the denizens of Frank's vividly realized and animated world, the Unifactor, in the book's appendix.

Of course, the protagonist of Frank provides *The Frank Book* with its main source of continuity and meaning, however elusive the latter may be. According to Woodring, readers have determined that Frank "is 11 years old, that he is covered with short, dense fur like a mole's, that he is innocent but not noble, and that he is mortal and must some day die" (351). Frank habitually wanders the meadows, forests, and coasts of the Unifactor in a quest for amusement, which he encounters in the form of, for instance, a party for the dead, a palace of horrors that pales in comparison to the world outside, and wells that cause unexpected transformations. Paradoxically, Frank is capable of extreme cruelty but can also show unusual compassion, even to his eternal antagonist Manhog. Frank repeatedly wants what he cannot have and goes to great lengths to obtain it, often at his peril, but he doesn't learn from his experiences. Unlike his cartoon predecessors, Frank doesn't always triumph; in fact, he often has to be rescued by others and is left on the brink of death after being chewed up and spit out of another dimension at the end of *The Frank Book*, subverting readers' expectations. Indeed, an essay that Woodring has endorsed describes *Frank* as a radical exploration and critique of cartoons that takes their conventions to sometimes horrifying extremes.

Yet *Frank*'s visual non sequiturs, unpredictable characters, and internal logic also create a self-contained, self-referential realm that frequently defies reason. Woodring claims that all the *Frank* stories have straightforward meanings, which he usually recognizes only after they are completed, but Woodring prefers to keep these meanings to himself "because the stories are more powerful when their mysteries are undiscovered" (351). In his *Comics Journal Special* interview, Woodring suggests that readers have

become inured to such mysteries in the world and tend to concentrate on trifles instead: "We live with this incredible mystery and we focus our attentions on these trivialities, like comics" (Groth 2002, 86). By provoking a sense of wonder, *The Frank Book* helps to restore the balance between the marvelous and the mundane.

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Michael W. Hancock

FRAZETTA, FRANK (1928–). Renowned comic book and **fantasy** artist Frank Frazetta was born in Brooklyn, New York. He attended the Brooklyn Academy of Fine Arts, studying under Michele [Michael] Falanga. He began his artistic career assisting **science-fiction** artist John Giunta at Bernard Bailey's studio where he had his first comic book work published in *Tally Ho* #1 in 1944. He turned down the opportunity to play professional baseball as well as working for Walt Disney and instead worked during the late 1940s at Standard on 15 different titles including *Barnyard*, *Coo Coo*, *Happy*, and *Supermouse*.

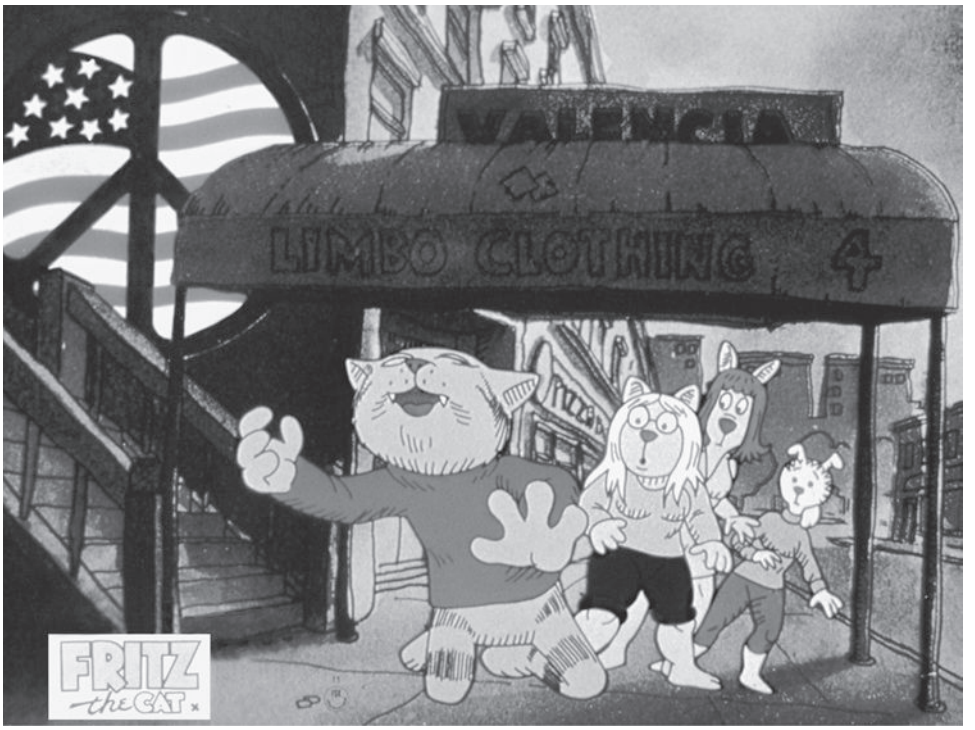
The late 1940s and early 1950s saw Frazetta working for a number of different publishers including Magazine Enterprises and National (now **DC Comics**), drawing humor, adventure and **Western** titles. In 1951 he created Thun'Da, a Tarzan-like character for Magazine Enterprises. It was the only complete comic he would draw. He tried to sell a few newspaper strips such as *Ambi Dexter* and *Sweet Adeline* with little success, with the exception of the short lived *Johnny Comet*. Other publishers Frazetta would work for during the 1950s included **EC**, Toby Press, and Prize Publications. His Buck Rogers covers for ***Famous Funnies*** are especially notable. His work in *Thrilling Comics* would catch the attention of Al Capp, and in 1953 Frazetta became his assistant on the *Li'l Abner* newspaper strip. Regrettably, the eight-year experience would affect Frazetta's ability to quickly return to his own style. Still, he found work with **Harvey Kurtzman** and worked on *Li'l Annie Fanny* for *Playboy* magazine. In 1963 Frazetta began painting paperback covers starting with **Tarzan** for Ace Paperback.

In 1964 Frazetta started doing his famous covers for the **Warren Publishing's horror** magazines *Creepy* and *Eerie*. In 1967 Frazetta re-defined the visual look of **Conan** for Lancer paperbacks and in doing so defined the look of the entire **fantasy** hero genre. His work has influenced not only others in his field but also film directors. In response to critics who charged that Frazetta's peak had come and gone, he painted two of his best works "Death Dealer" and "Silver Warrior."

During the mid-1970s, Frazetta started to offer prints of his work. Merchandise such as calendars and books became huge sellers. Original commissions were selling for between $1,000 and $10,000. In 1980 Frazetta moved to Hollywood to help oversee the production of the animated film *Fire & Ice* based on his original works. It was not a success and he returned to Pennsylvania to open the Frazetta Art Museum. Frazetta was an extremely fast painter with a photographic memory. Unfortunately he developed a debilitating thyroid problem which was not properly diagnosed and treated for eight years. Recovered, he continued to sell new works, the prices of which reached new heights. After suffering the first of a series of strokes Frazetta would lose the ability to draw with his right hand. However, through extensive rehabilitation he was able to change over to the left side and the art still contains the same powerful mastery as with his right.

Jeff McLaughlin

FRITZ THE CAT. Fritz the Cat was one of legendary **underground** cartoonist **Robert Crumb's** most famous early characters, a hip, anthropomorphized feline featured in a series of loosely linked stories that appeared in a range of publications between 1965 and 1972. Some of the strips were adapted into *Fritz the Cat* (1972), a controversial, successful feature film (advertised with the tagline "He's X-rated and animated!") directed by Ralph Bakshi; an ostensible sequel, *The Nine Lives of Fritz the Cat*



A scene from the 1972 film *Fritz the Cat*, directed by Ralph Bakshi. Cinemation Industries/ Photofest

(1994), involved neither Crumb nor Bakshi. In protest over the film (which had been negotiated by Crumb's first wife Dana), Crumb killed Fritz off in a final strip, "Fritz the Cat, 'Superstar'" (first published in *The People's Comics*, 1972), and has firmly resisted resurrecting the popular character ever since.

Fritz was based on drawings of Fred, a Crumb family pet and the lead character in home-made comics by the teenage Robert and his brother Charles: in early full-length stories like Robert's "Cat Life" (1959–60, first published in 1978) "Fred the Cat" is indeed a cat, walking on four legs and unable to speak, although his thoughts appear in word balloons. Shortly thereafter, the character, now named Fritz, was fully anthropomorphized, indebted to the tradition of **funny animal** comics that was clearly one of Crumb's inspirations: now walking upright, talking, and wearing clothes (though, in Disney tradition, he eventually lost his pants), the early Fritz demonstrates Crumb's nascent ability to breathe life into distinctive characters through remarkably expressive faces and gestures. By 1962, a series of full-length Fritz comics (first published in 1988 in volume two of *The Complete Crumb Comics*) edge toward greater social **satire**, and depict him as a romantic (though still chaste) lover; but by 1964 (in a story published in 1969) Fritz is seducing his innocent but nubile sister on a visit back home.

While working for American Greetings in Ohio, and struggling to establish a career as a cartoonist, Crumb revived Fritz for his first published comic strip, "Fritz Comes on Strong," in his idol **Harvey Kurtzman**'s *Help!* #22 (January 1965); other short Fritz pieces followed, and in 1968 the long stories "Fritz Bugs Out" and "Fritz the No-Good" were serialized in the men's magazine *Cavalier*, just as Crumb was emerging in San Francisco as the most prominent and prolific creator of underground **comix**. With Crumb's increased prominence, many of the Fritz strips were gathered together in published collections, including *Head Comix* (The Viking Press, 1968) and *R. Crumb's Fritz the Cat* (Ballantine Books, 1969), an oversized volume whose three stories (the *Cavalier* stories plus "Secret Agent for the C.I.A.") also appeared simultaneously as a series of three small, oblong books. After the animated film derived from these strips made Fritz even more popular, Crumb's disdain for the film, the exploitation of his work, and perhaps celebrity culture more generally led him to permanently dispose of the character he might have profitably marketed for years to come. As Crumb explained in his introduction to *The Complete Fritz the Cat* (Belier Press, 1978), "I felt compelled to have him killed. It was the only way I could resolve in my own mind what had become of him. He's definitely better off dead. Another casualty of the 'Sixties . . ."

In his earliest longer published stories, Fritz is a hip college student drawn to bohemian pleasures while suffering comically romantic and existential crises. Crumb also used Fritz to parody the popular James Bond novels and films, and increasingly allowed Fritz's libido to displace his earlier, more romantic yearnings, leading to a famous orgy in a bathtub in the story "Fritz the Cat" (1965, first published in 1968). Settling into a regular pattern, Crumb has Fritz's personal problems at the start of each story rapidly escalate until Fritz, an inadvertent rebel, is chased by the representatives of power amid the chaos he has created. Toward the end, Crumb allows Fritz's fame to fuel his arrogance

and narcissism, and in a few short years the representative of the free-thinking sexual revolution has become one of its traitors, a media celebrity and crass misogynist who is killed by one of his mistreated female fans. Crumb's innovation in developing Fritz was to combine a funny animal style associated with children's comics (and famous feline precursors like Krazy Kat or Felix the Cat) with increasingly **adult** content, first providing his cute character with a swinger's sex drive, and finally the arrogance of a decadent movie star.

Like his creator, Fritz embodied contradictory qualities during a cultural transition: on the one hand, both were children of the 1960s, indulging in the era's experimentation with drugs and free love. However, along with Crumb, Fritz found himself oddly placed at the heart of the moment, more a pre-hippie beatnik (Fritz, for instance, typically sports a necktie, not love beads) devoted to the *Playboy* philosophy rather than genuine countercultural revolution, despite frequent scrapes with the oppressive law, depicted (of course) as pigs. Often, he's clearly an opportunist, enjoying the pleasurable fruits of the hippie subculture but rarely subscribing to its politics other than through a knee-jerk resistance to authority. In the end, both Fritz and Crumb seem among the more incongruous icons of the era they nevertheless continue to represent.

In addition to the early collections already noted, the key stories featuring Fritz the Cat have been reprinted many times, including in the volumes *The Complete Fritz the Cat* (Belier Press, 1978), *The Life and Death of Fritz the Cat* (**Fantagraphics**, 1993) and in chronological sequence across volumes one through eight of *The Complete Crumb Comics* (Fantagraphics, 1987–92). Even though he was put out of his (or his creator's) misery almost 40 years ago, Fritz remains one of the icons of underground comics, rivaled perhaps only by Crumb's long-living guru Mr. Natural.

Corey K. Creekmur

FROM HELL is a graphic novel written and meticulously researched by **Alan Moore** and illustrated entirely in black and white by **Eddie Campbell**. It is based around the real-life Jack the Ripper murders that took place in London in 1888. Although the police file on the Whitechapel murders included 11 separate deaths, 5 of these are universally agreed upon as the work of the same killer and are the subject of *From Hell*, which is named after the address given on one of the letters sent to police claiming to be from the murderer. Moore's story names Sir William Gull (Queen Victoria's royal Surgeon-in-Ordinary and a high-ranking Freemason) and his coachman John Netley as responsible for these murders, acting under direct instruction from Queen Victoria.

From Hell begins in London, 1884, with the secret marriage and child of Prince Albert Victor and unsuspecting shopgirl Annie Crook. Queen Victoria finds out, has them separated and places Annie in an asylum, instructing Gull to impair her sanity. Four prostitutes, Annie's friends, know of the affair and try to blackmail the royal family, and the Queen again enlists Gull to silence them. He begins by visiting London landmarks such as the Hawksmoor churches and expounding on their mystical significance to his coachman, John Netley. Gull then proceeds to murder five women: Mary Ann/Polly



Heather Graham as Mary Kelly and Johnny Depp as Inspector Fred Abberline, in the 2001 film *From Hell*, directed by Albert Hughes and Allen Hughes. Twentieth Century Fox/Photofest

Nichols, Annie Chapman, Elizabeth Stride, Catherine Eddowes (killed by mistake as she uses the alias "Mary Kelly") and finally Mary/Marie Jane Kelly (although Moore offers the possibility that another prostitute sharing her room might have been this victim). Their deaths are presented as shockingly violent (the final murder spans over 30 pages) and the women's bodies are systematically and sexually mutilated. Gull conducts the murders as ritual killings rather than simple executions and receives a series of pseudo-religious and mystical visions, causing his behavior to become increasingly erratic. Inspector Frederick Abberline is assigned (against his wishes) to investigate the murders, with no success, until Robert Lees, a fake psychic, maliciously accuses Gull. Both Lees and Abberline are amazed when Gull confesses everything. However, their report is ignored (teacher Montague Druitt has been framed for the murders and his suicide faked by police) and Abberline quits the police force as a consequence. Gull is tried by a Masonic council, his death and funeral are faked, and he is imprisoned in an asylum under a false name for many years. The story closes with an extended vision in which Gull travels through time, finally encountering Mary Kelly. The prologue and epilogue are set in Bournemouth, 1923, with an aged Abberline and Lees reflecting on the case and visiting Druitt's grave.

Footnotes evidencing Moore's extensive research into Masonic customs, police, and witness evidence, and a vast number of Ripperology books are included in current editions of *From Hell* as an appendix, and demonstrate that almost every detail of the story is supported with possible evidence. The plot is largely credited to Stephen Knight's

The Final Solution (1976), a publication that has been marketed and received as both a serious exposé and elaborate hoax. Moore also credits Iain Sinclair's work on London architecture and C. Howard Hinton's theories of time. A second appendix ("Dance of the Gull-Catchers") is also included, which dramatizes Moore's research and the emergence of Ripperology.

From Hell is a deeply layered book that operates far beyond the boundaries of gothic horror or historical fiction. Rather than merely recreating a grisly tale or investigating a solution to the Ripper murders, it is a treatise on the nature of fiction and human psychology. Moore ties the murders to Masonic ritual and themes of the occult, the oppression of women, a philosophy of time as a spatial dimension, and a wider discussion of the nature of fact and fiction. He uses Masonic symbolism (such as the pentagram) alongside other terminology and rituals of the society but, although Gull defines his acts as a Masonic defense of the realm, they are also presented as rites that lead to the continuing male social dominance over women. The inequalities of Victorian society are emphasized still further by Campbell's artwork, which shows a brutal and unglamorized London.

Moore creates an "architecture of history" that relies on a notion of co-present time ("the fourth dimension") and cyclical patterns repeating throughout history, based on a pamphlet published by C. Howard Hinton, who appears briefly in the text. Intertextual references such as this abound in *From Hell* and other figures of the period such as Joseph Merrick (the Elephant Man), Oscar Wilde, Walter Sickert, the boy Aleister Crowley, and Robert Louis Stevenson also feature. Gull's visions also allow him to range beyond this timeframe as he visits other famous characters including William Blake, Myra Hindley, Ian Brady, and Peter Sutcliffe. Disparate historical figures and viewpoints are woven into a rich tapestry of events and philosophy, although *From Hell* also takes pains to establish its content as fiction by pointing out the inherently fictional status of all history, emphasizing the conjectural nature of Ripperology, and using self-conscious metaphor in its pictorial elements.

The narrative is driven by Eddie Campbell's stark, scratchy artwork, which proves unexpectedly evocative in its unflinching depiction of the violence and bleakness of lower-class life in Victorian London, particularly when contrasted with the brief insertion of a softer, muted style to illustrate upper-class life. The layout is composed of regular panels, most often arranged in a three-by-three grid, the uniformity perhaps also stressing the inevitability and realism of the events depicted. The story is event-driven; Moore uses no omniscient narration in the main body of *From Hell*, with the exception of providing places and dates. The only explicit narration is either drawn from police reports, or attributed to William Gull during his out-of-body experiences.

The beginning of the series was originally published between 1988 and 1992 in the short-lived anthology *Taboo* (Tundra Publishing), and as a stand-alone series between 1991 and 1996 (Mad Love/Tundra/**Kitchen Sink Press**). *Dance of the Gull-Catchers* was first published in 1998. The trade paperback collecting both was first published in

1999. The first part of *From Hell: The Compleat Scripts* was published in 1994 but this series was not continued.

The series has won multiple awards including the 1993 **Eisner Award** for best serialized story. The collected edition won the 2000 Comic Buyer's Guide Award for Favorite Reprint Graphic Album and the "prix de la critique" at the 2001 Angoulême International Comics Festival. In 2001, a movie adaptation was released, directed by Albert and Allen Hughes and starring Johnny Depp and Heather Graham, though this adaptation differs substantially from the graphic novel (Booker 2007, 99–107).

Selected Bibliography: Booker, M. Keith. *"May Contain Graphic Material": Comic Books, Graphic Novels, and Film*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007; Round, Julia. "'Be vewy vewy quiet. We're hunting Wippers.' A Barthesian Analysis of the Construction of Fact and Fiction in Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's *From Hell*." In *Out of the Gutter: Reading Comic Books and Graphic Novels*. J. Goggin and D. Hassler-Forest, eds. New York: McFarland & Co, 2010.

Julia Round

FUN HOME. This 232-page autobiographical graphic novel by Alison Bechdel was published in 2006 by Houghton Mifflin. Bechdel is known for her bi-weekly comic strip *Dykes to Watch Out For*, chronicling the lives of a community of lesbians as they cope with personal and political events. This strip has been published since 1983 in alternative and gay newspapers. *Fun Home*, in a departure of the work she has done on her strip, is a meticulously crafted story depicting her childhood and early adult years after the death of her father, Bruce Bechdel, in 1980. In unraveling the truth of her father's story, whose sexual orientation was "outed" to her at the same time of her "coming-out," Bechdel constructs an important, award-winning story about her search for father and self.

Told in seven chapters, Bechdel intertwines the journeys of the mythic Greek inventor, Daedalus, and James Joyce's Leopold Bloom. Like Daedalus, Bechdel's father has created a maze of documents and memories which Bechdel seeks to uncover. She, herself, toys with different roles in relation to her father. Is she Icarus, doomed to fall because of her father's invention or Stephen Dedalus, seeking a father figure?

Bechdel masterfully reveals all the secrets of her father's life to the reader in the first two chapters of the story, turning and twisting the story like the famous Greek labyrinth. After initial depictions about her emotional distance from her father and the stifling environment of the Victorian décor about her, she reveals that her father is gay on page 17 and then at the end of the first chapter, she mentions that he has died—most likely a suicide. In the second chapter, she discloses that her house was actually a funeral parlor and her father a part-time mortician. Though these events have larger ramifications on her formative years, they are mentioned casually, almost like an afterthought. Despite the confessional nature of the autobiographical genre, Bechdel's text is guarded and reserved.

Self-consciously literary, Bechdel creates a character of herself that interacts better with text than with people. In her own coming-out story, unsurprisingly, she finds answers to her feeling through textual evidence from Wilde, Colette, and other literary figures. It is only then that she can create a public persona to interact with her friends

and peers in college. That she communicates to her father through letters and literature is likewise unsurprising.

In the chapters that follow, Bechdel moves back and forth in time as the reader follows her journey of self-discovery. In chapter four, she explores her memories which, now in retrospect, offered clues to his sexual orientation, and she intermingles clues from her own childhood that signaled her own sexual orientation. At the end of the chapter, she holds two photos in her hands—one of her father at the age of 22, lounging on the roof of his fraternity house and the other of herself at the age of 21, standing on a fire escape. She questions whether his photo was likewise taken by a lover as hers was, and she tellingly uses a textual metaphor to express the similarities of the photos and the people within them, "it's about as close as a translation can get." Chapter five details her introduction to writing diaries, which dovetails into an explanation of her brief bout with obsessive-compulsive disorder. It is at this stage that Bechdel fully brings to the forefront how memories can be altered and elided, by noting what she had omitted from her own entries—omissions now glaring in retrospect. In chapter six she interweaves her mother's preparation for an Oscar Wilde play with her father's trial that threatened to expose his secrets to the community when he was accused of providing alcohol to a 17-year-old boy. Wilde was tried for "indecency" (or for being openly homosexual) and the trial was a national sensation. Bruce Bechdel's trial, on the other hand, quietly ended with mandatory counseling. In the final chapter, Bechdel depicts the few moments with her father where she could discuss their sexual orientation. The scenes are full of misfires and muted miscommunications, but Bechdel presents them as treasured memories and ends her book with a salute to him. In her metaphor, her "Icarus" does not plummet into the sea; instead, her father has caught her.

In preparation for this project, Bechdel revisited the novels that she shared with her father and read biographies of the famous figures who loom large in her story—James Joyce, Oscar Wilde, Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, and Albert Camus. She painstakingly took reference pictures for all the characters in her book, often posing for them herself in recreating events. The faded green of the two-tone comic replicates an emotion of feeling faded or washed out, as if the memories have bled out from the text. At the same time, the careful recreation of background and items give a feeling of stifling weight. Her characters' faces lack emotional punch; she often depicts their faces as tight and unemotional. Her art meticulously recreates family photographs, dictionary entries, diaries, literary texts, and maps. She mixes text and image, creating text as image, not only in replicating pages from her diaries and other printed pages but also in preserving whatever marginalia and underlining she finds. In this, her desire to recreate these primary documents is reminiscent of how **Art Spiegelmen**, in uncovering his own father's story, integrated maps and diagrams to authenticate his Holocaust memoir in ***Maus***.

Fun Home was named one of the best books of 2006 by the *New York Times* and was shortlisted for the National Book Critics Circle Award. It also won the GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) media award for Outstanding Comic Book

in 2007, the same year it was nominated for two **Eisner Awards**, winning one for "Best Reality-based work."

See also: Gay and Lesbian Themes

Wendy Goldberg

FUNNY ANIMAL COMICS. Above all other genres, funny animal comics have represented comics' role as lightweight children's entertainment. Despite this reputation, some of the most important, enjoyable, and artistically satisfying comics ever created have used funny animal characters. Authors differ regarding the defining characteristics of the funny animals genre. A funny animal comic typically features characters who combine animal faces with upright bodies that include hands, dressed (at least partially) in clothes, who converse with each other using language rather than animal sounds (for example, Donald Duck.) These characters think and act more like people than like animals. They exist either in a world that is entirely or mostly inhabited by funny animal characters (for example, Mighty Mouse) or in which the animal characters are accepted as people by human characters (for example, Bugs Bunny). They commonly interact with characters that more simply represent animals (the classic example being Mickey Mouse and his pet dog, Pluto, as opposed to Mickey's anthropomorphized dog friend, Goofy.) The art typically features a rounded, simplified, and exaggerated style rather than a detailed or realistic style. The intended audience typically consists of children more than adults. The approach typically emphasizes humor or adventure stories. Some of the most important funny animal characters, however, violate one or more of these parameters. For example, **Felix the Cat** does not wear clothes. Funny animal characters raise the question of whether they represent an animal who acts like a person or a person who looks like an animal or something else. In most cases, the answer seems to be "something else."

People have drawn and sculpted characters with animal heads on human bodies since long before they began making recognizable portraits of human heads on human bodies. Paleolithic drawings of these composite beings, created tens of thousands of years ago, were simpler than the famous cave paintings of large mammals. Some were crude line drawings, scratched onto bones, possibly as illustrations to support the telling of stories that are now lost.

Other noteworthy precursors of funny animal comics appear in ancient Egyptian art. Ancient Egyptians drew animal heads on bodies to show individuals who embodied that animal's qualities, but also comic scenes of animals behaving like humans. These ancient cartoons appeared on papyrus or broken pottery, and sometimes depicted mice as rulers with cats as their servants.

The immediate ancestors of American comic strips were the American humor magazines of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These magazines published notable work by T. S. Sullivant, who drew clothed animals with a dazzling liveliness and humor, and Harrison Cady, who drew wonderfully detailed cartoon illustrations of a

village populated by clothed insect characters. The American humor magazines had been inspired by earlier European humor magazines, which had published celebrated cartoons of animals acting like humans by J. J. Grandville and, later, by Heinrich Kley. In children's books, Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit* (originally self-published in 1901) provides another example of illustrated stories about animals with some human characteristics.

Funny animals appeared in newspaper comic strips just as that medium was becoming established. Characters in pioneering newspaper cartoonist Jimmy Swinnerton's comic strip "Mr. Jack" (which appeared in 1903), had round cats' heads on clothed, upright human bodies with hands. The strip quickly attracted protests as being unsuitable for children (the jokes centered on Mr. Jack's attempts to commit adultery) and it was moved to the sports pages in 1904. Other early funny animal newspapers strips included Sidney Smith's "Old Doc Yak" and George Herriman's "Krazy Kat."

"Krazy Kat" first appeared in a supporting role in 1910. "Krazy Kat" became the first comic strip to attract positive critical attention, most famously in 1924, when Gilbert Seldes named it as the "most satisfactory work of art produced in America to-day" in his book *The 7 Lively Arts*. The strip continues to win recognition as one of the greatest comic strips ever drawn. "Krazy Kat" became one of the first animated cats in 1916, when its publisher, William Randolph Hearst, set up an animation studio to make animated cartoons of his syndicated comic strip characters.

Since then, the usual path for funny animals has not been from print to screen, but in the other direction. The most popular funny animal characters began in animated cartoons and later became stars of newspaper strips, children's books, and comic books, where they appeared more frequently than in the films where they had originated. Funny animals perfectly matched the needs of the animation industry as it developed in the early 20th century. Under pressure to produce a quick and steady stream of cartoons on small budgets, each one requiring thousands of pictures, animators redesigned their animal characters to use more rounded lines, which were faster and easier to draw and flowed better on the screen.

Felix the Cat first appeared in 1917 in a three-minute animated cartoon created by Otto Messmer, who was working for Pat Sullivan. Felix became a success, and beginning in 1923 also appeared as a Sunday newspaper comic strip. The character Felix the Cat visually resembles the main character in an earlier animated cartoon that Messmer had assisted Sullivan on, entitled "Sammie Johnsin," with the cat substituting for the African American child "Sammie Johnsin." Funny animal characters were built on, overlapped with, and gradually replaced an older cartoon tradition of racial and ethnic stereotyping. For example, the first of Warner Brothers' animated "Looney Tunes" characters, Bosko, was copyrighted in 1928 as a "Negro boy," but at first closely resembled other popular funny animal characters. The covers of the comic book *Walter Lantz New Funnies*, featured Lantz's animated characters Andy Panda, Oswald the Rabbit, Woody Woodpecker, and Li'l Eight Ball—an African American child who had starred in three animated cartoons. Some Mickey Mouse stories included the cute but savage African

child character named Thursday. The repeated lesson for young readers seemed to be that children, but particularly black children, were simply another species of friendly animals.

Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse, first animated by Ub Iwerks, began by following a formula for cartoon animals that had already been established in Paul Terry's cartoons and Felix the Cat. The most immediate precedent for Mickey Mouse was "Oswald the Lucky Rabbit." Disney and Iwerks came up with Mickey Mouse as a replacement for Oswald, a character owned by Universal Pictures, after Disney's contract with the middleman Charles Mintz to do the Oswald cartoons expired.

The release of the Mickey Mouse cartoon *Steamboat Willie* in 1928 was a landmark success as the first cartoon to successfully use the new technology of sound films to tightly integrate the action on the screen with music and sound effects. Disney built his subsequent successes on attracting and coordinating the efforts of enormously talented cartoonists, and developing a style based on animated characters as real, believable personalities with bodies that moved in a natural way and who were involved in coherent stories.

Beginning in 1932, Herman "Kay" Kamen took over the licensing of Disney characters, and their commercial use skyrocketed, with Disney characters appearing on wristwatches, soap, dolls, toys, clothes, biscuits, and many other kinds of products, especially in North America and Europe. With this inescapable visibility, Mickey Mouse became a cartoon superstar. Mickey Mouse also became a brilliantly drawn and plotted adventure newspaper strip in 1930, drawn at first by Ub Iwerks, and for many years by Floyd Gottfredson, whom Disney had originally hired as an animator.

Western Printing and Lithography held licenses to all the most important animated film stars, and signed contracts with artists, writers, and editors to put together comic books featuring them, which they would then print themselves. These comics were financed and distributed to newsstands by the publishing giant Dell. Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse, after having appeared in several versions of *Mickey Mouse Magazine*, moved to standard comic book format in *Walt Disney Comics and Stories*, which Dell distributed beginning in October, 1940. Dell's *Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies*, featuring Warner Bros.' Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and Porky Pig, began that same month. Their line grew to include Walter Lantz's Woody Woodpecker and Oswald the Rabbit in *New Funnies* starting in July, 1942, and MGM's Tom and Jerry in *Our Gang Comics*, from September, 1942.

In addition to the newsstand sales that Dell handled, Western Publishing distributed giveaway premium comics, featuring many of the same funny animal stars, through chain stores and other clients with press runs reported as high as five million or more, without Dell's involvement. Western Publishing's control over the rights to the most popular characters left the other comic book companies to scramble for crumbs, or to create characters of their own.

In 1942, **Timely Comics** (the forerunner of **Marvel Comics**) became the second comic book company to publish funny animals, employing their usual strategy of trying

to flood the market with numerous titles in whatever genre was selling well. Timely Comics' editor, former Fleischer Studios animator Vince Fago, developed new funny animal titles that, for a time, sold as well as the company's **superhero** comics. Their inconsequential "Ziggy Pig" and "Silly Seal" may have been the first funny animal characters created specifically for comic books. The most successful of Timely's funny animal characters, "Super Rabbit," was created in 1943 and quickly won his own comic book which lasted from 1943 to 1948. Because funny animal comics were simpler to draw, Timely paid the cartoonists a lower page-rate for funny animal comics than for superhero comics.

In 1942, Timely made its first deal to license someone else's characters, arranging to publish Paul Terry's *Terry-toons*, starring "Mighty Mouse," "Gandy Goose," and other characters. Paul Terry had been one of the first animators in the business, and succeeded in producing a high volume of cartoons, with his series on "Farmer Al Falfa" and *Aesop's Fables*, in the 1920s.

National Comics (the forerunner of **DC**) added a funny animal title in 1944 with *Funny Stuff*, edited by Sheldon Mayer, and in 1945 published *Real Screen Comics*, which used Columbia Pictures' cartoon stars "The Fox and the Crow" and was drawn by moonlighting animators. As funny animals continued to grow in popularity, DC converted its superhero comic books *Leading Comics* and *Comic Cavalcade* into funny animal comics in 1945 and 1949, respectively.

During World War II, the covers of animal comics, like the covers of the superhero comics, sometimes had patriotic and military themes. Timely titles showed this most dramatically, with the animals bringing Hitler and Tojo to court to be tried for "war guilt crimes" (*Super Rabbit* #1, Fall, 1943) or suspending Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo over hungry sharks (*Terry-toons* #7, April, 1943.) Funny animal comics, especially Dell's, sometimes appealed on their covers for children to purchase war bonds and stamps for victory or waved the American flag.

Carl Barks, by universal acclaim, was the most important cartoonist in the funny animal comic book genre. He had worked as an in-betweener and then in the story department at Disney's animation studio when, in 1942, he was assigned to draw the first Donald Duck comic book that consisted of original material, as opposed to reprints of Al Taliaferro's gag-a-day Donald Duck comic strip. Later that year he got a job drawing 10-page Donald Duck stories for *Walt Disney's Comics & Stories*, and continued to write and draw duck stories for the next two decades until his retirement. Thanks primarily to Barks's Donald Duck stories, sales of *Walt Disney's Comics & Stories* reached two to three million copies per monthly issue, making it the most popular comic book ever published. Barks invented Uncle Scrooge, and some of his most-loved stories were adventures that appeared under that title, where the ducks often appeared as tiny silhouettes within various large and richly-drawn landscapes. Barks was paid by the page, at rates which did not reflect the commercial value of his work.

When American comic books were at the peak of their circulation and power in the 1940s and early 1950s, most people thought of funny animals when they thought of

comic books. In his book *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954), **Fredric Wertham** estimated that what he called "harmless animal comics" like *Donald Duck*, *Mickey Mouse*, *Terrytoons*, *Bugs Bunny*, and *Super Duck*, and other comics containing no harmful material, amounted to only 10–20 percent of the market. He warned that children were often secretly reading very different kinds of comic books that their parents did not know about. Even in the case of funny animal comics, Wertham cautioned in passing that some included violent stories, advertisements for weapons, and racist ridicule.

Perhaps the greatest funny animal comic, Walt Kelly's "Pogo" began in *Animal Comics* in 1942. (The previous year Kelly, a Disney animator, took a leave of absence during the great Disney animators' strike and never returned to the studio.) By 1946, *Albert the Alligator & Pogo Possum* had their own comic book. In 1949, Pogo became a daily newspaper comic strip, where it soon won lasting fame for occasionally incorporating contemporary political issues into its stories, and for expertly caricaturing Senator Joseph McCarthy as a dangerous bobcat. The Pogo strip balanced anti-McCarthy strips with anticommunist stories. The main attractions of this beautifully drawn strip included inspired nonsense, whimsy, slapstick, and delightful wordplay.

When compared with Barks and Kelly, the shortcomings of some other funny animal cartoonists of the 1940s and 1950s become apparent. Al Fago's stories about "Neddy" for *Frisky Fables* were charming, but most readers seemed to outgrow them by around the time that they were old enough to attend kindergarten. Ernie Hart's *Marmaduke Mouse* and *Egbert* were, especially in the beginning, solidly drawn and reasonably funny, but lacked a convincing sense of action and character. Art Bartsch's adventures of "Mighty Mouse" had imagination, but were brought back to earth by merely functional inking.

The new industry of animated children's television shows faced the same kinds of tight deadlines and tiny budgets as the early film animation studios had faced, and turned, like them, to simply-drawn funny animal characters and other ways to economize. Jay Ward and Alexander Anderson Jr.'s "Crusader Rabbit" first appeared on television in 1948 and in two comic books in 1956 and 1957. Later, Ward teamed up with Bill Scott and recycled and improved on the Crusader Rabbit formula with a new show about a flying squirrel and a moose, *Rocky and his Friends*, which debuted in 1959. Rocky and Bullwinkle stood out from all other animated cartoons of that period by striking both children and adults as consistently funny and intelligent.

The high cost of production was killing the cartoon shorts that the studios had created for movie theaters. Two animators from MGM, William Hanna and Joe Barbera, the creators of "Tom and Jerry," left to form their own animation studio aimed at creating cartoons for television. Their first show was *Ruff and Reddy*, starring a cartoon cat and dog, which premiered in 1957. They went on to create many successful animated children's shows, beginning with several more with animal casts: *The Huckleberry Hound Show* and *Quick Draw McGraw*. The Hanna-Barbera characters were licensed to comic book publishers, beginning with *Ruff and Reddy* in 1958.

The rise of the **underground "comix"** movement in the late 1960s has often been portrayed as an attempt to revive the broken lineage of **horror** comics that disappeared when

the industry adopted the **Comics Code** in 1954. The central figure in that movement, though, grew up loving funny animal comic books, not horror (or superhero) comics. **R. Crumb**'s favorite comic books when growing up in the late 1940s to early 1950s included *Walt Disney's Donald Duck*, *Terry-toons*, *Super Duck*, *Walter Lantz's New Funnies*, *Pogo Possum*, *Coo Coo Comics*, and *Heckle and Jeckle Comics* (and the stories of *Little Lulu*, featuring humans but drawn in a simplified style). He and his brother Charles were, in his words, "deeply into Carl Barks, one of the rare cartoonists to combine great art with great storytelling" (Crumb and Poplaski 2005, 244). Crumb had his first successes with his character Fritz the Cat, and continued to draw various funny animal comic book stories through much of his career.

In accord with underground comix's larger mission of exercising absolute freedom of expression, a group of underground cartoonists led by Dan O'Neill showed Disney's characters having sex and using drugs in the comic book series *Mickey Mouse Meets the Air Pirates* (1971). The comix artists claimed that they were exercising their legal right to parody Disney's characters. The Supreme Court ruled against them. Other comix artists who made notable use of Disney characters include Rick Griffin, Victor Moscoso, and Joel Beck. Comix artists who made regular use of the funny animal tradition include Kim Deitch ("Waldo the Cat"), Jay Lynch ("Nard n Pat"), Gilbert Shelton ("Wonder Warthog," "Fat Freddy's Cat"), Robert Williams ("Coochie Cootie"), and others.

The heyday of underground comix was a period of worldwide political upheaval. A lively and controversial polemic written in Chile, Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart's *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic* (first published in 1971) violated the taboo against looking for political meanings in "pure entertainment" created for children. They noted that cartoon animals, "exempt from the vicissitudes of history and politics, [. . .] are a convenient symbol of a world beyond socio-economic realities, and the animal characters can represent ordinary human types, common to all classes, countries and epochs" (146). They challenged the illusory innocence of these stories in the context of a struggle for Chile's future which they saw would be decided not only by the political battles over information, but also in cultural struggles over entertainment.

Decades earlier, a Chilean cartoonist, René Pepo Ríos, in response to Disney's creation of a small and weak airplane to represent his nation in the 1942 propaganda cartoon *Saludos Amigos*, created his own national symbol—Condorito, an anthropomorphic condor (1949). Despite these nationalistic origins, Condorito has become very popular throughout Latin America.

After the collapse of underground comix in 1974, experiments in low-circulation, black-and-white comic book format continued. **Dave Sim's *Cerebus the Aardvark*** began in 1977 as a self-published parody of ***Conan the Barbarian*** with an aardvark in the main role. Stan Sakai was inspired by *Cerebus* to create a long-running comic with an entire cast of funny animal characters, *Usagi Yojimbo*, an historical fiction comic about a samurai bunny in 17th-century Japan, which appeared in 1984. The black and

white comics boom took inspiration from the huge success of *The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* in 1984, which also began as a funny animal parody.

Because they have been so firmly associated with the innocence of childhood, cartoonists have repeatedly turned to funny animals to make adult material more shocking. **Wally Wood's** "Disneyland Memorial Orgy" first appeared in *The Realist* in 1966 to mark the death of Walt Disney. Underground comix, such as Robert Armstrong's *Mickey Rat* (1971), used animal characters in sleazy situations, as did their descendants, like "Creep Rat" in Kaz's comic strip "Underworld." In 1985, New York harbor officials confiscated Massimo Mattioli's biting comics-format parody of American popular culture, *Squeak the Mouse*, at the border on the grounds that it was pornographic, though a court later overturned that decision.

The graphic novel most responsible for legitimizing comics as a medium for serious expression began in an underground funny animal comic. **Art Spiegelman**, casting around in 1972 for an anthropomorphic animal story to contribute to the comic *Funny Aminals* [*sic*], came to the idea of doing a story about Jewish mice oppressed by **Nazi** cats. Beginning from the idea that the conflicts between cartoon cats and mice could be read as racial conflicts, Spiegelman realized that he was not qualified to make a convincing story about oppression of African Americans. He then remembered his parents' history as holocaust survivors as something that could provide material for a story. He later reworked this theme into his masterpiece, ***Maus*** (1986), using simpler and more angular drawings. The use of animal characters became one of the most discussed aspects of his story. To some, this choice succeeded in making a horrible story readable, while others condemned the story for making the oppression look as inevitable as cats preying on mice. Using animals allowed Spiegelman to present the story visually without getting continually bogged down in trying to avoid the small inaccuracies that would have irritated readers in a story drawn with human characters. Further, Spiegelman argues that using animal characters made it easier for readers to identify themselves with the characters in the story.

The power of Spiegelman's *Maus* when it first came out was due partly to the shocking contrast between the kind of stories that readers (most of whom were unfamiliar with the small but influential underground comix movement) expected from talking animal comics and the uses that Spiegelman made of them. Those who followed Spiegelman's example of telling serious stories in book-length comics seemed to realize that this shock could not be repeated, and have generally used human characters without masking them as animals. Still, some of the most celebrated contributors to this movement began their careers with works that did use animal characters. These include **Chris Ware**'s *Quimby the Mouse* (2003) and Craig Thompson's *Good-bye Chunky Rice* (2006).

In the 1980s, young cartoonists found a place for their work in alternative weekly newspapers. Before creating *The Simpsons* and *Futurama*, Matt Groening began his comic strip "Life in Hell" as a zine in 1977, and it has been published weekly since 1980. Groening told an interviewer that his strip's main characters are bulgy-eyed rabbits with overbites because when in high school, "somewhat inspired by *Pogo*," he had

attempted to draw a funny animal strip, but "my bears [. . .] looked sort of like big mice, and my mice looked like dogs, and people couldn't tell what the dogs were." He stuck with rabbits because they were the easiest species for his readers to recognize.

The funny animal genre did not seem to catch on in Japan, in spite of such precedents as the 12th-century *chōjūgiga* scrolls, which humorously depict cartoon frogs, rabbits, foxes, and monkeys engaged in human activities, and Suihō Tagawa's funny animal strip "Norakuro" (1931–41). However, a deeper look reveals that Walt Disney's rounded funny animal animation style was the largest single influence on the single most influential creator of manga and anime, **Osamu Tezuka**. Tezuka also absorbed the influence of other American cartoons, and once wrote that the "father" of his most popular cartoon character, the boy robot *Tetsuwan Atomu* ("Astro Boy," 1951), was Mighty Mouse. Another phenomenally popular Japanese robot character, Fujiko F. Fujio's "Doraemon" (which first appeared in 1969) is a robot cat. Hello Kitty, originally designed as a coin purse in 1974, reversed the usual path from animation to licensed merchandise. As part of the huge boom in Japanese popular culture exports, licensed merchandise of Hello Kitty and her friends have reached an estimated value of one billion dollars a year outside of Japan. Meanwhile, in 1983 Tokyo Disneyland opened, and now hosts almost 14 million guests per year, almost as many as the original Disneyland, but in third place to Disney's Florida theme park.

Many factors might explain the near disappearance of the American funny animal comic book. One has been the takeover of the industry by a generation that arrived determined to bury the idea that comics are a children's medium, even at the cost of losing their younger readers. That the most important reasons might be specific to the evolution of the American comic book industry rather than a general loss of interest in cartoon animals themselves can be seen by comparing the situation of funny animal comics in the United States to that in Europe, and comparing the situation in comic books with that in syndicated newspaper strips, video games, animated films, and web-comics.

Beginning in the 1930s, Disney's funny animal cartoons and comic books quickly became a global success story, and their success in Europe has outdistanced and outlasted their popularity in their native land. Thus, Italy has become the world's top producer of Disney comic books. Disney comics are read in staggering numbers in Sweden, Finland, and Norway. As further evidence of the popularity of funny animals in Europe, Rolf Kauka's comic *Fix und Foxi* (beginning in 1953), featured the most successful comics characters created in Germany. The Norwegian cartoonist Jason (John Arne Sæterøy) has attained worldwide fame (among fans of art-comics) for his stories featuring characters with animal faces.

Funny animal traditions live on in animated films with casts of funny animals (like *Kung Fu Panda*) or films in which animated animals share the screen with animated humans (as in *Ratatouille*) or play supporting roles (as in *Up*.) Similarly, on television, animated shows feature funny animals (as in the educational show *Arthur*, featuring an aardvark) or feature animated animals sharing the screen with animated humans (as in Brian in *Family Guy*). Sonic the Hedgehog has been one of the most popular videogame

characters, and has also had an animated television series and a long-running comic book series.

The history of funny animals over the course of the last century endlessly demonstrates that the worlds of animated cartoons and printed comics have been deeply intertwined. As a final example, Jim Woodring, after an unhappy career as an animator in the 1980s, moved to creating small-circulation comic books. He calls Frank, his best-known character (from ***The Frank Book***), a "general anthropomorph" not representing any particular species. Frank lives in a colorful and tasty-looking universe that appears deeply rooted in cartooning traditions but his stories communicate the anxiety of trying to improvise appropriate responses to relentlessly unfamiliar situations. Frank represents both a wealth of inherited cultural resources and a world of untapped possibilities, the current state of funny animal comics.

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Leonard Rifas



GAIMAN, NEIL (1960–). Born Neil Richard Gaiman in Portchester, England, Gaiman is a prolific writer of comics, short stories, poetry, and novels. He is most famous for his work on ***The Sandman*** (1989–96), which, along with the work of **Alan Moore**, is seen as bringing a literary breadth and depth to comics writing. Gaiman began his writing career as a journalist for the British Fantasy Society; he began writing for comics after his friend Moore asked him to work on Eclipse Comics' *Miraclemen*; his first published stories, however, were four episodes of *Future Shocks* in *2000 AD* (1986–87). He also collaborated with **Dave McKean** on three graphic novels, *Violent Cases* (1987), *Signal to Noise* (1989), and *The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of Mr. Punch: A Romance* (1994).

In the late 1980s, Gaiman began work for **DC Comics**, for whom he first wrote the re-launch of *Black Orchid* (1988) before beginning his celebrated *Sandman* series. Although *Sandman* began as a **horror comic**, Gaiman used the series to explore a number of mythological and literary avenues. For his writing on *Sandman*, Gaiman won four **Will Eisner** Comic Industry Awards, known as the **Eisner Awards**, for best writer, along with three **Harvey Awards**; in addition, *Sandman* #19 also won the 1991 World Fantasy Award for best short story, the first time a comic book had won a literary award (and the last time the World Fantasy Award was won by a comic book). Gaiman's other writing for comics includes *The Books of Magic* (1989); *Stardust* (1997–98); *Marvel 1602* (2003); and *Eternals* (2006).

While he does continue to write for comics, Gaiman has largely turned to more traditional writing. His novels *Good Omens* (1989, with Terry Pratchett), *American Gods* (2001), and *Anansi Boys* (2005) also blend mythological traditions as Gaiman did in *The Sandman*. Along with more adult fare, he has written a number of young adult

novels, including *Coraline* (2002), *The Wolves in the Walls* (2003), and *The Graveyard Book* (2008), many of which focus on the heroism of children as they mature. Gaiman has also written for television (*Neverwhere*, 1996), and several screenplays, including *MirrorMask* (2005) with Dave McKean, and *Beowulf* (2007) with Roger Avary, as well as film adaptations of his own works.

Gaiman lives near Minneapolis, Minnesota, in a home that he has described as an "Addams-Family" house. Since 2000, he has kept a blog at http://www.neilgaiman.com, in which he tracks his writing projects, book tours, home life, occasional beekeeping, and other ephemera.

Jacob Lewis

GAINES, WILLIAM (1922–92). Born in New York City, William "Bill" Gaines was the son of the comics entrepreneur M. C. Gaines, founder of **Educational Comics**, whose publications included **history** and science lessons, as well as Bible stories for children. When his father died in a boating accident in 1947, William assumed responsibility for the failing firm at the age of 25 and changed both the focus of the firm and its name. Educational Comics became Entertaining Comics, later referred to by its long-standing acronym **EC Comics**.

EC Comics' **horror**-themed titles, such as ***Tales from the Crypt***, were influential in their time and remain Gaines's best-remembered legacy. Storylines were typically tales of poetic justice, the dead often rising to take bloody revenge upon those who had wronged them. One of the most controversial storylines was "The Whipping," from *Shock SuspenStories* #13, in which a Ku Klux Klansman's virulent racism causes him to kill his own daughter unintentionally. Although criticized for employing graphic violence and engaging with unsavory topics, Gaines believed that the morals of such stories promoted a positive social message.

Gaines was outspoken in his defense of comics as a valid art form against charges made by **Dr. Fredric Wertham** that comics were corrupting the nation's youth. Although Gaines's claim that "nobody has ever been ruined by a comic" countered Wertham's charges of psychological damage caused by reading comics, Gaines was not entirely successful in supporting this point during Wertham's U.S. Senate hearings of 1954. Asked if the May, 1954 cover of EC Comics, which featured the image of a woman's severed head, was in good taste, Gaines replied that it was in good taste for a horror comic. He elaborated that it would have been less tasteful if the image had included more blood as well as the neck from which the head had been severed. Such distinctions failed to persuade the sensibilities of McCarthy-era politicians.

Subsequently, industry leaders moved to self-regulation with the formation of the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA). Gaines initially resisted joining the CMAA, whose **Comics Code** Authority prohibited depictions of various offensive images (including **vampires**) for which EC Comics' horror comics remain infamous, as well as extremely valuable, to this day. Subsequently, when Gaines eventually joined the CMAA, he had already been blackballed by distributors. After a brief attempt to switch

storylines to less controversial **science-fiction** titles, EC Comics stopped publication of all comics titles in November 1955 with the release of the February 1956 issue of *Incredible Science Fiction*.

Gaines remained active in the magazine publication industry thanks to the birth of *Mad* magazine in 1952. *Mad*'s status as a magazine rather than a comic permitted Gaines to evade CMAA regulations while still using its publication for biting social **satire**. Under the goofy grin of its mascot Alfred E. Neuman, *Mad* poked fun at the same political authorities and polite sensibilities that eventually drove Gaines from comics publication. While many other comics went out of business in the mid 1950s, Williams Gaines continued to prosper by adapting, much like his father, to the changing industry.

Tim Bryant

GAY AND LESBIAN THEMES. Gay and lesbian characters in comics have often been more conspicuous by their historical absence rather than their occasional and often problematic inclusion. The representation of sexual minorities in comics has traditionally been inhibited by social prejudices that lead to both self-imposed and externally enforced censorship. Changes in social attitudes toward homosexuals, in addition to the gay liberation movement, however, led to a proliferation of gay and lesbian-themed works by **underground** and independent comics artists, and to a parallel (if much more muted) shift in the restrictive policies of mainstream publishers. Accordingly, the history of gay and lesbian themes in comics can be roughly divided into several periods, with the early- to mid-20th century marked by a near-total absence of homosexuality, the 1950s featuring a rather explicit disavowal of homosexuality in comics, and the last three decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century signaling a significant shift toward more inclusion.

Virtually no gay or lesbian characters appeared in any comics in the first half of the 20th century. However, the subversive "Tijuana bibles," small, pornographic underground comics whose popularity peaked during the Great Depression, contained many sexual themes, among them homosexuality. Milton Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates* comic strip featured both a gay and a lesbian character in the 1930s. A storyline begun in the October 18, 1936 issue of the strip included a character named Papa Pyzon. There was no explicit statement regarding Pyzon's sexuality, but his numerous and emphatically negative statements regarding women made his homosexuality as clear as it was possible at the time. Sanjak, a French naval officer who first appeared in the February 12, 1939 strip disguised as Madame Sud and later dressed in men's attire, was never explicitly introduced as a lesbian character; Caniff made it known in later interviews, however, that both characters were intended to be homosexual.

The lack of homosexual themes in comics was, of course, a direct result of the status of homosexuality as a taboo subject matter in society at large. Ironically, the most famous explication of homosexual themes in comics during that era proved to be the most damning as well. **Fredric Wertham** devoted only a few but nevertheless

significant pages of *Seduction of the Innocent* to homosexuality. Wertham centered his argument on **Batman**, claiming that the Batman stories were latently homosexual, particularly because of the relationship between Batman and Robin. He additionally singled out **Wonder Woman** and Black Cat as Batman's lesbian counterparts.

Wertham's work, released at a time of heightened sensitivity over social issues, had a direct and immediate impact on the comics industry, eventually leading to the creation of the **Comics Code** Authority. In the face of mounting threats of censorship from the government, the Comics Magazine Association of America opted for self-censorship, resulting in the drafting of the Comics Code in 1954 and the establishment of the Comics Code Authority to implement it. The Code did not explicitly forbid homosexual themes in comics, but the seventh regulation in the "Marriage and Sex" section forbade representations of "sex perversion," and homosexuality undoubtedly fell under that category. The code subsequently underwent two revisions. In 1971, it was revised to allow for strictly negative representations of drug use, but no changes were made to the clause forbidding representations of "sex perversion." In 1989, the Code was revised again, this time to include an explicit sanction of homosexuality in comics in keeping with greater social acceptance of homosexuals.

The Comics Code, which has since become obsolete, had a significant effect on mainstream comics, forcing artists and writers to limit suggestions of homosexuality to, at best, mere innuendo. The code, however, never inhibited underground comics, independent publishers, or smaller companies over which it had no jurisdiction. Even as early as the 1950s and 1960s, a few examples of gay comics could be found. Touko Laaksonen, a Finnish artist best known as Tom of Finland, began drawing his homoerotic comics in the 1940s. His drawings began to appear in magazines starting with the spring 1957 cover of *Physique Pictorial*. Laaksonen's drawings, which remain hallmarks of gay iconography, featured muscular men with inordinately large physical features and sexual organs. As well, *Harry Chess: That Man from A.U.N.T.I.E.*, an erotic, satirical comic strip by A. Jay (Al Shapiro) ran in *Drum* magazine in the 1960s. Two strips by Joe Johnson, *Miss Thing* and *Big Dickwere*, also enjoyed a brief run in 1965 in *The Advocate*.

Comics featuring gay and lesbian characters, however, only began to flourish in tandem with the growth in underground and independent comics beginning in the 1970s in the post-Stonewall era when gay and lesbian artists, and others sympathetic to their cause, became motivated to act and began to express themselves more assertively in the medium. **Trina Robbins**'s *Sandy Comes Out*, published in *Wimmen's Comix* #1 in 1972, was the first comic to explicitly feature a lesbian character. In 1974, Mary Wings published the first comic book exclusively concerned with lesbian themes, *Come Out Comix*, and followed it with another work, *Dyke Shorts*, in 1978. Roberta Gregory, who came out in *Wimmen's Comix* in 1974, published an important lesbian comic, *Dynamite Damsels*, in 1976. Gregory later created *Artistic Licentiousness*, a sex comic strip, in 1990, and is perhaps best known for her characters Bitchy Bitch and Bitchy Butch, both of whom appear in *Naughty Bits*, a quarterly begun in 1991.

Regarding gay male characters and comics in the 1970s, *Gay Heart Throbs* #1 became the first exclusively gay male comic upon publication in 1976. It was followed by two other editions, in 1979 and 1981. The gay magazine *Christopher Street* featured many cartoons which were gathered in two collections, published in 1978 and 1980. Gerard Donelan's cartoons for *The Advocate*, including the *It's a Gay Life* page, began to appear in 1977 and were also published in two collections in 1987 and 1988. Rupert Kinnard introduced the first African American gay characters in comics in 1977 in *Cathartic Comics*, a strip which began its run in a student newspaper.

September 1980 saw the appearance of the first edition of *Gay Comix*, arguably the most important gay and lesbian comics anthology. Howard Cruse was the initial editor, until Robert Triptow took over with issue #5 in 1984. Andy Mangels replaced Triptow in 1991 (issue #14). The anthology changed its name to *Gay Comics* beginning with issue #15. Throughout its run, it featured a wide variety of works from a number of gay and lesbian artists, among them Cruse, Wings, and Gregory, and functioned as a resource guide for the gay and lesbian community.

Cruse, in addition to his editorship of *Gay Comix*, worked on a wide variety of comics throughout his career, beginning in the 1970s. In his *Barefootz* comic strip, Cruse created Headrack, a friend of the titular character, who came out in an April 1976 issue, thereby becoming the first gay or lesbian character to be featured continually in comics. Cruse additionally produced a comic strip titled *Wendel*, about a young gay man and his relationships with his lover, family, and friends. The strip ran in *The Advocate* from 1983 until 1989. Cruse's comics were collected in a book titled *Dancin' Nekkid with the Angels: Comic Strips & Stories for Grown-Ups*, published in 1987. In 1995, Cruse completed ***Stuck Rubber Baby***, a highly acclaimed and deeply stirring graphic novel about a young gay man named Toland Polk growing up in the American South during the Civil Rights era.

Poppers, a strip centered on two characters named Billy and Yves, was begun by Jerry Mills in 1982. The comic initially appeared in *In Touch* magazine but was later featured elsewhere, including in *Gay Comix*. *Gay Comix* was also the publication that first featured, in 1984, Tim Barela's *Leonard and Larry*. The strip, about the lives of the titular gay couple, was subsequently featured in *The Advocate* and *Frontiers*. In 1986, the first of many volumes of *Meatmen* was published. The anthology series featured gay (usually erotic) comics from a large number of artists. 1989 saw the beginning of the syndication of Eric Omer's *The Mostly Unfabulous Social Life of Ethan Green*. As suggested by the title, the comic centered on the lives of the unassuming Ethan and his boyfriend Doug. Andy Mangels's important, two-part article and interview series titled "Out of the Closet and Into the Comics" was published in *Amazing Heroes* #143, and #144 in 1988. In the same year, Mangels moderated a panel called "Gays in Comics" at the San Diego Comic Con, which has since become a fixed feature at the convention. Mangels was more recently responsible for the first edition of *Out in Comics*, a comics guide.

The 1980s and early 1990s also produced a number of important lesbian artists, foremost among them Alison Bechdel, who began her *Dykes to Watch Out For* strip in

Womanews in July 1983. Bechdel began syndicating the strip on her own in 1985. It has since been collected in several volumes and was featured in dozens of papers. The strip centers on a group of lesbian friends but includes a wide variety of characters, gay and straight, and is marked by its astute, left-leaning political and social commentary. In 2006, Bechdel's ***Fun Home***, a critically acclaimed and commercially successful graphic **memoir**, was published.

Diane DiMassa began publishing *Hothead Paisan: Homicidal Lesbian Terrorist* in 1991. The comic strip centered on Hothead, a strong lesbian-feminist figure who castrated rapists. *Hothead Paisan* was an immediate success, and its main character became a lesbian and feminist icon. The comics were collected in 1999 in *The Complete Hothead Paisan*. Jennifer Camper, who since 2005 has been the editor of *Juicy Mother*, the first gay and lesbian anthology since *Gay Comix* (in which Camper's own work was featured), published a collection of her comics in 1994 titled *Rude Girls And Dangerous Women*. Camper also published her comic strip *SubGURLZ* in 1999.

Many of the pioneers of the 1970s and 1980s continued to publish works well into the 1990s and beyond, and were joined by a host of new artists. Ralf König, a highly successful German artist, had several of his works translated into English during the 1990s. Robert Kirby edited an anthology called *Strange Looking Exile* in 1991, and in the same year began his strip *Curbside* which was published as a collection of the same title in 1998. Terry Moore's ***Strangers in Paradise***, begun in 1993, was centered on two female characters without a rigidly defined sexual orientation. In the same year, *Gaze Magazine* began to feature Paul Berge's gay-oriented political cartoons. In 1994, Jimmie Robinson published *Cyberzone*, whose leading character was an African American lesbian. Glen Hanson's and Allan Neuwirth's *Chelsea Boys*, a strip about three gay roommates, began to be featured in New York's *Next Magazine* beginning in 1998. In 2000, Judd Winick created *Pedro and Me: Friendship, Loss, and What I Learned*, an acclaimed graphic novel. Other notable artists from the 1990s and early 2000s included Ariel Schrag, Belasco, Leeane Franson, Ellen Forney, Gordon Spurlock, Sean Martin, Jon Macy, Craig Maynard, Chris Companik, Dave Brousseau, Daniel Curzon, and Julian Lake.

Most of the above-mentioned artists, since their works were geared toward a specific readership and did not enjoy mass distribution (at least initially), were not nearly as inhibited as artists working in the mainstream. Consequently, many of their works engaged with radical politics and sex in ways unimaginable in mainstream publications. Conversely, the limitations imposed on mainstream comics by the Comics Code, general public opinion, and the corporate bottom-line meant that the progress achieved by independent and underground publishers and artists was not equaled by their mainstream counterparts. Nevertheless, there were also occasional and notable changes in mainstream publications beginning in the 1970s.

Don McGregor introduced the first lesbian characters in mass-market comics in *Detectives, Inc: A Remembrance of Threatening Green*, published in 1980. McGregor was also the first artist working in the mainstream to show a gay kiss, which occurred

between the characters Deuces Wild and Summer Ice in 1983 in ***Sabre***. Another progressive step was the publication of *AARGH (Artists Against Rampant Government Homophobia)* in 1988, an anthology that formed a protest against homophobic laws in Britain. **Alan Moore** played an instrumental part in the project, and contributed a short piece, *The Mirror of Love*, to it. Moore's works, from ***V for Vendetta*** to ***Watchmen*** to *Top 10*, contain several sympathetically portrayed queer characters. **Neil Gaiman**, who also contributed to *AARGH*, featured a number of LGBT characters in ***Sandman***. Another successful 1990s comic, ***Love and Rockets*** by Gilbert and Jaime **Hernandez**, also featured several gay and lesbian characters.

Regarding comic strips, in a February 1976 edition of Garry Trudeau's *Doonesbury*, the character Andy Lippincott announced that he was gay, thereby becoming the first openly gay character in a mainstream comic strip. The event, unprecedented as it was, did not set a precedent. Andy made only sporadic appearances in the strip thereafter, and died of AIDS on June 2, 1990. During that entire period, he remained the only gay or lesbian character to appear in a mainstream comic strip. Trudeau introduced, or rather outed, a second gay character, Mark Slackmeyer, in September, 1993. After a period of denial and doubt, Mark eventually admitted to being gay and came out.

A few months prior to Mark's coming out, on March 26, 1993, a teenage character named Lawrence Poirier was outed by Lynn Johnston in her popular strip *For Better or For Worse*. The public reaction to Lawrence's coming out was immediate and sharp. Several newspapers canceled the strip, and several more replaced the controversial episodes with another comic. Johnston herself received death threats from angry readers. Subsequent episodes featuring Lawrence also generated controversy.

No significant progress could be achieved in the mainstream without efforts on the part of the two main comics publishers, **Marvel** and **DC**. Unfortunately, neither has had a commendable track record regarding sexual minorities, and representations of gays and lesbians in their comics have ranged from, at best, sincere attempts at inclusion to, at worst, offensive stereotyping. Throughout the 1980s, while under Jim Shooter's leadership, Marvel virtually ignored the existence of gays and lesbians in their universe. Despite that policy, Shooter himself was responsible for the first gay-themed story in **superhero** comics, "A Very Personal Hell," which appeared in *The **Hulk!*** #23 in 1980. The story featured two gay men who attempted to rape Bruce Banner while he was showering at a YMCA. DC publications featured a larger number of gay and lesbian characters from the outset, with the Joker of the 1980s being perhaps the most enigmatic among them. The Joker's effeminate representation during the 1980s, in large part instigated by **Frank Miller**, suggested a homosexual undercurrent to his character. More explicitly, in 1987, an effeminate gay Hispanic character named Extraño appeared in *Millenium* #2, thus becoming the first clearly gay or lesbian character featured in a comic under the Comic Code's jurisdiction.

Northstar, a member of the ***Alpha Flight*** superhero team, finally announced that he was gay in 1992 in *Alpha Flight* #106. The character had been introduced in 1979 and was intended to be gay from the outset, but there were only a few hints regarding

his sexual orientation during the 1980s. In 1987, Northstar was stricken by an illness featuring symptoms similar to those of AIDS. Bill Mantlo, who replaced **John Byrne** as the main author of *Alpha Flight* after issue #28, did indeed intend for Northstar to die of AIDS, but was prevented from doing so by Marvel. Instead, Mantlo came up with an elaborate explanation whereby Northstar's illness was due to the fact that he was, of all things, a fairy. Northstar's coming out generated much publicity, and drew both praise and criticism from a wide variety of individuals and organizations. A similarly mixed reaction greeted Pied Piper's declaration of his homosexuality in DC's *The* ***Flash*** #53 in 1991. Pied Piper, a reformed villain, came out to Flash during their discussion of the Joker's alleged homosexuality.

The first decade of the 21st century was marked by a significant increase in the number of gay and lesbian characters in Marvel's, and even more so DC's, titles. The most publicized of those characters was Rawhide Kid, an old Marvel character who was reinvented as a homosexual in a miniseries in 2003. Other significant gay and lesbian characters from recent years include Midnighter and Apollo, who came out as a couple in DC's ***The Authority*** #7 (by **Warren Ellis**) in 1999 and married in issue #29 (by **Mark Millar**). Terry Berg, a character in ***Green Lantern***, came out to his friend Kyle in issue #137 and became the victim of a vicious gay bashing in issue #154. In 2003, in the "Half Life" storyline in DC's *Gotham Central* series, detective Renee Montoya was outed as a lesbian by the villain Two-Face, making her one of the few lesbian characters in mainstream comics. DC additionally announced in 2006 that the obscure Batwoman would be featured prominently as a lesbian character in future comics. Marvel's *Young Avengers* series, begun in 2005, featured two gay teenage characters, Hulking and Asgardian (later Wiccan). Homosexual themes have also been featured in more mature fare, such as ***Y: The Last Man*** and ***Ex Machina***. The appearance and/or outing of virtually all of the above named characters caused controversy, but Marvel's and DC's increasing willingness to feature gay and lesbian characters, however uncomfortably, in their comics is an indication of the extent to which homosexuality, while by no means always accepted, has become an increasingly irrevocable part of mainstream society over the last few decades.

Gay and lesbian themes continue to become more prominent in comics, due in large part to the Internet, whose resources have effectively collapsed the difference in distribution between independent and mainstream publishers. Many artists, such as Greg Fox, the creator of *Kyle's Bed & Breakfast*, have found success by publishing their work online, thereby making it available to a potentially vast readership. Simultaneously, a broader, increasingly more diverse comic readership in combination with greater tolerance of homosexuality has created an environment more favorable toward gay and lesbian characters in comics.

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Denis Yarow

GEMMA BOVERY. Written and illustrated by Rosemary Elizabeth "Posy" Simmonds, *Gemma Bovery* was first serialized on a weekly basis in 100, one-page installments in the U.K. newspaper *The Guardian* before being published in book form in 1999 by Jonathan Cape, and then published in America by Pantheon in 2005. *Gemma Bovery* is a heteroglot work: more text heavy than most comics, it uses prose narration combined with diary excerpts, fictional media clippings, and passages from Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, supplemented by soft monochrome drawings in which the characters speak primarily English with the occasional snippet of French. A satirical tragicomedy, *Gemma Bovery* follows the late titular Gemma Bovery's recent life up until her untimely death. In England, Gemma Tate is a moderately successful illustrator who, in the wake of a bad breakup with food critic Patrick Large, marries the clueless and passive Cyril "Charlie" Bovery, a furniture restorer. Eventually tiring of urban England and the demands of Charlie's first family, Gemma persuades her husband that they should move to rustic France. In Bailleville, Normandy, fickle Gemma quickly becomes disenchanted with France and her husband, beginning an affair with Hervé de Bressigny, a member of the minor and financially ailing gentry who is studying for his law exams. The affair ends when Hervé leaves for Paris. While the Boverys struggle with their mounting debts, Gemma reencounters Large through their mutual acquaintances, the wealthy Rankins. Gemma and Large reignite their carnal relationship, although Gemma is resolute in not becoming more involved; during an argument with Large, Gemma chokes on a piece of bread and dies when Charlie mistakenly interrupts Large's attempted Heimlich maneuver. Raymond Joubert, a French baker who has obsessed over Gemma since her arrival in France, narrates the story, which is primarily comprised of his voyeurism, speculation, and his reading of Gemma's pilfered diaries.

Gemma Bovery is not a simple modernization of Flaubert, though it deals, in an updated context, with many of the same issues as *Madame Bovary*; rather, Simmonds cleverly exploits the connection between Gemma and Emma to question the relationship between text and life. The French characters inevitably parse Bovery as Bovary, with Joubert and his literary pretensions being the most prominent example; a failed writer and currently an editor, Joubert obsessively imposes Flaubert's story onto Gemma's life. Joubert is not content with merely imagining Gemma as an updated Emma: he meddles with Gemma's life using Flaubert's text, hastening the end of Gemma's affair with Hervé by anonymously sending her excerpts of *Madame Bovary*, as well as indirectly setting up the circumstances of Gemma's demise by sending excerpts from the parts about Emma's debts and suicide to Charlie, Large, and the Rankins. This leads to the encounter between Charlie and Large wherein Gemma chokes to death on bread that, significantly, was baked by Joubert. (Incidentally, Gemma herself

reads *Madame Bovary*, but Joubert ruins the ending for her.) Joubert is so convinced by the associative power between the Boverys and the Bovarys that he only stops dolefully predicting Charlie's demise after Gemma's death when Charlie reveals his real name is Cyril. Joubert seems otherwise incapable of seeing the disparities between the Bovery/Bovary connection, such as Gemma's childlessness, the lack of a Flaubertian equivalent to Large, and that Gemma's desire to go from urban to rural is the inverse of Emma's. Conversely, Raymond does not draw out the Flaubertian association as it would pertain to himself, which would suggest he plays the role of Monsieur Homais, the duplicitous and fraudulent town pharmacist. By the end of the story, it is implied that Joubert has not learned his lesson given his interest when the Eyres move into the house where the Boverys once lived.

In *Gemma Bovery*, Simmonds satirizes social pretensions. The British and the French have a complex interdependence: the British fetishize France while scorning its people, while the French condescend to the British even while they rely upon them financially. The stratification of French society is revealed as a sham since the seemingly established gentry trace their origins to money made in trade. While all of the wittily drawn characters gesture toward the satirical representation of certain social types, Simmonds lavishes the most attention upon Gemma and Joubert. Gemma and Joubert, with their respective artistic and literary interests, deplore those they view as rightwing bourgeois and crass new money, even while they are dependant upon them for income. Romantically inclined, they both chase fantasies of fulfillment even while reality continually foils their efforts: Gemma, through her continual and faddish re-imagining of herself and her surroundings, Joubert through his bovarystic obsession with literature and his past attempt at being an intellectual in a commune. The search for authenticity is a major theme in *Gemma Bovery*, particularly through appetitive and consumerist consumption. Food plays a major role: the influence of the slow food movement shows through Joubert's loving baking and Gemma's brief infatuation with the realness of French food; food is also inextricably linked to sex as another way of attempting to find meaning. Consumerism also offers the same illusion, with the British yuppies buying homes in France to live out the dream of an idyllic existence, and with Gemma's expensive shopping and redecorating. Gemma's aspirations lead her to weight problems, debt, and death.

The aforementioned heteroglot format of *Gemma Bovery* draws attention to the subjectivity of representations. Despite the dominance of his narrative voice, Joubert's unreliability is highlighted by the excerpts from Gemma's diaries as well as Simmonds's drawings of the narrated events, casting doubt upon his authority to translate Gemma's thoughts from English into French as well as his interpretation of events. The failure of Joubert's narration is also suggested by the hints that there was an affair between Charlie Bovery and Joubert's wife Martine, to which their respective spouses are oblivious. Finally, the reoccurring image of nature documentaries and their false objectivity provides an analogue to Joubert's voyeurism, even as it also implicates the reader as a fellow voyeur to the tragicomic events.

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Christine Yao

GHOST RIDER. Ghost Rider is the name of a series of characters in **Western**, **horror**, and **superhero** comics. Artist Dick Ayers (1924–) and writer Vince Sullivan created the original Ghost Rider in 1949 for Magazine Enterprises. The character is at least partially inspired by Vaughn Monroe's 1949 hit song *Ghost Riders in the Sky*. **Frank Frazetta** contributed covers to *Ghost Rider* #2–5. The cover to #4 is iconic and often reprinted. A sort of Western **Batman** crossed with The Lone Ranger, Ghost Rider was a Federal marshal whose phosphorescent costume was intended to strike fear into evildoers. This version of Ghost Rider also had a Chinese sidekick named Sing Song. Many of the original Ghost Rider's villains were supernatural, and those who were not were often grotesques similar to early *Dick Tracy* villains. Heavily tinged with horror elements, the character starred in a backup feature (originally given the placid name of The Calico Kid) and his own book until the horror comic scare of the 1950s ended his career in 1954.

Marvel Comics, acting on the belief that the license on the name had expired, revived the character in 1967, along with other **Golden Age** characters, **Daredevil** and **Captain Marvel**. The new Ghost Rider, again penciled by Ayers, was a watered-down version of the late 1940s character, this time tinged with Marvel's then-current trend toward realism. Supernatural elements were present but played down. Elements of the hero's personal life intertwined with the stories, with varying degrees of effectiveness. Inks that did not work with Ayers's pencils hampered the art. The revamped Ghost Rider was, along with the other late-1960s Marvel Western stars, granted another brief revival in the 1990s.

In 1972, editor Roy Thomas, author Gary Frederich, and artist Mike Ploog, a former apprentice of **Will Eisner**, created a new Ghost Rider. This character also crossed genres, but this time it was the melding of the **superhero** and the supernatural. Through a deal with the Devil to save his adoptive father's life, motorcycle daredevil Johnny Blaze is granted power and cursed to become the Ghost Rider by night. Riding a demonic motorcycle and casting fire while bemoaning his fate, the new Ghost Rider lasted 81 issues, following a short run in Marvel Spotlight. Ploog did the art on the stories in Marvel Spotlight, and the first few issues of the main title. **Jim Mooney** was arguably the best of a wildly uneven cadre of artists that followed.

The Johnny Blaze Ghost Rider flirted with Marvel's superhero world as an occasional member of the superhero team, The Champions. In keeping with the dual nature of the character, he was also a member of the short-lived Legion of Monsters. He was given a happy ending in 1983, when the demon was removed from Blaze's body and soul. However, his story was continued in a revisionist version (running from 1990 to 1998) in which Danny Ketch becomes the new Ghost Rider, who is



Nicolas Cage as Ghost Rider, in the 2007 film by the same name, directed by Mark Steven Johnson. Columbia Pictures/Photofest

cursed by simply touching the symbols on an old discarded motorcycle. This version of Ghost Rider, though still supernatural, is more in line with the superhero aspects of the character, even joining with **Spider-Man**, **The Hulk**, and Wolverine to form an ersatz **Fantastic Four**. His powers included a Penance Stare and a Hell Chain, reminiscent of **Spawn**. Both of the latter Ghost Riders are part of a legacy of Spirits of Vengeance, dating back to the 1800s. This concept is reminiscent of some aspects of **Alan Moore's *Swamp Thing***, though the heroic legacy dates back to The Phantom. Meanwhile, it is eventually revealed that Ketch is Blaze's half-brother, while Blaze is revealed to be the unknowing servant of an angel, rather than of Satan. As of this writing, the brothers share the mantle and powers of Ghost Rider in guest appearances and miniseries.

It should be noted that the **Comics Code** was still in place when the 1972 version of Ghost Rider appeared, making its depictions of demons and black magic quite daring, but also inhibiting the comic's effectiveness as a horror book. Paradoxically, the more superhero-driven 1990 story has more overt and successful horror elements. This is due to Marvel's virtual abandoning of the code in the 1990s in favor of its own internal ratings system.

In 2007, director Mark Steven Johnson helmed a *Ghost Rider* film based on his own screenplay. Starring Nicolas Cage, it incorporated elements of the 1970s and 1990s incarnations of the character, and took many of the usual Hollywood liberties with the source material. Fan opinion is somewhat divided on the film.

In a far-future story with cyberpunk **science fiction** themes, *Ghost Rider 2099* ran from May 1994 to May 1996, and echoed some of the ideas in the anime and **manga** *Akira*.

Selected Bibliography: Markstein, Don. *The Ghost Rider.* Don Markstein's Toonopedia: http://www.toonopedia.com/ghrider1.htm.

Diana Green

GHOST WORLD. Written and illustrated by **Daniel Clowes**, the cult classic graphic novel *Ghost World* was first serialized in Clowes's comic book series ***Eightball*** in eight parts from issue #11 in June 1993 until issue #18 in June 1997. In 1997, *Ghost World* was published in book form by **Fantagraphics** with some additions and modifications; due to its popularity, *Ghost World* has been reprinted several times. *Ghost World* portrays the unglamorous everyday life of teenagers Enid Coleslaw, formerly Cohn, and her best friend Rebecca "Becky" Doppelmeyer. Enid Coleslaw, whose name is an anagram of Daniel Clowes, lives with her quiet well-meaning father while barely tolerating her father's girlfriend; Becky also lives at home, and has a close relationship with her grandmother. Recently graduated from high school, Enid and Becky wander around the confines of their nameless small town, cynically critiquing people, their surroundings, and popular culture. Enid has a particular fascination with kitsch and the grotesque; more active and quirky than Becky, Enid is often either encouraging Becky to join her in her misadventures or telling her what has transpired. Ordinary events such as Enid getting her driver's license or having a yard sale are interspersed with activities such as playing cruel pranks on the town's inhabitants, or the pair visiting an old theme park or a tacky 1950s-themed restaurant. Expectations are often thwarted: supposed Satanists followed by the girls buy Lunchables from the grocery store, and, in a moment of self-insertion, Enid discovers the unflattering reality behind her vision of Daniel Clowes as a handsome cartoonist. One of the ongoing narrative threads involves Enid and Becky tormenting fellow teenager Josh while struggling with their attraction to him as well as understanding their own sexuality. The girls' cynicism masks their fear of their own vulnerabilities; combined with the pressure of late adolescence (post-high school), the tensions between them eventually escalate. While Becky eventually drifts into suburban normalcy and adulthood, Enid, still alienated and self-loathing, leaves town following her rejection from college. Their strange final encounter can possibly be read as evidence of Enid's intention to commit suicide.

Part of *Ghost World*'s cult appeal lies in its ability to capture the sense of small town adolescent alienation. *Ghost World* captures Enid and Becky in that liminal state before adulthood: after graduating high school, Enid and Becky are confronted with the expectation of being appropriately socialized to enter the adult world. Melorra and John Ellis are two characters that exemplify the clichéd extremes of accepting or rebelling against normalcy: Melorra is a perky overachiever who willingly shills for a rightwing candidate in order to get ahead, while John is deliberately contrarian, adopting repellent views in an attempt to be subversive. Discomfited by these options, Enid and Becky choose ennui and cynicism as a temporary means of delaying adulthood; in her usual conflicted fashion, however, Enid often socializes with both Melorra and John Ellis despite her professed dislike of them. Similarly, the girls



Thora Birch as Enid and Steve Buscemi as Seymour, in the 2001 film *Ghost World*, directed by Terry Zwigoff. United Artists/Photofest

adopt a blasé and crass attitude toward their burgeoning sexualities to cover up their anxieties about their underlying vulnerabilities, as they are both dissatisfied with their identities. Enid continually tries to remake herself through ventures like adopting a punk look or wearing a fetish piece akin to **Catwoman**'s mask. In the end, Enid leaves family and friends behind, possibly to realize her fantasy of becoming a completely different person in a different place. While Enid tries too hard to be different, Becky is more mainstream, enjoying popular culture even while she critiques it, and, being a blonde WASP, she even appears more conventional. However, Becky is sensitive about her lack of quirkiness in comparison to Enid. In the bland suburban landscape, both girls are able to find interest in the quotidian, such as mocking the awkwardness of television personalities. They also have a keen ability to enjoy pathos as they observe unattractive couples or an old man taking dying flowers home for his wife. The girls are able to engage in limited, if aimless, rebellion even as they exacerbate their distance from the norm.

The title *Ghost World* can be seen to allude to the sense of hollowness that Enid and Becky experience in their lives as well as the intertwined themes of the surreal mundane and the obsession with the past. The titular phrase appears as a motif in the story: it is repeatedly seen as graffiti sprayed around the town, with the perpetrator glimpsed briefly by Enid. The phrase is more appropriate for Enid than for Becky: Enid keeps a

photo of the graffiti in her album, and, at the beginning of one chapter, Enid utters the phrase "Ghost World" while beside her, Becky blows a bubble with her gum as an empty imitation of Enid's speech bubble. It is Enid who is truly enamored by the weirdness in the quotidian as well as the nostalgia of kitsch. From driving a hearse to her ongoing fixation with the psychic Bob Skeetes, Enid often either enacts or engages in surreal moments in her ordinary life. Enid's interests place her in a bind: her penchant for old records, tacky toys, and rundown amusement parks from her past helps to set her apart from the society she claims to loathe, but also exacerbates her self-loathing. As shown by her failed yard sale, Enid's fixation with the past leaves her unable to move forward or truly change. Significantly, when she reencounters psychic Skeetes, he reads Enid's fortune and sees a woman from the early 20th century as a part of her future; shortly after, Enid leaves her town via a bus on a line that was supposedly defunct years ago. It is left ambiguous as to whether Enid was able to escape from her ghost world.

In 2001, *Ghost World* was adapted into a critically acclaimed movie directed by Terry Zwigoff, with the screenplay written by Clowes. The film starred Thora Birch as Enid, Scarlett Johansson as Becky, and Brad Renfro as Josh. Significant changes included the addition of Seymour, a major character played by Steve Buscemi, Enid's experience in art school, and an exploration of racism. Among the film's many accolades include Golden Globe acting nominations for Birch and Buscemi, as well as a Best Adapted Screenplay Academy Award nomination for Clowes and Zwigoff.

Selected Bibliography: Ault, Donald. "Q&A with Dan Clowes and Terry Zwigoff at 2002 UF Comics Conference." *ImageTexT: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies* 1(1) (Spring 2004); Booker, M. Keith. *"May Contain Graphic Material": Comic Books, Graphic Novels, and Film*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007; Giroux, Henry A. "Teen Girls' Resistance and the Disappearing Social in *Ghost World*." *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 24 (2002): 283–304; Sperb, Jason. "*Ghost* without a Machine: Enid's Anxiety of Depth (lessness) in Terry Zwigoff's *Ghost World*." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 21(3) (July 2004): 209–17.

Christine Yao

GIBBONS, DAVE (1949–). The legacy of Dave Gibbons in the world of comics is inextricably tied to his artwork for the comic series ***Watchmen***, written by **Alan Moore**. As artist for the story, Gibbons worked extensively with Moore to produce a visually powerful piece that ultimately helped bring comics more cultural legitimacy. While, in many works, the use of panels, layering, symbolism, and even page layout are used to present connections and elements within the narrative, the depth to which Gibbons accomplished this within *Watchmen* has been written about in numerous popular and academic works. His work on *Watchmen* won him and Moore an **Eisner Award** in 1988 for Best Writer/Artist.

Gibbons has played many roles in comics over his lengthy career, including artist, colorist, cover artist, inker, letterer, penciler, and writer. In his first few ventures,



Dave Gibbons, co-creator of the graphic novel *Watchmen*, on the set of the 2009 film by the same name, directed by Zack Snyder. Warner Bros./Photofest

he drew for different pieces for the two major British periodical publishers, DC Thomson and IPC. In 1977, he became one of the original talents to work on the comic anthology *2000 A.D.* He worked on several projects in the late 1970s and early 1980s with a variety of British comic talent. He proved quite productive and found himself working on anthologies and series including *Dan Daring*, *Harlem Heroes*, *Judge Dredd*, *Ro-Busters*, *Rogue Trooper*, and *Tharg's Future Shocks* (which occasionally teamed him up with Moore). Gibbons also served as lead artist for the first three years of the *Dr. Who Magazine*. By the end of this run in 1982, he was picked up by **DC Comics**, and over the next few years he would draw for series such as *The Brave and the Bold*, ***The Flash***, ***Green Lantern***, and *The Omega Men*.

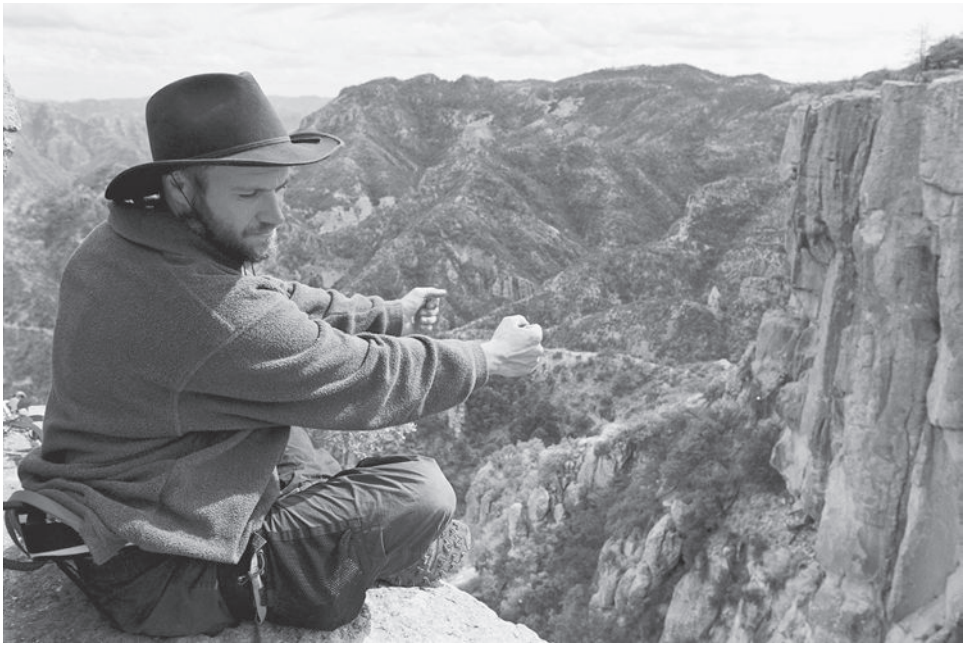
By the end of the 1980s, recognition of *Watchmen* by those in the comics industry, as well as in the mainstream, allowed Gibbons more creative power and pull within the industry. From the late 1980s onward, it is evident that Gibbons received a greater range of drawing opportunities from major and independent publishers. In 1990, he teamed up with **Frank Miller** (***Daredevil***, ***Batman: The Dark Knight Returns***), another industry powerhouse, to produce *Give Me Liberty*, a four-issue miniseries from **Dark Horse Comics**. Gibbons also moved into writing during this time, with dozens of projects throughout the 1990s and 2000s, including *Batman*, ***Captain America***, *Rann-Thanagar War*, *Thunderbolt Jaxon*, and ***World's Finest***. He was nominated for another Eisner Award for Best Penciler/Inker or Penciler/Inker Team for his work on *Martha Washington Saves the World* #1 in 1998.

Throughout the 2000s, Gibbons has continued to work on both mainstream and independent pieces, developing a diverse portfolio of titles and projects. In 2004, he released his first full-fledged graphic novel, *The Originals*, under DC's Vertigo imprint. The story deals with dueling youths differentiated by class, and the use of motorcycles

and hover-scooters in a dark but not completely dystopian future. Gibbons would also be a source of authorial input on the cinematic adaptation of *Watchmen* (2009).

Lance Eaton

GIRAUD, JEAN (GIR, MOEBIUS) (1938–). Also known as **Moebius** and occasionally as Gir, Jean Giraud is one of the few internationally celebrated European comics artists. Born in a village close to Paris, he started his career in France in 1956. However, except for some international projects such as *The **Silver Surfer**: Parable* (with **Stan Lee**, 1988) and *Icare* (with Jiro Taniguchi, 2000)—his work has only partly been translated from French into other languages (in English most of Moebius work has been published by **Marvel**/Epic). Giraud's use of pen names is fundamental not only in his work but also in his personal life; Giraud claims in his written autobiography that he carries the troubling rupture between two worlds (father/mother, city/country) and that he is trying to find the original unity by building bridges between the two worlds. He admits to having consumed lots of drugs and has followed various doubtful New Age-therapies as well—among them Guy-Claude Burger's raw diet "instinctotherapy." Giraud claims in his book that his main goal in life was to not duplicate the painful pattern of his family; after the divorce of his parents when he was three years old, after which he was as an only child mainly raised by his grandparents. His drawing skills would change his life fundamentally. Before Giraud became an apprentice with the Belgian comics artist Jijé, the young artist had already published some comics, but it was under the guidance of this Belgian master that he would develop himself remarkably (Jijé had also inspired other comics artists such as André Franquin, Morris, Roba or Peyo). Giraud's breakthrough would come in 1963, when Jean-Michel Charlier started writing for him the successful **Western** series ***Blueberry*** about a rebellious officer of the American army at the end of the 19th century, shortly after the U.S. Civil War. For a decade Giraud concentrated on *Blueberry* (being published in *Pilote* and in albums), but when Charlier got into a contractual dispute with the publisher, Giraud took the occasion to create a quite different kind of work under the pseudonym of Moebius—a name he had used already for some short comics in the French satirical magazine *Hara-Kiri*. As Moebius, he also assumed the role of scriptwriter and produced mainly **science fiction** stories, including the strange wordless *Arzach* (1975) and the improvisational *Le Garage Hermétique/Major Fatal* (1976) (*The Airtight Garage*), both first published in another French magazine *Métal Hurlant*. In the same period Giraud met the Chilean cult film director Alejandro Jodorowsky and they started collaborating on a film adaptation of *Dune*, but the project was aborted due to lack of funding. Various ideas from the aborted *Dune*-project were nevertheless invested in a new comic series, *L'Incal* (***The Incal***, *The Adventures of John Difool*, 1980–88) a superb New Age space opera. After his work on that series, Moebius set out for new projects. A commercial comic for the French car builder Citroën (*Sur l'Étoile*, 1983) became later the basis for a new fascinating science fiction series, *Le Monde d'Edena* (1988–2001). In addition to comics, the artist collaborated on various films (including *Alien*, *Tron*, and *The Fifth Element*). Moreover, two of his own comics



Director Jan Kounen, on the set of the 2004 film *Blueberry*, based on the comic strip by Jean 'Moebius' Giraud. Columbia Tri-Star/Photofest

(*Cauchemar Blanc* and *Blueberry*) were adapted into films. Giraud/Moebius has been working in recent years on various projects, including unexpected sequels or spin-offs of older series (e.g., *Mister Blueberry*), an album of the popular thriller European series *XIII* (originally by William Vance and Jean Van Hamme), and a philosophical illustrated autobiography, *Inside Moebius*. Though Giraud/Moebius has less impact today on younger generations than in the 1970s and 1980s (for instance even Miyazaki was then inspired for his *Nausicaä* **manga** and anime), he still remains one of France's most acclaimed and intriguing comics artists.

Selected Bibliography: Giraud, Jean. *Moebius/Giraud, histoire de mon double*. Paris: Editions°1, 1999; Sadoul, Numa. *Moebius, Entretiens avec Numa Sadoul*. Tournai: Casterman, 1991.

Pascal Lefèvre

GLOECKNER, PHOEBE (1960–). Born in Philadelphia, Gloeckner moved to California (the setting for much of her work) in the 1970s. There she encountered Aline Kominsky and Diane Noomin's collection *Twisted Sisters*, leading to her decision to create her own comics work. Given Gloeckner's history, this was no surprise: her father was a commercial illustrator and her mother introduced her to both ***Zap Comics*** and the influential **underground comics** artists of the time, including the aforementioned Kominksky and Noomin, as well as Bill Griffiths and **Robert Crumb**.

Gloeckner attended the University of Texas in Dallas, where she studied medical illustration, which has been her primary employment for over two decades. The influence of her medical illustration training is evident in her comics, which are suffused with highly detailed drawings of anatomy and corporeality, particularly in evidence in her illustrations for J. G. Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1990, RE/Search Publications). Her work is highly detailed, anatomically precise, and very forthright. This precision has drawn fire in some cases, in that her narratives are often frank about sex and sexuality, and do not shy away from explicit depictions of this subject matter.

Gloeckner's shorter comics work initially appeared in a number of underground anthologies, including *Twisted Sisters*, ***Weirdo***, and *Wimmen's Comix*. In 1998, Frog Books, a division of North Atlantic Books, published her controversial *A Child's Life and Other Stories*, leading her work to be seen within a larger context, as did *The Diary of a Teenage Girl*, released in 2002. The former, very explicit and blunt in its exploration of sex, drug use, and childhood trauma, was made all the more powerful by the precision of the drawings. In 2004, *A Child's Life* was banned from a library in Stockton, California, and was condemned by the town's mayor for its graphic depictions of the main character, 15-year-old Minnie Goetze, in sexual situations tantamount to child abuse. Her influences, most notably **Crumb**, are highly visible in her work, and the comparisons are apt.

Diary revisits these characters and fills in some of the narrative gaps from *Child's Life* through a series of written entries, drawings, notes, poems, and other different forms; it truly looks and reads like a diary. However, it is important to note that Gloeckner does not describe her work as autobiographical despite numerous commonalities between her life and Minnie's: she refers to her work as fiction.

She continues to produce a substantial body of work. In addition to her comics, Gloeckner has worked on a number of books intended for children, including *Weird Things You Can Grow* (Random House, 1994) and a number of titles in a HarperCollins series including *Tales Too Funny To Be True*, *Tales too Gross to Be True* (about urban legends) and *Tales Too Scary to Be True* (for babysitters). Gloeckner is currently teaching at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in the School of Art and Design, and was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2008.

Anne Thalheimer

GOLDEN AGE. *See* ***Ages of Comics***

GOTHAM BY GASLIGHT. *Gotham by Gaslight* is a graphic novel published by **DC Comics** in 1989. Written by Brian Augustyn and illustrated by **Mike Mignola** (artist) and **P. Craig Russell** (inker), it holds the distinction of being considered the first work to be part of DC Comics' ***Elseworlds*** imprint. The story places **Batman** and several of his key supporting cast in the 1880s as the serial killer Jack the Ripper comes to Gotham City. The success of this graphic novel spawned a 1991 sequel, *Batman: Master*

of the Future, and a 2008 spin-off, *Countdown Presents the Search for Ray Palmer: Gotham by Gaslight*, which featured the **Silver Age** microscopic hero, The Atom.

The popularity of the *Elseworlds* imprint was that it placed familiar DC Comics heroes and villains in new situations and time periods, without being limited by the constraints of long-established continuities. The stories were completely self-contained and separate from the mainstream DC universe. Beginning in the 1950s, DC Comics produced numerous tales speculating what life would be like for its heroes in alternate realities. These works were presented as "Imaginary Stories" and generally featured tales of **Superman** being affected by events (like births, deaths, and marriages) that were avoided in the regular continuity. While the majority of these Imaginary Stories involved the **Man of Steel**, some did present alternate versions of characters like Batman and **Wonder Woman**. The last official Imaginary Story to be published was **Alan Moore's *Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow?*** (*Superman* #423 and ***Action Comics*** #583, September 1986). The *Elseworlds* label essentially continued the Imaginary Stories agenda of reinterpreting the DC Comics characters, but within the graphic novel format and with an expanded sense of possibilities.

The back cover of *Gotham by Gaslight* features the image of a retro-looking Batman and asks the question, "What would the Gotham City of 100 years ago have been like?" This informs readers that they must suspend any preconceived notions as to what comprises a typical *Batman* adventure. Gotham City, along with its hero, villains, and citizens, has been re-imagined to fit Victorian-era standards. The book begins with an introduction by famed **horror** novelist and the author of *Psycho*, Robert Bloch. Titled "From Hell," it is written from the perspective of Jack the Ripper and is crafted in the style of the killer's signature letters. The story starts with a two-page reinterpretation of the murders of Thomas and Martha Wayne. The familiar back alley shootings of Batman's parents is essentially the same as in the established DC Comics continuity; however, it occurs when the Wayne family's carriage is overtaken by a murderous highwayman. It is soon revealed that these events are being recalled by an adult Bruce Wayne as he speaks with Sigmund Freud, his mentor, in 1889 Vienna. Wayne soon sets sail for Gotham City, which readers encounter not as a modern urban center, but as a misty, late-19th-century city illuminated by gaslight. Many of Gotham's landmark locations, such as Wayne Manor, **Arkham Asylum**, and Gotham City Police Headquarters, are all presented in the Victorian style.

Gotham by Gaslight is structured around two main plotlines: Bruce Wayne's return to Gotham to assume the mantle of Batman, and Jack the Ripper's arrival in the city to continue his series of sadistic murders. The plots eventually converge as suspicions are raised against Wayne, who often cannot account for his nightly whereabouts. Throughout the tale readers are presented with 19th-century reinterpretations of various members of Batman's supporting cast. Inspector James Gordon is transformed into a Teddy Roosevelt-like character in both his looks and manner of speech. The Joker makes a cameo appearance as a "Merry Widow"

killer who married and later poisoned several rich older ladies for their money. His failed suicide attempt by drinking strychnine leaves him with a face paralyzed into a permanent grin. Attorney Harvey Dent also appears briefly, as does the United Kingdom's Prince Albert Victor. Much of the enjoyment of the graphic novel comes from pre-modern crime fighting techniques that both Batman and the police must employ. Eventually, Bruce Wayne is arrested, tried, and convicted of Gotham's Jack the Ripper slayings. While awaiting his execution he is visited by Inspector Gordon, who provides him with all his police files in the hope that Wayne may find some means to prove his innocence. Jack the Ripper's identity is soon revealed to be that of Jacob Packer, an old Wayne family friend whose killing spree was instigated by Martha Wayne's rejection of his romantic advances. Wayne escapes prison and confronts his foe as Batman. Packer reveals that his anger over Martha's marriage to Thomas Wayne led to his hiring their killer years earlier. Hearing this confession, Batman removes his cowl to reveal his identity to his parents' murderer. Packer then slashes Wayne with a knife hidden beneath his coat; seconds later he is shot and killed by the arriving Inspector Gordon. The tale concludes with the hauntingly familiar image of Batman astride a gargoyle protecting Gotham from the shadows.

In 1991, Augustyn and artist Eduardo Barreto crafted a sequel to *Gotham by Gaslight*. Titled *Batman: Master of the Future*, it continues the story of the 19th-century Batman a year or two later as he is reluctant to continue his crime fighting career. The plot is primarily concerned with the villainous Alexander LeRoi's attempts to disrupt Gotham's upcoming turn-of-the century celebrations. Augustyn returned to this alternative reality again in 2008 with *Countdown Presents The Search for Ray Palmer: Gotham by Gaslight* #1. This tale was connected to DC Comics' weekly series *Countdown;* it presents modern heroes Donna Troy, Kyle Rayner, and Jason Todd traveling through the multiverse. In current DC Comics continuity, the *Gotham by Gaslight* world is now designated as parallel Earth-19.

Gotham by Gaslight was not originally designated as an *Elseworlds* publication. However, its success led to the development of the *Elseworlds* concept so much so that the title has been retroactively declared by DC Comics to be its first *Elseworlds* adventure. Subsequent printings showcase the *Elseworlds* insignia on the book's cover. The graphic novel demonstrated that Batman's popularity is so great that the character could be easily translated into a variety of settings and time periods.

Charles Coletta

GRAPHIC CLASSICS. Since the 1940s, adapting classic writings has been a mainstay for comic books and a way for the form to establish legitimacy. Whether the source material is the Bible, Shakespeare, Mark Twain, or Franz Kafka, comic publishers have used these literary pieces to not just establish comics but to explore the different ways in which text and image can create similar or new effects in the readers. As a publisher emerging in 2001, *Graphic Classics* became one of the first publishers to focus on adapting classics as regular practice since publishers such as ***Classics Illustrated*** in the 1940s

and 1950s. Editor, publisher and creator of *Graphic Classics*, Tom Pomplun began toying with the idea of publishing classics as comics in the 1990s when he worked on the literary journal, *Rosebud*, in Cambridge, Wisconsin.

The series initially released anthologies that focused on specific authors, including Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle, H. G. Wells, and many others whose stories were predisposed to being executed visually and have, over the years, been utilized in other media. These author-based anthologies included many frequently anthologized pieces, but also some lesser known pieces by the authors. For instance, the Poe anthology included "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Cask of Amontillado," but also "The Imp of the Perverse" and "Hop-Frog." Later volumes focused on a particular theme or genre including **adventure**, **horror**, gothic, **fantasy**, and **science fiction**. These linked together several famous and lesser known pieces of authors to create a mixture of stories that are both recognizable and authentic. For instance, the *Fantasy Classics: Graphic Classics Volume 15* includes the classic *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelly but also lesser known pieces such as "Rappaccini's Daughter" by Nathaniel Hawthorne and "The Glass Dog" by L. Frank Baum.

Graphic Classics relies on a range of artists; though few are established in mainstream comics. Instead, the publisher uses artists who have found their own niche, whether in magazines, newspapers, or within independent and alternative comics publishing. Their range of style, experience, and personal background evokes the individuality and creative process evident in each volume. Regular artistic contributors have included Kevin Atkinson, Maxon Crumb, Rick Geary, Molly Kiely, Rob Lott, Carlo Vergara, and Lisa K. Weber, many of whom have won awards and are well known in other professional circles.

Pomplun's decision to focus on classics stems in part from the influence of the *Classics Illustrated* series on his own upbringing, but also the economic viability of using public-domain pieces. Like other book and audiobook publishers, Pomplun looked to defray the cost of publishing by using free material that already had an established record, though *Graphic Classics* does rely significantly on writers to adapt a text before giving it over to the artist.

However, the power and success of *Graphic Classics* lies in the interpretative act of visually executing what is written. Pomplun did not want to copy the *Classics Illustrated* model, which repackaged the story in an accessible compact story that children could read and understand, but rather truly adapt these pieces for an adult readership. Therefore, the stories can take on new and more compelling meaning due to the tones, themes, and subtleties of the artwork. Since every adapted story has its own distinct voice and style, Graphic Classics uses different artists for each story; thus, each volume includes a wide range of drawing styles that can be a delight or challenge depending upon the reader. Often, this visualizing process can produce added effects or provide readers with interesting digressions from the original text. For instance, in *Graphic Classics: Mark Twain*, Kevin Atkinson's adaptation of "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" provides readers with an iconic robust character with a barrel chest and chiseled body. His body evokes images of **superheroes**, which

corresponds well with the protagonist's larger-than-life persona within the actual story. Thus, Atkinson simultaneously stays true to the story and invokes something of American heroic traditions with its projection of male protagonists from Twain to **Superman**.

The other method used within this series is to provide the straightforward text but add illustrations to enhance particular moments and enrich the reader's experience. These are used at times with poetry or very short pieces at the beginning of an anthology, or for transitions to larger pieces. While these are the two dominant styles, *Graphic Classics* also finds ways to blend these approaches and experiment with artistic styles. In Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," adapted by Tom Pomplun, the art provides a striking example of the work's ingenuity. In the first half of the novella, Simon Gane provides the comic art in a style of thick, rigid, and highly angular lines which in many ways evokes the moods and mentalities of the story's setting in Victorian London The second, personal confessional part of the novella is executed as an illustrated text. The text in its entirety is laid out alongside very different drawings by Michael Slack, whose roundish and caricatured drawings on a gray scale contrast sharply with Gane's work.

On occasion, *Graphic Classics* republishes its previous volumes as updated editions with added stories. Up until 2009, *Graphic Classics* was a black-and-white publication with the exception of cover art; but with *Science Fiction Classics: Graphic Classics Volume Seventeen*, they began experimenting with publishing in full color. Though publishers are hesitant to admit it, *Graphic Classics* has been the major influence on the return to classics attempted by many other publishers in the latter half of the 2000s. Other publishers following their tradition include the publisher Classical Comics, Lerner Publishing Group's imprint, Graphic Universe, NBM's relaunching of the *Classics Illustrated* series, and **Marvel Comics** imprint Marvel Illustrated.

See also: Adaptations from Other Media

Lance Eaton

GREEN ARROW. An archery-themed **DC Comics** superhero, the Green Arrow (alter egos Oliver Queen and Connor Hawke), was created by Mort Weisinger and George Papp in 1941. Although he has had a number of origin stories over the years, the majority follow the same plot: rich playboy Oliver Queen falls off of a yacht, washes up on a primitive jungle island, and is forced to take up archery to survive. When he discovers smugglers on the island, he uses his new skill to bring them to justice, and returns to his home in Star City determined to fight crime using archery and a number of trick arrows.

Green Arrow first appeared in ***More Fun Comics*** #73 in 1941. A major figure in the **Golden Age**, he survived that period, but was mostly a second-string character during the **Silver Age**. Green Arrow remained a second-string character, usually appearing as

a back-up feature. Mort Weisinger wrote the majority of these stories; however, **Jack Kirby** (who contributed the deserted-island origin story) also contributed a few stories in 1958. During this time, Green Arrow's stories were largely driven by his trick arrows, such as the net arrow, the rocket arrow, the fire extinguisher arrow, and, perhaps the most famous of these, the boxing-glove arrow.

In 1969, writer **Dennis O'Neil** and artist **Neal Adams** began to revise the character; this led to the loss of Queen's fortune, as well as his team-up with the Silver Age **Green Lantern** (Hal Jordan) on a now-classic road trip across America and the depths of interstellar space. O'Neil saw Green Lantern as a "cop, a crypto-fascist," who meant well but was hampered by his willingness to take orders without questioning them. O'Neil proposed Green Arrow as a challenge to the mindset of "liberal, vaguely well-meaning people of middle-class origin." In essence, Green Arrow was to act as Green Lantern's conscience. So he did, in stories that addressed issues of drug abuse, racial inequality, and class struggles, many of which contributed to or solidified the increasingly left-leaning political orientation of the Green Arrow character. Green Arrow also began an on-again, off-again relationship with the Black Canary (Dinah Lance) in the course of this series.

When Mike Grell took over writing duties in 1987, he moved the character from Star City to Seattle and attempted to take Green Arrow in more plausible directions: no more trick arrows, no more super-science, and, as time went on, fewer and fewer contacts with other DC characters. Grell's run began with the highly praised miniseries *The Longbow Hunters* (1987), in which Green Arrow faced down a Vietnam-era veteran who was murdering prostitutes, and spent the rest of the book pursing a Japanese assassin who is out for revenge. One of the clearest signs of Grell's more pragmatic take on Green Arrow was that Green Arrow agrees in the end to take a bribe from a drug lord, keeping that money for himself rather than giving it to the poor. *Longbow Hunters* is seen as the equivalent to **Frank Miller's *The Dark Night Returns*** in the tone it set for future writers.

Writers after Grell slowly returned Green Arrow to DC's main continuity. The character participated in DC's mid-1990s crossover event, Zero Hour, in which he was forced to kill Hal Jordan, who had become the power-crazed demigod Parallax. Shaken by this turn of events, Queen retired to a monastery, where he met his biological son, Connor Hawke, and trained him as an archer. Eventually, Queen returned to his Green Arrow duties, but in 1995, while infiltrating a group of ecoterrorists, Green Arrow chose to sacrifice himself to save Metropolis, and Oliver Queen died. After this, Connor Hawke became Green Arrow (with a brief stint as a member of the **Justice League of America**, as well as in his own series), until the Green Arrow series was canceled in the late 1990s.

Kevin Smith restarted the Green Arrow title in the aftermath of *Final Night* (1996). Parallax, having not quite died, elects to restart Earth's sun; before he does so, he chooses to "fix things," and resurrects Oliver Queen's body. Queen eventually returns, body and soul, and agrees to share the protection of Star City and the Green Arrow

mantle with his son. Later writers, including most recently Judd Winick, have continued providing Green Arrow with a number of challenges and changes, including the destruction of Star City during the events of Final Crisis and his marriage to Dinah Shore in 2008.

Like Batman before him, Green Arrow has teamed up with two younger sidekicks, both of whom have operated under the name "Speedy." The first of these, Roy Harper, was Queen's ward from Green Arrow's first appearance, and remained so until he left to found the **Teen Titans** in the 1970s. In 1971, he was the focus of a two-issue storyline dealing with drug abuse; Harper was addicted to heroin and blamed his addiction on Green Arrow's lack of concern for him. Since then, he has operated as several **superheroes**, including Arsenal and the Red Arrow. Since 2004, his replacement as Speedy has been Mia Dearden, a teenage prostitute whom Green Arrow rescued during the early days of his return from the dead. He agreed to watch out for her, and she later proved to be very capable and street smart. She has also learned that she is HIV positive, making her one of the few HIV-positive superheroes in comics today.

Green Arrow's cultural importance lies in his politics. Since the 1970s, he has been the most consistently left-liberal superhero in DC's collection. More than simply upholding the law, Green Arrow tries to see that it is applied fairly to rich and poor, black and white alike. He is as likely to show compassion toward the street criminal as show no mercy to the "boardroom fat cats;" this was especially true during Oliver Queen's run as mayor of Star City. Green Arrow demonstrates that he is more closely concerned with the social dimensions of crime in Star City, and writers have often used his character to give grittier, more real portraits of crime in comics.

Jacob Lewis

GREEN LANTERN. Created by artist Martin Nodell (most commonly known as Mart Dellon) and scripter Bill Finger, Green Lantern originated during the **Golden Age** and has become one of the central **superhero** characters in the **DC Comics** stable, though the name has actually been assumed by several different characters. According to Maggie Thompson, senior editor of the *Comic's Buyer Guide*, Nodell, while riding on the New York City subway on his way to All-American Publishers in 1940, noticed a train operator waving a green light by the side of the track. This experience led Nodell to develop the story of Alan Scott, a young engineer who, after surviving a train crash, finds in the debris of the wreck a lantern made from a green meteor. Scott uses the lantern to create a ring, which gives him superpowers, including flight. He goes on to use his powers to become a crime fighter. Green Lantern is an almost unbeatable entity at this time; however, the powers of his ring do not work on wood. Because of his inability to fight wood, many of his villains are made out of wood or use wooden weapons. The Alan Scott/Green Lantern's archenemy is a **zombie** strongman based on a 19th-century children's rhyme, Solomon Grundy, who is partly made up of woody plant growth, making him resistant to the Green Lantern's power. The Alan Scott character first appeared in the July 1940,

issue #16 of ***All-American Comics*** in an eight-page original story. Afterwards, he received his own starring role in a comic, as well as appearing in ***All-Star Comics*** as a member of the **Justice Society of America**, and *Comic Cavalcade* with the **Flash** and **Wonder Woman**. After a drop in the popularity of superheroes after World War II, Green Lantern found his title cancelled after issue #38, May–June 1949. The character would continue to appear in *All-Star Comics* until that title was cancelled with issue #57, February–March 1951. The Green Lantern would not appear again for eight years, and Alan Scott would not appear again for almost ten years.

By 1959, DC Comics, under the direction of editor Julius Schwartz, had started to adapt the stable of All-American characters from the 1930s and 1940s into new versions that were proving to be extremely popular. Instead of reintroducing the Alan Scott version of the Green Lantern, DC returned to the green ring idea, but with the wearer of the ring now being a test pilot by the name of Hal Jordan, introduced in *Showcase* #22 (September–October 1959). Jordan is introduced to Abin Sur, a dying member of an intergalactic police society, the Green Lantern Corps, and is given the ring and the powers that come with it. Jordan is informed by a council of blue, bald alien "judges" called The Guardians of the Universe, that he will be the intergalactic policeman for the planet Earth, and that it is his responsibility to uphold intergalactic law and order as ordained by The Guardians. Hal Jordan becomes something of an anomaly compared to superheroes that had come before him. In a story written by John Broome and **Gil Kane**, Jordan is given a family that includes siblings, all of whom were living in contrast to the orphaned **Batman**, **Superman**, and **Wonder Woman**. Kane in particular had a very distinct idea of what the Green Lantern should look like. "He complained, for example, that the inkers who went over his pencil drawing for Green Lantern did not understand the diamond shape that he intended for the costume. 'They always made it look like a sleeveless sweater, which bothered me to no end'" (Martin, 2000). Other highlights of the pre-1970s Green Lantern were the friendship that he developed with the **Flash** and the battle he had with the previous owner of the mantle of Green Lantern, Alan Scott.

Beginning with *Green Lantern* issue #76, April–May 1970, Schwartz had two younger creators, **Dennis O'Neil** and **Neal Adams**, move the bimonthly title away from light **science fiction** into a look at the problems of contemporary society. The title *Green Lantern Co-Starring the* ***Green Arrow***, later shortened to *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*, appeared on the cover, and the title started looking at topics ranging from black power to heroin addiction. The characters of Green Lantern and Oliver Queen/Green Arrow were personified as polar opposites, with Green Lantern as a by-the-books symbol of authority, while the Green Arrow is a free spirited left-wing populist with a strong interest in the sociology of the American landscape. While the run of the book under O'Neil and Adams was a critical success, leading to reviews in such mainstream publications as the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Newsweek*, the team was never commercially successful. After only 14 issues, the team-up and first great

experiment in adult content in a mainstream comic book title ended with issue #90 in April–May of 1972.

After the turn toward social realism, the title reverted back to an even more extreme look at the science fiction aspects of the character. The continuation of the Green Lantern story moved away from the Green Lantern of Earth and started to look into the adventures of Green Lanterns from other planets in the universe. Since the mid-1970s there have also been two characters that have served as alternative Green Lanterns to the Green Lantern of Earth: Guy Gardner, who was supposed to be the Green Lantern had he not been so far away, and John Stewart, an African American architect who was Green Lantern after Hal Jordan resigned from the Corp for a period of time. The 1990s into the 2000s have been a particularly interesting time for Green Lantern. In January of 1994, Kyle Rayner became the new Green Lantern after the destruction of Hal Jordan's home of Coast City, and Jordan's subsequent mental and emotional breakdown. Since then, Alan Scott has reappeared and was briefly rechristened the Sentinel, and Hal Jordan has taken on the identities of Parallax, The Spectre and is, as of this writing, serving once again as the Green Lantern for Space Sector 2814, which includes Earth.

Jason Gallagher

GRENDEL. Introduced in 1980 in *Comico Primer*, Grendel is representative of the prominence of villain-protagonists in the comics of the 1980s. Created by Matt Wagner (writer and artist) as a compelling personification of darkness and evil, Grendel is nevertheless a complex and ever-evolving character who changes greatly throughout the twisting, turning, and violent plot line of the series. The original *Grendel* is an anonymous individual who has assumed the identity of the novelist Hunter Rose, but he assumes a series of other identities in the series as well. Wagner has alluded to Grendels predating Hunter Rose, but there are no stories of them to date. Running a criminal empire while maintaining the facade of a socialite's life, Grendel is merciless, aside from his compulsion to protect a young girl, Stacey Palumbo. Physically, he is lithe, dresses entirely in black aside from white gloves/gauntlets, and wears a full-face mask tied behind his head. His principal weapon is an electrified double fork on a long staff.

The initial *Grendel*'s principal foe is the police detective Argent, a man-wolf. A cursed Algonquin Indian, Argent is driven to stop Grendel at any means. Both are protective of the child Stacey Palumbo. When Grendel mistakenly believes Argent has abducted Stacy, he insists on a battle that kills Rose and badly wounds Argent, who dies in battle with Rose's successor. This story is told in the original Grendel title and retold in an Art Deco–driven visual tour de force, a series of backup stories in Wagner's book *Mage*, later collected as *Devil By the Deed*. All subsequent Grendel stories have "Devil" in their titles.

At this point, Grendel becomes a mantle of aggression, power, and self-destruction. The next Grendel is Stacey's daughter, Christine Spar, who assumes the identity to fight

a Kabuki **vampire** who has stolen her son. Brian Le Sung, stage manager for the kabuki troupe, who believed himself possessed by the sprit of Grendel, succeeds her.

At this point, Grendel takes many catalytic turns, from thematic, creative, and business perspectives. After publication by Comico from its inception, the title moved to **Dark Horse** following Comico's bankruptcy. During the Dark Horse run, Wagner offered writing innovations, occasionally returning to the artwork as well. However, other artists served during much of this run, notably the Pander Brothers on the Christine Spar storyline.

The most important evolution in the series has involved the perception of the central character. Rather than an inherited mantle, like The Phantom, Grendel became a consciousness, a force of aggression and malevolence, akin to the contemporary mainstream Christian perception of the Devil. This was a catalytic point in the narrative.

Captain Wiggins, who ends Li Sung's Grendel role by shooting him, writes several Grendel novels, garnering commercial success in his retirement from the police force. However, as Wiggins's cybernetic eye gradually fails, he sees people's emotional states manifested in their appearances. Written and illustrated by Wagner, this series of stand-alone Grendel stories incorporates visual elements of German expressionist film. Rather than becoming a new Grendel, Wiggins tells stories of a past Grendel, Hunter Rose. This alludes to the evolving nature of the Grendel persona.

Grendel resumes in a corrupt post-Apocalyptic theocracy in the 26th century. In *God and the Devil*, a demented factory worker dresses as Grendel, is deluded by the influences of a designer drug (also called Grendel) to believe that God hates him. A thorn in the side of Pope Innocent XLII, the new Grendel is confronted by a Vatican police force led by Church lackey Orion Assante. Pope Innocent is revealed as the vampire Tujiro, Christine Spar's original nemesis. This brings the story full circle, reinforcing the concept of Grendel as an eternal force. The art in this and subsequent storylines echoes the aggression of the narrative, whether by Wagner or others. Notable artists on the title from this point include Bernie Mireault**, Tim Sale,** and John K. Snyder III.

Subsequent storylines manipulate the Grendel concept further. Grendel becomes a Paladin, Grendel Prime (who was in turn a cyborg), educating a royal heir in exile, who is in training to assume the mantle of the Grendel-Khan. Numerous Grendels, pretenders to the mantle, are encountered during the pair's travels and lessons. These and subsequent storylines offer bloody post-Apocalyptic battles, tinged with battle, survival, and metaphors despairing the human condition.

Replete with political intrigue and convoluted plot twists, the storyline of *Grendel: War Child* culminates in the apprentice, Jupiter Assante, assuming the mantle of Grendel-Khan. After discovering a piece of the Sun Disc, a powerful weapon and communications device, inside him, Grendel Prime rides into obscurity, leaving the newly installed Grendel-Khan controlling the remains of the world.

Wagner wrote and drew two Grendel/**Batman** crossover stories, each in two parts. The first narrative, *Devil's Riddle/Devil's Masque*, involves a direct conflict between the

Hunter Rose Grendel and Batman. The sole reason Rose undertakes his crime wave in Gotham is simply to see if he succeeds. The story has an intriguing subplot concerning two young women whose lives are swept up in events, with catastrophic results. The second story, *Devil's Bones/Devil's Dance*, has Batman confronted by the Grendel Prime cyborg. This story revolves around a search through time for Hunter Rose's skull and is more action driven than its predecessor. These two stories are particularly noteworthy in another way. One of Wagner's stated goals in *Grendel* was to create a dark character, an extension of Batman. Mage, Wagner's character of light (modeled in part on **Superman**), balances this dark character.

Other writers have had their turn with the character, including **Greg Rucka**, co-author (with Wagner) of the novel *Grendel: Past Prime*. Wagner has allowed other creators to adapt Grendel in short story anthologies. The first, *Grendel: Black, White and Red* appeared in 1998; its successor, *Grendel: Red, White and Black* in 2002. **Mike Allred**, Jill Thompson, d'Isreali, and Chris Sprouse made notable contributions.

Wagner has won two **Eisner Awards** for the series, for Best Limited Series for *Grendel: War Child* in 1993, and for Best Short Story in 1999 for *Grendel: Black, White and Red*.

Diana Green

GROO THE WANDERER. The story of a stupid but deadly barbarian who wanders around a fantasy world causing hilarious disasters, Sergio Aragonés's *Groo the Wanderer* is a perennial fan favorite. It was also a pioneering work in the evolution of creator-owned comics.

Aragonés, a native of Spain who spent his early life in Mexico, emigrated to the United States in 1962 and started working at *Mad Magazine* in 1963. Besides *Groo* he is most famous for his marginal illustrations and wordless strips in *Mad*. In 1970, he befriended Mark Evanier, then an assistant to **Jack Kirby** and now a successful TV and comic book writer. Aragonés's initial sketches for Groo date back to the mid-1970s, but at that time no company was willing to publish the character unless Aragonés agreed to give them ownership of it. Aragonés thus left Groo in the drawer until 1981, when Evanier asked Aragonés to contribute to *Destroyer Duck* #1, a comic book published by the independent company Eclipse Comics as a benefit for Steve Gerber's lawsuit over ***Howard the Duck***. Aragonés offered Evanier any of his unpublished material, and Evanier chose to publish the first Groo story. *Destroyer Duck*'s success helped show that independent creator-owned comic books were commercially viable, and fan reaction to the Groo story was positive enough that Aragonés felt there was a market for the character. Lacking confidence in his English, Aragonés hired Evanier to write dialogue for future Groo stories, an arrangement that continues today. The first full-length *Groo* comics were published by another independent company, Pacific Comics. Pacific soon went bankrupt, but the creator-owned concept was now popular enough that **Marvel Comics** established a creator-owned imprint,

Epic Comics. Aragonés transferred the series to Epic, where it became perhaps the first creator-owned title distributed to the newsstand market, and 120 issues were published before Epic's demise in 1994. The series then moved to **Image Comics** and later (1998) to its current publisher, **Dark Horse Comics**. *Groo* remains in active, though sporadic, publication and is thus one of the oldest creator-owned properties in American comics.

Like **Conan the Barbarian**, his most obvious influence, Groo is an itinerant barbarian mercenary. Unlike Conan, however, Groo is appallingly stupid. He misunderstands the most obvious situations, fails to anticipate the consequences of his actions, does the exact opposite of what he is told, and has no memory to speak of. Therefore, Groo's adventures usually end in disaster. Any ship with Groo on it inevitably sinks, and the towns Groo visits usually end up in ruins. Although every *Groo* story ends with a moral, Groo himself never learns anything from his mistakes; on witnessing the disasters he causes, he merely asks "Did I err?" Yet Groo is a deadly swordsman, able to defeat entire armies singlehandedly, and he loves nothing more than a "fray" (except cheese dip, his passion for which is a running joke). Yet Groo is no asset to an army, because he tends to slay his allies as well as his enemies. Despite having caused more deaths than a typical pandemic, however, Groo is rarely presented as a villain. The people he kills or bankrupts are often presented as deserving it; he sometimes performs good deeds, though usually by mistake; and on rare occasions he even experiences personal growth, such as in issue #100 of the Epic series when he learns to read. *Groo* stories often follow a formula—Groo wanders into a town or village and either gets hired to do a job, or volunteers to save the local people from a menace, but ends by causing disaster for his employer or the people he was trying to save—and fans often joke that *Groo* features the same story every issue. However, the *Groo* formula is surprisingly versatile and adaptable. The series features a large supporting cast, including Groo's canine companion Rufferto, based on Aragonés's own dog; the wise but unscrupulous Sage; the Red Sonja-like Chakaal; the overrated hero Arcadio; and Captain Ahax, whose ships are repeatedly sunk by Groo. Recurring villains include the mother-and-daughter witches Arba and Dakarba, and the mercenary commander Taranto, who repeatedly convinces Groo of his good intentions and then tries to kill him. Moreover, Groo's fictional world has some uncanny similarities to our real one, and many Groo stories use the standard narrative formula to satirize real-world social problems. For example, the **Eisner**-nominated "The Book Burners" (Epic #78) is a polemic against censorship; "The Plight of the Drazils" (Image #7) is about illegal immigration; and the 2007–8 miniseries *Groo: Hell on Earth* is about global warming and features thinly disguised caricatures of George W. Bush and Al Gore.

Even if Evanier were serious about the monotony of the stories, *Groo* would still be notable for Aragonés's artwork, which features perfect comic timing and an obsessive level of detail. Most issues of *Groo* begin with a two-page splash that features a fully rendered background and several dozen individual figures. Aragonés can produce

such compositions while still meeting deadlines because of his legendary speed. Evanier calls him the world's fastest cartoonist, and at conventions he gives exhibitions in which he and other cartoonists execute impromptu drawings in response to Evanier's instructions. In earlier years Aragonés encouraged close scrutiny of his artwork by including a hidden message in each issue. For most of its run, the series has been colored by Tom Luth and lettered by Stan Sakai. A final notable feature of *Groo* is the creators' close relationship with the readers; many issues begin with a gag strip starring Evanier and Aragonés, and the series has an impressive repertoire of running jokes between the creators and the fans. In the most notable of these, Evanier repeatedly worked the word "mulch" into his dialogue; then, in response to letters asking him to define it, he repeatedly cited a tedious dictionary definition of the word.

Although the barbarian genre that inspired it has lost much of its popularity, *Groo* has lasted for a quarter century on its own merits. In late 2008 it was announced that a *Groo* animated movie is in production.

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Aaron Kashtan

GRUENWALD, MARK (1953–96). Born in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, Mark Gruenwald was influenced by his father's love of comics, and turned that into his life's work. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh in December of 1975 with a BA in Art (with a minor in Literature), Gruenwald moved to New York City and unsuccessfully marketed his art portfolio to **Marvel** and **DC**. While working in a bank, Gruenwald started a self-published fanzine titled *Omniverse* in the fall of 1977, which he then used as a marketing device for his editorial and writing skills. This proved successful, and in February of 1978 Marvel's new executive editor, Jim Shooter, hired Gruenwald as an assistant editor.

By the end of 1978 Gruenwald had added writing duties on *Spider-Woman* to his editorial responsibilities, and was soon the regular writer on books such as *Marvel Two-in-One* and ***Thor***. Moving from assistant to full-time editor in 1982, he became the writer for ***Captain America*** in 1985 and remained on that book for just over a decade, introducing characters such as the Serpent Society, Flag-Smasher, and the U.S. Agent. His other notable runs include the 60-issue run of *Quasar* (a very strait-laced cosmic hero), and his 12-issue *Squadron Supreme* miniseries, which addressed questions about what would really happen if superhumans chose to take over the world for the benefit of humanity.

In 1986, Gruenwald began a regular column, "Mark's Remarks," in the books he edited. Where **Stan Lee** had once used a similar column as a promotional venue, during the 10-year run of "Mark's Remarks," Gruenwald provided a unique and considered viewpoint, both letting readers in on Marvel's processes and also pondering issues including comics as modern mythology, Captain America and flag-burning, and

the future of the comics industry. Gruenwald was perhaps best-known for his focus on continuity (the existing back-story of comics characters), and he originated the encyclopedia-like *Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe* in 1982, a series continued through multiple later editions and mirrored by DC in their *Who's Who in the DC Universe* series. Before being hired by Marvel, Gruenwald had penned a self-published 1976 *Treatise on Reality in Comic Literature* as well as the more public-friendly 1977 *A Primer on Reality in Comic Books* (co-written with his father Myron Gruenwald). Each discussed the nature of comic book reality and alternate universes, as did both issues of his 1977–79 fanzine *Omniverse*, and Gruenwald carried these ideas into his professional work; his definitions and language are still used in comic books today.

Noted for his vibrant sense of humor, Gruenwald's last request was honored following his unexpected fatal heart attack on August 12, 1996, and his ashes were mixed into the first trade paperback reprinting of his Squadron Supreme miniseries. Upon the 10th anniversary of his death in 2006, Marvel Comics began referring to him as the Patron Saint of Marvel.

Mark O'English



HARVEY AWARDS. Named for pioneering artist-writer **Harvey Kurtzman** and administered by the publisher **Fantagraphics**, the Harvey Awards have been given annually since 1988 for achievement in the field of comic books. Awards are given both to works (such as Best Continuing or Limited Series and Best Graphic Album) and to individuals (such as Best Writer and Best Artist or Penciler). Finalists are nominated through an open vote of comics professionals; winners are then selected by a final round of voting by these professionals. The awards have been given at a variety of different fan conventions over the years, though in 2004 and 2005, the awards were presented at the Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art in New York City.

M. Keith Booker

HEAVY METAL. *Heavy Metal* was founded as the English-language edition of the French comics magazine *Metal Hurlant*. Its pages featured edgy **science fiction** and **fantasy** comics, and it was an influential source for American comics artists to discover European artists such as **Jean Giraud**, better known as **Moebius**.

Heavy Metal was founded in 1977 and published originally by National Lampoon. Its format was a full-color glossy magazine that featured, in addition to comics content, traditional magazine content focusing on science fiction, film, and other areas of related interest. After originally focusing exclusively on French comics for the first years of its existence, the focus of the magazine was broadened to incorporate creative contributions from American writers and artists.

For many Americans, *Heavy Metal* was their first introduction to the world of French-language comics. Referred to in Europe as *bande-dessinée*, they are created by artists from France, Belgium, and elsewhere. In the late-1970s, while American

mainstream comics were obsessed with **superhero** stories, French-language comics featured fantasy, science-fiction, and **Western** stories. Generally, French comics are more interested in presenting a visually compelling product than American superhero comics, where visual style is subordinate to presenting the details of the plot. This preference for showing striking, detailed visual imagery guided the editorial policy of *Heavy Metal*. Among the artists showcased in *Heavy Metal* were Europeans Enki Bilal and Moebius, veteran artists of American **underground** comics, Richard Corben and Vaughn Bodé, and American comics artists Michael William Kaluta and Bernie Wrightson. The pages of *Heavy Metal* were also the home to fine artists and illustrators such as H. R. Geiger, Boris Vallejo and Julie Bell, and Esteban Maroto. The magazine also included contributions from writers such as Harlan Ellison, and filmmakers such as Roger Corman and Alejandro Jodorowsky.

Heavy Metal was respected among comics creators as being one of the first publishers to offer creator ownership. Mainstream comics, which were primarily done on a work-for-hire basis at established company-owned franchises, offered few opportunities for creators to express their talents with original material. *Heavy Metal* offered artists mass distribution in a high quality, full-color glossy magazine alongside internationally respected artists, as well as the opportunity to own the rights to the material submitted to the magazine. Some new comics artists, such as Rick Veitch and Stephen Bissette submitted early work to *Heavy Metal*, and adopted *Heavy Metal*'s stance of creator ownership in their later publishing endeavors such as publishing and creator rights advocacy. The magazine also linked together different groups in comics and the science-fiction and fantasy community. *Heavy Metal* attracted contributions from mainstream comics creators, from writers and artists associated with **Warren Publications** magazines such as *Creepy* or *Eerie*, and from the writers and artists of 1960s and 1970s underground and **adult comics**.

Several stories from *Heavy Metal* were adapted into animation to create a *Heavy Metal* film. Released in 1981, the film was animated by several different animation studios, and featured voice-over acting by notable comedic actors such as John Candy and Harold Ramis, along with a soundtrack featuring music by Journey, Devo, Cheap Trick, and Black Sabbath. The film became a cult classic that attracted a wider following for the original *Heavy Metal* magazine. The popularity of the film of *Heavy Metal* has thus far spawned one sequel, *Heavy Metal 2000*; and another sequel is, at the time of this writing, in the works.

In 1991, *Heavy Metal* was bought out by Kevin Eastman, who also took control of the editorial decisions for the magazine. Eastman was the co-creator, with Peter Laird, of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, which quickly transformed from an underground, creator-owned project into a multi-million dollar international entertainment franchise. Eastman participated in the public discussions over creator ownership in comics through the 1980s, discussions made somewhat possible by *Heavy Metal*'s stance in favor of creator ownership.

Eastman maintains editorial and publication control over *Heavy Metal* to this day. The magazine is less widely read, but has a strong core following that supports the

magazine, as well as book compilations of comics and artwork issued by *Heavy Metal*. Eastman's editorial choices for the magazine remain edgy and supportive of quality artistic projects from European or American creators. Arguably, the magazine is now more openly sexual in content than in earlier years, yet the magazine has never lacked sexual content. Under Eastman's ownership, the magazine has maintained publication through difficult years, and continues to be many American readers' principal point of contact with European comics.

See also: European Comics

Robert O'Nale

HELLBLAZER. A comics series, initially written by Jamie Delano and drawn by John Ridgway, that featured the exploits of John Constantine, who first appeared as a mysterious British mage who came to the aid of **Swamp Thing** during **Alan Moore's** ground-breaking run on that series. Along with *Swamp Thing*, *Hellblazer* served as one of the flagship titles in **DC Comics**' Vertigo line, a group of **horror** and **superhero** comics that shared mature themes and more unconventional storytelling and artistic styles.

After Delano's initial run, the series became a showcase for some of the top British comics writers, including **Garth Ennis**, Paul Jenkins, **Warren Ellis** (whose run came to a premature end when DC chose to "pulp" a controversial story involving a school shooting that would have appeared the week following the Columbine shooting), Mike Carey, Andy Diggle, Peter Milligan, **Grant Morrison**, and **Neil Gaiman**. In addition, Scottish mystery novelists Denise Mina and Ian Rankin, Australian cartoonist **Eddie Campbell**, and American writers **Brian Azzarello** and Jason Aaron have contributed to the series.

According to Moore, Constantine was created at the request of artists Steve Bissette and John Totleben, who wanted to draw a character who looked like Sting, the lead singer of the Police. When Constantine first appeared in *Swamp Thing* during the year-long "American Gothic" storyline, he was a well-dressed, mysterious figure who manipulated Swamp Thing by offering knowledge of his newly discovered elemental nature.

In the *Hellblazer* series, Jamie Delano established a tone of supernatural horror combined with sharp social criticism of Margaret Thatcher's conservative government. Constantine battled corporate and governmental manipulation of the supernatural realms early in the series, but Delano also had him confront the more conventional horror of a serial killer in the "Family Man" storyline. In the first storyline, Constantine suffers a serious accident, and, in order to hasten his recovery, he receives a blood transfusion from the demon Nergal. Constantine's demon blood has served as a significant plot point in later stories.

Delano also fleshed out Constantine's back story, including an early career as the lead singer in a short-lived punk band called "Mucous Membrane." While the band

was in Newcastle for a gig, Constantine had one of his first traumatic experiences with magic, when the failed exorcism of a young girl named Astra caused the girl to be dragged into Hell. Constantine then spent several years in Ravenscar mental hospital as a result.

Ennis followed Delano and introduced Constantine's primary rival: "The First of the Fallen," a replacement for Satan, who could not be used at the time due to events in Gaiman's ***Sandman*** series, where Lucifer had recently abdicated the throne of Hell. The mutual antagonism between Constantine and the First of the Fallen would develop throughout Ennis's run, and later writers like Paul Jenkins and Mike Carey would develop it further.

A common strategy among the writers has been to run Constantine through a series of trials and challenges that lead to his life crumbling apart or his rejection of magic, which then sets up a new status quo for the next writer. At the end of Mike Carey's run, for example, Constantine burned his books and artifacts and destroyed connections with the London magic community. Carey used characters from throughout the series and unified earlier plotlines into a larger metanarrative that places Constantine at the center of a power struggle between the First of the Fallen and other demons for control of Hell.

Constantine is a chain-smoking magician and con man in the hardboiled tradition. Like the classic hardboiled detective, he functions on the outside of society and only enters the public realm when his particular skills are needed. He often finds himself reluctantly defending humanity from the forces of both Heaven and Hell, usually by pitting both sides against each other. In this respect, many writers have treated him as a trickster figure, who serves to challenge both the earthly and metaphysical authorities who manipulate the lives of average humans. His moral complexity is one of his strongest characteristics: he must often endure significant personal losses in order to survive or succeed, including ruthlessly sacrificing friends, family, and colleagues in his efforts. Constantine also moves smoothly between levels of the British class hierarchy: he can be found at various times in aristocratic magic clubs and in London flophouses. He is also one of the few serial comic characters who ages in real time, though his aging may be retarded by Nergal's demon blood.

The city of London also plays an important role in *Hellblazer*, and writers frequently tap into the city's history of crime, magic, and mystery. Most writers emphasized Constantine's connection to London, locating adventures in Brixton, Camden, Portobello, Hamstead Heath, Paddington, and Peckham, among others. In particular, Ellis created the character known as "Map," a mage who lives in the London Underground and represents the magical spirit of the city. Jenkins connected Constantine to the broader realm of British folklore and mythology, while Mina moved him temporarily to Glasgow, and Azzarello took him on a tour of the United States.

A group of associates, friends, and fellow magicians often assist Constantine, though this group changes frequently due to the high mortality rate of his companions. Recurring members of the cast include Chas Chandler, a London cab driver who remains in

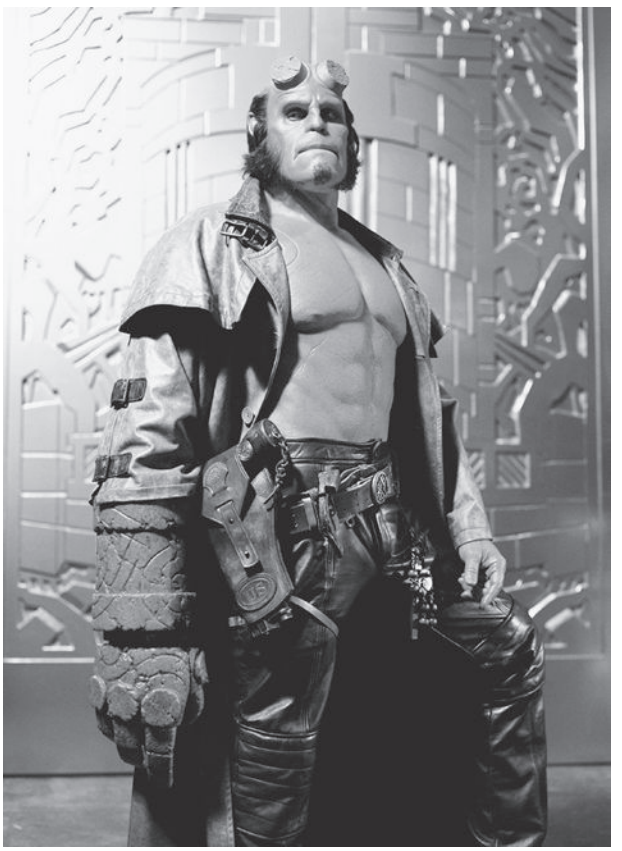
Constantine's debt due to a past favor; Papa Midnite, a powerful African magus who has had an antagonistic relationship with the hero; and Gemma, Constantine's niece who plans to carry on her uncle's work.

In his *Sandman* series, Gaiman introduced Lady Johanna Constantine, John's Elizabethan ancestor. With this character, Gaiman implies that the Constantine family serves important historical roles as magic users and tricksters, and other writers have expanded this list of Constantine ancestors. In 2005, a film version of the *Hellblazer* series, titled *Constantine*, was produced, starring Keanu Reeves as the hero. The film featured many of the characters from the series, including Papa Midnite and Chas, and particularly borrowed elements from Ennis's run on the series.

Andrew J. Kunka

HELLBOY. **Mike Mignola**'s signature character, a red, muscular half-demon with sawed-off horns and the Right Hand of Doom (an oversized rock-like hand that can bring about the end of the world) made his debut in 1993 at the San Diego Comic Con. From his humble beginnings as a section in a **Dark Horse Comics** giveaway, the conflicted demon has successfully crossed over into other media, including films, prose novels, and merchandise.

In 1994, as part of Dark Horse's Legend imprint, *Hellboy: Seeds of Destruction* was published as a four-issue miniseries. Scripted by **John Byrne**, it introduced the origin of Hellboy: summoned by Nazi occultists in World War II to help bring about the destruction of the world, the baby red demon is rescued when the ceremony is interrupted by U.S. troops. Professor Trevor Bruttenholm (pronounced "Broom"), a British parapsychologist working for the U.S. Bureau of Paranormal Research and Defense (B.P.R.D.), adopts and raises the demon as a son. Hellboy is secretly trained and educated as a paranormal investigator by the



Ron Perlman as Hellboy, in the 2004 live-action film by the same name, directed by Guillermo del Toro. Sony/Photofest

U.S. government. Readers were instantly drawn to Mignola's Lovecraftian tale that combined **horror** story aesthetics with **superhero** action; a loyal fanbase quickly formed.

Following this successful launch, Hellboy next appeared in a serialized story in ***Dark Horse Presents***, before future series gradually detailed his many adventures and further revealed his origins: "Hellboy: The Corpse/The Iron Shoes" (1996), "Hellboy: Wake the Devil" (1996), and "Hellboy: Almost Colossus" (1997). Hellboy reached an important milestone with the release of "The Conqueror Worm" (2004), which marked his 10-year anniversary. The many bizarre adventures span in time from the 1940s to the present, and often include sorcery, werewolves, **vampires**, and ghosts. **Nazis** of different varieties are also common occurrences: vampire Nazis, Nazis from space, and **zombie** Nazis. Hellboy grows to be the lead agent in the B.P.R.D, where he works with his good friend Abraham "Abe" Sapien, (an amphibious humanoid of mysterious origin that can breathe underwater), Elizabeth Sherman (Hellboy's pyrokinetic love-interest), and Roger (a large homunculus). A cast of equally fascinating characters make up Hellboy's enemies, including Grigori Rasputin, the infamous "Mad Monk" of Tsarist Russia, and Herman Von Klempt, a deranged Nazi scientist who is in fact a disembodied head kept alive inside a jar of liquid.

At the beginning of the series, Hellboy does not focus much on his demonic birthright, choosing instead to fight for good; but over time he must confront his true nature, with readers left to wonder whether he can escape his fate as a creature created to destroy humanity. Through his subsequent trials and tribulations, readers learn that Hellboy is certainly a force for good, with a strong will and desire to do the right thing. He disavows and rejects his destiny as a harbinger of the apocalypse—an act symbolized by a scene where he breaks of his horns. Mignola's flair for absurd humor shows up often when Hellboy faces both internal and external conflict with wise-cracks and sarcasm. A "blue-collar" hero, Hellboy would just as soon knock back a cold beer and light a stogie as send a demon back to Hell.

Hellboy's success has led to all manner of comic book and graphic novel tie-ins and crossovers, including appearances with **Batman,** Savage Dragon, and Pain Killer Jane. In 1997, a *Hellboy* novel was commissioned; entitled *The Lost Army*, it was written by Christopher Golden and illustrated by Mignola. That same year, *Hellboy Junior*, a satire, was also released. In the following years, Hellboy appeared in several more one-shots, specials, anthologies and miniseries, and additional Golden-penned novels.

The 2004 film, *Hellboy*, directed by Guillermo del Toro, brought a larger audience to the Hellboy character and storyline. Del Toro also directed a sequel, titled *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*, released in July 2008. Hellboy has also enjoyed success in animation, starring in a series of feature-length animated movies released directly to DVD. To date, only two of such films have been released: *Hellboy Animated: Sword of Storms* and *Hellboy Animated: Blood and Iron*.

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Richard L. Graham

HERGÉ (1907–83). Georges Remi, better known by his pen name "Hergé," is widely regarded as the greatest 20th-century master of the European *bande dessinée*. Most famous as the author of the ***Tintin*** books, which have sold well over 200 million copies worldwide, he also produced other comics and worked as a graphic designer.

Born and brought up in Brussels, Hergé experienced an uneventful childhood. His youth was marked by his involvement with the scouts and, starting in 1922, he regularly contributed illustrations to a variety of scouting periodicals. In 1925, Hergé found employment with the Catholic newspaper *Le Vingtième Siècle*, first in the subscriptions department and then as an illustrator. By 1928 he had become editor of *Le Petit Vingtième*, the paper's new weekly supplement for children, in which the first Tintin adventure would be launched in January 1929 (subsequently published as a black-and-white book in 1930). In 1932, Hergé married Germaine Kieckens who provided invaluable assistance as his career developed.

Hergé's meetings during 1934 and 1935 with a Chinese art student, Tchang Tchong-jen, led him to devote far greater attention to artistic technique and documentary source material. This is reflected in *The Blue Lotus* (1936), his first acknowledged masterpiece, and he continued thereafter to gain in proficiency both as a draftsman and as a storyteller.

Following the outbreak of World War II, the Tintin serials appeared in the newspaper *Le Soir*, which had come under German control. Banned from working for the press immediately after the occupation, Hergé continued to adapt his earlier black-and-white books to the new color format introduced in 1942 at his publisher's behest.

Once declared innocent of any war-time collaboration, Hergé could proceed in 1946 with the launch of *Tintin*, the weekly magazine in which all future Tintin stories would appear. In 1950 Hergé founded his "Studios Hergé" and began gathering a small team of assistants to allow for more elaborate working practices.

After the war Hergé suffered from bouts of depression that interrupted publication of three *Tintin* serials, and during the late 1950s he experienced further crises. His marriage with Germaine came under increased strain, but he managed to complete *Tintin in Tibet*—his most personal work—in 1959 before separating from Germaine in 1960.

His relationship with Fanny Vlamynck, a young colorist on his studio team who would later become his second wife, heralded a more relaxed phase of his life. New books were produced at a less hectic pace and Hergé devoted time to trips abroad and the enlargement of his contemporary art collection.

In 1979, the 50th anniversary of *Tintin* gave rise to almost uninterrupted celebrations to which Hergé attributed his increasing exhaustion. However, a bone marrow disorder was diagnosed early in the following year. The poignant reunion of Tchang and

a weakening Hergé in 1981, after nearly 46 years, generated intense media attention. On March 3, 1983 Hergé died in Brussels.

Today his works are held in ever higher esteem, and at auction his originals command higher prices than those of any other comic artist. On May 22, 2009, exactly 102 years after Hergé's birth, the strikingly-designed Musée Hergé at Louvain-la-Neuve was inaugurated to considerable acclaim.

Selected Bibliography: Farr, Michael. *The Adventures of Hergé: Creator of Tintin*. London: John Murray, 2007; Goddin, Philippe. *Hergé: Lignes de vie*. Brussels: Moulinsart, 2007.

Raphaël Taylor

HERNANDEZ BROTHERS. Brothers Gilbert "Beto" (1957–) and Jaime "Xaime" (1959–) Hernandez are among the most important figures to emerge from the development of independent or **alternative comics** in the 1980s. Another brother, Mario (1953–), has had a less visible career, but his occasional contributions should be noted. Raised in Oxnard, California, Los Bros Hernandez (as they call themselves) were encouraged to read comics by their mother, and were influenced by an eclectic range of popular culture, including **superhero** comics by **Jack Kirby** and **Steve Ditko**, ***Archie*** comics drawn by Dan De Carlo, Hank Ketcham's ***Dennis the Menace,*** and the **underground comics** of **Robert Crumb**. Aspects of Mexican American culture (such as masked wrestlers) would also influence their work, along with cheap horror films and the punk rock music that flourished in Southern California in the late 1970s.

Following a self-published issue in 1981, their black-and-white comic ***Love and Rockets*** has been published and regularly reprinted in various formats by **Fantagraphics** since 1982. Generally working separately in their own distinctive series, one of their significant mutual contributions has been to bring a Chicano perspective to a largely Anglo tradition in American comics: they have also been especially popular with female readers, when that audience has remained elusive for creators of American comics. The work of either brother would constitute a major contribution to American comics: together, produced in counterpoint, their work is an even greater achievement. Gilbert's densely populated series *Palomar*, inspired by Latin American magical realism, is set in the mythic Central American village of Palomar (the name often used to identify the series), while Jaime's narratives center around the Chicana friends and sometime lovers, Maggie and Hopey (Las Locas, the name summarizing the series), and the ethnically diverse Southern California subculture surrounding them. Frequent side projects by the prolific brothers have both derived from and diverged from *Love and Rockets*, but the rabid fan devotion the series generated has virtually demanded that they persistently return to their most beloved settings and characters, whom the artists have allowed to age and evolve.

Even before the original run of *Love and Rockets* (50 issues, 1981–96) was concluded to allow them to pursue other projects, both brothers had often worked on other comics, including writing and drawing early issues of the **science fiction** comic

Mr. X. In addition to numerous comics produced as offshoots of *Love and Rockets*, in 2006 Jaime's most popular character was featured in a story, "La Maggie La Loca," serialized in the Sunday *New York Times Magazine*. Always prolific, Gilbert's recent work has included the graphic novels *Sloth* (**DC**/Vertigo, 2006) and *Chance in Hell* (Fantagraphics, 2007), as well as the miniseries *Speak of the Devil* (**Dark Horse**, six issues, collected 2008). With a format change, *Love and Rockets* was revived in a second volume (20 issues, 2001–7), and in 2008, *Love and Rockets: New Stories* appeared as the first of a planned series of regularly released trade paperbacks.

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Corey K. Creekmur

HISTORY IN COMICS. Despite the creative freedom comics can achieve, history has been a persistent source of meaning in many of its genres. Comics use history diversely, as either fiction or nonfiction, to comment on real and imagined worlds: as the subject matter of **educational comics**; as the cultural context for personal biography; as the real-world background of fantastical or alternate histories; or, as the mythology of a wholly made-up universe and its denizens. These variations of fact and fiction tell both public and private histories, taking forms such as chronicles of real-world events and social movements, revisionist retellings of the accepted historical record, personal memoir, and even the classic **superhero** origin story. This flexible approach to history gives comics the ability to depict and speculate about multiple versions of reality—what has been and what might have been—by creatively adapting the methods of traditional historiography, especially those that relate the story of the individual to the wider world.

History as Education

Graphic narrative has long been used to educate its readers on a variety of topics, including history. Realistic historical comics expand the reach of graphic narrative beyond entertainment and often attempt to revise their readers' understandings of accepted history. For example, **Art Spiegelman**'s two-volume ***Maus*** (1986, 1991), perhaps the genre's best-known example, is often cited as a groundbreaking contribution to Holocaust studies. Spiegelman's story centers on the long-term effects of World War II, alternating between the memories that Vladek, a Holocaust survivor and Spiegelman's father, shares with his son and the author's own present-day attempts to come to terms with the survivor's guilt that has devastated his family. The story juxtaposes multiple moments in time, alternating between Vladek's wartime attempts to survive and the retelling and processing of that history by father and son, to highlight the creation of history as a process of storytelling. While the conflicted father-son relationship at the center of the present-day storyline personalizes the problems of history as one of

storytelling and familial inheritance, illustrations depicting human beings as animals—Jews as mice, **Nazis** as cats, the Polish as pigs, Americans as dogs—demonstrates some of the depersonalizing effects of rabid nationalism and war.

Transnational politics have increasingly become a central topic in historical comics. **Joe Sacco's *Palestine*** (1996) focuses on the West Bank and Gaza Strip conflicts. Writing himself into the comic as a participant-observer, Sacco recounts his experiences while visiting the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Though initially distanced from traumatic events in the region and the people affected, by the end of the book Sacco becomes familiar with the Palestinians and their story, even joining in some of their subversive activities. Broad social and political issues come to shape individual lives in many historical comics.

Jessica Abel's ***La Perdida*** (2006) follows the adventures of Carla, an American woman who attempts to reclaim her Mexican heritage by tracking down the Mexican father who abandoned her as a child. Though she lives in Mexico City for two years and learns to speak Spanish, she never finds her father and, instead, becomes entangled in a kidnapping scheme that forces her to flee the country. Acknowledging that she cannot change herself merely by changing her location, Carla returns to the United States, haunted by her past. Just as she never quite perceives what is really going on with her supposed friends in Mexico, her family history and that of Mexico remain in many ways a mystery to her. Although Abel lived in Mexico City for two years, she has noted that the book is not strictly autobiographical.

Harvey Pekar (writer), Gary Dumm (art), and Paul Buhle (editor) collaborate in *Students for a Democratic Society: A Graphic History* (2008) to recount the student activism of the 1950s and 1960s. While the first section of the book, "SDS Highlights" written by Pekar, attempts a comprehensive overview of the SDS and its various factions, the second section, "Local Scenes," presents a collection of personal stories written primarily by former SDS members about their immediate experiences in the movement. The numerous perspectives contained across the book's 27 chapters mirrors the diversity and conflicting opinions that informed the creation and led to the dissolution of the SDS as a non-hierarchical collective for political activism.

In *A People's History of American Empire* (2008) Mike Konopacki and Buhle join Howard Zinn in converting the latter's *A People's History of the United States* to comics form. Indictments of imperialism and aggressive warfare throughout the history of the United States are presented by a combination of historical facts, frequently unmentioned in American history classes and individual biographies, including that of Zinn. The book begins with Zinn questioning the possible reasons for the September 11 attacks on the United States, and continues to depict his own personal history as he uncovers potential causes in the lesser-known facts of U.S. history, especially the U.S. treatment of American Indians and invasions of foreign nations in the Pacific and Central America. As a populist history, this work combines questions of contemporary relevance with a personal accessibility to reach, and educate, a wide audience.

A host of creators have responded to the 9/11 attacks with creative work. In addition to the graphic narrative version of the 9/11 Commission Report, there are: Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004); Jeff Mason, **Will Eisner**, and Harvey Pekar's *9–11: Emergency Relief* (2002); Alissa Torres's *American Widow* (2008); and **Marvel**'s *Heroes: The World's Greatest Superhero Creators Honor the World's Greatest Heroes* (2001).

Several educational comics series also showcase key historical events or people. The prolific Rick Geary is one of the most well-known practitioners in this genre. In addition to his macabre *Library of Victorian Murder* series (featuring the likes of Jack the Ripper and Lizzie Borden), he has also published *J. Edgar Hoover: A Graphic Biography* (2008). Geary's black-and-white artwork illustrates dense amounts of research about murder investigations, as well as political figures, with ease for a popular audience.

Biography

Biographical history has been a central focus of comics since the advent of **superheroes** in the 1930s. The importance of biography is evident in the importance of the origin story to superhero comics. Every hero has an origin—a radioactive spider bite, interstellar immigration to Earth, untimely loss of one's parents—that is typically hidden from public knowledge and inextricably linked to the hero's abilities. Characters frequently become heroes by turning a personal tragedy into a power that serves the public good. Beyond this literary convention, true-to-life biographies have become increasingly common in comics and graphic novels, perhaps because of an increasingly older readership and a general fascination with memoir and reality programming in popular media.

In some cases, social history strongly informs the individual, biographical history. Howard Cruse's ***Stuck Rubber Baby*** (1995) explores the problems with which the book's main character, Toland Polk, must come to terms as a gay white man living in the American 1960s. Since his story is set against the backdrop of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, one of its major concerns becomes his attempts to overcome the racist attitudes that he internalized while growing up.

Set primarily in Iran, Marjane Satrapi's ***Persepolis*** (2003) recounts the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic Republic during the 1979 Iranian Revolution and afterward. Satrapi focuses these political developments to personal biography, as the story depicts her coping with the many social strictures placed on Muslim women and the constant threat of serious government censure. Though she describes various personal experiences, including a series of relationships with boyfriends, the history emphasizes issues of political and national identity. The two-volume, highly biographical work follows Satrapi in Tehran and Vienna (vol. 1) before her return to Iran, and her evaluation of how both she and her country have changed (vol. 2).

The division between public history and personal biography is often blurred for the sake of story. Andrew Helfer and Randy DuBurke's *Malcolm X: A Graphic*

Biography (2006) draws on a mix of biography and history to illustrate the many facets of the eventual Black Power leader before and after his personal story became a matter of public record. Unflattering information about Malcolm X's personal life and demonstrations of his political inconsistencies are intended to communicate the complexities of history, and history-making, often omitted in the conventional memory of such influential and iconic figures. Individual complexity can be used to revise popular impressions of prominent leaders who all come to be mythologized to some extent.

Complementing these broader histories, familial and personal history is established in many recent independent works of graphic narrative. Frequently these stories depict their authors' biographies as troubled in order to argue for an ethics of compassion when interpreting history as a lesson in how to live. In David Beauchard's ***Epileptic*** (2005), for instance, a brother's struggle to overcome a severe form of epilepsy takes his family on a long journey through several possible treatment solutions. Alison Bechdel's ***Fun Home*** (2006) chronicles the author's experiences growing up as a part of a dysfunctional family in which her father is more interested in remodeling their Victorian house than in interacting with his children. Since the house is literally a funeral home, the book's title is both an affectionate nickname and a reference to the narrator's many personal struggles, including her eventual revelation that she is a lesbian and her father's suicide.

Alternate History

Some graphic narratives offer revisionist versions of popular histories. While these comics often draw on real-life historical events, artists have also chosen to create alternative versions of superhero history, thus effectively revising the history of the genre in the process. Real-life historical events frequently inform fantastical storylines. For example, World War II remains one of the most frequently referenced time periods in superhero comics. Superheroes like **Superman** and **Captain America** serve as metaphors for the United States' intervention in the war and subsequent rise to superpower status, while revisions of their characters have commented on the making of history itself.

Captain America is especially interesting as a historical figure. Originally introduced during World War II, he disappeared from publication due to low sales until the 1960s, when he was revived from suspended animation to resume his role as an American hero. Writers frequently depict Cap as a living, breathing anachronism of a simpler bygone era, when American values like duty and patriotism seemed the bedrock of heroism. Although most often attributed unquestionable loyalty to traditional government, Captain America's leadership in the resistance during Marvel's ***Civil War*** (2006–7) recalls yet another tradition from another period of American history. In the crossover story arc, the superheroes from every universe face increased public censure when they are forced to register their abilities and choose whether or not to cooperate with the new controls that the government has imposed.

Robert Morales and **Kyle Baker's** *Truth: Red, White, and Black* (2004) offers another take on Captain America. The story examines the racism that black American soldiers faced during World War II. In a story inspired by the syphilis experiments performed on Tuskegee Institute soldiers, doctors infect a battalion with a super-soldier serum that either kills the men or transforms them into powerful but grotesque beings. One man becomes the ideal super-soldier, but he is imprisoned and hidden from public view after he participates in a failed mission against the Nazis. Readers learn that he, a black man, was the original Captain America.

Kyle Baker's ***Nat Turner*** (2008) tells the story of the slave rebellion that Turner led, relying on evocative pencil drawings and no text except for brief excerpts from Turner's own *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. Though many contemporary Americans saw Turner as a murderer because he orchestrated the deaths of 60 whites, Baker's sympathetic treatment of Turner's actions demonstrates how he became a civil rights figure for modern America.

Milestone Media's *Icon: A Hero's Welcome* (1997) revises the standard Superman story by presenting its title character as an alien who arrives on Earth among slaves, assumes their semblance, and, subsequently, lives through slavery to present times as an African American. He becomes a wealthy, conservative businessman who does not begin to make use of his superpowers until an inner-city youth, Raquel Ervin, attempts to rob him, but then chastises him for not using his great abilities to fight for social justice.

Alan Moore's *Supreme: The Story of the Year* (2002) and *Supreme: The Return* (2003) offer another revision to the Superman myth. Bearing a strong resemblance to Superman, Supreme is a superhero first created in 1992 by Rob Liefeld and Brian Murray. With its variety of tongue-in-cheek references to comic book superhero conventions, Supreme is a blatant parody of the superhero genre. He appears in a range of costumes and forms that vary by time period, age, gender, and abilities. These variations draw attention to the changeability of his character across time, rather than the typically presumed timelessness of superhero characters. Supreme is a tribute especially to the **Silver Age** of comics and the techniques that comics artists commonly used at that time. Supreme's own in-character realizations that he is only one of the many Supremes and that his memories are written by a group of authors, pay tribute to the history of comics authorship.

Mythology

In contrast to other forms of history, mythology relies on the belief in the unchanging nature of the world and its mythic figures. Mythic identity is especially important to the meaning of comics superheroes, who are identified with core values and abilities based on their origin stories and their past storylines. In order to retain a range of imaginative possibilities for characters—such as Superman, **Batman**, or the **Flash**—while staying true to their mythic identities over time, writers use a process called **retcon**, or retroactive continuity. Retcon involves some change in the nature of the

world in order to reconcile a potential contradiction in multiple versions of the same character.

Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* and Alan Moore's and **Dave Gibbons's *Watchmen*** offer dystopic visions of the future world. Miller's middle-aged Batman fakes his own death following a battle with Superman and concludes the story without his usual costume, carrying out an underground campaign of guerilla warfare, literally in a cave with an army of youth. In *Watchmen*, Moore creates an alternate reality, set in 1980s United States, in which superheroes feel powerless to intervene in social conflicts and the threat of nuclear war. The heroes of the world fail to believe in their own heroism or, when they do, are often mistaken. One such "hero," The Comedian, reacts violently to both personal and political issues, while another, Rorschach, channels his thirst for justice into a vengeful vendetta against criminality in general. These two works are credited with introducing to the superhero genre serious consideration of the effects that super-powered beings would have on society and history.

Other comics engage with fantastic or mythical versions of history through personifications of fate and the cosmic order. **Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*** (1989–96) series chronicles the lives of Dream/Morpheus and his siblings Destruction, Delirium, Destiny, Death, Despair, and Desire—all iconic embodiments of major universal traits in the realm of "the Endless." The 10-volume series traces Morpheus's personal quest for revenge and redemption, as his personal story of loss and renewal becomes the history of his world, whose ability to dream and create needs to be rediscovered in order to move into the future.

The title character of Moore's ***Promethea*** (1999–2005) is an avatar of mythic storytelling whose forms and functions change with shifts in the history of society and the creative arts. Through multiple incarnations across decades of the 20th century, Promethea represents the quest for artistic expression as well as humane living. The heart of Promethea's story is a mythic journey she takes through the stages of the tarot, as representative of the mystical stages of life that human beings must experience to become fully human.

Conclusion

History remains a central thematic and structural device of comics. The artistic and social evolution of comics has followed a particular historical trajectory, producing a series of distinct stages and narrative conventions to which subsequent authors continue to add. DC and Marvel, the two dominant comics companies in the United States, continue to revise their worlds with, respectively, their "Crisis" and "War" series. Authors throughout the field have exploited the potential historical awareness to expand, subvert, and otherwise revise both real and imaginary histories. These possibilities for creative adaptability occur within superhero universes or in reference to the real world; both suggest that comics serve an important political function by offering commentary on contemporary events and social conditions.

Selected Bibliography: Witek, Joseph. *Comic Books as History: The Narrative Art of Jack Jackson, Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar.* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1989.

Tim Bryant

HISTORY OF VIOLENCE, A. This graphic novel by writer John Wagner (*Judge Dredd, 2000 AD*) and artist Vince Locke (*Deadworld*) was published in 1997 by **DC Comics** under first the Paradox, then the Vertigo imprint. The graphic novel was the source for Josh Olsen's Oscar-nominated screenplay for David Cronenberg's 2005 film of the same title. In general, *A History of Violence* tells the story of Tom McKenna, whose violent youth catches up with him. The 286-page book begins in the present day: two killers enter a small-town diner at closing time looking for cash and trouble, but Tom, the mild-mannered proprietor, defends himself and his property with a coffee carafe and a pie rack, dispatching one and subduing the other. Raven's Bend, Michigan, now has a new hero, and Tom's picture hits the national news, despite his attempts to avoid the spotlight. Although it has been 20 years, Tom is recognized, and he and his wife and two children are targeted by old criminal acquaintances from Brooklyn. When the threats escalate to violence, Tom's adopted identity crumbles away: his real name is Joey Muni, and he has killed before.

Readers learn about Tom's backstory when he comes clean with his wife and with the police. The story unfolds that 20 years earlier, he helped his friend Richie avenge the mob murder of Richie's older brother. They opened fire in a restaurant where kingpin Lou Manzi and his associates were taken by surprise. In the process, they stole over $100,000 of the mob's money. Surviving henchmen soon caught big-spending Richie, but Tom narrowly escaped and eventually settled in Raven's Bend, living as a law-abiding family man. Now that the mob knows his new identity, the new legal troubles regarding his past are the least of his problems. The threats to his family intensify, and when he learns that Richie is still alive and held captive by Manzi's sadistic son, who now runs the family business, Tom returns to Brooklyn to settle his accounts.

This plot is shown rather than told, propelled by Locke's lively, black-and-white sketches and Wagner's realistic dialogue. Action scenes are especially effective, full of movement and sound. The book does not shy away from showing the violence that catches up to Tom, but the violence is neither glorified nor taken lightly. Violent actions simply have violent consequences. Full-page spreads effectively punctuate the action scenes. The final scene provides an appropriately graphic climax. Tom ditches his police escort and arranges to meet Manzi at a warehouse. He quickly disposes of several mob henchmen and locates what's left of Richie, who has been held captive and tortured for two decades by the psychopathic Manzi. Richie's arms and legs are long gone, along with an eye, and his scarred, harnessed torso is suspended like a boxer's heavy bag from the warehouse rafters. Barely alive, Richie manages to greet Tom raggedly but with the spirit of their past friendship: "... Long time ... no see, kemosabe ..." When Manzi arrives with his collection of power tools, things get even uglier.



Stephen McHattie as Leland, gets the drop on Viggo Mortensen as Tom Stall, in the 2005 film *A History of Violence*, directed by David Cronenberg. New Line Cinema/Photofest

As a graphic crime novel, *A History of Violence* bears closest comparison to ***Road to Perdition***, although the latter is set nearly 70 years earlier. Both texts revolve around protagonists with secret lives of violence. Both texts include villains of a similar type: the psychopathic son of a corrupt businessman. The black-and-white drawings in both novels are similar in style. While the two texts share these traits, *A History of Violence* poses a different set of questions for its characters and for its readers. To what extent can a person escape his past? What causes violence? Is violence the only way to address some problems? How can a person recover from a violent past?

When Tom tells his wife about his past, she learns that he has lied about his identity, that he was involved in a mass murder, and that he has endangered her life and the lives of their children. He asks, "Do you forgive me, Edie?" To which she replies, "You're still the man I married—the man I love." Unlike the mob, she entirely forgives any transgressions. Her automatic, unbridled loyalty at this point seems reductive, simplistic, and unconvincing. Notwithstanding this shortcoming in characterization, *A History of Violence* is a rollicking story that builds momentum in a way that makes it difficult to put down, and the art and dialogue offer many pleasant surprises, while posing a number of complex questions.

Anthony D. Baker

HOGARTH, BURNE (1911–96). A widely influential cartoonist, illustrator, teacher, and author, Hogarth was born on Christmas Day, in Chicago, where he grew up. His

carpenter father preserved the young Hogarth's early drawings, using them to gain the 12-year-old admission to the Art Institute of Chicago. Hogarth thrived there and at the Fine Arts Academy, forming associations with professionals in print media. After a move to New York, Hogarth gained his early fame as the **Tarzan** Sunday page cartoonist with United Features from 1937 to 1950. His advancement of the classical figure in an innovative adventure strip formed the style basis for today's **superhero** genre. Having taught drawing from his teens onward, Hogarth formalized his efforts by founding what is now known as the New York School of Visual Arts. It served as a training ground for all types of artists, notably the comic strip and comic book artists of the **Silver Age**, and today continues as an important art institution. During his many years teaching, Hogarth created six volumes of drawing instruction.

Twenty years after his last Tarzan Sunday page, Hogarth again approached the mythic jungle lord, determined to forge a new visual syntax adapted from Edgar Rice Burroughs's original text and his own fertile imagination. The result is the prototypical graphic novel *Tarzan of the Apes* (1972). A large format, 160 page hard-bound volume published in 11 languages by a fine arts imprint (Watson-Guptil), it marked a departure from juvenile comic books and the transient escape of strips, moving the sequential art form toward an enduring, mature pictorial narrative. With this volume, Hogarth was at last able to visualize Burroughs's story without editorial interference, interpreting the literature in its basic sense as a Homeric epic. Hogarth transfused the power of Renaissance and Baroque artists, German Expressionism, and the art of the East into a new pictorial fiction.

Hogarth continued the exploration of his new form in *Jungle Tales of Tarzan* (1976). Following a text which delved even more deeply into the interior life of the character, Hogarth made use of an array of visual cryptesthetic devices, including subliminal covert and negative space images, in addition to overt symbolism. He furthered his cinematic technique, utilizing both pages visible to the reader by means of visual linking devices across the separate panels, thereby approximating a single, nearly two-to-one aspect ratio image, a "widescreen" effect. Throughout both volumes, there appears a considered, unified design aesthetic executed with a singular creativity and an unmatched skill, a harmonious integration of image and text in service to a tale of enchantment.

These two pioneering books established not only a new genre wave in publishing but also the viability of such books for adult readership. Hogarth's work serves as a validation and example of the enormous potential of sequential art.

Kyle Ryan

HOMELESS CHANNEL, THE. The flagship work of Matt Silady, ***The Homeless Channel*** is a 2007 graphic novel about social issues and relationships wrapped in an unlikely but compelling business model. The story concerns the attempts of Darcy Shaw, a young television producer, to create a cable TV channel devoted to homelessness. The programming is set as planned programs during daylight hours, and sponsored

live broadcast from the streets overnight, the latter with ad banners but without commentary.

Despite the obvious strategic, moral, and legal problems, Shaw is able to sell the idea. The Homeless Channel launches and is a qualified success, its first broadcast day ending with live shots of Shaw's own sister. Between unexpected romance and encounters with her mentally ill sister, Shaw is forced to accept the limits imposed by attempting to marry altruism and commerce.

Inspired by the work of TV producer Aaron Sorkin, Silady tells his story in a "behind the camera" mode. The reader is privy to meetings and discussions through the channel's inception and execution. Yet, while the camera is omniscient in this book, the narration is not. The narrative deals overtly with emotional states and the motivations of the various characters, but it does not contain a single thought balloon. All the ideas are conveyed through dialogue, expression, and body language. Consistent with television tropes, the graphic novel uses sound bridges to connect scenes. Bits of phone calls and text messages begin by focusing on the recipient and following the sender visually through a series of POV shots until the two intersect.

The art has a particular sensibility, resembling overdeveloped black and white photographs. The art was completed in a singular fashion. Lacking formal art training, Silady compensated by setting up photo shoots for every frame in the book. However, he did not stop at a *fumetti* approach, taking photographs and adding captions as the Italian graphic novelists did in the late 1950s (properly translated, *fumetti* refers to all Italian comics, but came to be associated with the photo-narrative motif through the Fellini film *The White Sheik*, a romantic comedy about the shooting of one such *fumetti*). Silady downloaded the photos, reduced them to *chiaroscuro*, modified them into blue line art, printed them on heavy paper, inked them with black acrylic ink, rescanned the inked figures, and positioned them on high-contrast backgrounds. The majority of this work was done in Photoshop. The photos were shot at various locations in Southern California and at Chicago Comic Con. Jon Muth's 1980s graphic novel *M*, based on the Fritz Lang film of the same name, was created in a similar fashion. For *M*, Muth used photo reference and reworked the photos with a variety of media.

After being inspired by attending the 2004 APE conference, Silady created a mini-comic containing the first chapter of *The Homeless Channel*. This caught the attention of AIT/Planet Lar co-publisher Larry Young. After Young offered to publish the expanded version of that mini-comic as a graphic novel, Silady finished the book.

Silady's first major work in comics, *The Homeless Channel* grew out of his passion for nonfiction writing. After teaching eighth grade for six years, Silady entered and completed the MA program in creative writing at University of California-Davis. His interest in the intersections of the real world and fictions, coupled with a love for TV drama, led him to speculate on possible cable channels. The speculation was absurd until he happened to say "the homeless channel."

Touching on social themes presented in a public setting, Silady offers a specific view of the potential, and the limitations, of capitalism to solve social ills. The inevitable

corollary tragedies of homelessness—rape and death—take on an even more repugnant tone when broadcast. Despite her measured commercial success and reinvesting of a percentage into community projects, including new shelters, Darcy Shaw is ultimately unable to save the people whose cause she simultaneously champions and profits from.

The disparities between the lives of those running the channel and those whose ongoing homeless status make it possible are an increasing source of tension as the narrative unfolds. The story reaches its inevitable impasse when a homeless man, demanding more money to avoid dying on the air and embarrassing her, confronts Darcy.

No less implausible than the 1998 film *The Truman Show*, *The Homeless Channel* asks hard questions of its readers. Other attempts to couch significant social issues in fictional comic narratives have had varying degrees of success. The distinguishing factor between them and *The Homeless Channel* is the latter's direct approach, most closely resembling ***Persepolis*** in this respect. The book has no narrator. The story simply unfolds. While it is clearly edited using film and video techniques, the sensibility is less a drama than a documentary, or possibly a mockumentary in the model of *Forgotten Silver*. The further distinction here is that few mockumentaries hold any substantial respect for their subject matter. *The Homeless Channel*, while not lacking in wit, is quite serious and respectful in its approach to its central topic. The central questions posed by *The Homeless Channel* remain unanswered, but are brought into tighter focus through this work.

Silady currently teaches a course on graphic novels at California College of the Arts. He is a member of the San Francisco based comic writers group, Writers Old Fashioned, and is currently at work on his second book. *The Homeless Channel* was nominated for a Special Recognition **Eisner Award** in 2008.

Selected Bibliography: Silady, Matt. *The Homeless Channel*. San Francisco: AIT/Planet Lar, 2007; Walker, Jessica. "*The Homeless Channel*." *World Literature Today* (March/April 2008): 68–69.

Diana Green

HORROR COMICS. Horror has long been an important genre in the comics, though horror comics have a complex and controversial history. The earliest examples of horror in comics were influenced by literature, and were straight adaptations. *Classic Comics* led the way with adaptations of literary works such as *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (#12, 1943), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in *Classic Comics* #13 (1943) and *Frankenstein* (#26, 1945). Another notable early example is *Eerie Comics* #1 (1947), a one-off issue produced by Avon Periodicals. This comic holds the distinction of being the first to contain wholly original material, as opposed to adaptations of literary prose. Due to this, it is often viewed by historians as the first modern horror comic. Another issue of this title did not appear until 1951; it then continued to a total of 17 issues.

Adventures Into the Unknown (1948) was the earliest horror comic to achieve continuous ongoing publication. It was produced by B&I Publishing (which became

the American Comics Group) and achieved a run of 167 issues. The title focused on more literary horror and ghost stories, and was tame in comparison to the more shocking material that would appear in other comics in the next few years. This enabled it to survive the widespread condemnation of horror comics in the 1950s and the comic survived until it was cancelled in 1967.

EC produced the most significant horror titles during the 1950s. The company was founded by Max Gaines and produced educational and biblical comics. Following Gaines's death, his son **William Gaines** took over the company, re-branding it as Entertaining Comics and changing the subject matter and tone of the titles that were being produced, with horror proving to be the most successful.

Gaines was a shrewd businessman, and he took advantage of any ambiguity in law to further his company's success. For a period of time he would introduce a new title but retain the numbering of a title he had secretly cancelled, to make savings on second-class postage permits, which he had to stop doing once he was discovered. This led to confusion for fans decades later, as titles began with an issue number inherited from an unrelated title. EC's *Crime Patrol* ran for 15 issues, was replaced by *The Crypt of Terror* (issues #17–19) before the title was finalized as ***Tales from the Crypt*** (issue #20); *War Against Crime* became *The Vault of Horror* with issue #12; *Gunfighter* became *The Haunt of Fear* with issue #15. These were later replaced by its truer issue numbers once the ruse was discovered by the U.S. Post Office.

In partnership with **Al Feldstein**, a multi-talented editor, artist and writer, EC established horror comics which were visceral, darkly humorous and edgy. Gaines and Feldstein developed a system which enabled them to maintain a steady rate of story production. Gaines was an insomniac and a voracious reader, and he often spent many evening hours devouring books. He would use this time to develop story concepts, or "springboards" to discuss and develop with Feldstein the following morning. Once the story had been fully developed it would be assigned to an artist whose style would complement the narrative.

The stories in each of the EC horror comics would be introduced by a fictional host. For *Tales from the Crypt*, the Crypt Keeper performed this role, while the Vault Keeper presided over *The Vault of Horror*, and the Old Witch took charge of *The Haunt of Fear*. These stories would often end with an ironic, horrific twist, often involving horrific imagery and brutal poetic justice. This would lead to the company encountering problems with sections of the American public and the government.

In *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954), psychiatrist **Fredric Wertham** set out to establish links between juvenile delinquency and comic books. EC comics were one of Wertham's main targets, particularly their violence. He discussed the "injury to the eye" motif he saw as being common to the horror comics. He also focused on what he perceived to be sexual subtexts in **superhero** comics, such as homosexuality in relation to **Batman** and Robin, and a lesbian and bondage subtext in **Wonder Woman**. Wertham felt that comics fostered reader imitation and that they would lead young readers to enact crimes and questionable acts.

Wertham and his work came to the attention of the United States Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency, which had been established the year before his book was published. Wertham was called upon to outline his beliefs regarding the link between comics and delinquency, and he gave a damning indictment of what he saw as the comics' ability to pervert and corrupt.

EC comics publisher William Gaines also appeared before this committee. He was asked to justify how the depiction of a decapitated head dripping blood (on the cover of *Crime SuspenStories* issue #25) was in "good taste." Gaines reacted by stating that bad taste, as he judged it, would be a cover with more blood visible on the severed neck of the body, and dripping from the head. Gaines, in trying to defend his magazines as standard examples of the horror genre, inadvertently became a focal point for the bad feelings and misunderstandings surrounding comics that had arisen in American society at the time; inflamed by Wertham's book and the subcommittee investigation, Gaines was portrayed in negative terms by the media as a result.

The effect of these hearings caused widespread and far reaching consequences for the creation and production of comic books. Publishers felt driven to create a body of self-censorship called the **Comics Code** Authority in 1954, a censor dedicated to ensuring that material that contravened the code would be subject to revisions or would not be distributed. Their job was to enforce the Comics Code, which was similar in principle to the Motion Picture Production Code (also called the Hays Code, after its author) which outlined various acts which could not be depicted in films between 1936 and 1968.

Publishers would submit their comic books to the CCA for approval and would receive the CCA stamp once adherence to the code was attained. Scenes that would prove problematic would usually involve violence ("Scenes of brutal torture, excessive and unnecessary knife and gunplay, physical agony, gory and gruesome crime shall be eliminated"); sex ("Passion or romantic interest shall never be treated in such a way as to stimulate the lower and baser emotions"); horror ("Scenes dealing with, or instruments associated with walking dead, torture, **vampires** and vampirism, ghouls, cannibalism, and werewolfism are prohibited"); or anti-authoritarian acts ("Policemen, judges, Government officials and respected institutions shall never be presented in such a way as to create disrespect for established authority").

The Comics Code was one of the most restrictive of any media, and its effect on EC Comics was that it served to outlaw their successful line of horror comics. This led the company to focus on *Mad*, a humor comic which soon became a magazine and, as such, was not subject to the restrictions enforced by the CCA.

The effect upon the comics industry due to these events was profound and led to job losses and company closures. Subject matter in comics became anodyne in some cases, as companies felt obliged to produce low-risk material. One significant effect was the eventual re-emergence of the superhero as a code-friendly subject for comic books, which became the main genre in comic books for decades after. The two companies who dominated this trend were **DC** and **Marvel**.

However, prior to their creation of the Marvel superhero universe, beginning with **Fantastic Four** issue #1 (1961), **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby** created a run of Monster comics in the late 1950s and early 1960s under the company name of Atlas, the forerunner of Marvel. They copied the structure of the EC comics that came before them, and titles like *Tales of Suspense* and ***Strange Tales*** would contain monsters that were either straight horror or horror/**science-fiction** hybrids. Lee and Kirby would create outlandishly designed behemoth's with names like Fin Fang Foom. These proved popular but were phased out when superheroes became popular. However, their influence could still be seen through characters like the Thing from the **Fantastic Four** and the **Hulk**.

Warren Publishing was founded by James Warren in 1957. The company published magazines, but some of these also include horror comic stories. Warren's initial success came with the publication of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and *Monster World*, magazines that were edited by Forrest J. Ackerman. The latter magazine began publishing comic stories, which led to the publication of such stories in their magazines *Creepy* and *Eerie*; being magazines, they were not subject to the restrictions of the Comics Code. The horror line was joined by *Vampirella* in 1969. The adult subject matter and magazine format were influential in the development of more mature comic magazines like *Epic Illustrated* (published by Marvel) and ***Heavy Metal*** (an American version of the French magazine *Metal Hurlant*). Artists employed by Warren included veterans such as **Alex Toth**, **Wally Wood**, and **Gene Colan**, in addition to newcomers like Dave Cockrum and Berni Wrightson. Writers included Archie Goodwin, Doug Moench, Don McGregor and Steve Skeates.

DC would produce significant horror titles in the 1970s. *The House of Secrets* was an anthology title that originally ran for 80 issues between 1956 and 1966, mixing one-off stories with some ongoing features. A more significant run of the title was a revival which began in 1969, and ended in 1978. The series was now hosted by Abel, who would offer an introduction to, and provide links between, each story in the anthology, often making conversation with an unseen companion called Goldie. It was complemented by another title, *The House of Mystery*, hosted by Abel's brother Cain from issue #175 in May–June 1968, with the title ending in 1983. The content of both series was very much in the style of the EC comics of the 1950s, and the two titles dominated the horror comic field in the 1970s. Their influence would be felt some years later, as Cain and Abel became recurring characters in **Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*** series, where he delved more deeply into their relationship and established locations for both houses within the Dreaming itself.

House of Secrets #92 (1971) saw the debut of the **Swamp Thing**, created by Len Wein and Bernie Wrightson, in an eight-page tale in which Alec Olsen is killed and his body cast into a swamp, where he mutates into a swamp creature who enacts revenge upon Alec's killer. The character proved popular enough to warrant an ongoing series (1972), which modernized the setting and characters. The Swamp Thing was now Alec Holland who, with his wife Linda, is working on a bio-restorative formula.

Holland is then caught in an explosion set by people who are after the secrets of his formula, and his body is thrown into the swamp, where it mutates. The series lasted for a respectable 24 issues, until 1976.

In 1971, the Comics Code Authority began to relax some of its rules in relation to horror in comics, such as the depiction of vampires, and this led to the publication of the ***Tomb of Dracula*** in 1972, which ran for 70 issues until 1979. Marvel took advantage of the fact that Bram Stoker's creation was in the public domain and featured him as the title character. The title was scripted by **Marv Wolfman** from issue #7 onwards (the earlier issues being written by Gerry Conway, Archie Goodwin, and Gardner Fox) and penciled by **Gene Colan** for the whole run. Dracula would sometimes work with others to vanquish threats, but in the main he took on the role of villain in the stories. Supernatural stories were balanced with appearances by **Spider-Man** and the **X-Men**, which located the title firmly within the mainstream Marvel universe.

The *Tomb of Dracula* issue #10 saw the first appearance of Blade as a supporting character. He is a vampire hunter with the ability to sense supernatural creatures and an immunity to vampirism. He would go on to appear intermittently in other titles during the 1970s, but gained a more significant following in the 1990s, starring in his own series. He appeared in three films and a TV series that were only loosely based on the comics incarnation. His most recent appearance at the time of this writing has been in *Captain Britain and MI:13*, written by Paul Cornell with art by Leonard Kirk.

The first significant horror comic series produced by DC Comics in the 1980s involved the **Alan Moore** scripted issues of *Saga of the Swamp Thing*, which became *Swamp Thing* from issue #31 onwards. His run covered issues #20–64 and annual #2 (1984–87). The title was facing cancellation due to poor sales (it had been revived in 1982 in an attempt to capitalize on a feature film version). Len Wein, Swamp Thing's editor and co-creator, had seen some of Moore's U.K. work and was impressed, which led to him offering Moore his first regular work in U.S. comics. Moore approached issue #20 as an opportunity to resolve previous plot threads and clear the way for his new version of the series. In this version, Swamp Thing is shot and killed by the agents of the Sunderland corporation who had pursued him in previous issues.

Issue #21, entitled "The Anatomy Lesson," is set within the Sunderland Corporation building. Jason Woodrue, the Floronic Man, has been hired to perform an autopsy on Swamp Thing, and his conclusion completely redefines the nature of the character: he had never been Alec Holland, as the bio-restorative formula Holland had worked on somehow allowed the plant-life to absorb characteristics of Holland's consciousness. Moore felt that the character was restricted by a premise that could never be fulfilled: if he became human again, it would be the end of the series. By taking away the possibility of reverting to Holland he reset the rules for the character in this issue and went on to redefine the American horror comic in subsequent issues.

Swamp Thing remained firmly rooted in the DC universe, with appearances by characters including Batman and the **Justice League of America**. Moore also explored the paranormal side of the DC universe, with appearances by the Demon and Deadman.

The title also introduced readers to John Constantine, a blue collar warlock who bore a striking resemblance to the musician Sting, who would go on to star in his own series ***Hellblazer***. Stories used traditional horror icons and themes with a contemporary twist, such as using lyncanthropy as a metaphor for menstruation. Moore took Swamp Thing all across America to explore the dark side of contemporary society and then sent him headlong into space to explore issues of lost love. The darker side of human relationships is also explored through society's negative reactions to the inter-species relationship between Swamp Thing and Abigail Arcane, a female supporting character that Moore had inherited and made his own. By issue #64 Moore had established a significant reputation for himself as a writer in U.S. comics, and he saved *Swamp Thing* from cancellation, helping the title to become one of DC's biggest sellers. The series would continue after Moore's departure, although never reaching the same levels of critical acclaim.

Hellblazer is an ongoing monthly comic first published by DC comics in 1988. Originally conceived under the title *Hellraiser*, the name was changed due to the release of the Clive Barker film of that name. The original creative team on the series was writer Jamie Delano and artist John Ridgway, with covers supplied by **Dave McKean**. The series has attracted a wealth of creative talent, including writers **Garth Ennis**, Mike Carey, **Warren Ellis**, **Brian Azzarello**, **Neil Gaiman**, and **Grant Morrison**, and notable artists such as Steve Dillon, Cameron Stewart and Bryan Talbot. The comic is still being published at the time of this writing, and has been collected in a series of trade paperbacks. A film version starring Keanu Reeves was loosely based on Ennis's "Dangerous Habits" storyline (issues #41–46), although much was altered in terms of the plot and the central character, who was now transformed into a dark-haired American.

The comic book series focuses on John Constantine, the British, working-class warlock who first appeared in the Moore, Bissette and Totleben issues of *Swamp Thing*. His facial appearance is modeled upon the musician Sting, as Bissette, and Totleben were fans, and had drawn a Sting look-alike as early as issue #25. The Constantine character officially appeared for the first time in issue #37. He originally operated on the fringes of the DC universe during his time in *Swamp Thing*, and while there have been appearances by various supernatural characters in *Hellblazer*, including Swamp Thing, the Phantom Stranger, and Zatanna, the series operates very much within its own universe, set apart from the mainstream DC superhero universe.

Constantine was born in Liverpool, but he relocated to London during his mid-teens. He became involved with the occult and later formed a punk rock band called Mucous Membrane. He suffered a nervous breakdown following an incident involving an abused child and a demon, which left him psychologically scarred. He is often portrayed as wearing a trench coat, with shirt and tie (and sometimes with a suit jacket), although he has experimented with a leather jacket at one point in the series. He is perhaps best described as an occult detective figure, and has proclaimed himself to be a "weirdness" magnet. He has had relationships with both men and women and is a

streetwise, cynical, manipulative, chain-smoking rogue whose charm can dilute his less attractive qualities.

DC's success with horror titles continued with Gaiman's *Sandman* series, which began in 1989. It had a strong current of horror in the opening arc of stories, and the series would return to the genre at various times throughout its 75-issue run. It would also focus on myth, legend, and **history**. Gaiman's childhood interest in comics were reignited in his 20s by Moore's work on *Swamp Thing*. He wrote a letter of appreciation to Moore, and included a copy of *Ghastly Beyond Belief*, a collection of humorous quotations from science fiction novels he had edited with Kim Newman. This led to a friendship between the two writers. Moore showed Gaiman how to write a comic book script, and Gaiman began to submit scripts in addition to his journalism work. He later submitted a proposal for a new version of the Sandman character to DC Comics, which became a major title for the company and led to widespread mainstream success beyond comics fandom.

The first issue tells the story of Roderick Burgess (created in the style of real-world occultist Aleister Crowley), who tries to invoke and capture Death in a magic ritual. The spell is not completely successful as Dream (or Morpheus, the Sandman of the title) is captured instead, and imprisoned by Burgess for 70 years. Morpheus escapes, returns to his realm of dreaming, and begins a quest to retrieve special items in which he had imbued part of his power, as this had allowed him to conduct his duties more efficiently. As a part of this quest, which takes place over the first few issues of the title, Morpheus encounters a number of situations which fit well within the horror genre: he discover that Cain and Abel, the hosts of DC Comics' horror anthology titles *The House of Secrets* and *The House of Mystery*, are a part of the dreaming (issue #2); he meets John Constantine, an important horror character, and retrieves a pouch of magical sand (#3); he goes to Hell to recover his helmet (#4); he visits a diner where the clients are being manipulated into conducting horrific acts (#6). Another early highlight was the serial killers' convention issue (#14). The title was also instrumental is helping to establish the Vertigo line of books, an imprint within DC Comics that included pre-existing and newly commissioned titles containing content deemed to be more suitable for a mature audience. DC's horror titles suited the aims of the new line, which led to *Swamp Thing* and *Hellblazer* joining Vertigo.

Another Vertigo book, ***Preacher***, was written by Irish writer Ennis and British artist Dillon. It ran for 66 issues and 5 specials between 1995 and 2000. It remains in print in a series of 9 trade paperbacks, with a 10th containing Glenn Fabry's cover illustrations. The series tells the story of Jesse Custer, the eponymous preacher, who is suffering a crisis of faith when he becomes possessed by a creature who is the offspring of an angel and a demon called Genesis. It grants him the ability to force others to do what he tells them to. In his search to call God to account he is accompanied by Tulip O'Hare, an ex-girlfriend, and Cassidy, an Irish vampire.

Ennis and Dillon combine overt horror conventions, like Cassidy's vampirism, with other genre conventions: there is a respectful take on the **Western** achieved through the

depiction of Custer's relationship with an imaginary John Wayne informing his own personal ethics and character; while Arseface, a deformed character who, in visual terms, seems to be the typical type monster in the horror genre, actually embodies a criticism of the media and the impermanence and shallowness of celebrity, being a young man who is inspired to shoot himself like Kurt Cobain, but survives and becomes a media celebrity, until a series of misfortunes ends his career.

Horror continues to be a popular genre in the 21st century. ***The Walking Dead***, published by **Image Comics**, is a black-and-white comic created by writer **Robert Kirkman** and artist Tony Moore in 2003, with Charlie Adlard replacing Moore from issue seven onwards. It focuses on a group of people who are trying to survive an apocalypse where zombies are the primary danger. The comic is an ongoing monthly series that has been reprinted in trade paperback collections. Kirkman has stated that his intention is to write the series for as long as he can, as he is a fan of zombie films and wants to continue to follow the development of characters' lives after a film's conclusion.

The protagonist is Rick Grimes, a police officer, who is shot by an escaped convict at the start of the series. He awakens from a coma in the hospital and soon discovers that zombies, the walking dead of the series' title, are roaming Earth. He bands together with a group of survivors, including his wife Lori and son Carl, becoming their reluctant leader. The series focuses on their struggle to survive. Along the way they encounter more zombies, and more survivors (both friendly and dangerous). The series is a powerful combination of horror and soap opera in its combination of visceral danger and engaging character interaction.

Marvel Zombies was a five-issue limited series published from 2005 to 2006, also written by Kirkman, with art by Sean Phillips and Arthur Suydam. Its popularity has led to a number of sequels. The idea was first presented in *Ultimate Fantastic Four* issues #21–23, by writer **Mark Millar** and artist Greg Land. The central idea is that the superheroes in an alternative universe have become infected by a virus that has turned them into zombie cannibals.

The first series tells how the **Silver Surfer** arrives on an alternative Earth ahead of Galactus (the eater and destroyer of planets) and is overpowered by zombie versions of **Captain America** (or Colonel America in this universe), **Hulk**, Wolverine, **Luke Cage**, Giant Man, **Spider-Man**, and **Iron Man**, who then ultimately overpower Galactus until they are stopped by Reed Richards' Ultimate Doctor Doom. Two sequels, a graphic novel entitled *Marvel Zombies: Dead Days*, and a crossover with *The Army of Darkness* (Dynamite Entertainment) have appeared as of the time of this writing.

Kirkman's interest in horror is also evident in *The Astounding Wolfman*, an ongoing monthly series he created, which has been published by Image Comics since 2007. Art is provided by Jason Howard. The story focuses on the adventures of Gary Hampton, who tries to use the powers he gains from becoming werewolf to become a superhero. He soon meets Zechariah, a vampire who becomes his mentor. The series

is notable for Kirkman's use of horror concepts within the framework of a superhero narrative.

Andrew Edwards

HOWARD THE DUCK. Best remembered today as the basis for an unsuccessful film adaptation, *Howard the Duck* was one of the most sophisticated and unusual mainstream comics of the 1970s, and indirectly played a pivotal role in the evolution of creator ownership. Howard was created in 1973 by writer Steve Gerber (1947–2008). While writing a Man-Thing story in *Adventures in Fear* #19, Gerber needed a visual image stranger than one he had used in the previous issue: a barbarian climbing out of a jar of peanut butter. Thus, he wrote a scene in which a suit-and-tie-wearing duck walks out of a thicket and complains about being trapped in a world of "hairless apes." (Howard's trademark cigar was added by artist Val Mayerik.) The character appeared as a backup feature in *Giant-Size Man-Thing* #4 and #5, gaining sufficiently positive response from fans to merit his own ongoing series. Gerber wrote the first 27 issues of the series, while Frank Brunner drew the first two issues, and **Gene Colan** the last 25 issues. In 1977, Howard became the star of a syndicated comic strip, whose original creative team was Gerber and Colan. When **Marvel** fired Gerber as writer of the strip (perhaps because Gerber was too radical), Gerber sued Marvel for ownership of the character, alleging that his contract did not give Marvel ownership of ancillary



Ed Gale as Howard T. Duck and Lea Thompson as Beverly Switzler, in the 1986 film *Howard the Duck*, directed by Willard Huyck. Lucasfilm Ltd./Universal/Photofest

characters created by him. Marvel then fired Gerber from the monthly *HtD* title. The lawsuit helped raise public awareness of the issue of creators' rights, and ended in 1981 with an undisclosed settlement. As a fundraiser for Gerber's lawsuit, Eclipse Comics published *Destroyer Duck* #1, which was one of the first successful independent comic books of the 1980s and also introduced **Groo the Wanderer**. Following Gerber's firing, the monthly comic was soon cancelled and replaced by a black-and-white magazine-sized comic that lasted until 1981. In 1985 Gerber submitted a proposal to revive the character, but it was rejected, partly because of Gerber's insistence that Howard stories by other writers had never "happened." Gerber did return to the character on two occasions, for a four-issue storyline in *Sensational She-Hulk* (1991) and a six-issue miniseries (2002). Howard's latest miniseries (2008) was not written by Gerber, who died that year of lung disease.

HtD may appear to be a **funny animal** comic (given Howard's resemblance to Donald Duck, which was strong enough to result in legal action by Disney) or a parody **superhero** comic (given the bizarre villains Howard often encounters). However, it is in fact a seriously intended work of **satire**. Gerber said that *HtD* was his "serious book" and *Defenders*, which he was writing at the same time, was his "humor book." Originally from a world of cartoon animals, Howard is magically transported to Earth, specifically the city of Cleveland, against his will, thus becoming—as the tagline says—"trapped in a world he never made." As a nonhuman, who is also too smart for his own good and has a strong cynical streak, Howard is uniquely equipped to recognize and comment on the absurdities of American life. "Four Feathers of Death!" in #3 of the original series argues that the martial arts craze encourages violent tendencies. Issues #7 and #8, in which Howard runs for president, criticize the dishonesty of American politics. The recurring "Kidney Lady" character, who blames Howard for ruining her namesake organs, is Gerber's caricature of reactionary and totalitarian elements in American society. In the 2001 miniseries, Gerber satirizes the popularity of overproduced, commercialized boy-band music by featuring a boy-band whose members are grown in vats. Overall, Howard sees contemporary America as a childish society which lacks respect for individual freedom, an attitude which Gerber himself probably shared. For Howard, the primary redeeming feature of hairless-ape society is his companion Beverly Switzler, a human who took in the homeless Howard after he rescued her from a villain. Gerber is ambiguous as to the exact nature of Howard and Beverly's relationship, though later writers depicted them as an interspecies couple. However, Howard's affection for Beverly is genuine; she represents his only link to hairless-ape society, and when she is forced to marry Howard's archenemy, Dr. Bong, to save Howard's life, Howard is left alone and depressed. In Gerber's original series, Beverly leaves Howard for his archenemy Dr. Bong (the name is deliberate), but by the time of the *Sensational She-Hulk* story they are back together, without explanation.

Howard the Duck, though often hilariously funny, also has its serious and somber side. It is ultimately about the difficulty of surviving as an intelligent and sensitive person (or waterfowl) in contemporary America. Like other Gerber works such as

Man-Thing and *Omega the Unknown*, *HtD* is closer in sensibility to **underground** comics than to most other Marvel comics of the time.

The 1986 film adaptation, produced by Lucasfilm, entirely ignores the satirical aspect of the original series and instead tries to exploit the comic potential of the fact that Howard is a duck. In the comic this fact is rarely important: it hardly matters what kind of animal Howard is, as long as he is not human, and he spends most of the 2002 miniseries in the form of a mouse. Whereas Colan depicted Howard with the same degree of realism as the human characters in the series, Howard's duck costume in the film looks blatantly fake. Perhaps the film's only redeeming feature is Lea Thompson's occasionally endearing performance as Bev. The film was a critical and commercial failure; it shared $20.7 million at the box office and shared the Golden Raspberry Award for the worst film of 1986. Its failure has been blamed for Marvel's failure to release any other major motion picture adaptations until 2000. However, Marvel has kept Gerber's original *HtD* stories in print, and they remain essential reading for those interested in mainstream comic books of the 1970s.

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Aaron Kashtan

HULK. *See* ***Incredible Hulk, The***



IDENTITY CRISIS is a seven-issue limited series published by **DC Comics** (2004–5). Written by *New York Times* best-selling author Brad Meltzer, and showcasing covers by Michael Turner, the story features art by penciler Rags Morales, inker Michael R. Bair, and colorist Alex Sinclair. Though the series has been collected and reprinted in popular hardback and soft-cover trade formats, the original issues of the series were some of the best selling comics put out by any American comics publisher during their time period. The story takes place in the DC universe's mainstream continuity and is notable for its focus on some of the minor characters who came to prominence during the **Silver Age**.

In addition to being a **superhero** story, the tale is also a murder mystery that begins with Ralph Dibny, the Elongated Man, waxing poetic to Firehawk about his love for his wife, Sue Dibny. Shortly after finishing this paean to his marital bliss, Ralph receives a distressing, cryptic phone call from his wife, who is under attack. He rushes home to find her and their unborn child already dead, with third degree burns over 40 percent of Sue's body. The **Justice League of America**, of which both Sue and Ralph are members, is called in to investigate, but they find no sign of forced entry, and even **Batman**—the world's greatest detective—cannot find a single carpet fiber out of place. A touching funeral for Sue follows, and while different teams of heroes split up to continue their investigation into the crime, a select group from the mid-Silver Age JLA lineup stays behind to help Ralph track down the person he believes to be responsible for Sue's death: Dr. Light.

By way of flashback, readers are informed that during the JLA's satellite years, Dr. Light successfully teleported onto the JLA satellite where he found and raped a solitary Sue Dibny. Responding to Sue's Justice League signal device, some of the team

quickly subdued Dr. Light. Afterwards, a core group of the JLA—**Green Arrow**, **Green Lantern** (Hal Jordan), the **Flash** (Barry Allen), Black Canary, the Atom (Ray Palmer), Hawkman, and Zatanna—decided to have Zatanna use her magical powers to erase the memory of the incident from Dr. Light's mind. However, on a suggestion from Hawkman, the majority of the group eventually voted to take the mind wipe a step further and have Zatanna magically alter Dr. Light's personality, effectively lobotomizing him. The flashback ends with two more revelations: Dr. Light was not the only criminal whose mind they magically tampered with, as the group even agreed to erase some of Batman's memories when he accidentally discovered the scheme.

After an unsuccessful attempt to apprehend Dr. Light, during which several members of the JLA are taken down a peg by the mercenary Deathstroke, an autopsy reveals that the burns covering Sue's body were not the cause of her death, which ostensibly exonerates Dr. Light of the crime. Shortly thereafter, Sue's killer seems to attack again when the Atom's ex-wife, Jean Loring, is hanged in her home. Jean survives, but this new attack brings the heroes and their loved ones even closer together, as it is now clear that someone is targeting the families of super-powered heroes. Further investigations into the attacks ensue, while letters containing death threats are received by **Superman**'s wife, Lois Lane, and Robin's father, Jack Drake. Meanwhile, brain scans performed during Sue's autopsy finally reveal her true cause of death: an aneurism precipitated by microscopic footprints on her brain. All signs now point to a killer with the power to shrink, and Ray Palmer (the Atom) seems the most likely suspect. However, before the Justice League can contact Palmer to question him about who else might have had access to his shrinking technology, his ex-wife Jean accidentally reveals to him a crime scene detail that only the investigators and the killer would have known, thereby incriminating herself in the crime. Jean professes that she never meant to kill Sue, that her intent was only "to knock her out . . . just to scare everyone a bit," all the while hoping that the fear engendered by the attack would bring the hero community closer together, perhaps even reuniting her and Ray. The series closes with a montage showing that the events actually have brought the crime-fighting community closer together, though Jean is committed to **Arkham Asylum** and Palmer disappears due to his grief.

The title of the series, *Identity Crisis*, has several significant meanings depending on the context to which it is applied. On one level, the title could refer to the loss of identity that some super villains experience as a result of the JLA magically altering their minds, but of equal thematic importance is the loss of identity some of the protagonists in the book experience as a result of their own actions. Most of the main characters in the work identify themselves as heroes, but when these same characters are shown to have crossed serious moral and ethical lines by tampering with the memories of criminals, their identity as heroes is called into question. Finally and perhaps most meaningfully, the miniseries also presents a crisis in the identity of Silver Age comics as a whole, suggesting that the notion that the era consisted of clear-cut good guys and bad guys might be overly simplistic. Indeed, Meltzer all but states as much when, in an entirely black panel in the final issue of the series, he quotes a line from Arthur Miller: "An era can be

said to end when its basic illusions are exhausted." By infusing the comic with this kind of metatextual commentary on the Silver Age of comics, *Identity Crisis* joins a long line of comics that question the place of superheroes in contemporary society, such as ***The Dark Knight Returns***, ***Watchmen***, *Squadron Supreme*, and ***Kingdom Come***.

Craig Crowder

I, JOKER. A 48-page graphic novel written and illustrated by Bob Hall that was published by **DC Comics** in 1998, *I, Joker* offers an alternative reality version of the **Batman** legend. It is one of a series of prestige format graphic novels, collectively called *Elseworlds*, produced by DC Comics that take place beyond the restrictions of the company's long-established canon. *I, Joker* is one of the few titles under the ***Elseworlds*** imprint to feature a villain in the lead role. The graphic novel presents a futuristic Gotham City where Batman is worshiped as a god. It is told from the Joker's insane perspective as he participates in an annual televised event described as a "Night of bloody cleaning when the great villains are resurrected—only to be slain by the Bat."

The Joker has remained one of the most notable of all comic book villains since his debut in *Batman* #1 (1940). His iconic appearance, with his pasty white skin, green hair, lanky body, and ever-present smile, is known to generations as he has appeared in countless comic books, television episodes, feature films, and on a mountain of merchandise. The Joker is Batman's arch-nemesis who has been variously characterized as both a comedic trickster and a maniacal mass killer.

I, Joker offers a unique interpretation of the "Clown Prince of Crime" by placing him within a futuristic television program that is somewhat similar to the one seen in Stephen King's science fiction novel, *The Running Man* (1982). Author Bob Hall, who began his comics career in the 1970s and has worked for both **Marvel** and DC Comics, offers no explanations as to what led to the creation of this bizarre future Gotham City. He also does not provide any sense of the world beyond the televised program at the center of the graphic novel. The artwork can best be described as idiosyncratic as it is characterized by hyperactive drawings combined with heavy inking. The manic quality of the art may have been deliberately employed to reflect the Joker's insanity.

The graphic novel begins with a bizarre ritual where Batman is praised by a chanting throng of worshipers who yell phrases such as, "Hail the God-King of Gotham!" and "Hail to the Bruce." The ensuing spectacle that follows features notorious members of the Dark Knight's rogues gallery (Penguin, Two-Face, Riddler, and Ra's Al Ghul) being immobilized in giant glass containers before they are placed into their own stylized racing vehicles. The final foe to enter the event is the Joker. As they race madly throughout Gotham, Batman gives chase. However, this Batman is much more violent and bloodthirsty than the hero who has appeared continuously for decades in mainstream DC Comics. The Penguin and Two-Face are given particularly gruesome deaths.

Much of *I, Joker* is devoted to a flashback sequence where this version of the villain's history is revealed. He is, in actuality, a young rebel named Joe Collins who has discovered that the Batman society worships is nothing but a tyrant "propped up by the mob's

taste for blood." Joe and some companions, including a beautiful girl named Maya, are seen investigating the original Batcave. The group is soon captured by armed guards and a menacing Batman, who describes himself as a god. Joe is forced into a disturbing medical device where the truth is finally revealed: his missing friends have been physically altered to replicate the original enemies of Batman. The resurrected villains have been created so that they may be destroyed in the bloody sacrifice to "The Bruce" god seen at the beginning of the text. The purpose of the gladiatorial combat is to pass the mantle of the Bat to the contest's winner. Joe's fate is that he is to be transformed into the new Joker. After the procedure, Hall depicts a scene in which this new "Harlequin of Hate" discovers an ancient video recording from Bruce Wayne, who states that he wishes his future followers will shun meaningless vengeance and fight for what is right. A sequence featuring the final confrontation between this reality's Batman and Joker (who is also now dressed in Batman's costume) follows. Maya, who is now dressed in a version of Robin's uniform, shoots the Dark Knight, who falls to his death. In an ironic twist ending, this new Joker (still dressed as Batman) has become the hero who brings down the Batman cult.

I, Joker is an often confusing story that is both written and illustrated somewhat crudely. It seems to relish in its over-the-top violence rather than condemn it. There does not appear to be any overt political meaning other than "tyrants are bad." It offers no interesting or lasting perspective on either Gotham's heroes or villains.

Charles Coletta

IMAGE COMICS was founded in 1992 by seven high-profile illustrators who defected from the far larger publisher **Marvel Comics**, starting a new company with the goal of allowing artist-creators to retain ownership and control of their titles. Fresh off of his success with the new ***Spider-Man*** title, **Todd McFarlane** formed Todd McFarlane Productions (TMP), and Marc Silvestri of *Uncanny* ***X-Men*** fame started his Top Cow Productions, both partner studios of the wider Image Central. Along with McFarlane and Silvestri came Erik Larsen, Rob Liefeld, Jim Valentino, and **Jim Lee**, though Lee's own Wildstorm Productions would align with **DC Comics** in 1998. Artist Whilce Portacio also accompanied the group but was not considered a full partner in the enterprise. In 2008, writer **Robert Kirkman** would also become a partner, with Lee and Liefeld having previously departed.

Much of Image's early success came at the height of the comic book industry's 1990s heydays. Liefeld's Extreme Studios—later rebranded as Awesome Comics, Awesome Entertainment, and Awesome-Hyperwerks—premiered Image's first book, *Youngblood*, and Valentino's *Shadowhawk* character debuted in issue #2 of that series. McFarlane launched the hugely popular ***Spawn***, the story of a dead mercenary returned to life with demonic powers. Larsen repurposed one of his older characters to headline the eponymous *Savage Dragon* miniseries, eventually leading to an ongoing monthly title. Lee eventually released *WildC.A.T.s: Covert Action Teams* in August of 1992, and Silvestri produced *CyberForce* that October. Portacio had to withdraw his participation in order

to help his sister's battle with lupus; he would later put out *Wetworks* through Lee's Wildstorm line.

While the Image imprint was originally fashioned in order to provide creators with greater control over their properties, the partners eventually splintered over time. Unrest over financial matters led to Liefeld's exodus, and Lee sold Wildstorm to DC Comics while maintaining editorial control. Gradually, Image came to publish a wide array of creator-owned titles, including **Brian Michael Bendis**'s *Powers*, Eric Shanower's *Age of Bronze*, and Kirkman's *Invincible*, among numerous others.

Especially considering its relative youth, a large number of Image properties have been adapted to other media. Top Cow's ***Witchblade*** has been turned into a TNT series, a cartoon, anime, and **manga** titles. Likewise, *Spawn* was transformed into both an animated series for HBO and a major motion picture in 1997. Larsen's *Savage Dragon* ran for 26 episodes as a USA Network cartoon, and Sam Kieth's *The Maxx* was shown on MTV from 1994 to 1995 as part of the show *Oddities*.

With the departure of Lee and Executive Director Larry Marder in 1999, Valentino assumed the role of publisher, later followed in 2005 by Larsen. In 2008, that office was passed to Eric Stephenson, creator of *Nowhere Men*. According to 2007 Diamond Comics Distributors data, Image remained the fourth-largest U.S. direct market comic book publisher as of that year. Their approximately 4 percent of total comics purchases places them closely behind **Dark Horse** at 5.61 percent. DC Comics and Marvel Comics continued to dominate the landscape with a combined 72 percent.

A. David Lewis

INCAL, THE. *The Incal* is a French **science-fiction** comic book series written by Alejandro Jodorowsky and illustrated by **Moebius**. The original series comprised six issues, which, in their English translation, are collected in trade paperback form as *The Incal: The Epic Conspiracy*, and *The Incal: The Epic Journey*. The series was then expanded (justifying the designation "epic") via a prequel, a sequel, two spin-offs, and a role-playing game.

The story, featuring protagonist John Difool (whose name clues readers in to the tarot card motif in the series), takes place in a future world that has come to be called both the Jodoverse and the Metabarons Universe, where dystopian conditions are facilitated by oligarchical rule, a conspiratorial media, and mind-numbing drugs. This world is established in the prequel, entitled in English-language trade paperback form *The Incal: Orphan of the City Shaft*. The people of the City Shaft on the planet Terra #2014 run the gamut of social status, with the hedonistic Aristos, characterized by the halos they are supposedly born with, at the top. To achieve Class "R" Detective status, Difool begins to uncover the mystery of how the halos are actually created, which carries over into the next trade paperback, *The Incal: John Difool, Class "R" Detective*. Difool solves the mystery, but is kept from exposing the truth, which he soon forgets due to brainwashing. He then finds himself newly established as a Class "R" Detective, and just as emotionless as the rest of Terra #2014. Meanwhile, events are taking place to help

Difool live up to his destiny—bringing the periled universe's awaited consciousness to light by bearing witness to a catalyst for the subversion of the dystopian conditions under which he lives.

According to the trade paperback versions of the prequel series, the Incal "is the dual nature of reality embodied in the form of two pyramids; the Black Incal and the White Incal," and is "representative of the basic conflict within everything; hero/coward, light/dark, beautiful/ugly, up/down, etc." The story in *The Incal: The Epic Conspiracy* and *The Incal: The Epic Journey* follows Difool as he comes into contact with these pyramids, which help him and others to bring about the downfall of the system wielding power over Terra #2014 and beyond. In the end, Difool must take the Incal to the place where its light can replace the old light, which has been all but consumed by darkness—the light and dark are here both literal and figurative. In this sense, *The Incal* maintains utopian potential by suggesting that the present system and the damage done by it can be overcome and replaced by a better one. It is this to which Difool becomes the "eternal witness."

Beyond the original series and the prequels (illustrated by Zoran Janjetov), *The Incal* spawned the spin-off series, *Technopriests* (illustrated by Janjetov) and *The Metabarons* (illustrated by Juan Giménez), as well as a *Metabarons* role-playing game. A sequel entitled *Après l'Incal* (*After Incal*), originally scheduled for six volumes, appeared in 2000 but was abandoned by illustrator Moebius (**Jean Giraud**) due to overwork. In its place came *Final Incal* (illustrated by José Ladrönn), set for only two volumes, the first of which, *Les Quatre John Difool* (*The Four John Difools*) was released in 2008.

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Alex Hall

INCREDIBLE HULK, THE. **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby**'s The Incredible Hulk is an enduring **Marvel Comics** character who first appeared in his self-titled series in May, 1962. His story features one of Marvel's most complicated and convoluted mythologies. The Hulk was the quintessence of human rage, and was originally an outgrowth of the **Cold War**, the Frankenstein/Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde mythos, and a 1950s fascination with nuclear-inspired monsters, notably *The Amazing Colossal Man* (1957); but over the next several decades, the Hulk would become one of the most Promethean and complex figures in comicdom.

The story of the Hulk is as follows: Robert Bruce Banner was a nuclear research scientist working on a gamma ray bomb with General Thaddeus "Thunderbolt" Ross. Banner was in love with Ross's daughter, Betty, but on the day of a test explosion, Banner

noticed a rebellious teen, Rick Jones, driving through the test area. Banner ran to save the boy, ordering the countdown suspended. His assistant, in reality a Russian spy, ignored Banner, hoping to kill Banner and end the research. Banner thrust Jones into a safety trench, just as he himself was engulfed in the blast. Jones, realizing he was responsible, stayed with the comatose Banner who that night first transformed into the Hulk, a raging mass of unreason and fury. The Hulk was an early and significant failure for the golden team of Lee and Kirby, who oversaw Marvel's early 1960s **Silver Age** renaissance. The Hulk, part-monster, part-Cold War allegory, part-fairy tale, part-**superhero**, was too complex and only lasted six issues.



The Incredible Hulk, issue #124, was published in February 1970, just 22 issues after the title was officially changed back from *Tales to Astonish*. Photofest

In the initial stories, the Hulk would inexplicably transform, and gamma radiation was cited as a catalyst for these metamorphoses. However, the combination of the Hulk's rage and Banner's intellect was problematic. For a brief time, the Hulk would appear with Banner's head attached, and the Hulk would have to wear a Hulk mask to attain full "Hulkness." Mostly, the Hulk epitomized feral aggressiveness. Over time, fear of this rage drove away various would-be supporters, including Jones, paramour Betty Ross, **The Avengers**, **The Fantastic Four**, and The Defenders. This same anger inexplicably enhanced his powers; as the Hulk's fury increased, his abilities grew exponentially. When the television Hulk of the 1980s, played by Bill Bixby, explained, "don't make me angry, you wouldn't like me when I'm angry," viewers knew where he was coming from.

The initial run of *The Hulk* was from May, 1962, through March, 1963. Though unsuccessful in his own comic, the Hulk was wildly successful as an anti-hero and guest antagonist in other Marvel titles. He battled the Fantastic Four (*Fantastic Four* #12) and would become an almost routine foil to The Thing. The main debate was who was stronger, and though the Hulk seemed more powerful, it was The Thing, another tragic

hero, who usually prevailed due to his greater guile and humanity. By 1963, the Hulk was back on the scene as a founding member of The Avengers, then almost immediately as an antagonist of the team. He guest-starred in ***Spider-Man*** #14 and with Giantman in *Tales to Astonish* #59, where in issue #60, he became a regular feature.

Charting the complex trajectory of the Hulk through countless writers, artists, and incarnations is nearly impossible. Initially the character was grey, then green, and more recently a red variant. At first, he was an inexplicable Jekyll and Hyde arising from gamma exposure, then as a manifestation of Banner's rage (the most common explanation of the Hulk's appearance), but in various eras he could also be summoned, sometimes at will, through hypnosis, through sleep, through Banner's childhood traumas about his psychotic father, Brian Banner, or through alien interventions. At times, the Hulk was subdued by Banner's will, submerged in Banner, split apart as a separate entity from Banner, controlled by yoga, and even extinguished from being for a time.

Gamma radiation was a potent aspect of the mythology; villains such as The Leader and The Abomination were also gamma-induced. Gamma rays transformed proletariat laborer, Samuel Sterns (The Leader) into a maniacal genius bent on world domination. Emil Blonsky (The Abomination) was a Russian spy who used gamma radiation to evade capture and remains the only regular villain to rival the Hulk's massive strength. During the *Tales to Astonish* run (1964–68), the Leader was a primary nemesis. With issue number #102, *Tales to Astonish* was re-titled *The Incredible Hulk*, and it ran through the 1990s. In 1999, the title was restarted once again, as issue #1.

Under author Peter David's 12-year stint as Hulk writer (1987–99), the Hulk was revamped as the result of Banner's dissociative identity disorder caused by childhood abuse (at the hands of his crazy father), thus accounting for the Hulk's long-term mental problems and rage issues. For a while the grey-skinned Hulk, a more muted, less powerful, but more intellectual version of the Hulk, returned. This Hulk moved from cosmic battles to terrestrial plots in Las Vegas as an ambiguous mob enforcer known as Mr. Fix-it. Another clever transformation was Doc Sampson's merger of three hulk personalities blending Banner's intellect, Mr. Fix-It's grey, savvy Hulk, and the green-skinned savage Hulk, as a new configuration called the professor. Throughout his various permutations, the emphasis was always on the Hulk's instability, untrustworthiness, and perpetual transformation.

In 2007, Marvel embarked on the ambitious *World War Hulk* cycle. The Illuminati (Black Bolt, Mr. Fantastic, **Iron Man** and others) decided that the Hulk must be involuntarily exiled to an uninhabited world where he could pose no threat. Shanghaied, the Hulk found his ship redirected to the planet Sakaar. In a pastiche of works such as *Spartacus* and *Dune*, he achieved bizarre **Conan**-esque manifestations as a rebel warrior, king, mythological figure, and potential messiah. After a warp core explosion on his ship killed nearly everyone, the Hulk and survivors headed to Earth for revenge against the Illuminati. There, he learned he had been betrayed on Sakaar and instead aided the S.H.I.E.L.D. spy group to explore the mysteries of a new Red Hulk.

The Hulk has long been a pivotal character in the Marvel universe, symbolizing the juxtaposition of American aggressiveness and diversity, with a propensity for self-destruction and anti-intellectualism, mirroring the best and most problematic elements of our society. His carnivalesque body marks him as a grotesque grappling with ideas about American foreign policy that overreaches its boundaries and explodes into the world.

Selected Bibliography: Christiansen, Jeff, et al. *World War Hulk, Gamma Files*. New York: Marvel Comics, 2007; Kirby, Jack and Stan Lee, et al. *The Incredible Hulk, Transformations*. New York: Marvel Comics. 2001.

Stuart Lenig

I NEVER LIKED YOU is an intimate and affecting autobiography by the Canadian artist **Chester Brown** (1960–), originally serialized as *Fuck* in the issues #26–30 (1991–93) of his comic book *Yummy Fur*, but further revised for the book edition (Drawn Quarterly, 1994 & its reprint of 2002). Brown has produced two long narratives about his troubled teens in Châteaugauy, a suburb of the Canadian city of Montreal, but each stands on its on: ***The Playboy*** (1992) deals with his adolescent obsession with the famous men's magazine, while *I Never Liked You* deals with Brown's emotional and social coming-of-age at home and among his peer group. Key topics include trying to cope with bullying classmates and with uneasy feelings such as shame, jealousy, a crush on the girl-next-door, and so on. For critic Charles Hatfield, Brown's memoirs treat ordinary, everyday encounters as occasions for the deepest questioning. Behind the quite ordinary teen problems looms, indeed, a deeper human tragedy: the gradual mental breakdown of his schizophrenic mother and Chester's inability to express explicitly his love at her deathbed. Such gripping scenes are depicted with the same discreet reticence as the more innocent scenes. Brown's drawing style is light and minimalist, but the corporal and facial expressions are revealing in their subtlety. Indeed, silence in *I Never Liked You* can say as much as the dialogue; moreover, characters often say things—like the title of the comic—that they do not really mean.

Brown's small, fragile drawings are the only bulbs of light in the dark environment of the black plates. Such a page layout stresses the fact that the author offers only carefully selected pieces of his youth, but almost every scene plunges the reader into teenage angst. Nevertheless, even at the most dramatic stages Brown refrains from cheap effects, instead he offers the readers enough elements to experience the complexity of the situation and its emotional charge. Despite the fragmented narration and the jumps in time, the sequences seem to flow with remarkable ease and turn out to be internally very cohesive. This narrative structure is a consequence of Brown's creation process, in which he first envisions the individual scenes he wants to include, then modifies them as the narrative unfolds. The rather serious tone of *I Never Liked You* also includes some gentle humor; the 30-something Brown can clearly relativize various things that seriously worried him as a teenager. On the other hand, some painful events—especially

in relation to his mother—are seemingly still haunting him. No matter how personal his story may look, it remains paradoxically highly recognizable for the reader; especially readers of the same age as the author, who will enjoy the various references to the popular culture of that decade (from television shows as *Charlie's Angels* to the music of Led Zeppelin or David Bowie).

Selected Bibliography: Grammel, Scott. "Chester Brown Interview." *The Comics Journal* 135 (April 1990); Hatfield, Charles. "The Autobiographical Stories in Yummy Fur." *The Comics Journal* 210 (February 1999): 67; Juno, Andrea. "Chester Brown." In *Dangerous Drawings. Interviews with Comix & Graphic Artists*. New York: Juno Books, 1997.

Pascal Lefèvre

INVISIBLES, THE. This ground-breaking series, which ran between 1994 and 2000, was a literate and complex narrative that firmly established **Grant Morrison** as one of the most interesting and thought-provoking writers working in comics. It featured numerous artists, including Steve Yeowell, Sean Phillips, Chris Weston, John Ridgway, Phil Jimenez, Philip Bond, and Frank Quitely. The series ran for 59 issues, which were divided over three volumes, and has been reprinted in seven collected editions. The story concerns a band of anarchist terrorists, known as the Invisibles, who are fighting against the forces of order and conformity using magic and time travel, as the world hurtles towards the apocalypse. This is portrayed as the intersection of our universe with a fictional reality, one of Morrison's recurring themes, with fiction being viewed as a kind of magical working which has the ability to unleash previously untapped potential. Influences on *The Invisibles* include H. P. Lovecraft, Aleister Crowley, William S. Burroughs, Jorge Luis Borges, **Alan Moore,** Philip K. Dick, William Gibson, *The X-Files*, and conspiracy theories, as well as Morrison's own earlier work, *Zenith*.

The story begins with the rescue and recruitment of Dane McGowan (otherwise known as Jack Frost), a foul-mouthed youth from Liverpool, England, who may be on his way to being the new Buddha, a Messiah of the Age to come. When Dane is incarcerated for criminal damage and assault he finds himself facing indoctrination and torture by followers of the Outer Church who are attempting to enslave humanity. Dane is liberated by a cell of "Invisibles," which consists of King Mob, an occult assassin and a surrogate for Morrison himself; Ragged Robin, a girl from the future who reads a book called *The Invisibles* and comes back in time to make it a reality; Lord Fanny, a Brazilian transvestite shaman; and Boy, a female expert in martial arts. Freed from the Outer Church, Dane encounters a being called Barbelith, an entity that appears to Invisibles as they look beyond the veil we call "reality," telling them to "wake up" and to "remember." Dane apparently escapes both the Outer Church and the Invisibles and experiences homelessness on the streets of London. Here he is initiated into the Invisible College by Tom O'Bedlam, who, posing as an elderly homeless man, shows him how to unlock his potential.

Following this experience Dane joins King Mob's cell and works with them to fight the Outer Church, travelling through time, encountering past Invisibles, such as the Marquis de Sade and the Romantic poets Byron and Shelley, all the while honing his psychic abilities. Using these powers Dane wins a telepathic battle with Sir Miles, a member of the British aristocracy and representative of the establishment, who is also a member of the Outer Church. The Outer Church is revealed to be under the control of alien gods from another dimension who use a mix of occult practices and advanced technology to dominate humanity.

The story moves to America where the Invisibles continue to battle the Outer Church, which also runs the military and industrial complex. With the help of Mason Lang, a wealth Invisible struggling to comprehend his own alien abduction experience, they learn that Colonel Friday and the mysterious Mr. Quimper are in possession of numerous secrets, such as an AIDS vaccine and a substance known as "Magic Mirror." In the ensuing conflicts Mr. Quimper infiltrates the Invisibles, secretly controlling Ragged Robin, who has fallen in love with King Mob. Lang reveals that he has been working to create a time machine, and after defeating Mr. Quimper Ragged Robin uses it to return to her own time, leaving behind her lover, King Mob. As the story moves toward its conclusion Dane accepts his role as savior of humanity and King Mob reconsiders his use of violence to fight evil. Dane leads a battle against the forces of the Outer Church as they try to complete a ritual that will crown a monster as the King of England, a monster whose body will serve as the host for Rex Mundi, ruler of the Outer Church. Dane discovers that the Invisible College and the Outer Church are two sides of the same coin, and in the aftermath of the battle forms his own cell of Invisibles. With the war over Dane turns to the real role of the Invisibles—saving humanity from the coming apocalypse, predicted to occur on December 22, 2012. The final issue sees King Mob and Ragged Robin reunited on this date as all time collapses in on itself and those who know how are able to move freely through it, as easily as someone can move through space. In the final pages Dane steps outside of the fictional reality of the comic and addresses the reader, a meta-fictional move that Morrison employs in several comics, notably *Animal Man*. *The Invisibles* concludes with Dane telling the readers that they are free and that "our sentence is up."

In *The Invisibles* Morrison argues that we find ourselves trapped in a world that is a fictional construct of our own making. What we call "reality" is generated by language and by our perceptions, which are slaves to conformity. We are therefore framed and controlled by the cages we call "personalities." As in *Flex Mentallo*, Morrison uses the story to argue that we have forgotten the essential truth of all being—that we create the world. Religion, morality, and social institutions are the framework of our obedience, and the Invisibles, as anarchists, are determined to bring about the next stage of human evolution, whereby we cast off our preconceptions and ideologies in order to grow up and to stop being afraid to become free. As Morrison argues, the world as we know it is essentially an elaborate fiction, and there is no underlying shared reality—it is all simulation. At its heart, *The Invisibles* asks a few key questions: What if all the conspiracy

theories were true? What if order, rationality, even our perceptions of time and space, were the ultimate conspiracy theories? How would we break free of such constraints? In order to answer these questions Morrison uses the comics medium itself, as comics mark a meeting point between the primal building blocks of representation—words and images. By playing with signs throughout the work Morrison makes *The Invisibles* a massive sign system. The text itself becomes an exercise in semiology, an elaborate visual and linguistic code, or as he termed it, a "hypersigil," something more than a story, a living, breathing fabric of stories, images, and signs that is intersected by other stories and refers to cultural myths and archetypes. Like Alan Moore, Morrison equates creating comics as a kind of magical working, manipulating words and images in a primal alchemy.

The Invisibles is Morrison's largest and most important work, and his best exploration of the themes of fiction: magic, anarchy, and apocalypse. He has written scripts for its adaptation to television and film, but these projects were not commissioned. Some have said that the Wachowski brothers' 1999 film *The Matrix* "borrowed" much of its plot, characters, and ideas from *The Invisibles*, although substituting a computer program as the origin of our shared illusion, rather than language or personalities. Morrison has returned to the ideas in *The Invisibles* in later works, notably *The Filth* (2002), which he has described as a companion work to *The Invisibles*.

Chris Murray

IRON MAN. Created by the artistic team of **Stan Lee**, Larry Lieber, **Jack Kirby**, and Don Heck and introduced in the pages of *Tales of Suspense* #39 in March 1963, the story of Iron Man follows genius inventor, capitalist, and playboy Tony Stark as he confronts an array of villains while encased in a futuristic, self-designed mechanical suit of armor. Although he spent his early years as an ethically blind arms manufacturer supplying advanced weapons to the United States military, a life-threatening injury forces Stark to radically alter the goals of his technological innovations. The tension brought on by this conflict—between scientific loyalty to one's country and the individual duty to do what is right—fuels much of the early Iron Man mythos and realigns Stark as a heroic figure. Other prominent themes in the character's history include **Cold War** militarism, corporate corruption, international espionage, and more recently, global terrorism. Also a founding member of the **superhero** team ***The Avengers***, Iron Man often makes appearances in various books and storylines throughout the **Marvel** universe and has become a central figure of Marvel's recent crossover event storylines.

Born into a wealthy industrialist family, Tony Stark was primed early on to become a pillar of American industrial capitalism. At the age of 15 he began studying electrical engineering at MIT. When his parents were killed in a car accident, Tony, just 21 years old, took over Stark Industries, his late father Howard Stark's arms and defense manufacturing company. At first enthusiastic about aiding the U.S. military in its war against Communism abroad, Stark was personally involved in the development and testing of new technologies. Because of this need to remain active in producing experimental

technology, however, Stark fell victim to an attack by warlords in Vietnam; he was taken prisoner and seriously injured by shrapnel wounds to his chest. Aided by fellow prisoner and physicist Ho Yinsen, Stark was able to stabilize his injury and escape the prison by constructing the first rudimentary Iron Man suit. Later discovering that his wound would kill him if he ever removes the magnetic chest-plate that keeps shrapnel away from his heart, Stark's very life became reliant on his technological prowess—a blunt reversal of his previous work as an arms manufacturer whose goal was to more efficiently take life away from others.



A stamp released by the U.S. Postal Service in July 2007, commemorating the first issue of *The Invincible Iron Man*, published in May, 1968. Marvel Comics/Photofest

Imbued with a new sense of purpose after his time in captivity, Stark continually develops new versions of his Iron Man suit to help him fight crime and the still-lurking communist threat. Though he no longer maintains a strict ideological stance of U.S. intervention against Soviet expansion abroad, communist villains—including the **Black Widow**, Crimson Dynamo, and Titanium Man—play a significant thematic role in the *Iron Man* story by providing a background of foreign foes through whom the narrative can explore conflicted and conflicting positions of the role the United States should play internationally. That the Crimson Dynamo and Titanium Man also use mechanical armored suits provides a neatly packaged metaphor for the arms race between the two international superpowers.

The Mandarin, a recurrent supervillain first introduced in *Tales of Suspense* #50, further complicates the question of internationalism in the narrative by utilizing stereotypically-derived imagery of a magical Chinese descendant of Ghengis Khan—despite the Mandarin's "magic" being sophisticated alien technology in the form of 10 powerful rings. In battle after battle, Iron Man's superior Western technology struggles to overcome the seemingly mystical Eastern powers of the Mandarin, encapsulating major political themes of imperialism and military struggle in the wake of the Vietnam War.

The Black Widow, a Soviet spy and assassin first introduced in *Tales of Suspense* #52, is one of the primary female supervillains to continuously cross paths with Iron

Man. The other major female foil to duel with Stark is Madame Masque (née Whitney Frost), daughter of Count Nefaria and one-time secretary to Stark who was introduced in *Tales of Suspense* #98.

Iron Man is supported by a stable of recurring cast members. Included among these characters are Pepper Potts, Tony Stark's secretary, and Happy Hogan, Stark's chauffer and assistant. Early stories depict Potts as smitten with Stark, and Hogan equally smitten with Potts, creating a love triangle between the major characters. Eventually Potts and Hogan marry in *Tales of Suspense* #91 and leave the book for some time, though recently both characters played significant roles in Marvel's ***Civil War*** event and the resulting crossovers and spin-off storylines.

James Rhodes, created by David Michelinie and Bob Layton in 1979, debuted in *Iron Man* (Vol. 1) #118 as a pilot and close friend to Stark. Eventually Rhodes took on the mantle of Iron Man during a period of time when Tony Stark was recuperating from serious injury (*Iron Man* [Vol. 1] #170). Ultimately Rhodes was given his own (much more) heavily armored suit, known as the War Machine armor (*Iron Man* [Vol. 1] #284). Though Rhodes has maintained a degree of narrative importance throughout presence in the *Iron Man* story, the recent *Civil War* storyline thrust him into prominence once more.

The ongoing narrative of *Iron Man* is defined in part by several formative storylines. Perhaps the most widely known story arcs are credited to the creative team of Michelinie and Layton. "Demon in a Bottle," where Tony Stark is revealed as an alcoholic, depicts Stark as he struggles with the consequences of addiction (*Iron Man* [Vol. 1] #120–28). Fan-favorite story arc "Doomquest" features Iron Man and villain Doctor Doom thrown back through time into King Arthur's court (*Iron Man* [Vol. 1] #149–50). Originally called "Stark Wars" but popularly re-titled "Armor Wars," *Iron Man* (Vol. 1) #225–32 finds Tony Stark obsessively chasing down and destroying leaked Stark weaponry, including that used by the U.S. military. **Warren Ellis** and Adi Granov's recent "Extremis" story arc reconfigures Tony Stark into a post-human cybernetic organism after he is injected with a "nanotech virus" that allows his central nervous system to interface directly with the Iron Man armor (*Iron Man* [Vol. 4] #1–6).

Tony Stark and his heroic persona of Iron Man have been featured in several other media, ranging from animated television shorts in the 1960s to contemporary live-action film. In the 2008 blockbuster film, Tony Stark was played by Robert Downey, Jr., to critical acclaim.

Joshua Plencner

IT'S A GOOD LIFE, IF YOU DON'T WEAKEN. First published as issues #4 through #9 of **Seth**'s (Gregory Gallant) series *Palookaville, It's A Good Life, if You Don't Weaken* appeared in graphic novel form in September 1996, published by independent Canadian comics publisher Drawn & Quarterly. It received a fair amount of critical attention upon release. Seth won two Ignatz Awards in the year following the book's release; he received an Outstanding Artist award in the first year the prize was awarded, as well

as an Outstanding Graphic Novel or Collection award. The Ignatz is a festival prize designed and designated by the Small Press Expo, to (according to the organization's Web site) "recognize outstanding work that challenges popular notions of what comics can achieve, both as an art form and as a means of personal expression." The award is determined by popular vote of the attendees (both professional and fans) of the festival and is highly regarded within the industry; 1997 was a breakout year for Seth, whose series *Palookaville* was still relatively new at the time, though it was selling well for Drawn and Quarterly.

Palookaville has also generated considerable controversy because some have felt that its content was all too close to that of Seth's own life. It is a comic book with a decidedly autobiographical focus; the stories within its covers are about Seth and his interactions with fellow (at that time) Toronto-based autobiographical cartoonists ***Chester Brown*** and ***Joe Matt***, daily life and events, childhood memories, collecting, and other such things. On its face, *It's A Good Life, if You Don't Weaken* is the story (presented as if it were fact) of a cartoonist—ostensibly Seth himself—searching for more information about another cartoonist, Jack "Kalo" Kalloway, whose illustrations in *The New Yorker* he stumbled across while inspired to find out more about Whitney Darrow Jr. Seth himself went on to create illustrations for *The New Yorker* later in his own career, and so the similarities between the two men, reading Seth's history and Kalo's own, are striking.

The relatively unknown Kalo catches Seth's already nostalgic eye with his simple lines and clean style, which evoke a forgotten heyday of illustrators and single-panel work. To say that Seth's works are, as a collective whole, enamored of a lost history is simultaneously too simple and squarely at the very center of much of what he does. Nostalgia plays a major role in Seth's work, as does his own personal history. In his more recent work, the autobiographical aspects have taken a secondary role in his treatment of history as a lost past, such as stories about salesmen who are outpaced by technological advances or about collectors, much like himself, sifting through old magazines and bookstores in low light.

As Seth's narrative search to find more Kalo illustrations takes him through places in Canada that evoke his own childhood, such as a stop in Strathroy, he finds that the object of his research was a Canadian who lived (and died) in the same town in which Seth himself lived as a child. In the narrative, Seth collects and saves these illustrations, combing through used bookstores and sifting through old copies of *Esquire* and *The New Yorker*. They are reproduced at the end of the book, along with a photo of Kalloway during the time when he lived and worked in New York City, during the late 1940s to early 1950s, before he returned to Canada, where he married and had his daughter, and stopped cartooning in favor of settling down and founding what proved to be a family-based real estate business.

Seth speaks to both Kalo's daughter and, in the final scene of the book, to Kalo's own mother, living in a retirement community in Strathroy. Seth's research leads him in other directions as well; while at the library researching Kalo his path crosses with

that of a young woman, a French major named Ruthie, whom he dates and then dumps. She is, in fact, the one who discovers Kalo's full name, from as easy a step as checking the contributor notes in an old issue of *Esquire*. One would think that Seth would have thought to check this himself; what kind of researcher fails to do so?

As it turns out, of course, Seth is no researcher at all, but a writer of fiction. Though *It's A Good Life, if You Don't Weaken* seems to be about a cartoonist rediscovering himself as he rediscovers an obscure *New Yorker* cartoonist, the truth is simpler: Kalo is a fictional character, made up by Seth for narrative purposes. However, the story is so convincing that many readers were surprised to find that it was not true: the narrative borrows heavily from Seth's own life, including his family and friends, but it is not as autobiographical. The work proved endearing and lasting; it was listed as #52 on *The Comics Journal*'s list of the "100 Best Comics of the 20th Century."

Anne Thalheimer



JACKSON, JACK (JAXON) (1941–2006). Jack Jackson was a pioneering **underground comics** artist (using the pen name "Jaxon"), a figure in the San Francisco rock scene of the 1960s, a graphic novelist, and a self-taught historian who became one of the foremost experts on early Texas cartography, eventually becoming a fellow of the Texas State Historical Association and a member of the Texas Institute of Letters. Jackson grew up in Texas and attended the University of Texas Austin, where he began cartooning for a school humor magazine, until he was fired over a censorship issue. In 1964, he published the one-shot comic *God Nose*, considered by many to be the first underground comic. Soon afterward, he was one of a group of Texans who moved to San Francisco, including his friend Janis Joplin, as the counterculture was being born. This group, including Fred Todd, Gilbert Shelton, Jackson, Jackson's girlfriend Beatrice Bonini, and Dave Moriarty, was affectionately called "the Texas Mafia." Jackson went on to publish a variety of visionary comics for Last Gasp and his own Rip Off Press (which he co-founded in 1969). He also played an important role in the development of psychedelic art, as art director for Chet Helms's Family Dog Productions, a key force in the area's burgeoning countercultural music scene.

Returning to Texas in 1973, Jackson became a more serious cartoonist, focusing on the history of Texas in his comics. His first historical story, *Comanche Moon* (1979), began telling the story of Quanah Parker, the last great leader of Texas Comanche, who was the son of a captive mother and a Native American Indian father, and sought peace between the Comanche and white Texans. Jackson created additional works detailing Texas history (often focusing on the plight of Native Americans displaced by the arrival of white settlers), including *Los Tejanos* (1981), *Lost Cause* (1998), and *The Alamo* (2002).

In addition to his comics work, Jackson became a respected scholar of Texas history, especially early maps. As his expertise in this area developed, Jackson began to write and speak on the topic, eventually publishing several major books on it. Jackson's historical graphic novels have been compared with the work of novelist Larry McMurtry, combining evocation of the past with social questioning and philosophical depth. Jackson's style was distinctive, beginning with his psychedelic work that, despite its flights of fancy, always retained physicality reminiscent of the work of Heinrich Kley. For his historical novels, Jackson combined this with sweeping compositions and realistic detail, drawn in part from **Western** artists like Remington and Russell and the cinematography of John Ford. Jackson completed his final works despite suffering from a progressive disease that eventually limited his ability to draw.

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Christopher Couch

JAXON. *See* ***Jackson, Jack***

JIMMY CORRIGAN: THE SMARTEST KID ON EARTH is writer and artist **Chris Ware**'s magnum opus, first published in graphic novel form by Pantheon in 2000 after slowly taking shape in comic strips that had appeared in various locations, including the Chicago weeklies *New City* and *The Chicago Reader*, and especially in Ware's unique comic book series *The Acme Novelty Library*, first published by **Fantagraphics** in 1994: the long concluding section of *Jimmy Corrigan* appeared in *Acme* #14 in 1999. Once the extended storyline of almost 400 pages was collected into an intricately designed, brick-shaped book, *Jimmy Corrigan* became one of the first examples of a graphic novel, following **Art Spiegelman**'s groundbreaking ***Maus*** to command mainstream recognition as a serious work of literature. Cited on many "Best of the Year" lists, *Jimmy Corrigan* was awarded an American Book Award and the *Manchester Guardian's* First Book Award in 2001 following a previous steady accumulation of prizes from the comics industry.

Given its extraordinary formal complexity as both a comic and an artifact, the story told by *Jimmy Corrigan* is misleadingly simple: painfully shy, middle-aged Jimmy Corrigan works in an anonymous Chicago office, fielding hectoring phone calls from his mother. After he receives an unexpected note from his father, who abandoned his family long ago, Jimmy travels to meet the old man in Michigan, in effect for the first time, on Thanksgiving weekend. Following their brief, awkward reunion, the father dies while Jimmy is becoming acquainted with his previously unknown half-sister Amy. Any such summary of the basic story of *Jimmy Corrigan* is misleading, since Ware's work unfolds incrementally, though minutely rendered actions, or through long flashbacks into the Corrigan family's past, at times set against the elaborately rendered 1893 World's

Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The story of the lonely Jimmy Corrigan reveals itself to be a multi-generational saga of poor fathers and their traumatized sons, pondering in form and content (with the past echoing in the present) how a cycle of emotional abuse repeats itself. Often, as well, the tedium of Jimmy's life is offset by his imagination, depicted for the reader through fantasies of revenge and rescue, the latter embodied by a paunchy substitute for the definitive comic book **superhero**, **Superman**, who weaves his way through the story as another ultimately disappointing father figure, and even perhaps a flawed stand-in for God.

While the sad story of Jimmy Corrigan is itself moving, Ware's text achieves its impact through the juxtaposition of its consistently elaborate form and its often emphatically mundane and un-dramatic content; while some readers have found that the formal virtuosity of the work overwhelms the story, the praise heaped upon Ware's graphic novel seems to acknowledge that it effectively employs devices unique to comics to achieve its meanings. Among other techniques, Ware continually uses writing as both language and image, and draws upon unexpected graphic models, ranging from architectural drawings (associating the grid of comic panels to the facade of a modern office building) to industrial flow charts, to affiliate his comics with a larger context of spatial and temporal representations. What would be minor moments in a conventional narrative thus become occasions for tour-de-force visual sequences in Ware's text.

While it includes mordant humor, for some readers *Jimmy Corrigan* is too relentlessly grim to enjoy, and Ware seems to purposely withhold easy sympathy for the pathetic Jimmy, whose extreme passivity can become frustrating. However, one of the work's singular achievements is to treat with unusual precision the quiet emotions of a deeply wounded family in a form that is consistently visually dazzling. As in Ware's other work, the meticulous design of the comic extends to all the features of the book itself, including the hilarious but self-lacerating notes that require a magnifying glass to read. The original hardback edition of the book also includes an elaborate dust jacket, designed by Ware, that unfolds to provide a virtual cosmology of the book it was meant to protect.

Though it is rarely noted, *Jimmy Corrigan* also honestly addresses the uncomfortable role racial difference continues to play in contemporary America, when Jimmy discovers his African American half-sister. Unlike the relatively rare comics that tackle American racism directly, *Jimmy Corrigan* effectively demonstrates the confusion that racial identity poses when it intersects with the identity provided by family.

Notes at the end of the book confirm that the story resonates with Ware's own: in an astonishing link to the reader's own experience, he notes that the time it takes us to read his book approximates the full time he spent with his own father in their single meeting as adults, and Ware even suggests that the shape of the book he has crafted resembles the box that held his father's ashes after he died shortly after Ware had chronicled the death of Jimmy's father. Ultimately, *Jimmy Corrigan* is one of the few comics that, despite Ware's persistent self-deprecation, fully deserves its prestigious identification as a graphic novel, given its full attention to typography, color, drawing, and design elements,

all in the service of a narrative that moves between the intimate explorations of human emotion and the historical sweep that often characterize major works of literature.

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Corey K. Creekmur

JLA/AVENGERS. Published in 2003–4, *JLA/Avengers* was a four-part miniseries teaming **DC** and **Marvel's** respective central teams of heroes against common antagonists. The book was written by **Kurt Busiek** and drawn by **George Pérez**, then the creative team on Marvel's ***Avengers***.

The two companies' teams first unofficially faced off against each other in mid-1969 when the Avengers battled a villainous Squadron Sinister composed of loose counterparts of **Batman**, **Superman**, **Flash**, and **Green Lantern**. The idea was well-received by fans, and in late 1970, both *Avengers* and ***Justice League of America*** featured each team facing other-dimensional analogues of their counterparts: the Avengers traveled to the world of a heroic Squadron Supreme (which included versions of Black Canary, **Green Arrow**, the Atom, and Hawkman in addition to those duplicated in the Squadron Sinister's quartet) while the Justice League of America traveled to the post-apocalyptic world of Angor, which included heroes based on the Avengers' Quicksilver, Scarlet Witch, **Thor**, and Yellowjacket. After initially inconclusive battles, in each case the two teams of heroes ultimately allied with the other as friends before returning to their own dimensions.

In 1972, Marvel and DC's books unofficially crossed when the writers of DC's *Justice League of America* and Marvel's *Thor* and *Amazing Adventures* series set simultaneous stories in the same Rutland, Vermont, Halloween parade setting, with the artists and writers writing themselves into all three books as parade attendees and witnesses to the actions of their companies' characters, while the actions of the heroes and villains in each book had unexplained ramifications in the others; for example, while a villain stole a car in the DC book, one of the Marvel books pictured their villain dodging that same stolen car as it fled the scene.

In 1975, Marvel and DC had both independently agreed to produce comics adaptations of *The Wizard of Oz*; learning of each other's plans, the two companies agreed to cooperate to create just one version and the resultant book became the first official joint project of the two. With the ice broken, 1976 saw a jointly produced *Superman vs. the Amazing* ***Spider-Man*** book. A few years later, the early 1980s saw a succession of team-ups, including another Superman/Spider-Man title, a **Hulk**/Batman team-up, and a book featuring the **X-Men** and **Teen Titans**. The next planned production was to be an Avengers/JLA book. Plotted in 1982–83 by Gerry Conway (later revised by Roy Thomas) and scheduled to be penciled by George Pérez, the book encountered a

variety of editorial difficulties. After DC had given their creative team the go-ahead to begin writing and drawing the book, Marvel's executive editor Jim Shooter raised some objections to the proposed story. After several months of back-and-forth, the book was quietly abandoned. While Marvel and DC's management both told their sides of the story in articles in later-published comics, the book itself was never finished, though the 21-penciled story pages would ultimately see print two decades later in the 2004 *Avengers/JLA Compendium*.

Ill-feelings from that project effectively ended Marvel/DC crossovers for a decade. In 1994, with the editors involved in the Avengers/JLA difficulties having moved on, new crossovers began to happen, including an eventual four-issue *DC versus Marvel* series, followed by two sets of "Amalgam" titles featuring the heroes of both universes amalgamated with each other as well as a four-issue miniseries titled *DC/Marvel All Access* which featured heroes of one universe visiting the other. Concerned that the DC/Marvel crossovers had began to feel commonplace, the companies ceased teaming their primary heroes with each other after 1999's Batman/**Daredevil**. The exception, announced in 2001, was the long-awaited *JLA/Avengers*.

Avengers writer Kurt Busiek and *JLA* writer **Mark Waid** proposed that the crossover actually happen within the pages of each monthly series, but legal concerns led to the book becoming a four-issue stand-alone miniseries (48 pages per issue), written by Busiek with art by Pérez (who still wished to do the book he had been denied 20 years previously), and colored by Tom Smith. Busiek was well known for his encyclopedic knowledge of Marvel and DC's history, and Pérez was equally well known for his art with team or crowd scenes; this proved a good fit as every Avenger or JLA member who had ever appeared was ultimately included in the published story, though in many cases only peripherally.

JLA/Avengers (issues #2 and 4 were actually titled *Avengers/JLA*) was released in late 2003 and early 2004, with the final issue delayed several months due to an injury to Pérez's drawing hand. The plot involved DC villain Krona's universe-destroying quest for knowledge, and Marvel's Grandmaster and DC's Metron's attempts to thwart him, drawing the Avengers and JLA into opposing each other in quests for items of power. As each team visited the other's universe they found themselves taken aback by the other's worlds—the JLA viewed the Avengers' universe as a dark place that feared and hated its protectors, while the Avengers saw the JLA as setting themselves above those they protected. When both universes had their histories rewritten, the two teams were briefly portrayed as long-time allies, often meeting in a manner reminiscent of the Earth-1 Justice League and Earth-2 Justice Society's frequent cross-universal team-ups, but ultimately reality was restored and both teams allied against Krona. While the final issue, which saw Superman wielding Thor's hammer and **Captain America**'s shield to face Krona, was held by a small but vocal fanbase as disrespectful of Marvel's heroes (this despite the JLA/Avengers creative team then being Marvel's creative team on Avengers), the series was otherwise regarded as a great success critically, artistically, and monetarily.

In late 2004, the series was reprinted as a boxed hardbound two-volume set; the first volume reprinted the miniseries, while the second volume (the *Avengers/JLA Compendium*) included Pérez's pencils for the original unpublished series, scripts for the published books, and a selection of historical materials. In 2008, the miniseries was republished in a collected trade paperback form.

Mark O'English

JOHNS, GEOFF (1973–). In the first decade of the 21st century, Geoff Johns emerged among the most popular and prolific storytellers for the **DC** universe. Johns proved adept at revitalizing **superheroes** once written off as past their prime, and became a fan favorite for his ability to work within the constraints of previous continuity. A native of Detroit, Johns studied media arts and screenwriting at Michigan State University, before honing his craft by interning with film director and producer Richard Donner in Los Angeles. Donner, of course, had famously directed the first ***Superman*** (1978) feature film, and Johns went on to assist him with the production of the films *Conspiracy Theory* (1997) and *Lethal Weapon 4* (1998). Years later Donner would re-team with Johns for a collaborative run of Superman stories in ***Action Comics*** (2006–8).

Well before becoming a scribe for *The Man of Steel*, Johns's first comics work debuted in a one-shot special, ***Star Spangled Comics*** (1999), which was a prequel for re-launching a **Justice Society of America** series. Within a few short months, DC published Johns's first ongoing series, *Stars and S.T.R.I.P.E.*, which featured a new Star-Spangled Kid (later renamed Stargirl), Courtney Whitmore. The character was based on Johns's own deceased younger sister, also named Courtney, and has served as a frequent touchstone for his subsequent work on *JSA* (2000–6) and *Justice Society of America* (2007–9).

Johns also got his first crack at a cross-over series in 1999, authoring *Day of Vengeance*, which culminated in the deceased **Green Lantern** Hal Jordan taking on the ghostly role of the Spectre. Johns would take turns at other cross-overs with *Infinite Crisis* (2005–6) and its weekly follow-up series, *52*, which he co-authored with **Mark Waid**, **Grant Morrison**, and **Greg Rucka.** Johns would return to work on Hal Jordan again, breathing new life into the character beginning in the *Green Lantern: Rebirth* (2004–5) miniseries and continuing on in a new ongoing *Green Lantern* (2005) series. Johns and several collaborators have greatly expanded the Green Lantern mythos within the popular "Sinestro Corps War" (2007–8) and "Blackest Night" (2009) storylines.

Part of the appeal of Johns's writing lies in his ability to create vivid characterizations. This talent became pronounced in his approach to the rogue's gallery of villains in ***The Flash***, which he spotlighted during his tenure on the title from 2000–5. Johns took formerly two-dimensional villains like Captain Cold and Mirror Master and cast them as featured players in their own stories, adding previously unexplored depths to their motivations. Strong characterizations and a healthy respect for heroic legacies continued to be the hallmarks of Johns's work in re-launches of *Hawkman* (2002), ***Teen Titans*** (2003), *Booster Gold* (2007), and *Flash: Rebirth* (2009).

While the majority of Johns's work has been for DC, he done some work for other publishers, most notably a run on **Marvel's *Avengers*** (2002–4). He has also written for television, including penning episodes of *Justice League Unlimited*, *Blade*, and *Smallville*.

Selected Bibliography: For more information on Geoff Johns, go to www.geoffjohns.com.

Matthew J. Smith

JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY. With a first issue cover dated June 1952, *Journey into Mystery* began the way of *Tales to Astonish*, *Tales of Suspense*, and ***Strange Tales*** as one of many **horror/science fiction**/suspense anthologies issued by Martin Goodman's Atlas (officially Canam Publishing Sales Corporation) line of comics. Initially more a journey into the mysterious rather than actual mysteries, these stories were generally of the ironic "just desserts" variety with elements of horror thrown in. Most of the stories boiled down simply to murder for money or revenge plots. Not all the stories used supernatural elements, but **vampires**, ghosts, **zombies**, and witches were welcome to serve as the agents of undoing for the greedy, jealous, cruel, and selfish.

Each issue contained four or five stories. The lead story was seven pages while subsequent tales were three or four. This led to a direct "set-'em-up-and-knock-'em-down" style of storytelling that left no room for character or even plot development. The main character's obsession (something to either obtain or avoid at all costs) is established; that obsession then quickly causes his or her death.

Issue #23 (cover dated March 1955) brought with it the **Comics Code** seal of approval and the changes that it dictated. Though *Journey into Mystery's* covers were ghoulish but not gory, gone were vampires, zombies, and the many ambulatory skeletons. Individual story titles dropped all references to these creatures, as well as the word "death." Instead, there was a turn to incredible phenomena as readers were intrigued by titles such as "What was 'Farley's Other Face?'" "What happened in 'The Haunted Halls!'" and "Can you solve the strange mystery of 'The Woman Who Played with Dolls?'"

Due to the collapse of Atlas, there was a 15-month gap between issues #48 and 49. *Journey into Mystery* returned with an orientation toward science fiction. A gigantic Viking alien adorns the cover of #52 (5/59) heralding the arrival of **Jack Kirby**. Though **Stan Lee** and Carl Wessler are two of the few credited writers, it is no coincidence the Godzilla-like Bombu, Xemnu, Rorgg, Spragg, and Lo-Karr (some of whom graduated to **Marvel's** superhero comics) followed Kirby. With #83 *Journey into Mystery* became the home of The Mighty **Thor** and with #126 was officially re-titled to reflect this. In 1972, there was a 19-issue revival of the original title. The first five of these had new stories and featured **Gil Kane** covers. The others were reprints from the pre-superhero days.

1996 saw the "death" of Thor, and with #503 a return to the *Journey into Mystery* title. This incarnation hosted The Lost Gods until #514 when Shang-Chi, Master of Kung Fu, The **Black Widow**, and Hannibal King, Vampire Detective succeeded them. The title ended with #521.

During its Atlas run *Journey into Mystery* displayed the art of Bill Everett, Russ Heath, Tony DiPreta, Vic Carrabotta, **Gene Colan**, **John Romita, Sr.**, **Steve Ditko**, Doug Wildey, George Tuska, Jerry Robinson, Carl Burgos, **Reed Crandall**, Vince Colletta, Bill Benulis, Jay Scott Pike, Don Heck, Joe Maneely, Dick Ayers, Sol Brodsky, **John Severin**, Ed Winiarski, Carl Hubbell, Bernie Krigstein, Ann Brewster, and many others.

Brian Camp

JUNGLE COMICS. Adventures in exotic jungle settings have provided the material for an entire family of comic books, among other products of American popular culture. In 1939, Edgar Rice Burroughs's famous ape man, **Tarzan**, had been going strong since the early 20th century, starring in a long series of books, films, and his own newspaper comics strip, which started in 1929, illustrated by Hal Foster. That year **Will Eisner** and Jerry Iger created a female version of the jungle hero for their new comic book, *Jumbo Comics*. The comic book was so named because of its large size: over 10 × 14 inches, and a whopping 64 pages. Inspired by H. Rider Haggard's classic tale of the beautiful ruler of a lost continent, *She*, Eisner embroidered on the name for his newly-created heroine. After the first eight issues, Jumbo was reduced to traditional comic book size, but Sheena ruled unchanged until 1953, starring in both Jumbo comics and her own comic book, inspiring two television series, a movie, and numerous imitators.

At a time when most women wore aprons and primarily ruled only their kitchens, Sheena wore leopard skin and ruled an entire jungle. Two years before the advent of **Wonder Woman**, Sheena, queen of the jungle, brave, beautiful and tawny as the big jungle cats she often fought, starred in the first issue of *Jumbo Comics*. Unlike Tarzan, Sheena was not raised by wild animals. She was brought to the jungle as a baby by her explorer father, Cardwell Rivington, who, in a tropical case of medical malpractice, was accidentally poisoned when a friendly witch-doctor named Koba fed him the wrong potion. The understandably apologetic Koba atoned for his error by bringing up Rivington's baby daughter as his own.

Sheena grew up wild, brave, and speaking pretty good English, considering. She dressed in leopard skin back in the days when leopards were not yet an endangered species. She could swing from tree to tree on vines, and she could take on any male bully, armed only with her dagger. She earned the title of jungle queen, and the respect of all the tribes in her neck of the jungle. ("Wah!" exclaims a native, "Sheena much strong!")

The jungle queen lived in a tree house with her pet chimpanzee, Chim, and with Bob, a white big-game hunter who was referred to as her "mate." Bumbling Bob was often the cause of Sheena's troubles. The jungle seemed to be full of evil white men scheming to dupe the natives and steal their treasure, or evil natives scheming to kill their tribe's rightful chief and take over the throne. Bob tended to blunder onto their plans and wind up bound to a tree, about to be sacrificed to yet another jungle god, and Sheena would have to swing down on a vine, knife in hand, to rescue him. There were also dozens of beautiful tribal queens or priestesses of lost kingdoms, who always wanted Bob

for their own, although, judging from his ineptitude, one wonders why. In one story, the villainess, thinking she has killed Sheena, has Bob and another explorer dragged into an arena where they will be slaughtered. "Now that Sheena is no more, you are without a mate," she declares, "I offer you half my kingdom. Refuse me and you suffer a fate similar to the one about to befall him!" Nobly, Bob answers, "A simple choice . . . death!" Of course, Bob could afford to be noble, because he knew that Sheena, not that easily destroyed, would leap out of a tree and rescue him.

When she was not saving Bob, Sheena often came to the rescue of other clueless white folks who ventured into the jungle for various reasons and wound up attacked by wild animals or imprisoned by evil natives. Actually, the natives were usually not evil, but simply naive and easily duped. When Sheena stops a tribe from attacking a safari, their chief explains, "Snake goddess demand goods for idol, or curse fall on village . . . we not have things in village, so attack safari!" Sheena, of course, then has to prove that the snake goddess is a phony.

When viewed over 50 years later, much in Sheena's narrative is dated and absurd. The natives are insultingly stupid, and everyone in the jungle, including Sheena, talks funny. Saving a man from an attacking lion, she shouts, "Ho, clawed one . . . release your prey!" Taking on a giant octopus, she says, "The knife of Sheena is sharp! No more will you crush and devour!" Of course, Tarzan ("Me Tarzan, you Jane") did not have great command of English either.

However, the golden-haired jungle queen burns brightly through the fog of racism and stilted Tarzan-speak. Leaping lithely across the printed page, dagger in hand, to save a native child from an attacking lion, or to rescue her boyfriend, she is a thing of fantasy and beauty. She was a goddess-like figure in a world that had not known goddesses for 2,000 years. Young boys wanted to be rescued by her and carried off to her tree house. Young girls wanted to be her.

Sheena's last appearance in a comic book was in 1954, when her publisher, Fiction House, released a special 3-D Sheena comic; but she had become an icon, and icons do not die that easily. She moved on to the small screen, in a television series that ran for 26 episodes, and is still fondly remembered by anyone who watched it. The jungle queen's role was filled by strapping ex-model Irish McCalla, who did her own stunts until the day that she miscalculated a tree and badly injured her kneecap. Thereafter, because it was impossible to find a stuntwoman as tall as McCalla, her vine-swinging was done by male stunt men wearing long blonde wigs, including, at one time, a young Sergio Aragones, who would go on to become a cartoonist for *Mad* Comics, and to create, among other characters, **Groo the Wanderer**.

Fortunately for McCalla, the role of Sheena did not require much acting. (Sheena's dialogue was on the level of "Me Sheena, you Chim.") On the other hand, the statuesque beauty bore an uncanny resemblance to the jungle queen and seemed to have stepped out of the pages of a Sheena comic book. While a majority of girls may have read the Sheena comic books, a majority of grown men watched the TV show to see McCalla romping around in what was then considered a brief and racy outfit (Today it would

be considered a slightly short minidress.). When the series ended, McCalla finally took acting lessons, but ironically, she had been typecast, and could only get roles in B movies with names like *She Demons* and *Five Gates to Hell*. None of this bothered McCalla much, as she had returned to her first love, painting. She became a successful Western artist, selling to, among others, Pat Nixon.

Over 25 years after the end of McCalla's TV series, Columbia Pictures made a Sheena movie, starring ex-Charlie's angel Tanya Roberts. It was a disaster. In the name of political correctness, the new Sheena wore leather instead of leopard skin, and her acting made Irish McCalla seem positively Shakespearean. On the other hand, the syndicated Sheena TV series, which debuted in 2000, was, if possible, even worse.

Encouraged by the success of their jungle queen, Fiction House followed up with three new jungle characters that ran in two of their six titles. Tiger Girl started in 1944, as the last story in *Fight Comics* but quickly moved up to the cover and the first story in the book. Stylishly drawn by the artist **Matt Baker**, she was a strawberry blonde who wore a tiger-skin swimsuit, and also had two pet tigers, Togara and Benzali. All the Fiction House jungle heroes had interesting origins, and Tiger Girl's is one of the most interesting. The daughter of an Indian rajah and an Irish princess, both killed by a lion, she was brought up in an ancient crumbling stone palace in the jungle by her faithful Sikh servant, Abdollah. As she is half Indian, she is one of the rare non-white heroines in comics at that time.

Fiction House's aptly named *Jungle Comics* featured not one but two jungle heroes. Ka'anga, a bronzed, blond masculine version of Sheena, starred on the cover and in the lead comic. His "mate" was Ann, a shipwrecked American girl who chose to don a two-piece leopard-skin bathing suit and stay in the jungle with her man. She was very much the Jane to his Tarzan, and most covers depicted him rescuing her from some sticky situation.

Taking up the back pages of *Jungle Comics* was yet another jungle queen, Camilla, known variously as "Queen of the Lost Empire" or "Queen of the Lost City." She debuted two years after Sheena's first appearance in *Jumbo Comics*. In Camilla's earliest stories, she is far from being the jungle queen she later became. Her empire is populated by Norsemen, who for some reason came to Africa during the Crusades, thus giving the queen and her subjects the opportunity to wear winged Viking helmets.

Camilla is more like Ayesha, the immortal heroine of *She* than Sheena was. The queen and her subjects drink from a magic sulfur spring that has kept them young for 600 years. The first few years of the comic saw her leading her people in battles against evil kingdoms, until finally, a little over two years after her origin, she changed from her midriff-baring harem outfit into a two-piece zebra bathing suit and joined the jungle girl club. No longer queen of any lost empire or lost city, but simply Camilla, she was occasionally referred to as "jungle queen" or "Congo queen."

As a jungle girl, Camilla was a loner. She had no white hunter "mate," like Sheena, but she did have the requisite pet: an immense gray dog named Fang, who raced through the jungle at her side, and helped as much as a big dog can. In her stories, she

tended to fight the usual evil slave traders and bad white guys who were out to steal some innocent native tribe's gold or jewels.

What kept Camilla from being merely one more Sheena copycat was her art. During the war, and for a few years after, she was elegantly drawn by a woman artist, Fran Hopper, who drew a good number of comics for Fiction House. By the later 1940s, Camilla was taken over by Tiger Girl artist Matt Baker. His Camilla had class, and wore her zebra skin with the grace of a high fashion model displaying her mink. After Baker left the strip in the early 1950s, it was drawn by various other artists, and while it was never badly drawn, the spark was gone. Camilla lasted until *Jungle Comics* ended in 1954, but by then she was just another jungle girl.

By 1947, Sheena and her vine-swinging sisters and brother were selling so many comics that other publishers decided to get into the act. Fox Feature Syndicate was one of the first publishers to hitch a ride on Sheena's furry coat-tails with their comic, *Rulah, Jungle Goddess*. Unlike Sheena, Rulah is hardly a feral girl growing up with jungle animals. In fact, she is an adventurous American named Jane Dodge.

Jane is a loner and a plucky woman. The story starts with her at the controls of her private plane, flying over the jungle: "Flying around like a lone eagle . . . no home . . . no family . . . just money and a search for adventure." Something goes wrong with the engine, and Jane parachutes out over the jungle. As for her plane, it crash-lands on top of a giraffe. Her clothes ripped to shreds by the crash, Jane slices herself a bikini out of the skin of the late giraffe. She says, "Good thing the sun is hot, and I can cure the skin quickly." Sure enough, the next panel shows her lacing the outfit together with lines from her parachute, after which she sets out to look for help. Jane is next seen in her giraffe suit, swinging from branch to branch like Tarzan's kid sister. She has learned, says the caption, "that tree traveling is speedier than trudging through the profuse jungle growth."

Meanwhile, for some inexplicable reason there is another white woman in the jungle of Africa. Her name is Nurla; she wears a bizarre two-piece getup, and, wrapping herself in Jane's parachute silk, she declares to the African villagers that she is a "moon goddess." In the process of convincing the Africans, who are portrayed as gullible idiots, that Nurla is an impostor, Jane kills a cobra with a knife that she just happens to have on her, leaps out of trees with the knife in her teeth, catches a spear in mid-air, and finally bests a leopard in hand-to-claw combat. The natives name her Rulah and declare that she is a goddess. Any American girl with no previous jungle experience who can out-do Sheena in vine-swinging and big cat-killing—not to mention her superb style sense in fashioning a bikini out of a dead giraffe—has got to be a goddess.

Jane, alias Rulah, likes being a goddess and decides to stay in Africa. Because one cannot be a jungle girl without a wild animal pet, she eventually acquires a black panther, Saber, who in his own furry way plays Lois Lane to her **Superman**. Saber seems to always get attacked by vicious wild boars and rhinos, or caught in traps, so that Rulah can come to his rescue with her trusty knife. In one story, she even protects him from an attacking tiger, which is quite a feat, since there are no tigers in Africa. In return, Saber

plays a sort of Wonder Dog role. When Rulah is held prisoner by killer gorillas, Saber races to get help from the ruling colonial white guys. An official exclaims, "It's Saber—Rulah's pet! And he's trying to tell me something—looks like he wants me to follow him. I guess Rulah must be in danger!"

As usual, the jungle comics' treatment of the African natives is highly racist. They are shown to be clueless fools, who constantly exclaim, "Aiee!" In one story, reminiscent of Rulah's own origin, a balloonist named Betty Trinke, aiming for a world record, crashes her balloon in the jungle. The natives arrive at the usual wrong conclusion: "Aiee! Some strange monster drops at us from the skies!" "It is a powerful flying foe!" "She came in a strange bird to kill us!" They overpower Betty, tie her to a stake, and build a fire. "We have you now, devil woman, " one says, "and your power is gone!" Along comes Rulah, swinging through the jungle with the wounded Saber (he caught his paw in a trap) slung across her shoulders. "Aiee!" scream the natives, "It is the jungle goddess!" Rulah rescues Betty and beats up the native bad guy. ("Aiee! Never have I seen such a woman!"). Later, Betty tells her, "Gee Rulah, you were swell! Saved my life, and I'm cured, too. No more trying to break records for me. I'm going to get married."

Throughout the 1940s and early 1950s, the newsstands were deluged by a veritable torrent of fur-clad jungle girls, vine-swinging their way into what their publishers hoped would be the heart of America, but aside from Sheena and Tiger Girl, only Rulah caught on and lasted as long as two years. Most of the others were lucky to see issue #2. Their names were Taanda, Saari, Zegra, Tygra, Jann of the Jungle, Judy of the Jungle, Lorna the Jungle Girl, Princess Pantha, and Jungle Lil.

A few men also got into the act as imitation Tarzans, with names like Zago, Jungle Prince, and Jo Jo, Congo King, published by Fox. Jo Jo, who wore leopard-skin swim trunks, had a girlfriend named Tanee whose two-piece bathing suit appears to be made of giraffe. Jo Jo's various writers never agreed on how "civilized" their jungle boy was. One writer has him speaking in typical junglespeak: "Holeee! The brute hears my challenge cry! Come, old two horn, and meet one who fears not!" Yet at other times, he sounds more like someone who has spent at least some time in English class: "Hurry, Tanee, I have set the thunder bomb so that it will explode shortly!" Jo Jo and Tanee were white. So were the women of their tribe; but in a curious and repugnant tradition in Fox comics, all the men of the tribe were black, their skin colored a dark brown.

All those jungle girls had the men outnumbered. Most of the women came complete with daggers to fight off marauding lions, evil white traders, beautiful but scheming high priestesses, or crazed natives. All the comics were racist. The natives were always stupid and easily fooled, and often they were rendered in a racist style, complete with exaggeratedly thick lips. Despite the fact that the jungle girls looked quite fetching in their midriff-baring outfits made of various animal skins—Lorna was the most overdressed, in an outfit made of both leopard *and* tiger—there was a sameness about them. Armed only with their knives, they were forever battling lions, tigers, leopards, and crazed apes, or saving the natives from yet another scheming white trader. None of the others were, like Rulah, adventurous American girls.

Even sarong-wearing movie star Dorothy Lamour had her own comic, in which she starred as a sarong-wearing jungle girl. While most of the jungle girls wore fur, there was one other jungle heroine who ruled her land in a sarong. Starting in 1946, South Sea Girl, who appeared in the aptly named *Seven Seas Comics*, was Polynesian. This made her, like Tiger Girl, one of the few non-Caucasian comics heroines of the 1940s. South Sea Girl was a product of Jerry Iger's studio, the same man who co-created Sheena. Elegantly drawn by Matt Baker, her name was Alani, and she ruled over "The Vanishing Islands," hidden somewhere in the mists of the Pacific Ocean. The natives in *South Sea Girl* were all handsome sarong-clad people with the same skin color as their ruler. However, by 1954, Fox had gotten hold of South Sea Girl and was reprinting her, with her name changed to Vooda, Jungle Princess. They also changed the coloring. Now the natives, male and female, were a light brown while their renamed ruler stayed Caucasian.

Without a doubt, the jungle comics published by Fox were the most grotesque of all. The women wore the briefest costumes and the native tribesman were depicted in the most racist manner. One of the worst is a story from Zegra, Jungle Empress. In a tale that is so weird it is funny, Zegra's tribe is menaced by a manlike beast called Zubba, when along comes a safari headed by a woman named Tugga, dressed in a bra and jodhpurs, described as "a cruel and ambitious female wrestler who owed much of her wrestling success to her hypnotic powers . . ." "If the stories we've been told are half true," she tells her manager, "we'll find the world's next heavyweight champ in this gal Zegra's tribe."

Apparently for no other reason than because she is crazy and homicidal, Tugga suddenly breaks her manager's neck. Then, because her native guide has witnessed her crime, she pushes him over a cliff and gets herself "rescued" by Zegra: "I almost went over (the cliff) like my guide, Simba." Tugga then takes a gander at the tribe's treasures, gold and jewels (in jungle comics, the tribes always have treasures), which of course she plans to steal. She finds the monster Zubba and hypnotizes him to be her slave. "I'll get those fabulous jewels," she says, "and I'll take this beautiful hulk back to the states. Me with those jewels and owning the heavyweight champion of the world! Ha, ha, ha ha!" Pointing to Zegra and her tribe, she orders Zubba," "Go and kill, kill, kill!!!"

The tribesmen roll a boulder down onto Zubba and smash him flat. Next, Tugga tries to hypnotize Zegra, but as is to be expected, the jungle queen is too smart for her and resists. Finally Tugga goes for Zegra with a dagger, shouting, "I'm going to kill you, kill you, kill you!" However, she goes over the cliff instead, and Zegra waxes philosophic: "Today's sun will set and tonight's moon will rise on a jungle old as the ages, and wise in judging and meting out punishment to those who deserve punishment!!"

In Dr. **Fredric Wertham**'s 1954 book, *Seduction of the Innocent*, in which he claimed to prove that comics were a major cause of juvenile delinquency, he came down hard on jungle comics. When it came to Fox titles, particularly the bizarre tale of Tugga, Zubba, and Zegra (and Simba!), he could have added that comics could also be a source of great confusion and amusement.

Reacting to America's new anti-comics attitude partly caused by Wertham's book, the comics industry, in order to survive, came up with its own **Comics Code**. One of the rules decreed that "females shall be drawn realistically, without undue emphasis on any physical quality." The rule was interpreted to mean that women in comic books had to be more covered up, and they were. Since it is hard to swing from vines and leap from branches clad in an ankle-length skirt, this effectively ended the reign of the jungle queens.

Trina Robbins

JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA. The Justice League of America, also known as the JLA, the Justice League, and several other names, is the main superhero team of the **DC** universe and has counted among its membership most of the major DC characters. It differs from its predecessor, the **Justice Society of America**, in that its members have mostly been **superheroes** who were already popular on their own. The team has gone through many incarnations over the years, and has had its high and low points. The league, in its various incarnations, has appeared in six regular ongoing series, one quarterly title, and a large number of limited series, one-shots, and specials. The team first appeared in *The Brave and The Bold* #28 (1960) and were in the next two issues of that title before moving to the first ongoing *Justice League of America* comic the following year. This series ran until issue #261 (1986). Stories from this title (as well as the three from *Brave and the Bold)* have been collected in the various volumes of *Justice League of America Archives*, *Showcase Presents the Justice League of America*, and various "themed" collections. Between 1986 and 1996, four separate Justice League titles appeared, some published simultaneously. The primary title began simply as *Justice League*, changed to *Justice League International* with issue #7, and then to *Justice League America* with issue #26. This title remained until it ended with issue #113 (an issue #0 also appeared in 1994). In 1989, the first ongoing spin-off, *Justice League Europe* began, changing its name to *Justice League International* with issue #51, and ending in 1994 with issue #68. Both *JLIs* had annuals associated with the series that went through all of the name changes as well.

A third new series, *Justice League Task Force*, ran for 38 issues (including a "zero issue") from 1993 to 1996, and a fourth, *Extreme Justice*, ran for 19 issues (#0–18) from 1995 to 1996. After *Justice League America*, *Justice League Task Force*, and *Extreme Justice* were cancelled in 1996, there was a transitional limited series called *Justice League: A Midsummer's Nightmare*, which led into the new ongoing comic book that was simply titled *JLA*. This series lasted 126 issues (including an issue "one million" in 1998). The *JLA* title was also used (along with various subtitles or with words such as "and," "vs.," etc.) for a large number of limited series, one-shots, specials, trade collections, and so forth. When this series ended in 2006, DC went back to basics with a new series simple titled *Justice League of America*. One additional series that began in the 2000s was *JLA Classified* (2005–8, 39 issues) which featured stories set throughout the team's history. Also of note are two ongoing titles aimed at younger readers and based on the animated programs on the Cartoon Network, *Justice League Adventures* and *Justice League Unlimited*.

There have been many collections of Justice League–related comics. The original series has been collected chronologically in a series of *Archive Editions* and *Showcase Presents* volumes, as well as several themed collections. Those include the multi-volume *Crisis on Multiple Earth* series of book which reprinted the annual meetings between the JLA and Justice Society, and *Justice League of America Hereby Elects . . .* which contains the stories in which members joined from several of the teams. The early *Justice League International* issues have only recently been collected, though most of its contemporaries have not. Much of *JLA* has been collected in one form or another, as has the most recent series. A large number of the limited series have been collected as well.

Due to revisions in DC Comics' continuity, there have been some changes to the history of the *JLA*. In the original version, the team came together when, independently of each other, **Superman**, **Batman**, **The Flash** (Barry Allen), **Green Lantern** (Hal Jordan), **Wonder Woman**, The Martian Manhunter, and **Aquaman** battled aliens from the planet Appellax and then teamed up to defeat the final alien threat. The team was already together when they made their first comic book appearance battling another alien, the starfish-like Starro the Conqueror.

The team originally made its home in a secret cave located near the small town of Happy Harbor, Rhode Island. Local teen resident Lucas "Snapper" Carr, who had helped them against Starro, became their mascot. The fledgling team fought such menaces as Amos Fortune, Doctor Light and additional alien menaces like Kanjar Ro and Despero. The team began to expand; the founders were soon joined by **Green Arrow** (Oliver Queen), The Atom, and Hawkman. One of the most important adventures during this period was an encounter with the Justice Society of the parallel-Earth known as Earth-2 in issue #21 (1963). This led to an annual team-up which lasted until 1985.

In *Justice League of America* #77 (1969), the team was unwittingly betrayed by Snapper Carr, who revealed the location of their headquarters to the Joker. Needing a more secure location, the team constructed a satellite 22,300 miles above Earth that could only be accessed by a teleporter. During this period both Wonder Woman and the Martian Manhunter left but as the 1970s progressed the team gained additional members including Black Canary and Red Tornado, who came from Earth-2 to join, Hawkwoman, Elongated Man, Zatanna, and Firestorm. Also during this period both Green Arrow and Batman left for a time, the latter to form The Outsiders.

The next major change occurred in 1984. The JLA Satellite was destroyed by invading aliens, and, due to the fact that various reasons prevented many members from showing up to stop it, Aquaman disbanded the league in favor of one which would deal with threats full time. He was joined in this by Zatanna, The Elongated Man (and his wife, Sue) and a returned Martian Manhunter. They were joined by two others—Vixen and Steel—the latter of whom provided them with a new headquarters located in Detroit. There they were soon joined by two new heroes, Vibe and Gypsy. The "Detroit League," as they have come to be known, was not that popular with fans and they soon moved back to the original "Secret Sanctuary" and were rejoined by

Batman and others. After the events of the *Legends* limited series, this incarnation of the team ended, and a new one began.

This newest incarnation of the league underwent some changes in its early days, culminating in working with the United Nations and becoming Justice League International with embassies all over the world (with the main headquarters in New York). This team was a mix of both returning members and new ones including Fire, Ice, "renegade" Green Lantern Guy Gardner, Captain Atom, Mr. Miracle, **Blue Beetle**, and Booster Gold. The tone of the adventures often became humorous at this time under the writing of Keith Giffen and JM Dematies, with occasional stories dealing with the "schemes" of Beetle and Booster.

This period also brought about changes in the team's backstory, due to changes in the histories of other characters. Superman, Wonder Woman, and Hawkman were no longer in the Justice League, and Batman was an early member but not a founder, though Black Canary now was a founder. Flashbacks to the earlier stories have incorporated the changes, some of which have since been reversed. The international team soon split into two parts—Justice League America and a new team, Justice League Europe, whose new members included Power Girl, the Wally West Flash, Metamorpho, Animal Man, and Wonder Woman.

Time went on and the teams lost their UN affiliation. Memberships changed as well, sometimes featuring heavy hitters such as Superman, and other times featuring second and even third-string characters. The main team eventually moved to new orbiting headquarters that once belonged to one of their foes. With the JLE disbanded, two new teams were formed. One was the Justice League Task Force which was led by the Martian Manhunter and at first had a rotating membership for special missions but later became a place for training newer heroes. The other group called themselves the Justice League but was featured in the comic *Extreme Justice*. Led by Captain Atom and consisting of various other league members, this team split with the main team over the way that they handled things. All three teams eventually disbanded.

The team's next incarnation went back to the Magnificent Seven of the original version with Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Aquaman, the Wally West Flash, and the Kyle Rainer version of Green Lantern (who, along with John Stewart, was now the fourth Green Lantern to be on the team). With their adventures originally written by **Grant Morrison**, this team went back to fighting major threats and were based on the "Watchtower," which was located on the Moon. As in other incarnations, the membership often changed, with both former members and newer heroes joining. Notable new members included the new Steel, **Plastic Man**, Nightwing, and the Conner Hawke Green Arrow, the son of the original. While there was a brief spin-off team (*Justice League Elite*) there was less fracturing than in the previous incarnation.

Following the events of *Infinite Crisis* the team again disbanded and reformed. Featured in a new *Justice League of America* title written by novelist Brad Meltzer, this team had headquarters both on Earth and in orbit, and once again consisted of old and new members. New members included Red Arrow (aka Green Arrow's old sidekick

Speedy), the new version of Firestorm, and Black Lightning who had once turned down membership in the original JLA. As of this writing, the team may be splitting again with either multiple teams or yet another reforming planned.

The JLA has also appeared in other media, especially animated television. Their first appearance was in several episodes of 1967's *Superman/Batman Hour of Adventure*, which primarily focused on individual heroes. While they were only occasionally referred to as the JLA, the team starred in the various incarnations of *The Superfriends* (1973). Their own self-titled cartoon *Justice League* began in 2001 on the Cartoon Network and featured a team made up of Superman, Batman (with continuity from both of their 1990s programs), Wonder Woman, the Wally West Flash, the John Stewart Green Lantern, The Martian Manhunter, and Hawkwoman. In the third season the show changed to *Justice League Unlimited* and added dozens of heroes from the DC universe, including various secondary characters (including members from the "Detroit" era. They also appear in the direct-to-DVD *Justice League: The New Frontier* which adapted the comic book limited series. The league was also introduced in the later seasons of the 2004–8 series *The Batman*.

There have been some attempts at a live-action Justice League, including a 1997 pilot as well as a prototype league introduced in the latter seasons of *Smallville*. There has also been discussion of a feature film. The JLA have also appeared in book form, including a handful of original novels, as well as an "Ultimate Guide" published by DK. DK also has a series of "JLA Readers" in which they use the various leaguers to teach subjects such as Greek mythology (Wonder Woman), the ocean (Aquaman), and space (Superman). No matter the title, no matter the line-up, no matter the format, the Justice League of America will continue to be an important part of the DC universe and comics in general.

David S. Serchay

JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA. The Justice Society of America was the first **superhero** team and has appeared in comics for 60 years. The current team includes both original members and those heroes descended from, or influenced by them, making them a crucial part of the **DC** comics universe. Originally designed to give exposure to superheroes who were not yet popular enough to carry their own titles, The Justice Society of America (JSA) first appeared in ***All-Star Comics*** #3 (1940), and remained in that title until issue #57 in 1951 (when the title became *All-Star Western)*. The team reformed in ***Flash*** #123 (1962) and for the next 13 years they appeared in various titles, most notably ***Justice League of America***, where they had an annual team-up with that group every year between 1963 and 1985. In the mid 1970s, *All-Star Comics* was revived (issue #58) and would run until #74. The team also had a short run in ***Adventure Comics.*** During the 1980s, some of the team's 1940s adventures were recounted in *All-Star Squadron*, which also featured other heroes of that era. Of note is *All-Star Squadron Annual* #3 (1984) which explained why the JSA, who, unlike other comic characters, aged in real time, yet were still active and powerful in the 1980s. They also appeared in the present day in *Infinity Inc.*, a team of second-generation heroes which included

some of their children. *America Vs. The Justice Society* (1985) recounted their 45-year history, and the following year, in the pages *The Last Days of the Justice Society*, the team was trapped in a "limbo" world, seemingly forever, though "forever" only lasted a few years. In 1991, the limited series *Justice Society of America* showed an untold JSA adventure from the 1950s, and that same year the team was brought back at the end of the *Armageddon Inferno* limited series; in 1992 the team was given, for the first time, their own self-titled book, which only lasted 10 issues. Various team members appeared in other books for the next few years, but 1999 brought two important developments. The first was a limited series and several one-shots that were printed under the umbrella title of "The Justice Society Returns." The story took place in the 1940s and each comic bore the name of a superhero title of the era, such as *All-Star Comics*. The second was a new, ongoing series simply titled *JSA*. This series featured old and new characters and ran through 2006, when it was replaced by a new *Justice Society of America* ongoing series. The team has also appeared in various limited series, specials, and graphic novels. Their adventures have been collected in various places including the *All-Star Archives* which collect issues from the 1940s, several volumes of *Crisis on Multiple Earths* that feature stories from the 1960s and 70s, two *Justice Society* books that feature the 1970s adventures, and many collections of the modern ongoing series.

There are some difficulties in recounting the fictional history of the team, as some of it was told out of chronological order. For example, their origin story was not told until over 35 years after they first appeared. In addition, following the events of 1985's ***Crisis on Infinite Earths*** the team's history has been revised on various occasions, so that their history now consists of pre-and post-crisis versions.

As revealed in DC *Special* #29, the JSA was formed in 1940 when the Flash (all characters listed here are the original heroes as named, unless otherwise indicated), **Green Lantern**, and **Batman** were sent on a mission to Europe to uncover a **Nazi** plot. When they were captured, Dr. Fate recruited the **Sandman (Golden Age)**, the Atom, Hourman, Hawkman, and the Spectre to both free the others and stop a Nazi invasion of England that used both regular weapons and mystical Valkyries. While they saved the day in Europe, one special warplane and several Valkyries made it all the way to America. Yet with the timely arrival of Superman, the day was won, and after his life was saved by the Atom, President Roosevelt suggested the group band together permanently.

They did so, and while Superman and Batman became honorary members, the rest of the heroes, as seen in *All-Star Comics* #3 met for dinner and swapped stories. What was interesting about this gathering was that technically some of them were owned by National Comics and the others by All-American, making this the comics' first inter-company crossover. The humorous superhero The Red Tornado (aka "Ma" Hunkel) made a brief appearance, and the dinner was also attended by Johnny Thunder who made a wish on his magic Thunderbolt that he could be there. Their first full mission, given to them by the head of the FBI, was to break up a spy ring. Many of their early adventures were against ordinary spies and criminals, and a common story would have each team member go on a solo adventure (the comic in which they regularly

appeared would be hyped on their adventure) and then team up at the end of the story to finally stop the bad guys.

There were several changes in the line-up early on with Flash, Green Lantern, and Hourman leaving and Johnny Thunder, Dr. Mid-Nite, and Starman soon replacing them. **Wonder Woman** also became part of the team early on, but, despite being more powerful than many on the team, acted only as their secretary for some time. Following America's entry into World War II, the team wanted to fight overseas but mystical artifacts owned by the Axis powers prevented their most powerful members from doing so. Several members joined the military in their civilian identities but were convinced by FDR to remain on the homefront. They did so, occasionally going by the name "Justice Battalion," and worked with the All-Star Squadron, which was made up of all of the heroes of the time.

Over the next few years, besides fighting spies, saboteurs, and Axis Agents on the homefront, the JSA fought criminals, both regular and those with super-abilities or gadgets. Members left and returned, while Wildcat and Mr. Terrific joined in 1945. Following the war the team had other adventures, including fighting the "Injustice Society of the World" made up of Brain Wave, Vandal Savage, The Fiddler, Per Degaton, and the Gambler, villains who had fought the team or individual members in the past and would continue to do so in the future. Other versions of the ISW would later appear with additional members. The JSA gained one more member as well in the form of The Black Canary.

What finally brought the JSA down was not some supervillain, alien invader, or foreign power, but the U.S. Government. As revealed in *Adventure Comics* #466 (published in 1979, but set in 1951), the team was brought in front of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, asked about a recent adventure, and told that they must reveal their secret identities to the committee. They refused, vanished from the hearing, and with the exception of Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman went into retirement; but this was not the end of the JSA.

In 1963's *Flash* #137, the team re-formed to help both their Flash and the Flash of the alternate world known as Earth-1. This soon led to *Justice League of America* #21 with the first meeting of the JSA and the JLA of Earth-1. There were several counterparts among the two teams, with some sharing a name and/or a similar power while others, such as Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman shared the same secret identities and basic origin. The teams met again every year until 1985 and had several notable adventures, including encountering heroes and villains from other alternate worlds and one adventure which brought the 1940s Earth-2 team **The Seven Soldiers of Victory** into the present day. Over the next few years individual members would appear in various books, usually teaming up with their Earth-1 counterparts, though occasionally on their own.

In 1976, *All-Star Comics* was revived, with the numbering continuing where it left off. This 14-issue revival concentrated on the JSA's Super-Squad, made up of the grown-up Robin, the Seven Soldiers of Victory member The Star-Spangled Kid, and a new character Power Girl, who was the counterpart of Earth-1's Supergirl. Another

new member also introduced at this time was The Huntress, the daughter of Batman and his enemy-turned wife **Catwoman**. The JSA also had a short run in *Adventure Comics*. The late 1970s brought tragedy to the JSA as both Batman and Mr. Terrific were killed by villains.

In the stories of the 1970s, the members of the JSA were beginning to show signs of aging, with lines on their faces and grey in their hair. While their Earth-1 counterparts were in a "sliding-scale timeline" which let events that were published decades earlier only happen a few years ago in continuity, the JSA was still tied to the 1940s, and while they were still vigorous, their ages did have occasional effects on them. In the opening pages of the first issue of *Infinity Inc*., it was reported that Sandman had suffered from a stroke. In that same issue readers were introduced to the newest generation of heroes, made up of the sons, daughters, and protégées of the JSA. Put together by the Star-Spangled Kid, Infinity Inc. was formed, with their first task to stop several members of the JSA who had been brainwashed.

During the events of *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, all of the parallel worlds were merged into one, which had several ramifications on the JSA. First this meant that they and the JLA lived on the same world and always had and this affected several areas of their history. More importantly, it meant that those older heroes with exactly the same identities and origins as their newer counterparts—Superman, Batman and Robin, and Wonder Woman—were no longer remembered by the world. At the end of the crisis, Robin and the Huntress (who had also been forgotten) died, Superman went off to another dimension, and Wonder Woman was brought by the gods up to Mt. Olympus. Power Girl survived but had her origin changed several times over the next 25 years.

Soon afterward the remaining members of the team were trapped in another dimension where they worked to prevent the end of the world. It was thought that they would be there forever, and they were mourned as if they were dead, but a few years later they were back, stronger than ever. However, the 1990s were not the best time for the team, as a villain brought them to their true ages, killing several members and weakening others. With the exception of a few members who kept their vitality, the rest of the team retired with several other members passing away over the next few years.

This was still not the end of the JSA. Those few members kept the team going and acted as mentors to new generations of heroes, making JSA a multigenerational team that included some who were the children of the originals or other 1940s heroes, and others who were inspired by them. These included new incarnations of Hourman, Mr. Terrific, Starman, Doctor Mid-Nite, and Wildcat. In addition, after the events of 52, a new Earth-2 was created with a Justice Society whose membership is made up of both classic members and members of Infinity Inc., including the classic versions of Robin and the Huntress. No matter the line-up or the world, the JSA will continue to be there into the 21st century to save the day.

David S. Serchay



KANE, BOB (1916–98). Born Robert Kahn in New York, Kane, a self-professed "superb copycat" artist, would co-create **Batman**, one of the world's most popular comic book characters. After high school, Kane received a scholarship to the Cooper Union art school. In 1936, while still in school, he was hired by **Will Eisner** as staff artist for *Wow What a Magazine!* Kane, who always preferred "slapstick" cartooning, created strips such as *Hiram Hick* and *Peter Pupp*, but also began experimenting with adventure comics. In 1937, *Detective Picture Stories* published his "Case of the Missing Heir," which featured a handsome and clever young millionaire. While earning $25 a week drawing for National Comics, Kane developed other adventure series like *Clip Carson* and *Rusty and His Pals*, modeled after Milton Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates*. To help with his workload, Kane hired his friend Bill Finger to write scripts.

Kane's telling of the creation of Batman has altered throughout the years. In later life, he became more generous with his recounting, giving Finger credit as an unappreciated co-creator of the icon. In 1938, following the success of **Superman**, Vincent Sullivan, Senior Editor of National Comics, told Kane he wanted another **superhero**. Hearing how much Superman's creators were paid, Kane spent that weekend brainstorming. His first and most prescient decision was to give his superhero no special superhuman powers so as to distinguish him from Superman. In the end, Kane synthesized a number of archetypes: a bat-based flying machine designed by Da Vinci; the 1930 pulp film *The Bat Whispers*; and Douglas Fairbanks's performance in *The Mark of Zorro*. Not fully satisfied, Kane called on Finger who suggested some key changes, most notably, elongating the ears on the mask, making the bat-like wings into a more practical cape, turning the eyes solid white, and changing the "union suit" from red to gray. The following Monday morning, Kane presented his "Bat-Man" to Sullivan who,

though concerned by the dark nature, accepted it. In May 1939, Batman debuted in "The Case of the Chemical Syndicate," in ***Detective Comics*** #27.

Because Kane sold Batman as his own creation, he received the only by-line. During much of the first year of Batman, Kane and Finger did all the work, Finger writing, Kane drawing, coloring, and lettering. Together, they developed and refined the core characters within Batman's world, including Robin, **Catwoman**, and the Joker. The increasing success of the series created escalating demand, and Kane began to hire "ghosts," un-credited writers and artists who would add their own unique twists to the Gotham City microcosm.

In 1943, Kane gave up comic book work to focus on a syndicated Batman comic strip, during which time Jerry Robinson's more illustrative and ornate drawing style began to replace Kane's admittedly simplistic style. Twenty years later, Batman's "New Look," as penciled by Carmine Infantino, debuted in the first Batman title without Kane's unique boxed signature. In 1967, Kane retired from penciling Batman to devote himself full-time to painting and lithographing fine art versions of the Batman characters.

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Jason S. Todd

KANE, GIL (1926–2000). Born Eli Katz in Riga, Latvia, Gil Kane had a career in comics that ran from 1941 until his death. His career included work at nearly every major comic publisher, including MLJ (which later became ***Archie*** Comics), where he got his first job in comics at the age of 15, **Quality**, Fox, Fawcett, Tower, King, Dell, **DC**, and **Marvel**. Perhaps best known as one of the key **Silver Age** artists at DC Comics, co-creating the Silver Age **Green Lantern** and Atom, Kane also pioneered the graphic novel with *His Name Is . . . Savage* (1968) and *Blackmark* (1971). In addition, he became a key artist at Marvel during the 1970s, co-creating Iron Fist, Adam Warlock, and Morbius the Living Vampire, and contributing to the revival of the company's **Captain Marvel** character.

After working in production at MLJ, Kane worked as an assistant to **Joe Simon** and **Jack Kirby** and to Bernard Baily, while also freelancing for several short-lived comic companies in the early years of World War II. Kane was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1944; upon his return from the war, he began doing freelance work in the variety of genres that became popular in the postwar comics industry: humor, **war**/military, **Western**, **crime**, and **romance**. After 1949, he was working almost exclusively for DC/National, working under editors Julius Schwartz and Robert Kanigher. After the successful reinvention of **The Flash** that launched the Silver Age, Schwartz gave Kane assignments on the new Green Lantern and Atom series, and Kane then became one of the most significant Silver Age creators at DC, until he left to work at Marvel in the late 1960s.

In an effort to stretch beyond the limitations of the short stories he was doing at DC, Kane decided to create a longer-form comic story aimed at a more adult audience. The result, *His Name Is . . . Savage*, is a violent action story that combines prose and sequential art in a unique way. Kane self-published the comic as a magazine, but it failed to reach an audience due to distribution problems. Soon after, Kane published the long-form sword-and-sorcery book, *Blackmark*, in a mass-market paperback format with Bantam press. Each of these works anticipated the graphic novel. With writer Ron Goulart, he also innovated a two-tier daily comic strip with *Star Hawks*, which ran from 1977 to 1981.

During his tenure at Marvel during the 1970s, Kane drew some key **Spider-Man** stories, including the death of Gwen Stacy and a drug addiction story that did not receive approval from the **Comics Code** Authority, despite the fact that the U.S. Department of Health initiated the idea to use Spider-Man comics as a vehicle for spreading anti-drug messages. Later in his career, Kane, along with writer Roy Thomas, developed an adaptation of Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* for DC. He was working on a **Superman *Elseworlds*** story with Steven Grant at the time of his death.

Kane was known as a master of anatomy and dynamic action. His signature image involves a hero in the background punching a villain toward the audience, the villain's mouth open and face contorted in pain. He also challenged traditional page design by drawing action that broke through panel borders.

Andrew J. Kunka

KATCHOR, BEN (1951–). The American writer, penciller, inker, letterer and cover artist Ben Katchor is the author of complicated and intertextual comic strips that involve the urban, and especially Jewish, experience in American life. His strips revolve around the lives of his characters, many of whom search for unique experience in a world that may otherwise seem mundane. Katchor was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1951 to Yiddish-speaking members of the American Communist Party, so it comes as no surprise that Katchor often explores the world of New York City intelligentsia as well as working class figures. After attending Brooklyn College and the School of Visual Art in Manhattan, Katchor first explored the comics medium by publishing in **Art Spiegelman's *RAW*** in 1980. Two of his best-known works are *Julius Knipl Real Estate Photographer* and *The Jew Of New York*.

In 1988, Katchor was offered the opportunity to publish a weekly comic strip in the former publication of the Yiddish Socialist party, *The Jewish Daily Forward*. That strip, *Julius Knipl*, tells the story of a New York City defined by the mundane, bizarre and adroit. In Knipl's New York, people make their livings taking pictures of real estate; businesses will close when they would usually be busy; and the cultural event of the moment is a personal concert by a man who plays radiators. Knipl's events have been published in the collections *Cheap Novelties: The Pleasures of Urban Decay, with Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer* (Penguin, 1991), *Stories* (Little, Brown, 1996), and *The Beauty Supply District* (Pantheon, 2000). *The Pleasures of Urban Decay* is also the title of

a 1999 documentary film by Samuel Bell featuring a look at Katchor's New York with a surprise appearance by Julius Knipl.

While he was still working for *The Jewish Daily Forward*, Katchor decided that he wanted to tell the story of Mordecai Manuel Noah, a Sephardic Portuguese American, who after becoming a prominent journalist and playwright, tried to establish a Jewish state on Grand Island, New York, near Niagara Falls in Lake Erie, a strip he called *The Jew of New York*. With this collection, Katchor moved from the 1930s-ish New York of *Julius Knipl* back to the 1830s. J. Hoberman encapsulates Katchor's style in his review of the collected *The Jew of New York* strips (Pantheon, 1998) for the *New York Times:* "In Katchor's drawings, reality typically has the quality of a facade put up to conceal the ruins of some fantastic scheme, and Noah's bizarre enterprise is more alluded to than represented." While *Julius Knipl* was freer form in structure, *The Jew of New York* relies more upon narrative continuity. When this series was collected, it was subtitled *A Historical Romance* (1999).

Katchor has contributed strips and panels for issues of *The New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, and the architecture and design magazine *Metropolis*. He wrote a journal for *Slate* in 1997, and articles for the now-defunct magazine of the Library of Congress, *Civilization*. The 1999 opera *The Carbon Copy Building*, which Katchor composed with the Bang on the Can collective, won an OBIE award for outstanding off-Broadway stage production. Katchor was awarded a 1995 Guggenheim Fellowship in fiction, and in 2000, he was awarded a MacArthur Foundation "Genius Grant" Fellowship. During the end of the 2000s, Katchor worked on a strip entitled *Shoehorn Technique*, for *The Jewish Daily Forward*.

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Jason Gallagher

KILLING JOKE, THE. Written by **Alan Moore** and illustrated by Brian Bolland, *The Killing Joke* is a short graphic novel published by **DC Comics** in 1988. Aimed at an older readership, *The Killing Joke* is often cited—along with ***The Dark Knight Returns***, ***Watchmen***, and ***Sandman***—as a key part of the movement toward darker and more mature **superhero** stories that took place in the late 1980s. It has been in continual publication since its original release, and in 1998 DC Comics produced a 20th-anniversary edition featuring new colorization by artist Bolland, who felt that the original coloring had been rushed and was substandard. Although its full title is, technically, *Batman: The Killing Joke*, the story is ostensibly a tale about **Batman**'s most famous enemy, the Joker.

Moore and Bolland explore the relationship between the vigilante Batman and the psychotic criminal, the Joker, and also delve into the Joker's mysterious origin and motivations. The story begins with Batman traveling to **Arkham Asylum** with the apparent

objective of speaking to and achieving some sort of reconciliation with his nemesis. The Joker, however, has already managed to escape from captivity without detection. In an infamous scene, the Joker and his henchmen assault Police Commissioner James Gordon and his daughter, Barbara (secretly the superhero Batgirl), in their home. The commissioner is kidnapped, and the Joker shoots Barbara with a revolver, paralyzing her. Joker takes Commissioner Gordon to the carnival grounds serving as his headquarters, strips and binds him, and then forces him to look at the photographs of his daughter's suffering, which some believe includes an implied rape. The Joker's intention is to make Gordon crack from his anguish, and prove that random tragedy will cause any person to be reduced to madness. Even before Batman's intervention, however, Gordon does not snap and insists that Batman brings in Joker "by the book" to prove that their "way works." After a brutal fight, Batman offers to help rehabilitate his adversary, but the Joker recognizes that he is beyond hope and the two enemies even share a laugh over a poignant joke.

Intercut amongst this narrative are flashback scenes that indicate the Joker's transformation into a deranged killer. Moore draws upon "The Mystery of the Red Hood," a story published in ***Detective Comics*** #168 (1951). In that story, Batman investigates the true identity of a long-missing criminal known only as "The Red Hood," who earned his name from his distinctive red mask that gave no indication of his appearance. Batman uncovers that the masked thief was the Joker, whose disfigured, clown-like appearance is the result of plunging into a vat of chemicals while fleeing Batman. In Moore's version, the Joker begins as an unsuccessful (unnamed) comedian trying to financially support his pregnant wife. Desperate for money, he agrees to assist two thieves in a robbery, and they have him wear their gang's signature "red hood" as a disguise. Although he tries to back out of the burglary after his beloved wife is killed in a freak accident, the criminals force him into abetting their crime. As in the established version, the heist goes awry amid interference from the police and Batman, and the Joker's physical appearance is altered after exposure to chemicals during his escape. His horrific new face and the traumatic loss of his wife and unborn child cause the Joker to snap, and he embraces madness as the only recourse in a world that makes no sense. Although many fans consider this origin to be definitive, Moore gives a caveat within his story by having the Joker mention that he is unable to truly remember his old life, and that he prefers his memories to be "multiple-choice."

The Killing Joke was a commercial success and its impact on subsequent depictions of Batman was immediate. The tone of Batman (and many other comic book characters) continued to grow darker in the wake of *The Killing Joke*, and many writers were influenced by Moore's psychological approach to the characters. Moore presents Batman and the Joker as reflections of one another; both are men who experienced great tragedies that forever changed their lives. Joker's gag at the end of the story suggests that he and Batman are on opposite sides of a hairline dividing sanity and madness. Many later writers would elaborate on this theme, emphasizing Batman's obsessive personality and implying that his sanity is questionable. Although Moore presents the Joker somewhat

sympathetically, comic historian Les Daniels notes that the vileness of the villain's actions in *The Killing Joke* may have diminished readers' relish in his antics. Daniels also suggests that it was convenient for DC to have Barbara Gordon/Batgirl crippled by the Joker, as a lone Batman was in vogue at the time. Although many critics, readers, and comics professionals hail *The Killing Joke*, Moore himself considers it to be one of his weaker works. Moore has said in interviews that, unlike his *Watchmen* and ***V for Vendetta***, which comment on power and anarchy, respectfully, *The Killing Joke* fails to address any real issue. Ultimately, according to Moore, *The Killing Joke* is simply a story about Batman, the Joker, and their relationship, and—since the characters are not really symbols for anything—therefore it says nothing about the real world or existence.

Nevertheless, *The Killing Joke* still succeeds as a complex and intelligent superhero story that continues to define the Joker and his relationship to Batman. Moreover, the graphic novel is well crafted by Moore and beautifully rendered by Bolland. The story has influenced not only comic professionals, but also artists working on Batman in other media. Former president of DC Comics Jeanette Kahn recalls that director Tim Burton showed licensees for his 1989 film, *Batman*, a copy of *The Killing Joke* and said, "This is what the film will look like." Also, *The Killing Joke* was reportedly one of the few comics used as research by actor Heath Ledger for his chilling performance as the Joker in 2008's *The Dark Knight*. Moore is correct that—despite some commentary on the tenuous divide between sanity and madness—*The Killing Joke* is primarily a story about Batman and the Joker, with little connection to real world issues. Regardless of Moore's own criticisms, *The Killing Joke* stands as a pivotal book, especially in Batman's publication history, but also in the development of superhero comics aimed at a mature readership.

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Jackson Ayres

KILLRAVEN. The character of Jonathan Raven, or "Killraven," first appeared in **Marvel**'s *Amazing Adventures* #18 in 1973. Marvel writer/editor Roy Thomas had been struck by a chapter in H.G. Wells's 1898 novel *The War of the Worlds* which speculated on life after a Martian invasion, with some humans living underground as rebellious freedom fighters, while other humans acted as quislings, serving the invaders to ensure their own survival. Thomas proposed that he write a series wherein the Martians had reinvaded Earth 100 years after their original attack and enslaved humanity; 20 years after the second invasion the book would follow a band of human freedom fighters rebelling against the Martian masters. The concept was approved by Marvel, and Thomas recruited **Neal Adams**, with whom he'd previously worked on both ***X-Men*** and the ***Avengers***, to pencil the art. Adams liked the idea but had his own spin on how it should play out; however, Thomas felt that Adams's ideas, though excellent, were incompatible with his own and

he chose to withdraw from the project, enlisting Gerry Conway to script it in his stead (Conway would provide the lead character's name, Killraven). Preferring to work with Thomas, Adams in turn then withdrew as well, with the result that the first issue was co-plotted by both Thomas and Adams, scripted by Conway, and drawn by both Adams and **Howard Chaykin**, each of whom did half the issue. Though published in Marvel's *Amazing Adventures* title, the series' covers would read either "War of the Worlds" or "Killraven, Warrior of the Worlds" in large letters, and subsequently Killraven's series was occasionally, if inaccurately, referred to by those names. Conway and Chaykin each remained with the book for only one more issue, to be replaced by **Marv Wolfman** and Herb Trimpe; after one issue Wolfman was followed by Don McGregor. Trimpe remained for five issues, and after one-shot penciling fill-ins by Rich Buckler and **Gene Colan** the artistic duties were assumed by **P. Craig Russell** with issue #27.

After this early creative turnover, the writing and art team of McGregor and Russell became the series' signature team, remaining with *Amazing Adventures* throughout its run, excepting one fill-in issue. Russell's art was highly detailed and had a distinctive fantastic tone that, while potentially awkward in Marvel's mainstream superheroic titles, elegantly suited Killraven's **science fiction/fantasy** future world. Under McGregor and Russell's stewardship, Killraven would reflect the social concerns of the 1970s (McGregor's simultaneous work in *Jungle Action*, featuring the **Black Panther**, would be similarly noted for its social consciousness). The book's cast included both sexes and characters of different **race and ethnicity** fighting side by side, and in 1975's issue #31, two regular cast members shared what is believed to be color comics' first interracial kiss, an event which stirred much debate within the company beforehand, but very little outside notice once it was actually published. Several Killraven stories dealt with the effects of technological changes on humanity, while many others dealt with the roles of innocents pulled into a war against their wishes (reflecting the recent Vietnam conflict). In issue #34 two regular cast members were killed (then a rarity in mainstream serial comics), as the creators felt that portraying a group as fighting a war without suffering personal losses was dishonest.

As the book took place in the future years of 2017–18, it had few ties to the **superhero** characters of the Marvel universe. Issue #38 included a virtual reality simulator in which an aging Earth astronaut visualized the heroes of his youth, while outside *Amazing Adventures*, *Marvel Team-Up* #45 had a time-lost **Spider-Man** aiding Killraven. During this same period, a far-future series, the Guardians of the Galaxy (in *Marvel Presents*), was stated to take place 1,000 years into Killraven's future. Despite these loose ties, Killraven's series stood on its own, a **post-apocalyptic** science-fantasy series. Years later, a different future Earth's Killraven would appear in 1999's *Avengers Forever*, and in 2007 the *Wisdom* series, set in Marvel's mainstream universe, would feature a heroic Maureen Raven and briefly mention very her young son Jonathan.

Amazing Adventures was canceled in 1976 with issue #39, but McGregor and Russell would return in 1983 to create an oversized Killraven graphic novel (originally intended for serial publication in *Epic* magazine) titled *Killraven: Warrior of the Worlds*.

McGregor would later begin work on a new Killraven series intended to see publication in *Marvel Comics Presents* in the late 1980s/early 1990s, but it was never completed.

In 2001, Eva Hopkins and Joseph Linsner created a one-issue story, simply titled *Killraven*, which revisited the characters; this and all the preceding Killraven stories were later collected and republished by Marvel in black and white in a 2005 *Essential Killraven* volume. A six-issue *Killraven* miniseries by **Alan Davis** was released in 2002–3 (and collected in 2007 in a hardbound edition); this story was a reimagination of the original character and is not a continuation of the original's story. Another reimagination, planned for five issues and written by **Robert Kirkman** and drawn by Rob Liefeld, has been announced.

Mark O'English

KING: A COMICS BIOGRAPHY OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. Written and illustrated by Ho Che Anderson, this three-part unauthorized biography of American Civil Rights leader Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was originally published by **Fantagraphics Books** from 1993 to 2003. It was collected into a single trade paperback in 2005. Anderson's graphic narrative traces King's life from his years as a doctoral student at Boston University in the early 1950s, through the March for Jobs and Freedom in Washington, D.C., and to his assassination in Memphis in 1968. The biography, strengthened by historical research, delves deepest into King's personal struggles behind the scenes of a social movement publicly dominated by his spiritual wisdom and shrewd agitation in the interest of racial equality. Drawn in a fast-paced comic noir style that shifts between black-and-white shadows, photographs, and abstract, muted colors, *King* couples the intense energy of Civil Rights Era boycotts and backroom negotiations with a subtext of sorrow and tragedy at the loss of a great leader.

Significantly, Anderson frames King's life story around the observations of "The Witnesses"—voices of men and women of all ages and races who represent a wide array of perspectives and ideological arguments during the 1950s and 1960s. The Witnesses include unnamed church members and family friends, reluctant bystanders and Freedom Riders, white racists and nervous politicians, even Motown singers and Hollywood actors. Their voices play on both the judicial and the spiritual meanings of the term "bearing witness," as they bring elements of a Greek chorus, black church testimonial, and crime-scene interrogation to the recollection and analysis of King's life. Illustrated in tight black-and-white headshots, the Witnesses speak directly to the reader in traditional panel grids that juxtapose the principle narrative's wide angles and jagged, overlapping panel arrangements. Aesthetically, their presence brings a sense of balance and expert pacing to the story. Yet the ultimate purpose of these Witnesses is to facilitate a multidimensional glimpse into the motives and consequences of King's actions, making *King: A Comics Biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* as much a collective history of the Civil Rights Movement as it is the story of a single man.

As a result, the biography's preface frames King not as the larger-than-life symbol that is familiar to most readers, but as a son who is being nudged out of the formidable

shadow of his own father, an early Civil Rights activist and the minister of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. While the elder Martin King is not a prominent figure in the narrative, King's sense of himself as his father's son surfaces in moments of crisis, such as during the Harlem stabbing that King survived in 1958 and the shooting that ended his life 10 years later. Following this brief childhood memory, Anderson introduces King as a self-assured student and minister who, despite his educational achievements, has grown impatient with the intellectual distance of the academy. Also prominently featured in this first section is King's courtship with the incisive young woman who would later become his wife, Coretta Scott. While their conversations offer insight into King's early ambitions, it is clear that his aspirations for social reform through nonviolence were tested and refined once he returned south and was forced to confront first-hand the realities of racial terrorism. After the 1955 arrest of Rosa Parks in Alabama, King was elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association and used its city-wide bus boycott campaign to bring national attention to the problems of racial segregation.

The second part of Anderson's comics biography follows King's work as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the organization's efforts to end segregation and black disfranchisement through targeted boycotts, marches, and published writings. Invitations to the Oval Office and increased scrutiny by FBI director J. Edgar Hoover indicated King's growing influence in national affairs during the early 1960s; at home, however, his relationship with his wife suffered because of his sexual infidelity during extended trips away from Atlanta. Indeed, Anderson's account is quite candid in its depiction of the Civil Rights leader's extramarital affairs and flirtations with female staff members. The narrative further utilizes King's guilt-ridden conversations with his close friend and colleague Ralph David Abernathy (in addition to the silent surveillance of FBI wiretaps during moments of indiscretion) to indicate the extent to which the boundaries between King's private and public life were becomingly dangerously blurred.

Nevertheless, it is the celebrated "I Have A Dream" sermon that King delivered at the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in 1963 that emerges as the pivotal and most profound scene in *King*, the moment in which the title figure is declared "the moral leader of the nation." In recounting the event over the course of 10 pages, Anderson demonstrates the visual power of the comics medium to convey the intensity of the listening crowd and the profundity of King's message in an expressionist montage of artwork, photographs, and newspaper clippings. The scene progresses from King's own insecurities before the speech, as he wonders how much he can accomplish in his allotted eight minutes at the podium, to his thundering conclusion of "Free at last!" This powerful speech foreshadows political triumphs such as the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 that would be attributed to King's dynamic leadership.

The final third of *King* highlights the last major campaigns of his career in Chicago and Memphis during the late 1960s. With King's transition from the terrors of Dixie to the urban political machines of the North, Anderson moves away from the comic

noir style (with occasional flares of red and orange) to a more abstract aesthetic that is dominated by color. Muted blues, tans, and yellows effectively convey Chicago's concrete landscape while accentuating the difficulties that King and the SCLC faced in applying their strategies for nonviolent resistance to an environment distinguished by urban riots, Black Power slogans, and the Vietnam War. In relating King's final months, the graphic narrative portrays the Civil Rights icon as tireless, unflinching, and somewhat prideful in his determination to address injustice wherever it exists. Yet the unadorned, symbolic resonance of his last moments brings the reader's attention back to his human frailties, thereby offering a richer and more complex portrait of the man known simply in Anderson's title as *King*.

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Qiana J. Whitted

KINGDOM COME. Written by **Mark Waid** and **Alex Ross**, with painted illustrations by the latter, *Kingdom Come* was a four-issue miniseries with strong religious overtones published under the ***Elseworlds*** imprint in 1996, depicting a dystopian future for the heroes of the **DC** universe. *Kingdom Come* is a bystander story; the narrative is seen from the perspective of Norman McCay, an aging preacher who glimpses an apocalyptic vision in his dreams akin to that of the Christian Revelation. McCay is ushered through the story by the Spectre, a paranormal agent of God who has been sent to punish the wicked but needs Norman's perspective to better judge who is ultimately at fault for the approaching Armageddon. The two travel across the transformed landscape of DC's fictional cities—Metropolis, Gotham, Keystone—establishing the motif of degeneration wrought upon the world by a generation of **superheroes** who care little about protecting society. A decade earlier, **Superman** had abandoned his never-ending battle against injustice after being rejected by the public, leaving the world to its fate. McCay and the Spectre's journey touches, too, upon the fates of some of DC's greatest champions, such as the **Flash** and **Batman**, who mostly have retreated from the global spotlight to fight for their own private causes. The climax of the first issue reveals that the coming doomsday is initiated by a recent nuclear explosion in Kansas—a result of the careless use of force by the new superheroes plaguing the populace—which irradiates the Midwest. Superman is forced to return in the final pages of the issue to limit any further disasters and to attempt to curb the growing violence of the modern world.

The Spectre endows Norman with an ethereal presence as they observe the unfolding events, detaching them from the action but allowing a broad perspective for the audience. Superman quests to re-establish the **Justice League of America** as a superhuman peace-keeping force. During the second issue of the series, Superman gathers the older generation of superheroes together and builds a penitentiary among the ashes of Kansas to house and re-educate the most violent of the new generation. However, the situation

worsens as relations between members degrade due to ideological differences; Batman creates a separate, more clandestine group and begins negotiating with Lex Luthor and his Mankind Liberation Front to discover alternatives to Superman's prison. Issue #3 escalates this conflict as the prisoners riot and breach the prison walls, recalling the remaining superheroes to defend against the prisoners' escape. Batman confronts Luthor about **Captain Marvel**, whom Luthor has been brainwashing, and stops the supervillain from unleashing his forces to aide the rioting superhumans. Yet, Captain Marvel himself escapes and stops Superman from pacifying the mob, leading to an all-out war between the older and younger generations of heroes in issue #4. As the war threatens to spill into populated areas, the United Nations sanctions the use of three nuclear bombs to be dropped into the heart of the battle in order to destroy the planet's superhuman population. Superman hears the bombs falling but realizes, as the Spectre did in employing McCay, that he is too out of touch with humanity to effectively decide whether he has the ethical right to intervene. He leaves the world's fate in the hands of Captain Marvel, who divides his time between living as a normal human and as a superhero endowed with the power of the gods; Captain Marvel thus knows better than any other hero what it is like to be both mortal and superhuman, and is thus in a better position to decide between the two sides. Captain Marvel destroys the bomb, but it devastates the superhumans, wiping out most of them out. The climax of the story occurs when Norman McCay convinces the Spectre to let him intervene in Superman's enraged, violent confrontation with the United Nations. McCay tells Superman that his perspective has shown him that the mistake of the superhumans was to think of themselves as gods and distance themselves from humanity. The book ends with Superman pledging to work with humanity, hoping to break down the false opposition between humans and superheroes; he ushers in a new age without secret identities where superheroes are more conscious of their place within humanity.

Kingdom Come responds to works such as ***Watchmen*** and ***The Dark Knight Returns***, which brought a new standard of violence and realism to superhero comic books. Like both of these works, *Kingdom Come* begins with an older generation of superheroes having retreated from the modern world, and the contrast between the modern world and the era of the superheroes is a paramount motif presented in the work. Another centrally important issue explored in both *Kingdom Come* and its two predecessors is the hegemony of their superheroes. Concerns about fascism dominate all three titles, and each, in its own way, asks how much of a right do these superheroes have to fully exercise their power. The characters in *Kingdom Come*, however, are less morally ambiguous and closer to their respective traditional depictions than in *The Dark Knight Returns* or *Watchmen*. *Kingdom Come* has a brighter ending, also, as the heroes only need to make shifts in their behavior to rejoin society. The knowledge that they must work together with humanity seems enough to temper their use of power.

Kingdom Come was originated from Alex Ross's designs and storyboards; the preacher, Norman McCay, even being modeled directly in look and character from Ross's father, Clark Norman Ross, himself a minister. The religious imagery of the book and the

parallel between Superman's return and the second coming of Christ was also influenced by Ross's religious background. Even the narrative style, though provided by Mark Waid, has roots in Ross's previous work, ***Marvels***, a bystander story about a photographer who catalogues through pictures the rise of the heroes in the **Marvel Comics** universe.

When *Kingdom Come* was collected into a single volume, an epilogue was added that features a meeting between Superman, **Wonder Woman**, and Batman where it is revealed that Superman and Wonder Woman are expecting a child. A prequel, *The Kingdom*, was also published in 1999 along with several one-shots that tied into the events of *Kingdom Come*, but Alex Ross had no official connection to the prequel. There has been one novelization of the comic, published in 1998 and written by Eliot S! Maggin, and the characters from *Kingdom Come* have been marketed as toys, trading cards, and game pieces in the DC Heroclix collectible miniatures game. *Kingdom Come* has recently become canon after the series 52, which established the universe of *Kingdom Come* as one of the realities parallel to DC Comics' regular continuity, the Superman from *Kingdom Come* appearing in the "Thy Kingdom Come" storyline running from ***The Justice Society of America*** Vol. 3 #7–22. In 1997 and 1998, *Kingdom Come* and its creators won a total of seven **Eisner Awards**.

Jackson Jennings

KIRBY, JACK (1917–94). Born Jacob Kurtzberg in Manhattan's lower east side, Jack Kirby was perhaps the most influential illustrator of **superhero** comics of the 20th century. Raised in New York, the son of working class Jewish immigrant parents, Kirby taught himself how to draw by copying popular newspaper comic strips, such as *Barney Google* and *Jiggs and Maggie*. Citing as influences such artists as Milton Caniff, Alex Raymond, Hal Foster, and Rollin Kirby (from whom Kirby would eventually adopt his pen name), Jack Kirby received his first professional work as an artist from the Max Fleischer animation studios. After a brief stint there, he went to work for Lincoln Features Syndicate, drawing comic strips and turning out the occasional political cartoon. By the late 1930s, with the comic book industry in full swing, Kirby began producing his first comic book work for **Golden Age** comic publisher Eisner & Iger, as well as working in the sweatshop studios of Victor Fox at Fox Features Syndicate.

It was at Fox Features Syndicate where Kirby met **Joe Simon**, the editor and writer with whom Kirby would make the move to **Timely Comics** (which would later become Atlas and then **Marvel Comics**). Always the better businessman of the pair, Simon negotiated a deal with Timely publisher Martin Goodman that guaranteed Simon and Kirby 15 percent of the profits generated by their co-created ***Captain America*** (1941) comic book. A flag-wearing, fascist-bashing patriot, *Captain America* proved highly successful, with the first issue selling out in a matter of days and firmly establishing Simon and Kirby as creators and collaborators of note. In the pursuit of better pay, the pair soon began working for National Comics (which later changed its name to **DC** Comics), where they created the *Boy Commandos* (1942) comic before Kirby was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1943.

After World War II, Kirby would again team up with Simon on several projects, most notably creating exceedingly popular **romance comics** such as *Young Romance* (1947) and *Young Love* (1947). By the late 1950s, Kirby and Simon's relationship had soured somewhat after a failed launch of their own comics company, Mainline Comics, and Kirby then began freelance work for Atlas Comics (later Marvel). In 1961, Kirby again made comics history when he teamed up with writer **Stan Lee** to co-create ***The Fantastic Four***. This title revolutionized American superhero comics with a comparatively realistic presentation of a family of heroes living in a fictional, but contemporary, New York City. Unlike previous characters in superhero comics, the Fantastic Four were beset with everyday problems, such as family squabbles, money troubles, death, and heartbreak.

Kirby would go on to create or co-create some of the most popular icons in comics, including **Thor**, **Hulk**, **Black Panther**, the **Avengers**, and the **X-Men** (for Marvel), and the Challengers of the Unknown, the New Gods, Darkside, and the **Silver Age** version of **Sandman** (for DC). Further, it is difficult to overstate the impact that Kirby's style of illustration had on comics. His art is known for its incredibly detailed cinematic style. His layouts were often designed by the page, rather than by the panel, which allowed characters to break panel boundaries and convey a greater sense of motion and energy than had previously existed in comics. Kirby was also one of the first to incorporate other media in comics, devising photo-collage covers and splash pages. Some drawing techniques innovated by Kirby are even associated with his namesake, such as his method for depicting radiation and energy known as "Kirby Dots."

The prodigious amount of work that Kirby left behind after his death from heart failure in 1994 stands as a testament to his unflagging work ethic. The fact that he is almost universally respected in the comic book industry shows him worthy of the nickname Stan Lee gave him, "The King of Comics." Perhaps Mark Evanier sums it up best when he writes, "If he wasn't your favorite artist, the odds were good that he was your favorite artist's favorite artist."

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Craig Crowder

KIRKMAN, ROBERT (1979–). Though still early in his career, writer Robert Kirkman has already made an unmistakable imprint on the medium of comics. From original **horror** stories and **superhero** creations to mainstream house characters at **Marvel** Comics, Kirkman's honest characterization and ear for dialogue reveal not only an intimate understanding of the characters and their universes but also a deep sense of respect often found in serious fans of the medium.

Beginning in 2000, alongside artist Tony Moore, Kirkman self-published his first comic book, the satiric superhero title *Battle Pope*. Following the hard-living Pope and

his buffoon sidekick Jesus H. Christ, this series not so discreetly exemplifies Kirkman's approach to comics: superficially a parody, the series attempts to recapture the whimsicality of early superhero stories by juxtaposing the pastiche anti-hero Pope with purposive obnoxiousness and pseudo-serious plot. Eventually republished by **Image Comics**, *Battle Pope* was adapted as a cable television cartoon series for Spike TV in 2008.

Stepping next into a series of short-lived jobs at Image, in 2003 Kirkman and artist Cory Walker collaborated to create the critically acclaimed *Invincible*. Part family drama, part adventure series, *Invincible* represents the fruition of Kirkman's original project formulated in *Battle Pope*—that is, *Invincible* faithfully re-imagines the innocence and awe of **Golden** and **Silver Age** superhero narratives. Ryan Ottley took ongoing charge of pencils with issue #8.

Kirkman bottled lightning twice in 2003 at Image, collaborating with *Battle Pope* artist Tony Moore to create the **zombie**-horror series ***The Walking Dead***. An increasingly popular revision of the George A. Romero zombie mythos, the story claims no central character or pre-ordained mission. Because of this, Kirkman often shakes reader expectations through eliminating important characters and disrupting developing storylines in an attempt to reflect a more realistic zombie apocalypse survival story. Issue #7 finds artist Charlie Adlard assuming interior art duties, though Moore stayed on to provide his **Eisner**-nominated cover art through issue #24.

Seeing his popularity and marketability rise, Kirkman was tapped by Marvel to become a contributor to several limited and ongoing series in 2004. These include a stint writing ***Captain America*** (2004), a ***Fantastic Four*** limited series (2005), and a long run on *Ultimate* ***X-Men*** (2006–8). Perhaps his most notable contributions to the Marvel universe are the tongue-in-cheek *Marvel Zombies* (2005) and *Marvel Zombies 2* (2007) limited series and the *Marvel Zombies: Dead Days* (2007) one-shot. With interior art by Sean Phillips and sought-after cover art by Arthur Suydam, the line of *Marvel Zombies* titles was an immense commercial success and solidified Kirkman's popular credentials.

Despite this success (and an exclusive contract), Kirkman grew unhappy working within the constraints of Marvel's editorial system. He subsequently left Marvel in 2008 to become the first non-founding partner at Image Comics. From this position Kirkman has advocated for an increased number of creator-owned properties in the marketplace; in late 2008 Kirkman instigated a semi-serious debate with fellow comic book writer **Brian Michael Bendis** on the merits of creator-owned properties versus corporate-owned properties.

Joshua Plencner

KITCHEN SINK PRESS. Founded in 1969 by **underground comics** artist Denis Kitchen, Kitchen Sink Press was one of the first of the underground publishers started within months of Rip Off Press and Last Gasp. Kitchen published his own work, *Mom's Homemade Comics*, and began to publish other underground artists. Located in

Wisconsin, Kitchen attracted Midwestern artists, including Jim Mitchell (*Smile*) and Jay Lynch, but soon developed national relationships, including with **Robert Crumb** and other San Francisco-based artists. Kitchen was one the most historically-minded of the underground cartoonists, and he developed relationships with **Harvery Kurtzman**, and later and most importantly **Will Eisner**. Kitchen developed related businesses in addition to publishing, distributing comics and other products to alternative retail outlets, and operating a flourishing mail order business featuring his own and others' publications. As the underground boom faded, and the comics shop system grew, Kitchen Sink Press adapted by establishing a more varied publishing line, and creating merchandise, artists prints, and other products. Kitchen had a degree in journalism from the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, and had an appreciation for the history of comics. He began reprinting classic comic strips, working with Milton Caniff to reprint *Steve Canyon*, and launching a comprehensive reprint of Al Capp's *Li'l Abner*, which eventually filled 27 volumes. Kitchen also reprinted Eisner's landmark ***Spirit*** comic book stories, in both magazine and comic book formats. These reprints brought Eisner's work to a new generation of readers and artists, and had an incalculable impact on the development of comics. In addition, Kitchen Sink Press became the publisher of Eisner's series of graphic novels. Kitchen's *Spirit* deal included the right to reprint ***A Contract with God*** (1978), Eisner's first graphic novel, which had not sold well when published by a New York trade house. With Kitchen Sink, Eisner continued to create and publish graphic novels. At first attracted by his *Spirit* work, readers followed him as he explored long-form comics in new works appearing every two or three years, including such seminal works as *A Life Force* (1988) and *To the Heart of the Storm* (1991). Kitchen Sink Press offered Eisner effective distribution for his work. Eisner also developed a rewarding professional relationship with the press' editor, Dave Schreiner, a journalist and former publisher of the Milwaukee *Bugle*.

Kitchen Sink also fostered the work of Mark Schultz, the creator of *Xenozoic Tales*, a **science fiction** series featuring **post-apocalyptic narratives** in which dinosaurs are reborn. A consummate artist, Schultz went on to write ***Superman*** comic books and the *Prince Valiant* strip. Some of the ecological awareness of *Xenozoic Tales* was transferred to the television animated series adapted from it, *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* (1993–94). In 1994, Kitchen's reputation as a publisher who maintained the highest standards, as well as one with business acumen, led to a merger with Tundra, the idealistic but troubled company founded by Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles creator Kevin Eastman. The combined press then moved to Northampton, Massachusetts. Kitchen Sink continued to publish Eisner and Schultz, adding James O'Barr's ***Crow*** comics and **Alan Moore's *From Hell*** to its catalog. The press expanded its efforts in merchandising, creating successful boxed candy bars featuring Crumb's Devil Girl and Jeff Smith's **Bone**, and created finer artists' prints, including a boxed Schultz set. Eisner authorized the creation of new *Spirit* comics, which attracted superb artists and writers, including Moore, **Neil Gaiman**, and many others. The collapse of the speculative boom of the late 1980s and early 1990s

and the concomitant contraction of the comic shop system led to the closing of the press at the end of 1999.

Christopher Couch

KURTZMAN, HARVEY (1924–93). Few comic book creators have had as profound an effect on popular art and media, and culture as a whole, as Harvey Kurtzman. Although his most important impact may have come as founding editor of *Mad* magazine, Kurtzman's impact as writer, artist, teacher, and publisher cannot be underestimated. Kurtzman began his career in comics in the 1940s after graduating from New York's High School of Music and Art. After doing humor stories for **Timely** (the precursor to **Marvel**), Kurtzman joined **William Gaines**'s innovative **EC** Comics, which published the most intelligent and sophisticated **crime**, **horror**, and **science fiction** comics of that time. Kurtzman's work as editor, writer, and artist on *Two-Fisted Tales* and *Frontline Combat* in the early 1950s set a high standard for accuracy and quality in **war comics**. Kurtzman replaced the jingoism and unquestioning cheerleading of previous comics with culturally aware and reflective stories that were often critical of war and exercised an important influence on later war comics such as *Blazing Combat* (1965–66), which became controversial for its anti–Vietnam war stance. Because he began in humor, and then moved to EC, where personal artistic style was encouraged and promoted through credited stories and editorials, Kurtzman was free to develop his own approach to art. Usually done with a brush, his stark, economical, and expressive line captured a character or action in a few strokes. Expressionist painting and woodcuts by masters like Masereel, Munch, and Ensor helped form the expressive range of his style. Earlier cartoonists, including Milt Gross, and cinematic comedy, particularly the physical elegance of Chaplin and Keaton, underlay the humor tinged with pathos of the art of his comic stories. Although supported and aided by Gaines and artist and writer **Al Feldstein**, Kurtzman set the tone and pattern for *Mad*, a humor magazine in comic-book form. Although humor magazines, like England's *Punch*, had always featured cartoons, *Mad* was all comic book stories. In the conformist 1950s, *Mad* taunted advertising, presciently mocked consumerism, satirized political figures including Communist-hunting Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, with unflinching skepticism combined with acute comic writing and story pacing. Media **satire**s, pioneered by **Will Eisner** in ***The Spirit***, unpacked cultural tropes, and demonstrated convergence in popular media as television began to dominate the American home. Kurtzman's design for *Mad* helped foster transgressive comedy, from Lenny Bruce to *Saturday Night Live*. The suppression of comic books in the McCarthyite 1950s, which climaxed when the imposition of the **Comics Code** ended EC's success with comic books. After a brief run as a comic book, Gaines changed the format of *Mad* to a magazine to avoid submitting it to the code, and it became a runaway success. Kurtzman, however, left the book after establishing it, due to a dispute with Gaines over ownership of the title. He edited a series of critically successful humor magazines which were commercial failures, including *Humbug* (1957–58), *Trump* (1957, published by Hugh Hefner), and the longest-running,

Help!, which was published by **Warren Publishing** from 1962 to 1966 and exercised an important influence on the emerging phenomenon of **underground comics**. In his later years, Kurtzman continued to work on various anthologies and also to teach at New York's School of Visual Arts. The **Harvey Awards**, given annually to celebrate achievement in comics art, are named in his honor.

Selected Bibliography: Kitchen, Denis, and Paul Buhle. *The Art of Harvey Kurtzman: The Mad Genius of Comics*. New York: Abrams ComicArts, 2009.

Christopher Couch



LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN, THE. A comic series written by **Alan Moore** and drawn by Kevin O'Neill, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* was initially published by Wildstorm/**DC Comics** as part of the ABC line, which published other comics by Moore, notably ***Promethea***. The series began in 1999, moving to Top Shelf/Knockabout Comics in 2009. Over the course of his career Moore had some of his greatest successes re-interpreting existing characters, deconstructing and demystifying them in the process, commenting on the clichés and conventions that underpin popular genres. In creating a "Justice League of Victorian England" Moore took this strategy beyond the **superhero** genre, where he had previously applied it to great effect, as in ***Watchmen***, and turned to one of the immediate precursors of comics, Victorian popular and pulp fiction. The story places various characters from different works of fiction in the same universe, including Mina Murray from Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Allan Quatermain from H. Rider Haggard's *King Soloman's Mines* (1885), Hawley Griffin, otherwise known as the Invisible Man, from H. G. Wells's 1897 story of the same name, Henry Jekyll/Edward Hyde from Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and Jules Verne's enigmatic Captain Nemo, from *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1870). Also featured over the course of the series are characters from Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, Fu Manchu, the Martians from H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1898), and characters from Edwin Lester Linden Arnold's *Gulliver of Mars* (1905), and in later stories, James Bond, as well as a host of other cameos.

The series is often identified as being part of the "steampunk" sub-genre of **fantasy** and **science fiction**. The first volume tells the story of the league being gathered together to protect the British Empire against a plot by Fu Manchu to create a deadly airship. The second volume takes a more apocalyptic stance, being set during the Martian invasion



The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, a.k.a. LXG, directed by Stephen Norrington, with Jason Flemyng as Dr. Jekyll; Stuart Townsend as Dorian Gray; Naseeruddin Shah as Captain Nemo; Sean Connery as Allan Quatermain; Peta Wilson as Mina Harker; Tony Curran as the Invisible Man; and Shane West as Tom Sawyer (2003). 20th Century Fox/Photofest

envisaged by Wells in *The War of the Worlds*. The third volume, *The Black Dossier*, was not in fact a series like the previous two volumes had been, but was published as an original graphic novel, in part due the fact that Moore was in the process of severing his connection with Wildstorm as it had been sold to **DC Comics**, whom he was in dispute with over the rights to *Watchmen*. Despite assurances that he would be insulated from working closely with DC, Moore found that DC still interfered with his work. Consequently, *The Black Dossier* was published with rather limited availability, and was viewed by Moore as a bridging work to the real Volume Three, which is entitled "Century," and began publication in 2009 by Top Shelf/Knockabout Comics. Moore's dispute with former employer **Marvel Comics** was also a cause for some concern for DC Comics while the series was being published by them through Wildstorm. Moore included a vintage advertisement that could have been construed as an attack on Marvel (the advertisement was for a "Marvel Brand Douche"). This led to DC recalling and ordering the destruction of the entire run on Volume 1, issue #5. The few issues that survived this are therefore very rare and sought after by collectors.

In keeping with Moore's usual practice, the scripts for *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* are extraordinarily detailed and precise, yet, as with the best of Moore's work, the power of the series comes from the collaboration between artist and writer. O'Neill's style has in the past been thought to be inappropriate for mainstream comics

(the **Comics Code** famously objected to his work on ***Green Lantern***), but it perfectly complements the arcane lavish detail of the period setting, and his angular, edgy style recalls the artwork seen in Victorian advertisements, parodies of which are littered throughout the series.

In 2003 a film was released based on the comic, directed by Stephen Norrington and starring Sean Connery. It was a critical and commercial failure, with widely reported clashes between star and director. The result was a muddled, incoherent adaptation that captured nothing of the intelligence of Moore's writing or the edgy style of O'Neill's artwork.

Chris Murray

LEE, JIM (1964–). Jim Lee is a Korean American comics artist, writer, editor and executive. Arguably the most popular and commercially successful artist in Anglo American comics of the last 20 years, Lee is best known for drawing **Marvel's X-Men** characters and for co-founding **Image Comics**. Lee's pencil style, particularly when inked by longtime collaborator Scott Williams, stands in the tradition of **John Byrne** and Arthur Adams, combining fine linework and attention to detail with flashy visuals and liberal splash pages. Following Lee's rise to popularity, numerous artists have attempted to imitate his style.

Lee's first published work, inks on the small-press comic *Samurai Santa* #1, came out in 1985. Lee received a bachelor's degree in psychology from Princeton University in 1986, but decided he wanted to be a professional comics artist. He was soon hired by Marvel, after showing his work to editor Archie Goodwin. From 1987 through 1990, Lee mainly worked on ***Alpha Flight*** and ***Punisher*** *War Journal*. In 1989, he also drew four issues of *Uncanny X-Men*, however, and, as a result, was made the series' regular artist by editor Bob Harras in 1990. In 1991 Lee's popularity led to the launch of *X-Men*, a second flagship title that Lee was now plotting as well as penciling, and whose debut issue is still considered the best-selling American comic book since World War II. Although Lee was granted greater creative control than usual, he left Marvel in 1992. He joined Rob Liefeld, **Todd McFarlane**, and other Marvel artists who wanted to work on their own characters to found **Image Comics**.

At Image, Lee established his own studio, WildStorm Productions, and created or co-created series such as *WildC.A.T.s*, *StormWatch* and *Gen 13*, to great initial success. In 1996 and 1997, Marvel outsourced some of its major properties to WildStorm, in order to kickstart them creatively and commercially; it worked, and a new ***Fantastic Four*** series, drawn by Lee himself, became the most successful of the "Heroes Reborn" titles. Lee went on to launch *Divine Right* at Image, a 12-part series that he both wrote and drew, but he failed to match his earlier commercial successes.

Lee left Image in 1998, selling WildStorm Productions to **DC Comics**, including its sub-labels—Homage Comics, Cliffhanger! and **Alan Moore**'s then-forthcoming America's Best Comics—and all of his own characters. Lee himself has stayed on as the editorial director of WildStorm, which DC continues to maintain as a publishing



Jim Lee, attending Wizard Big Apple Comic Con at Pier 92 in New York City on October 16, 2009. Noah Dodson/Retna Ltd./Corbis

brand. Later asked about his motives for the sale, Lee said that he wanted to spend more time creating comics again, and less time dealing with business concerns.

Lee has since worked almost exclusively for DC. Among other projects, he has drawn a 12-part ***Batman*** story written by **Jeph Loeb**, a 12-part ***Superman*** run written by **Brian Azzarello**, and the still ongoing, much delayed ***All Star*** *Batman & Robin*, written by **Frank Miller**, all of which have been highly successful commercially. In recent years, Lee's style has taken on a somewhat more visceral and expressionist quality. In 2006, Lee committed to a 12-part *Wildcats* series written by **Grant Morrison** that was meant to relaunch his WildStorm characters, but only one issue has been published as of July 2009. Since 2006, Lee has also held a major creative and executive position in the development of *DC Universe Online*, a computer game based on DC Comics characters, to be released in 2009 or 2010.

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Marc-Oliver Frisch

LEE, STAN (1922–). Born Stanley Martin Lieber in New York City, Lee is arguably the most prominent and influential writer and editor in comic book history. He

also played a crucial role in the history of the industry as an extremely visible public promoter of comics, becoming the industry's best-known figure. After getting a job at **Timely Comics** (which would change its name to Atlas and then **Marvel Comics**) through his relative Martin Goodman (who was publisher), he wrote his first text filler piece in ***Captain America*** *Comics* #3 1941 and adopted the name "Stan Lee." Classified as a playwright in the U.S. Army, he wrote training films and training manuals in the comic book format during the war. A talented editor, Lee quickly rose to the position of chief editor at Timely, holding that position at Timely and Marvel for decades. An exceptionally prodigious writer, he easily moved among different genres. Lee also dabbled in non-comic publications such as photo-gag books. In 1961, Lee made his breakthrough as a writer by producing, along with artist **Jack Kirby**, the first issue of ***Fantastic Four***. Although **superhero** teams such as **DC's *Justice League of America*** had appeared before, the Fantastic Four represented a strikingly new direction in superhero comics. For example, the four superheroes didn't wear masks or have secret identities, and they spent as much time squabbling among themselves as they did fighting villains. *Fantastic Four* was informed by a sense of everyday realism that altered comic books and people's perceptions of them for the better.



Stan Lee poses at the premiere of the new action-adventure film *Spider-Man*, April 29, 2002 in Los Angeles. Reuters/Corbis

Lee went on to create or co-create some of the best-known and loved characters in American pop culture including **The Hulk**, **Doctor Strange**, **Iron Man**, **Daredevil**, the **X-Men**, and hundreds more. His most famous character **Spider-Man** (aka teenager Peter Parker) not only fought supervillains but also worried about homework, girls, and clear skin—problems that millions of readers readily identified with. Lee also

established a unique way of writing scripts (the Marvel Method) whereby a synopsis of the plot was given to the artist who then had greater creative freedom over what goes on each page.

In the early 1970s Lee visited university campuses giving public lectures to eager college fans, while at the same time defending comics as a valuable literacy tool. In 1971, noting the influential power of comic books, the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare asked Lee to write an anti-drug story; the anti-drug issues #96–98 of *The Amazing Spider-Man* were printed without the Seal of Approval of the **Comics Code**, which forbade the use of drug-related material in comics. These issues represented an important movement toward more relevant content in comics. Lee would also write the Spider-Man newspaper strip which started in 1977.

Lee made his readers feel like a part of the Marvel family. His "Bullpen Bulletin" features explored the antics and goings on in the Marvel offices, while "Stan's Soapbox" informally dealt with whatever was on his mind at the time—be it silly or serious. Lee became a world-wide celebrity and the spokesman of the comic book industry. Even though the famous statement "With great power comes great responsibility" is associated with Spider-Man, it is the **Silver Surfer** (first designed by Kirby) who allowed Lee to be more philosophical and comment upon the fallibilities, injustices, and lost opportunities of humankind. At different times throughout the years Lee was also editor-in-chief, publisher, president, and chairman emeritus of Marvel Comics. He continues to write and develop projects in Los Angeles for his own company, POW! Entertainment.

Selected Bibliography: McLaughlin, Jeff, ed. *Stan Lee: Conversations*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007; Raphael, Jordan, and Tom Spurgeon. *Stan Lee and the Rise and Fall of the American Comic Book*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2004.

Jeff McLaughlin

LEIALOHA, STEVE (1952–). A comic book artist best-known as an inker, Steve Leialoha began to work professionally as a comics artist in 1972 and became a full-time artist in 1975 as an inker for Jim Starlin's *Warlock* for **Marvel**. During this period, following and in part inspired by the **underground comics** movement, independent companies began to compete with the big two, **Marvel** and **DC**, publishing ground level comics, featuring stories aimed at intellectually adult readers in a variety of genres, from action and **superhero** stories to mysteries and **adaptations from other media**. Though he continued to work for Marvel until 1988, Leialoha also soon began to work for the first and perhaps most influential of these new companies, Star*Reach, in both their eponymous anthology title and in the humor title *Quack*. His first work for the company, an exemplar of the period's innovation, was as the artist on an adaptation of the Crosby, Stills and Nash song "Wooden Ships" (*Star*Reach* #3, 1975), written by Mike Friedrich. Meanwhile, his ongoing work for Marvel included penciling and/or inking on such titles as *Warlock*, ***Howard the Duck***, *Star Wars*, *G.I. Joe*, *Spider-Woman*, the

Spider-Man title *Marvel Team-Up*, the ***New Mutants*** and, notably, the *Firestar* limited series, which brought a female analog of the Human Torch from the ***X-Men*** TV series into Marvel comics continuity. Ever the freelancer, by the end of the 1980s, Leialoha had moved away from Marvel and began working for DC and other companies. He inked stories for comics featuring **Batman** and other superheroes for DC; Vampirella, the erotic vampiress, for Harris; Peter David's *Soulsearchers and Company* for Claypool Comics; and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, for Byron Preiss. His best-known and most honored work has probably been as the inker of over 50 issues of DC/Vertigo's innovative *Fables*, stories of fairytale characters such as Snow White, Beauty and the Beast, and Pinocchio who have been stranded in the contemporary world. He and penciller Mark Buckingham won the 2007 **Eisner Award** for Best Penciller/Inker Team for their work on that series. Some of his most recent work includes inking for various DC/Vertigo books, including *Nevada*, *Petrefax*, ***Sandman***, *The Dreaming*, *Dead Boy Detectives*, and *Fables*. He illustrated *Peter & Max: A Fables Novel* (2009) written by Bill Willingham. An exhibition of Leialoha's work appeared at the San Francisco Museum of Comic Art in 1999. He also played bass for the group Seduction of the Innocent, who performed at several San Diego Comic-Cons.

Christopher Couch

LEVITZ, PAUL (1956–). Born in Brooklyn, New York, Paul Levitz has had a long and successful career in the American comic book industry, rising from fan to president and publisher of **DC Comics**. In 1971, while still in high school, Levitz and friend Paul Kupperberg began a comics news fanzine, *Etcetera*. Kupperberg soon dropped out of the enterprise, and later in the year Levitz took over the title and subscription list of the defunct fanzine *The Comic Reader* (*TCR*). Levitz published *TCR* for three years and won two fan awards for best fanzine.

The frequent visits to **Marvel** and DC offices to gather the latest news for TCR led Levitz to a freelance job doing letters pages for DC editor Joe Orlando. The day after he graduated from Stuyvesant High School in 1973 Levitz began filling in as Orlando's assistant editor for the summer. The fill-in job became long term and Levitz worked at DC two or three days a week while attending New York University. In 1976 he left NYU when offered a full-time position as editor of titles of his own.

It was common practice at the time for editorial staff to also do some artwork or writing for the company. Levitz's first writing assignments for DC were text pieces such as "Behind the Scenes at the DC Comic World" and the Direct Currents page. His first work on comic book stories was doing rewrites and finishing jobs for freelancers who missed deadlines. His first solo writing chores were on *Weird Mystery*, *Ghost Castle*, and ***Aquaman***. Having proven himself on minor titles, Levitz was given the opportunity to write ***All Star Comics*** featuring the **Justice Society of America**. During his stint on the book he co-created the Earth-2 Huntress with artist Joe Staton. The Legion of Super-Heroes had long been Levitz's favorite characters, but his first run on the book, from 1976 to 1978, was undistinguished. In 1981 he returned to the *Legion of Super-Heroes*

for an acclaimed 100-issue run. Levitz has authored over 300 comics stories, including the **Superman** newspaper strip.

As he was writing some of his most impressive work Levitz was also rising through the ranks at DC. In 1980, he was appointed as manager of business affairs. Levitz worked closely with DC President Jenette Kahn to create DC's first marketing department and explore the possibility of making some of DC's best material available to new generations of readers in trade paperback form. Within a couple of years Levitz was promoted to vice president of operations and then to executive vice president. In 1989, that position was modified to executive vice president and publisher, a post which he held for 12 years. When Kahn left DC in 2002 Levitz became president and publisher.

Subsequently, Levitz had a hand in all aspects of DC brand management from editorial content, to toy licensing, to film **adaptations**. He has been instrumental in expanding the company with the acquisition of WildStorm Productions and seeking new markets with graphic novels and trade paperback collections. Levitz remains one of the leading experts on comics history and a devoted fan of the art form. In September 2009, he announced that he was stepping down as president and publisher at DC in order to become contributing editor and overall consultant for the newly-formed DC Entertainment and return to his career as a writer of comics.

Randy Duncan

LICENSING. *See* ***Merchandising and Licensing***

LOEB, JEPH (1958–). Joseph "Jeph" Loeb III was born in Connecticut. Loeb's early career included co-writing scripts for the movies *Teen Wolf* (1985) and *Commando* (1985). He worked with Tim Kring on *Teen Wolf Too* (1987); the pair would collaborate again nearly a decade later on the superhero themed television show *Heroes* (2006–).

Throughout his career Loeb has continued to work in film and television. It was while working on a script for a feature film of ***The Flash*** for Warner Brothers that he became involved in comics. The movie never happened but **DC Comics**' then-president Jenette Kahn asked Loeb to write a comic book for them. That work was *Challengers of the Unknown* in 1991. The project was the first of many collaborations with artist **Tim Sale**, though at the time Loeb thought the job would be a one-time thing. However, Archie Goodwin, a writer and editor at DC Comics, asked Loeb if he and Sale would do a **Batman** story. Their first was *Batman: The Long Halloween*, a 13-issue limited series originally published in 1996 and 1997 that is credited with being one of the comics to influence the 2005 film *Batman Begins*. Loeb and Sale have also collaborated on many other projects for DC including *Batman: Dark Victory* (also a 13-issue series) and ***Superman*** *for all Seasons*—a Year-One type story told in four issues and recognized as an inspiration for the *Smallville* television series. Loeb subsequently worked as a producer and writer on *Smallville*. Other titles Loeb has written for DC Comics are *Superman/Batman*, *Supergirl*, the limited series ***Catwoman:*** *When in Rome*, and *Batman: Hush*—the latter with **Jim Lee** on art.

Loeb's son, Sam Loeb, was a budding comics writer as well, but died in 2005 at the age of 17 after a 3-year battle with cancer. Sam had written a six-page story in 2004 at the request of **Joss Whedon** for **Dark Horse**'s *Tales of the Vampires* #5. He also started writing an issue of *Superman/Batman* that would be published as issue #26—the issue after Loeb's last on the title—but he died before he could finish it. The title went ahead with an all-star cast of writers and artists working off of Sam's plot. They contributed their fees and royalties to The Sam Loeb College Scholarship Fund. Loeb contributed a short six-page story to the issue called "Sam's Story."

Loeb and Sale have also collaborated on several six-issue limited series for **Marvel Comics** including: ***Daredevil:*** *Yellow* (2001–2), ***Spider-Man:*** *Blue* (2002–3), and ***Hulk:*** *Gray* (2003–4). Loeb is an **Eisner Award** Winner for his work on *Batman: The Long Halloween* and *Batman: Dark Victory*, and has received Wizard Fan Awards for *Batman: The Long Halloween* and *Superman for all Seasons*.

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Jennifer K. Stuller

LONE WOLF AND CUB. This epic **manga** series by Kazuo Koike (writer) and Goseki Kojima (art) was originally published as *Kozure Ōkami* in Japan between 1970 and 1976. Along with ***Barefoot Gen*** (although it could not be more different in subject and theme), it was one of the first manga to be published in the United States. Set in the 18th century during Japan's Edo period, this story follows the long path of revenge by the samurai, Ōgami Ittō, and his son, Daigorō. With its graphic depictions of sex and violence, it is a prime example of *seinen* manga, an action series composed for an adult male audience. It was partly released in the United States by First Comics (45 issues, 1987–91) in traditional American comic pamphlet format; **Frank Miller**, who was greatly influenced by this manga, did the cover art. The full 28-volume run was later printed by **Dark Horse Comics** in smaller trade paperbacks (2000–2). Miller also did the covers for the first 12 of these books, and other comic book luminaries, such as **Bill Sienkiewicz** and Matt Wagner, provided much of the rest.

The series is mostly composed of stand-alone short stories that chronicle Ōgami and Daigorō's adventures before concluding with the framing revenge story. Ōgami had been the Shōgan's executioner, permitted to be the second for those condemned to commit *seppuku* (ritual suicide). In this, he decapitates them, ensuring a swift death. However, Ōgami's wife is murdered, and, through the machinations of the leader of the rival Yagyū clan, Retsudo, his loyalty to the Shōgan is questioned. He is commanded to commit *seppuku*, but refuses. Before he sets off on his quest for revenge, he offers his infant son two items—a sword and a ball. If the child selects the ball, Ōgami plans to kill him. If he selects the sword, then the child will join him in walking the path of *meifumadō* (the demon path) where the two will cast off their humanity in a single-minded need for revenge. The boy chooses the sword and the pair set off, raising money for their

revenge, 500 ryo per assassination—the sign "sword for hire, son for hire" affixed to Daigorō's baby carriage.

The pair interact with men and women at all levels of society—peasants, merchants, government officials, ninjas, and samurai. While most killings are done for justice, others are tragic. For example, in the sixth chapter of the first volume, titled "Waiting for the Rains," Ōgami waits patiently for his target to return to his dying lover's side. After they have their bittersweet reunion where she has died in his arms, Ōgami kills the man; with his last breath, he whispers her name, Shinobu. The series has many such moving stories, and, by adding a child, Koike and Kojima bring humanity to the story, which could have descended into simple bloody revenge.

In many instances, Daigorō proves to be an asset to his father rather than a hindrance, as Ōgami exploits people's reaction to the child in order to get closer to his targets; his baby carriage is made of weapons. Often invoking Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, Ōgami's clever ruses earn him the admiration of even those he kills. Daigorō, however, is not a mere by-stander to these events; the son reveals his own stoicism and courage over the course of the series. As the volumes draw to a close, the feud between Ōgami and the Yagyū clan reaches a climax that shakes the countryside, even drawing the Shōgun to witness the final confrontation.

Koike's script and Kojima's black-and-white art can best be described as "dynamic," because they are masters at choreographing tension and emotion in their often wordless scenes. Remarkably, for such a long series, they are able to create new and inventive ways to pit Ōgami and his son against their various adversaries. The fight scenes are drawn with an economy that most artists would be hard-pressed to recreate. Yet in the final chapters, they are also able to construct a sustained battle sequence that builds to a moving and satisfying conclusion.

Koike and Kojima's work not only influenced Miller, especially in his modern-day samurai story, ***Ronin*** (**DC** Comics 1983–84), but they were also role models for a new generation of manga artists and writers. Koike created a course called *Gekika Sonjuku* which produced a number of rising stars—one of his most famous graduates is Rumiko Takahashi (known for her works, *Ranma 1/2* and *Inu Yasha*). Koike is currently a professor at Osaka University of Arts. Kojima, who also paired up with Koike on the manga, *Samurai Executioner* and *Path of the Assassin*, passed away in 2000.

Lone Wolf and Cub won an Eisner Award in 2001 and two **Harvey Awards** in 2002. The manga was made into two TV series (in 1973 and again in 2002) and into a series of six feature films. *Lone Wolf 2100*, a futuristic re-imagining of the original series, was licensed to Dark Horse Comics in 2002 and ran for 11 issues.

Wendy Goldberg

LOST GIRLS. *Lost Girls* is a work of illustrated erotic fiction by **Alan Moore** and Melinda Gebbie. The first six installments appeared in Steve Bissette's anthology *Taboo*, starting with issue #5 in 1991. These were reprinted as two volumes by Tundra in 1995 and 1996, respectively. The completed work was ultimately published 16 years after the

first installment was published, appearing in a lavish, three-volume, slipcased edition published by Top Shelf in 2006. It was followed by a single-volume edition released in July 2009, again by Top Shelf. While Moore and Gebbie began this work as artistic collaborators, through the process of its creation they began a romantic relationship which ultimately led to their engagement in 2005 and marriage in 2007.

Moore was originally driven to try and create a work of erotica which would satisfy a reader on both an intellectual and sexual level. He struggled initially as his original ideas failed to live up to his expectations, feeling that his initial concepts veered towards the merely smutty rather than the artistically sublime. Gebbie suggested that they focus on three female heroines from fiction: Alice (*Alice in Wonderland*), Dorothy (*The Wizard of Oz*) and Wendy (*Peter Pan*). This suggestion proved to be the catalyst Moore needed to create the narrative that would become *Lost Girls*.

Moore and Gebbie settled on the period 1913 to 1914 as the time in which to set the work, which allowed them to use all three characters at a point where they all could conceivably have been alive. It also afforded them the means to focus on the sexual lives of three women in different stages of adulthood: Lady Fairchild is Alice from *Alice in Wonderland*, now an elderly lady; Dorothy Gale is Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz*, now in her 20s; Wendy Potter is Wendy Darling from *Peter Pan*, now married and in her 30s.

While residing in the Hotel Himmelgarten in Austria, the three protagonists discuss their past sexual histories. Wendy recounts sexual encounters in a park with a homeless Peter Pan and the Lost Boys; Dorothy recounts having sex with three farm workers, and Alice recounts her sexual experiences as a pupil in a girls' school. In narrating these recollections, Moore and Gebbie utilize elements of the original texts and present sexually charged, realistic versions of them. Sex continues to dominate the text, as all three characters, and the hotel staff, indulge in many diverse sexual acts and orgiastic pleasures.

Moore has also tried to pre-empt negative criticism of *Lost Girls* by reasoning that if he describes the work using the word pornography, as opposed to erotica, he steals the power away from detractors who would accuse him of producing pornography, with the word being used by them in a derogatory sense. *Lost Girls* is a work that transgresses conventional modes of sexual morality, and it has caused significant controversy since its publication. It contains images of children in a sexual context, which has proven to be morally and legally questionable in a number of countries, leading to sporadic international publication and limited stocks in cautious book and comics retailers. In addition, the UK saw a delay in publishing the book due to copyright issues over the depiction of characters from *Peter Pan* by the copyright holders of the play version, the Great Ormond Street Hospital in London, which specializes in caring for sick children. This dispute was resolved and the work appeared the following year, in 2007.

Andrew Edwards

LOUIS RIEL. Chester Brown's *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* was first published as a series of individual booklets by Drawn & Quarterly, from 1999 to 2003,

before being released in a collected hardcover (2003) and later in soft cover (2006). This engaging and comprehensively researched account of the life of one of Canadian history's most controversial figures was nominated for two 2004 **Eisner Awards**, "Best Graphic Album—Reprint" and "Best Publication Design." It was the winner of the 2004 **Harvey Awards** for "Best Writer" and "Best Graphic Album of Previously Published Work." In his home country of Canada, Brown was nominated for a special 2005 Shuster Award for bringing attention to Canadian history and for raising cultural awareness of the graphic novel format.

Brown's exploration of the Métis, people of French-First Nations ancestry in Western Canada, and its charismatic leader covers the years from 1869 to Riel's death in 1885, when he was executed after being convicted of treason against the Canadian government. Brown does not shy away from Riel's mystical experiences, his ordeals in mental asylums, and the issue of Riel's sanity during his trial. At the same time, however, Riel is presented as a well-educated, ambitious, and natural leader, respected and revered by the Francophone community to this day. In the reader-friendly and expansive footnotes, Brown presents historical background on the Métis conflict and the issues surrounding the various interpretations of the character of Riel and the rebellion by historians, along with discussions of his own deviations from the historical record to enhance the narrative flow of the story. The inclusion of an extensive bibliography, maps, and an index enhance the integrity and application of this title beyond the conventional comic book readership.

The 272-page book is printed in black and white on heavy-weight yellowish paper and, in order to avoid melodramatic effects, employs a static page-layout of six square panels reminiscent of Harold Gray's *Little Orphan Annie*. Brown incorporates other visual influences from Gray as well: blank eye sockets, pronounced noses, large bodies with almost nonexistent necks, and simplicity of facial expression, background, and garments. The original series, published in a nonstandard size, both narrower and shorter than most comic books, underwent little adaptation when reformatted into the graphic novel. Brown had to re-draw some of the early illustrations for visual consistency of characters, as Riel started out with a big head and smaller body. This was reversed by the end of the series, which depicts Riel with a large body, small head, and huge hands. The notes and rationale provided by Brown remained virtually untouched in the new format. The story is told with a minimum of words; the two spoken languages of the characters, English and French, are visually indicated, enhancing the reader's perception of language miscommunications inherent in Métis history.

Brown began this series, written from a complete script at the onset, with an acknowledged anarchistic agenda highlighting the incompetence of the Canadian government and seeking to introduce Louis Riel outside of Canadian borders. In constructing this work, Brown soon concluded that it was not a viable venue for conveying his own anarchist ideas. However, he succeeded in achieving his secondary goal, producing a refreshing and reliable narrative regarding this contentious figure in Canadian history.

Selected Bibliography: Brown, Chester. *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography*. Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly, 2003.

Gail de Vos

LOVE AND ROCKETS. *Love and Rockets*, a black and white series written and drawn by the **Hernandez Brothers**, Gilbert and Jaime, is one of the most successful of the independent or **alternative comics** that emerged with the rise of the direct market. Early on, *Love and Rockets* attracted an intensely loyal following, including many of the female readers mainstream comics found elusive. Following a self-published issue in 1981, the magazine-sized comic by "Los Bros Hernandez" (with rare contributions from older brother Mario) was published by **Fantagraphics** between 1982 and 1996 for 50 issues, which have since been collected and reprinted in many configurations. (These have allowed the brothers to alter their work in order to effect subtle changes, and reprints have generally separated their work, which originally appears together.) After a five-year hiatus devoted to other projects, the brothers began a second series of 20 comic book-sized issues (2001–7). Beginning in 2008, the first issue in the third series of *Love and Rockets* appeared as a 100-page paperbound volume. Whatever its format, *Love and Rockets* has remained one of the major achievements in alternative comics; it is also notable for bringing a rare multicultural perspective to American comics, blending diverse influences from (among others) punk rock, the brothers' Chicano heritage, and ***Archie*** comics into an altogether unique mixture.

Following a few issues of gently parodic **science fiction**, two densely populated narratives unfolding within richly imagined worlds have defined *Love and Rockets*. Comics by Jaime (often signing as "Xaime") center around a shifting group of "Locas" (crazy women), especially the vulnerable yet resilient Maggie and her volatile punk sidekick (and sometimes lover) Hopey, set within the imaginary but realistic Southern California neighborhood of Hoppers. Over the course of their fragmentary narrative during the last quarter-century, these and Jaime's many other distinct characters have acquired complex personalities, encouraging fans to adore and identify with them, with fluctuations in Maggie's personal relationships and weight generating unusual empathy from longtime readers. The "Locas" stories shift effortlessly from raucous comedy (especially in depictions of Hopey's rock band) to poignant narratives of loss and resignation. While Jaime allows fantastic elements to enter his world, his longer stories, such as "The Death of Speedy," are rare explorations in comics form of the often mundane but sometimes dramatic (or even tragic) interactions of individuals with their families, peer groups, and cultural environments. When Maggie was separated from Hopey for a lengthy period, readers were tormented as they waited for the bittersweet reunion of the pair. More recently, Jaime's readers have been confronted with the aging of his characters, presumably mirroring their and the artist's own maturation, although he is often willing to provide welcome flashbacks to earlier times.

Simultaneously, Gilbert's "Heartbreak Soup" stories, set in the mythic Central American town of Palomar (by which the stories are also often identified), also feature

a vast cast of complexly related characters, centered around the buxom matriarch Luba. Gilbert (frequently signing as "Beto") has constructed especially ambitious and lengthy narratives, including the major sequences "Human Diastrophism" and "Poison River," both intricately organized explorations of the lives of individual characters within larger social and historical structures. Gilbert's stories make demands upon their readers, relying upon unexpected transitions and quietly recalling past events as his narrative moves forward (or, as in "Poison River," shifts to the past, revealing the origins of later events); yet he also provides frequent moments of gentle comedy, often involving the many children of Palomar, whose responses to their often bizarre and magical world are recognizably natural.

Both of the brothers' narratives, often supplemented by shorter pieces, veer between harsh realism and audacious **fantasy**, which in Gilbert's case has often been favorably compared to the magic realism of modern Latin American literature. Both are adept at drastic shifts in tone, and both take advantage of the status of their works as independent comics to depict the active sex lives of their characters (with Gilbert's perhaps showing more regular abandon than Jaime's). The narrative range in their stories is matched by their artistic skills: Jaime's adult characters resemble actual people (with amusing echoes of Dan De Carlo's version of the *Archie* characters Betty and Veronica), but he tends to represent children in "cartoonish" styles indebted to earlier kids' comics, with Hank Ketcham's ***Dennis the Menace*** an oft-noted influence. For comic effect, his attractive characters may be briefly distorted with techniques borrowed from animated cartoons. Gilbert's drawing is less realistic that Jaime's, yet more detailed, and more likely to erupt into disturbing, surrealistic images. Especially in their longer narratives, both have developed sophisticated means of moving from panel to panel, fully exploring the spatial and temporal possibilities of the form: complex transitions allow them to trace the lives of their characters out of chronological sequence, often with resonant implications across time for the multigenerational stories each tells. Early on, both brothers relied on a good deal of expository text to narrate their stories, but their mastery of the narrative potential of precisely sequenced images developed quickly, and many of the most effective moments in their work are now wordless (though their major characters remain energetic talkers).

Between the first and second volumes of *Love and Rockets*, Gilbert and Jaime created works both derived from and deviating from their main storylines. Their desire to break free from the worlds they had created is understandable, but works like Jaime's *Whoa Nellie!* (three issues, collected 2000) may require readers as fascinated with female wrestling as the author; he eventually returned to his original cast and setting, allowing Maggie, for instance, to confront the difficulties following a divorce in volumes like *Ghost of Hoppers* (2005). Gilbert's work outside of his usual territory, in a volume like *Fear of Comics* (2000)—compiling material from his miniseries *True Love* (six issues, 1996–97) and guest appearances elsewhere—is more diverse but suggests obscure in-jokes with little access for readers. His major work (aside from graphic novels unrelated to *Love and Rockets*) following the first series of the comic books concentrated again on Luba

and her extended family, including her cousin Ophelia, who travels to America with her: originally published in *Love and Rockets* as well as *Luba* (10 issues, 1998–2000) and *Luba's Comics and Stories* (eight issues, 2000–4), these "post-Palomar" stories have been collected in a trilogy (*Luba in America*, 2001; *The Book of Ofelia*, 2005; *Three Daughters*, 2005) as well as a single volume, *Luba* (2009).

A recent uniform set of trade paperbacks (2007–8) assembles the brothers' work in three volumes each, with an additional volume of disconnected work by both brothers (and Mario). The major narratives are also available in a series of large, hardbound volumes, *Palomar: The Heartbreak Soup Stories* (2003) and *Locas: The Maggie and Hopey Stories* (2004), supplemented by the more recent material collected in *Luba* (2009) and *Locas II: Maggie, Hopey & Ray* (2009). Whether consumed issue-by-issue, or in these massive collections, *Love and Rockets* remains essential reading in the history of contemporary comics.

Selected Bibliography: Hatfield, Charles. *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005; Wolk, Douglas. *Reading Comics: How Graphic Novels Work and What They Mean*. New York: Da Capo Press, 2007.

Corey K. Creekmur

LUKE CAGE. Also known as Carl Lucas, Hero for Hire, Power Man, and simply Cage, Luke Cage debuted in *Luke Cage, Hero for Hire* #1 published by **Marvel Comics** in 1972. Cage was the first African American **superhero** to be featured in a self-titled comic book, though the African American **Western** hero Lobo had appeared in his own comic book in 1965. Like many early African American superheroes, Cage was the product of a white male creative team inspired by pop culture images and narratives. While Cage's first issue was written by Archie Goodwyn and drawn by George Tuska, the character design incorporated significant input by **Stan Lee**, **John Romita, Sr.**, and Roy Thomas. His persona was loosely modeled after the Blaxploitation film character Shaft, a streetwise detective known for his sexual prowess and exemplification of cool. Cage's costume—a yellow shirt unbuttoned to his navel, yellow boots, blue pants, a chain for a belt, and metal head band resembling an upside down tiara—was inspired by disco. He used the phrase "Sweet Christmas" as a substitute for an expletive. After his creation, Cage would go through many transformations, often reflecting different notions of black culture and identity.

While imprisoned for a crime that he did not commit, Carl Lucas participates in medical experiments in exchange for early parole. The experiments give him steel-hard skin and superhuman strength; then a lab explosion leaves him missing and presumed dead. He resurfaces in Harlem using the name "Luke Cage" to cover up his presumed death and remind himself of his time in prison. He opens a business for which the book was titled: Luke Cage, Hero for Hire. As a hero for hire, Cage is more of a mercenary than a true superhero. Beginning with issue #17, *Luke Cage, Hero for Hire* became *Luke Cage, Power Man*, in an explicit reference to the 1970s Black Power

Movement. While fighting a super villain, Cage remarks, "Chalk it up to *Black Power*, Man." In the next panel he thinks to himself: "*Black Power, Man? Power Man?* Hey, kind'a like the sound a that" (emphasis in original).

As of issue #50 *Luke Cage, Power Man* became *Power Man and Iron Fist*. Iron Fist was Danny Rand, a wealthy Caucasian 1970s superhero inspired by kung fu films. The two work together as "Heroes for Hire" but most of their work is pro bono. Heroes for Hire occupies an office near Knightwing Restorations, Ltd., a detective agency founded by African American female detective Misty Knight and Asian American female martial artist Colleen Wing. At the time, Iron Fist's book had been cancelled, *Luke Cage, Power Man* sales had declined, and Misty Knight and Colleen Wing had had appeared in several martial arts themed titles. Combining characters from multiple books with similar themes (in this case Blaxploitation, Detective, and Kung Fu) was an economic and narrative decision. Throughout its run, *Power Man and Iron Fist* painted an optimistic picture of **race** and gender relations. Cage, Knight, Rand, and Wing were depicted as confidants, friends, professional peers and occasionally rivals. Knightwing Restorations, Ltd. frequently partnered with Heroes for Hire. Rand and Knight became an interracial couple. The last issue of *Power Man and Iron Fist* #125, published in 1986, ended the series with Luke Cage framed for the apparent death of Iron Fist.

During the 1990s, Cage had a relatively low profile, consisting of guest appearances and two short-lived series. Costumes based on urban fashion replaced his disco inspired attire. He was cleared of murder charges in *Cage* (1992–93) after it was revealed in the pages of *Namor* (1990–95) that Iron Fist was alive. Cage and Iron Fist reunited in *Heroes for Hire* (1997–99), this time as part of a larger team as opposed to a duo.

Cage's next two notable appearances were the *Cage* miniseries (2001), written by **Brian Azzarello**, and guest appearances in *Alias* (2001–4), written by **Brian Michael Bendis**. Alias and Cage were part of Marvel's Max line, a mature readers line featuring extreme violence and sexual content. The *Cage* miniseries featured a Luke Cage modeled after then hip-hop sensation Fifty Cent. At the time, hip-hop was identified as cool, urban, and "black" but with a cross-cultural appeal. The story opens with Cage in a strip club sporting a goatee, jeans, vest (with no shirt underneath), sunglasses, gold chain, and black skullcap. A woman approaches him to catch her daughter's killers. What follows is a gritty urban tale in which a jaded Cage fights crime bosses, corrupt cops, and gang bangers for control of the streets. He later had multiple guest appearances in *Alias*, a comic book featuring Jessica Jones, a white female former superhero turned private investigator. Cage and Jones's first appearance together is a drunken sexual encounter. In the last issue of *Alias*, Jones tells Cage that she is pregnant with his baby. Cage asks her if she wants to keep the child. Jones says "very, very, very much." Cage smiles. He replies in the last panel, "Alright then. New Chapter."

Hip-hop garnered heavy criticism in the mid-1990s through the early-2000s for depicting negative racial stereotypes, misogyny, materialism, and violence. As such, a hip-hop-inspired Cage was subject to the same critiques. Still, this movement away from Blaxploitation references in favor of hip-hop in the context of mature readers

books, while problematic, did pave the way for a new chapter for Cage. This new chapter borrows heavily from *Power Man and Iron Fist*, the *Cage* miniseries, and *Alias*. Cage wears mostly black street clothes, sunglasses, and a skullcap, though with less of a hip-hop style. His head is shaved and his chest is covered. Cage and Jones are married with a baby girl. Cage also founded the New **Avengers** with **Captain America**, **Iron Man**, **Spider-Man**, and Spider-Woman. Cage had prominent roles in the ***Civil War*** and "Skrull Invasion" crossover events. Though they no longer share a book, Cage, Knight, Rand, and Wing frequently turn to one another for help. Throughout, Cage struggles to balance his responsibilities as father, husband, New Avenger, and superhero. His Blaxploitation and hip-hop references a part of his past, Cage comes across as a streetwise everyman who happens to be an African American superhero.

Stanford W. Carpenter

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VOLUME 2: M–Z

M. KEITH BOOKER, EDITOR

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For Benjamin Booker, Skylor Booker, and Adam Booker

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It's a Good Life, If You Don't Weaken
Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth
JLA/Avengers
Journey into Mystery
Justice League of America
Justice Society of America
Killing Joke, The
Killraven
King: A Comics Biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.
Kingdom Come
League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, The
Lone Wolf and Cub
Lost Girls
Louis Riel
Love and Rockets
Luke Cage
Madman
Manhunter
Man of Steel, The
Marvel Boy
Marvels
Marvel Super Heroes Secret Wars
Maus: A Survivor's Tale
More Fun Comics
Mystery Men
My Troubles with Women
Nat Turner
New Mutants
Nikopol Trilogy, The
"Omaha" the Cat Dancer
100 Bullets
Optic Nerve
Palestine
La Perdida
Persepolis

Phantom Lady
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Playboy, The
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Promethea
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Sandman, The (Golden Age)
Seaguy
Seven Soldiers of Victory
Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos
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Tom Strong
Transmetropolitan
V for Vendetta
Walking Dead, The
Watchmen
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What If?
Witchblade
Wonder Woman
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World's Greatest Superheroes, The
X-Men
Yossel
Y: The Last Man
Zap

Individual Writers and Artists

Adams, Neal
Allred, Mike
Azzarello, Brian
Bagge, Peter
Baker, Kyle
Baker, Matt
Barks, Carl
Barry, Lynda
Bendis, Brian Michael
Brown, Chester
Brubaker, Ed
Busiek, Kurt
Byrne, John
Campbell, Eddie
Chaykin, Howard
Claremont, Chris
Clowes, Daniel
Colan, Gene
Collins, Max Allan

Crandall, Reed
Crumb, Robert
Davis, Alan
Ditko, Steve
Dixon, Chuck
Eisner, Will
Ellis, Warren
Ennis, Garth
Feldstein, Al
Fradon, Ramona
Frazetta, Frank
Gaiman, Neil
Gaines, William
Gibbons, Dave
Giraud, Jean (Gir, Moebius)
Gloeckner, Phoebe
Gruenwald, Mark
Hergé
Hernandez Brothers
Hogarth, Burne
Jackson, Jack (Jaxon)
Johns, Geoff
Kane, Bob
Kane, Gil
Katchor, Ben
Kirby, Jack
Kirkman, Robert
Kurtzman, Harvey
Lee, Jim
Lee, Stan
Leialoha, Steve
Levitz, Paul
Loeb, Jeph
Matt, Joe
McCloud, Scott
McFarlane, Todd
McKean, David (Dave)
Mignola, Mike
Millar, Mark
Miller, Frank
Mooney, Jim
Moore, Alan
Morrison, Grant
Motter, Dean
Nicieza, Fabian
O'Neil, Dennis
Pekar, Harvey
Pérez, George
Priest, Christopher
Rall, Ted
Robbins, Trina
Romita, John, Jr.
Romita, John, Sr.
Ross, Alex
Rucka, Greg
Russell, P. Craig
Sacco, Joe
Sale, Tim
Seth
Severin, John
Severin, Marie
Shuster, Joe
Siegel, Jerry
Sienkiewicz, Bill
Sim, Dave
Simon, Joe
Simone, Gail
Simonson, Walter (Walt)
Spiegelman, Art
Steranko, James (Jim)
Stevens, Dave
Straczynski, J. Michael
Swan, Curt
Tezuka, Osamu
Toth, Alex
Vaughan, Brian K.
Waid, Mark
Ware, Chris
Whedon, Joss
Williamson, Al
Wilson, S. Clay
Wolfman, Marv
Wolverton, Basil
Wood, Wallace (Wally)

Themes and Genres

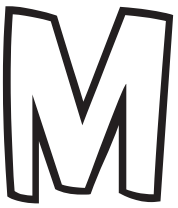
Adaptations from Other Media
Cold War
Crime Comics
Educational Comics
Espionage
European Comics
Fantasy
Feminism
Folklore in Comics
Funny Animal Comics
Gay and Lesbian Themes
History in Comics
Horror Comics
Jungle Comics
Manga
Memoir/Slice-of-Life Themes
Mutants
Nazis
Politics and Politicians
Post-Apocalyptic Narratives
Race and Ethnicity
Religion
Romance Comics
Satire
Science Fiction
Superheroes
Underground and Adult Comics
Vampires and Zombies
War Comics
Westerns (Comics)
Youth Culture in Comics

Comics Publishers

Charlton Comics
Dark Horse Comics
DC Comics
EC Comics
Fantagraphics
Image Comics
Kitchen Sink Press
Marvel Comics
Milestone Comics
Quality Comics
Warren Publishing

Miscellaneous

Ages of Comics
Comics Code
Comics Scholarship
Eisner Awards
Harvey Awards
Merchandising and Licensing
Retcon
Wertham, Fredric



MADMAN. The Madman of Snap City is the star of multiple series by comics auteur **Mike Allred**, including *Madman*, *Madman Adventures*, *Madman Comics*, and *Madman Atomic Comics*. Combining Allred's interest in metaphysical speculation, pop-culture kitsch, and **superhero** action, these titles have established Allred's reputation as a talented and increasingly ambitious craftsman and storyteller.

Allred's narrative began in the 1992 *Madman* miniseries published by Tundra. When readers first meet the title character, he is a disfigured, childlike amnesiac prone to sudden fits of horrifying violence and introspective ruminations on the nature of existence—a dual nature that finds expression in the yo-yos, slingshots, and other children's toys that he has converted into weapons. Though his precognitive and psychic powers offer him insights into the souls of others, Madman is a mystery to himself. Beneath his mask, he is Frank Einstein—a character Allred had previously spotlighted in *Grafik Muzik* (1990) and *Creatures of the Id* (1990)—the victim of a car crash brought back to life by the brilliant but unbalanced Dr. Boiffard. One of Frank's few ties to his forgotten past life is his costume: His only memory is of reading comics starring his childhood hero, Mr. Excitement, and he finds it soothing to wear his idol's distinctive exclamatory lightning bolt design. Aided by his faithful girlfriend Joe, and Boiffard's partner, Dr. Flem, Frank begins to make a new life and piece together the remains of his old one. His peaceful existence, though, is often shattered by the minions of the evil Monstadt, a former ally of Boiffard's obsessed with the secret of eternal life.

This first series was a critical success and drew particular attention for Allred's clean-lined and dynamic visual style, a style influenced by **Alex Toth**, Jack Cole, and Bruno Premiani, and informed by Allred's affection for pop culture ephemera of all

sorts. Allred continued to chronicle the exploits of Frank and his friends in a second three-issue Tundra series, *Madman Adventures*. This series, which cast its protagonist adrift in time and had him meet a centuries-old alien in South America, saw Allred moving away from his emphasis on Madman's occasional fits of rage and focusing more on the combination of graceful action, whimsical comedy, and metaphysical speculation now commonly associated with Allred's work. The next series, *Madman Comics*, ran for 20 issues at **Dark Horse** and includes Allred's most sustained exploration of the retro-futuristic Snap City and its inhabitants—including mutant street beatniks, runaway robots, demonic detectives, and men with vomit for skin. This series also developed Allred's exploration of the nature of identity when the open-hearted and heroic Frank discovered that in his previous life he had been a deadly assassin named Zane Townsend.

After featuring Madman as an ensemble character in the spin-off title *The Atomics*, Allred launched a fourth series for the character through his own imprint, AAA Pop. *Madman Atomic Comics* ran for 17 issues. Although he did not abandon the lighthearted adventure characteristic of previous incarnations, Allred began to place a greater emphasis on religious and philosophical questions and on formal experimentation—including an issue in which each panel was drawn in the style of a different artist from comics history and an issue in which the action was superimposed upon a continuous background. Though Allred ended the series in 2009, he has indicated that Madman and his supporting cast will play a significant role in future projects.

Brannon Costello

MANGA. Manga (*man*, frivolous, *ga*, drawings) is a term that refers to the collective comics traditions of Japan. Although manga is similar in many ways to American and **European comics**—and the similarities have increased as manga has increased in global popularity—it is distinctive in its content, creative style, and published format. Like much of Japanese pop culture, manga represents a synthesis of traditional, indigenous art styles with Western influences, resulting in a uniquely Japanese end product.

History

One of the traditional forms that influenced manga were the *Ukiyo-e*, woodblock prints of daily life, landscapes, and legendary episodes. Other influences include the *Emakimono*, a traditional narrative art painted on scrolls. From the Meiji Period (1868–1912) until World War II, Japan became culturally and economically accessible to the West. Early Japanese cartoonists were inspired by published cartoons in American and French humor magazines and newspapers. Magazines were created explicitly to imitate these influential Western magazines, which provided a popular forum for creators to share their work with an increasingly affluent and educated public. A few popular and enduring characters were created in this period, including Ryuichi Yokoyama's *Fuku-chan* (1938) and Suiho Tagawa's *Norakuro* (1931).



Manga action. Photofest

Before World War II, manga barely resembled the popular mass medium it would eventually become, and was published in newspapers, humor magazines, and books. The outbreak of war limited the resources available to publishers, and after the war widespread economic turmoil and the political upheaval of the occupation changed much about the business and the art of manga. Manga remained popular through these troubled times, largely through appealing to the reliable children's market. Manga magazines for children would continue, and eventually proliferate, while new methods of delivering entertainment to children and young adults would appear.

Arguably the most influential publication format for manga at the time was the *akabon*, or "red book," referring to the use of red ink as a half-tone color for interior black-and-white line art. Akabon titles were cheaply published on inexpensive paper, at roughly the size of contemporary manga volumes, or *tankobon*. Akabon titles introduced work from new, highly original and influential creators such as **Osamu Tezuka** and Tetsuya Chiba. Other important artists, such as Yoshihiro Tatsumi and Sanpei Shirato, presented their work in *kamishibai*, or paper theaters. A kamishibai artist would travel with his display, a series of images drawn on paper or cardboard, and narrate a story while selling cheap candies or trinkets to the accumulated children. Meanwhile, as a cheap alternative to the cost of buying books, rental libraries or *kashibonya* sprang up, offering manga volumes to readers at rates such as 10 yen for two days.

By the 1950s and 1960s, the manga publishing business shifted into its current paradigm: new work would be serialized in magazines, released quarterly, monthly, or even weekly. These magazines, including those issued weekly, would extend to the hundreds of pages and would be sold at affordable prices. Serialized manga stories would be compiled into *tankobon* volumes, containing roughly 150–200 pages. Such *tankobon* would become the permanent print edition of a given manga storyline. The original magazines containing the same content would become superfluous: the American predilection for

collectability in comic books largely does not translate to Japanese manga magazines and volumes. After 1970 and through today, manga became stratified into a variety of well-defined genres designed to appeal to commercial audiences.

Genre

Manga is marketed in several basic genres, which are determined by the intended audience of a given work. Within each genre are several formulas, which can target very specific reader interests, although a work might contain elements of multiple formulas or genres. An example of this is the recent series *Hikaru no Go* (1998) by Yumi Hotta and Takeshi Obata. This series focuses on the subject of competitive hobbies and pursuits, specifically the traditional Japanese board game, *Go*. Manga about such personal pursuits are very popular—there are series about most popular sports and hobbies, all featuring the same basic plot elements, such as the impetuous, youthful beginner, the seemingly invincible opponents, the obsession with minute details and perfectionism, and so forth. This formula is part of a genre called *shonen* manga, which is manga geared toward a young, male readership, primarily focused on readers under the age of 18 years old. The popular American manga magazine *Shonen Jump* focuses on such titles, as does the Japanese *Shonen Jump* franchise and many other magazines in Japan. Tezuka dominated early *shonen* manga: his early trilogy *Lost World* (1948), *Metropolis* (1949), and *Next World* (1951), along with his later series *Astro Boy* (1952), set the tone for *shonen* manga and had innumerable imitators throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Later *shonen* creators influenced by Tezuka include Shotaro Ishinomori, who created *Cyborg 009* (1964) and Mitsutero Yokoyama, creator of *Tetsujin 28-Go* (1956, an animated version of this manga series was released in the United States as *Gigantor*). *Shonen* is arguably the dominant genre of manga both in Japan and worldwide, and includes such series as *Dragon Ball* (1984) by Akira Toriyama, *Rurouni Kenshin* (1994) by Nobuhiro Watsuki, and *Naruto* (1999) by Masashi Kishimoto.

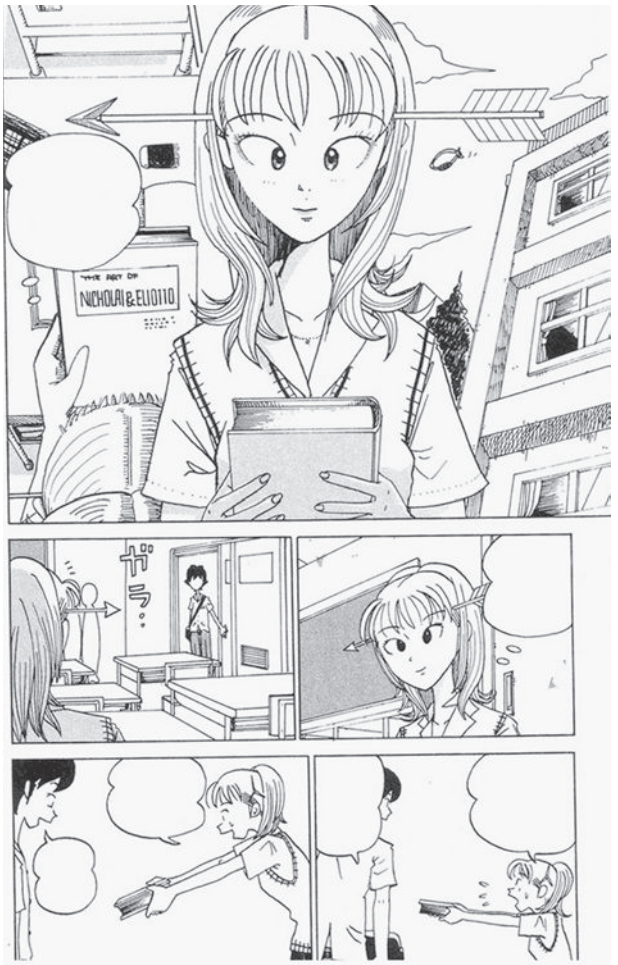
Shojo is another major genre of manga in Japan, focusing on stories for young girls, though as in the case of shonen manga, the stories have appeal to a diversity of readers. *Shojo* manga does include **romance** themed stories, although the diversity of stories available to female readers is a distinct characteristic of manga. Tezuka is again recognized for creating one of the first *shojo* series, *Ribon no Kishi* (1954, translated as *Princess Knight*). Tezuka's *shojo* series introduced an important trope in *shojo* manga: sexual ambiguity and androgynous characters. In the 1970s, *shojo* had a wave of popularity, coming from series such as Riyoko Ikeda's *The Rose of Versailles* (1972), a historical drama centered around the French Revolutionary period; and *Swan* (1976) by Kyoko Ariyoshi, which follows the struggles of a young ballerina. By the 1970s, female creators were becoming more heavily involved in the creation of *shojo* manga, and current *shojo* manga titles are almost exclusively created by women. One noteworthy formula in *shojo* manga, called *magic girl*, features main characters that are almost the equivalent of Japanese superheroes. Magic girl characters dress up in elaborate costumes and fight evil foes, yet with **fantasy** elements instead of a focus on crime, common to **superhero** comics.

Magic girl titles include *Sailor Moon* (1992) by Naoko Takeuchi and *Cardcaptor Sakura* (1996) by CLAMP. Other popular *shojo* manga titles include *Fruits Basket* (1999) by Natsuki Takaya and *Kare Kano* (1996) by Masami Tsuda. Many Japanese magazines publish *shojo* manga, including long-running titles such as *Nakayoshi* and *Margaret*; in the United States, the magazine *Shojo Beat* also serializes *shojo* manga.

Kodomo manga is manga aimed at children but not toward a specific gender orientation. Although some kodomo manga resemble *shojo* or *shonen* manga, *kodomo* stories tend to avoid the masculine action of *shonen* manga or the youthful romance of *shojo* manga, and to focus instead on whimsical stories and cute characters. One of the most influential *kodomo* series is *Doraemon* (1969), created by the creative duo Fujio-Fujiko. This series follows the adventures of a robotic time-traveling cat and a young boy named Nobita. Other *kodomo* manga include popular, cute franchise characters such as *Pokemon* (1996).

Seinen and *josei* manga refer to manga created for adult male and female readers, respectively. *Seinen* manga has been particularly popular in the West. Popular *seinen* titles include *Akira* (1982) by Katsuhiro Otomo, *Ghost in the Shell* (1989), and *Appleseed* (1985) by Masamune Shirow, and *Gantz* (2000) by Hiroya Oku. *Seinen* manga largely avoids the popular art and storytelling styles prevalent in *shonen* and *shojo* manga, and features stories with adult themes, as well as, in some cases, increased violence and nudity. Relatively less popular, *josei* manga often adopts the style found in *shojo* manga, with a focus on more mature storylines and sexuality. Only a few *josei* manga have been translated for American audiences: among the few are *XXXHolic* (2003) and *Chobits* (2001) by CLAMP, *Nodame Cantabile* (2001) by Tomoko Ninomiya, and *Nana* (2000) by Ai Yazawa.

Alternative comics are frequently, though not universally, referred to in Japan as *gekiga*. This term, which translates as "dramatic pictures," was coined by Yoshihiro Tatsumi as a preferred term for the style of comics he began publishing in 1957. While *seinen* and *josei* manga are in many ways adult-oriented versions of *shonen* and *shojo* manga, *gekiga* is not targeted toward readers of a specific age or gender. Influential magazines that featured alternative and experimental manga were *Garo* and *COM*, the latter published by Tezuka. *Gekiga* and other alternative manga have been rare in the United States; although in recent years with the boom in manga publishing more *gekiga* have begun to appear in the United States. From 1997 until 2002, manga publisher Viz issued the magazine *Pulp*, which largely focused on *gekiga* and alternative manga. Regular *Pulp* columnist and former *Garo* editor Chikao Shiratori assembled the book *Secret Comics Japan*, published by Viz in 2000. *Secret Comics Japan* highlighted artists such as Junko Mizuno, who draws unusual childlike characters with a cute, though frequently sexual style; and Usamaru Furuya, who illustrates four-panel strips that often explore social, religious or philosophical ideas as well as creating humor. Among other important efforts to bring *gekiga* to the United States are recent series by Tezuka, including ***Buddha*** (1972) and *Phoenix* (1967); Yoshihiro Tatsumi's work has gained significant attention in the West due in large part to the advocacy of the American



Typical manga drawing style. Photofest

indie comics artist Adrian Tomine, and several titles by Tatsumi have been translated and published in English.

The diversity of stories available in Japanese manga, accessible from very young to very old readers, and including children's humor, **fantasy**, **science fiction**, **Westerns**, romance, action stories, comedy, **horror**, and even pornography have led comics fans and creators in the United States to question the narrow focus of American comics on superhero stories.

Artistic Style

The most commonly perceived artistic conventions in manga, particularly for Western readers, are the peculiar conventions manga utilizes for character design. Often characters will have disproportionately large eyes combined with small, delicately drawn noses and mouths. Characters may often be indistinguishable save for costuming and elaborate, and at times outlandishly colored, hairstyles. In some types of manga there is a preference for illustrating both male and female characters with thin, feminine qualities.

This style largely originates with Tezuka, who was distinctly influenced in his artistic style by Walt Disney cartoons that were being shown in Japan during the post-war occupation. Tezuka's conventions in character design were a major influence on his fellow artists for many years, particularly his use of childlike proportions, large eyes, and thick arms and legs. By the 1970s, other artists had expanded the parameters of manga style—some artists, including Tezuka, continued to use the familiar style, inked in a heavy line, while some artists would use a completely realistic style, thickly inked with pen and brush. The style that became popular with *shojo* comics featured the now-stereotypical style with androgynous characters, large eyes and unique hairstyles, and in the 1970s this style became popular as the preferred mainstream style of manga. The basic conventions of this style are predominant in all but the more experimental

and adult-oriented manga, and Japanese artists have built around this cartooning style a unique vocabulary of manga cartooning.

Artists may have different preferences for drawing in this mainstream style, depending on their alignment within the genre system. For example, a *shonen* artist may draw an image with a clear, heavy line without much artistic embellishment. A seinen artist may draw this style with heavy penwork and thoroughly rendered textures, or alter the mainstream style slightly towards more adult proportions. *Shojo* artists, on the other hand, might draw the mainstream style with a very light, nimble line and a heavy use of filled grey-tones instead of hand-rendered textures.

Other differences between Japanese manga and Western comic book styles abound, some of which are superficial, others which demonstrate the differences between how Japanese and non-Japanese readers perceive comics. Minor differences include the symbolic elements in manga, such as the use of a large, single sweat drop to symbolize worry or frustration, nosebleeds to symbolize lust, or shading of the eyes to symbolize embarrassment. More intriguingly, in America the preference for illustrating motion is to clearly illustrate a fixed scene with the moving element, such as a person, illustrated as moving within the scene. In Japan, illustrators show motion in a scene by having the moving element, such as a person, fixed within the center of the panel, surrounded by a background of motion lines.

As in Western comics, manga uses rendered sound effects—words drawn within the visual space of the story—to demonstrate sounds. In the United States, the use of sound effects in comics primarily derives from the physical, action-oriented stories in superhero comics. Outside of superhero comics there has been a reluctance to use sound effects, except perhaps in a more subdued way. In manga, however, sound effects are almost universally embraced regardless of the content of the story or its' targeted audience. While Western comics often use sound effects to clearly denote loud sounds, such as explosions or crashes, manga often utilizes sound effects to indicate subtle actions, such as a character grabbing an item or making an expression. In some situations in manga there is a sound effect used to indicate silence itself.

One surprising fact to new manga readers in the United States is that the pages of manga volumes are published in the reverse order of an English-language book. This is not unique specifically to manga, but is a reflection of how virtually all books and magazines published in Japanese are formatted.

Manga utilizes a publishing format that is much smaller than comics in the United States. In the United States, original comic art is most often drawn on heavy paper, such as bristol board or illustration board, in 11-by-14 inch sheets. Manga art is typically drawn on sheets that are 8.7-by-11.3 inches, known as the international paper format A4. The finished art is reduced in size only slightly for full-size magazine printing, but is reduced much further for reproduction in book-format volumes roughly 5-by-7 inches in size. The format can vary based upon a number of factors, such as the choice of the artist or the preferences of the publisher, and books are often published in larger or smaller formats.

A given manga title typically bears the name of a single creator, or at times a creative team whose members are largely responsible for the creation of the story and artwork. Manga creators are referred to as *manga-ka*, and are also referred to by the respectful title *sensei*, much like doctors, teachers, or politicians. As is the case in American comics, *manga-ka* are responsible to an editor, who represents the financial interests of the publisher as well as coordinating the production aspects of the finished manga. In the United States, the control an editor has over the creative aspects of the work that is produced depends on a variety of factors, such as the importance of the project, the perceived value of a creator or creative team, or the editorial policies of the publisher. In Japan, however, an editor generally holds a great deal of creative power, regardless of the *manga-ka* involved.

During the plotting stage of a manga work, the *manga-ka* will typically draft out the work in a notebook or on a series of folded sheets of paper referred to as a *name* (pronounced "nah-meh"). The *manga-ka* will then submit the *name* to their editor, who may approve some parts or request revisions in others. After the final storyline is agreed upon, the *manga-ka* coordinates the illustration of the story with their own personal art staff, which is often a group of several people, each in charge of specialized tasks in the creative process. The *manga-ka* or an assistant will lay out the page, rendering the panel boundaries, and the *manga-ka* reserves the primary task of rendering the characters on the page. It may be the assistants' jobs to render background elements, background figures, add tones and lettering, and fill in black or color areas of the page. This division of labor allows for the relatively speedy production time that manga is known for, and all the while the editor is in charge of verifying that the *manga-ka* is producing the required number of pages to meet deadlines. Also, working as an assistant for an established *manga-ka* allows for new artists to earn their way into establishing their own careers as *manga-ka*.

Of course, not all manga creators utilize such a system. Experimental and alternative manga artists are rarely even paid for their work, much less are given a staff to assist in the creative process. Despite this, these *manga-ka* are not only given a forum for public exposure, but they are given almost total creative control over their own work, which is atypical in mainstream manga.

Outside of the mainstream, yet still influential, are the manga fanzines referred to as *dojinshi*. *Dojinshi* are produced and published by independent creative teams outside of the corporate system, often by artists who aspire to work in that system. *Dojinshi* are difficult to characterize, since they are produced independently of the commercial manga editorial system. *Dojinshi* are often printed in thin, black-and-white magazine-style pamphlets, and may contain stories using established manga characters in unlicensed fan stories that may focus on character relationships and other fan-oriented expectations.

Dojinshi, along with mainstream and other manga, are often sold in the context of large trade shows, analogous to the American comic conventions. The largest one is Comic Market, otherwise known as Comiket, held twice a year in Tokyo. Comiket is

the largest public comic convention in the world, although it consists entirely of a sales floor for publishers and creators to sell their work. Much like comic conventions in America, Comiket and similar Japanese manga conventions allow fans to socialize and explore different and difficult to obtain manga.

Manga in English

Manga was first brought to the United States by the artist Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama, whose *Four Immigrants Manga* was privately published in 1931 and featured comic stories about his experience as a Japanese immigrant in San Francisco, California, between 1904 and 1924. Kiyama's work had relatively little impact outside of the San Francisco Japanese immigrant community, and was quickly forgotten, but has been rediscovered recently due to the book's translation by noted manga scholar Frederik Schodt.

After World War II, manga made its American debut with work by Keiji Nakazawa, a survivor of the atomic bomb that fell on Hiroshima in 1945. Nakazawa documented his experiences in *I Saw It* and the fictionalized series ***Barefoot Gen.*** The translation and publication were coordinated by an all-volunteer group known as Project Gen, and the result was published by small press imprints such as Educomics and Last Gasp starting in 1982.

In the 1980s, following the popularity of imported "anime" (essentially animated versions of manga) series such as *Astro Boy*, *Speed Racer*, and *Battle of the Planets*, American comic book fans and artists showed great interest in Japanese manga and anime. The artist **Frank Miller**, who would later be known for ***Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*** and the ***Sin City*** series, wrote and illustrated the miniseries ***Ronin***, published by **DC Comics** in 1983. In the series, Miller tells the story of a reborn samurai warrior who fights a time-traveling demon in a decadent futuristic city. The artwork is clearly inspired by Japanese artists such as Goseki Kojima, the artist of the legendary samurai manga ***Lone Wolf and Cub.***

At the same time, established independent publishers such as Eclipse Comics and First Comics began to publish manga titles such as *Lone Wolf and Cub* by Kazuo Koike and Kojima, *Appleseed* by Masamune Shirow, and other titles. Another new manga publisher in the early 1980s was Viz Comics. Viz's original publication lineup included *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* by Hayao Miyazaki and *Crying Freeman* by Kazuo Koike and Ryoichi Ikegami. **Marvel Comics's** imprint Epic also published manga, including excerpts in their flagship magazine *Epic Illustrated*, and ongoing series such as *Akira* by Katsuhiro Otomo.

At the end of the 1980s, manga was a modestly successful, if obscure publishing niche. As Eclipse and First folded by the early 1990s, the new publisher **Dark Horse Comics** gained attention by publishing manga along with their licensed and original titles in both the comic book periodical format and the graphic novel paperback format, such as *Ghost in the Shell* by Masamune Shirow, *Blade of the Immortal* by Hiroaki Samura, and eventually reprints of *Akira* and *Lone Wolf and Cub*.

Anime releases in the mid-to-late 1990s, such as *Dragon Ball Z* and *Pokemon*, helped to raise the profile of manga to the level of a major publishing force. One new publishing upstart, Mixx Publications, began publishing *shojo* titles that were then rare in the United States, such as *Sailor Moon*. Mixx, which was later renamed Tokyopop, revolutionized how manga was published in America. While other publishers were printing manga in the format of comic books before compiling them into digest format paperback collections, Tokyopop bypassed the comic book format entirely, publishing titles in a significantly cheaper paperback format designed to mimic the original Japanese editions. Tokyopop promoted their manga titles to major bookstore chains, particularly the Borders and Waldenbooks chain, rather than direct-market comic book stores. Eventually, all of the major American manga publishers would adopt a similar business model, selling hundreds of titles in high volume at all of the major bookstore chains as well as many of the major media retail outlets and online. By the mid 2000s, some manga titles were appearing on bestseller lists, attracting the notice of some of the largest book publishers. Viz became a publishing subsidiary of the Japanese publishing conglomerates Shogakukan and Shueisha, and Tokyopop negotiated a business partnership with HarperCollins. DC Comics founded a manga publishing imprint, CMX. Random House began publishing manga under a new branch of its science fiction and fantasy imprint Del Rey, in partnership with the Japanese publisher Kodansha. Finally, Hachette Book Group founded Yen Press to publish original titles as well as licensed content from Japan.

Manga's explosive popularity in America has additionally led some American and European artists and writers to explore the style. As discussed previously, comic artists such as Miller have been incorporating manga drawing techniques since the 1980s, often in comics that otherwise offered little resemblance to manga. After 2000, however, Western artists began to create artwork that revealed a sincere devotion to manga beyond simple emulation. This type of manga became known collectively as OEL—Original English Language—manga. Significant creators include Bryan Lee O'Malley, creator of *Scott Pilgrim* (2004); Chynna Clugston, creator of *Blue Monday* (2000), Becky Cloonan, creator of *East Coast Rising* (2006) and artist for *Demo* (2004), written by Brian Wood; and Kazu Kibuishi, creator of *Daisy Kutter* (2006) and *Amulet* (2008), as well as the editor for *Flight*, an anthology that includes manga-inspired comics. Manga has also inspired a number of popular webcomics, such as *MegaTokyo* and *AppleGeeks*, as well as video games, animation, and other media.

In addition to its influence on the American comics industry, manga is also leading a trend in what some are referring to as *world comics*, a style of comics that embraces international themes and styles. By embracing manga style, creators from Europe, Asia, and the Americas are able to craft work that crosses borders and interests.

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Robert O'Nale

MANHUNTER. Manhunter is the name given to a group of vigilante crime-fighting heroes appearing in **DC Comics** since the 1940s (not to be confused with the DC superhero J'onn J'onzz, known as the Martian Manhunter). There have been four significant versions of the character. The first two Manhunters appeared during the 1940s. **Quality Comics** introduced its Manhunter, Donald Richards, created by Tex Blaisdell and Alex Kotzky, in *Police Comics* #8, March 1942. Paul Kirk, National (DC) Comics' Manhunter, first appeared in 1940 as a non-costumed private detective in ***Adventure Comics*** #58. In 1942, **Joe Simon** and **Jack Kirby** revised the character, giving him the familiar blue-and-red costume and the "Manhunter" name in issue #73. The two characters share little else but the name. DC purchased the Quality Comics characters in the late 1950s, and the two characters only retroactively interacted in the 1980s *All-Star Squadron* and other DC Comic titles.

Dan Richards, with his canine companion Thor (later revealed to be a Manhunter android in the 1988 *Millennium* crossover), became a mystery man to hunt down the killer for whose deeds his brother was framed. Afterwards, the Richards Manhunter's adventures involved crime fighting otherwise ordinary thugs and criminals. The character is killed by Mark Shaw in the 2004 *Manhunter* series.

Paul Kirk, a big game hunter and private detective, becomes Manhunter after the death of his close friend and city police commissioner. His **Golden Age** adventures are of relatively little note, though he is historically important, if only because he was a creation of Simon and Kirby. Archie Goodwin and **Walt Simonson** revised the character in the 1970s as a backup story for ***Detective Comics*** (beginning with #437 and ending in #443).

Placed in suspended animation by a secret organization, Kirk re-emerges to work as the organization's assassin, trained in the martial arts and embedded with a healing factor. On discovering their goal of global domination, Kirk turns on his benefactors and dies by the end of the story arc. This version is seen as a product of its time and represents seminal work on new characters to transition superhero comics away from their **Silver Age** innocence. (A clone of Paul Kirk appears as Manhunter in **Kurt Busiek**'s *Power Company* series.)

The 1988 DC crossover *Millennium* launched the next incarnation of the Manhunter character, in a series written by John Ostrander that ran for 24 issues into 1990. Attorney Mark Shaw turns on the Manhunter cult that recruited him. The Shaw Manhunter works as bounty hunter and his antagonist is Dumas, a shape-shifting mercenary. The series reveal is that Shaw is Dumas and that his split personalities are a result of government experimentation (a plot line that would be finally resolved in the third 2000-era series). Another *Manhunter* series, written by Steven Grant, was launched in 1994 after the *Zero Hour* crossover and lasted 12 issues.

The third *Manhunter* series, created by writer Marc Andreyko, ran from October 2004 to January 2009. This popular series features Kate Spencer as a prosecuting attorney who, fed up with the acquittal of various supervillains, pieces together various superhuman devices to take on the Manhunter persona. The series would find Spencer taking on established villains and interacting with DC heroes while struggling to be a single parent. Even with fan support to save the series, it was canceled with issue #38 in January 2009. The Spencer Manhunter also appears in *Birds of Prey* and later becomes the District Attorney of Gotham City in the 2009 ***Batman:*** *Streets of Gotham* series.

D. R. Hammontree

MAN OF STEEL, THE. A six-issue miniseries published by **DC Comics** in 1986 that retells the origin story of **Superman**, *The Man of Steel* was written and penciled by **John Byrne**. The first issue is set initially on Krypton, a coldly scientific world where even skin-to-skin contact has been prohibited between Kryptonians. There, Jor-El and Lara remove their infant son from his gestation chamber to send him rocketing towards Earth, escaping the destruction of his native planet. Through a flashback of scenes from Superman's childhood we learn how Jonathan and Martha Kent found the infant sent from Krypton and raised him as their own, and how gradually, throughout puberty, Superman developed his amazing powers. The issue ends with Superman publicly saving a crashing experimental space-plane, which prompts him to create a costumed persona with which to operate as a **superhero**.

The remaining issues are highly episodic and are used to establish various aspects and characters from the Superman mythos. While Lois Lane does appear as a reporter covering the test flight of the experimental plane in the first issue, the remaining supporting cast from the *Daily Planet*—Perry White and Jimmy Olsen—is introduced in the second issue along with Lex Luthor (though he is little more than a shadowy figure inside a limousine). The third installment shows the first meeting between Superman and another costumed hero, **Batman**, who enlists his help in tracking down a Gotham City jewel thief. The fourth and fifth issues focus on Superman's rivalry with Lex Luthor, he at first trying to place Superman on retainer in issue four, then cloning him in issue #5 after realizing Superman cannot be bought. Luthor inadvertently unleashes the clone (a pale white copy of Superman without his high regard for justice or life—Byrne's updated version of Bizarro) and later in the same issue Superman is forced to stop the rampage of his alter ego. To end the series Byrne has Superman return to Smallville and explore his origins, both as an immigrant to Earth and as a Kryptonian through confronting a holographic projection of his father from his spacecraft.

Byrne's miniseries was the most extensive **retcon** of Superman up to its publication. Previous stories had changed details involved in Superman's origin—1948's "The Origin of Superman!" changed the design of Kryptonian clothing, placing emblems reminiscent of superhero costumes on the inhabitants, and 1961's "The Story of Superman's Life" added the expanded cast of characters, such as Krypto and Supergirl's Father, Zor-El,

which had appeared under Mort Weisinger's run as editor; however, Byrne's miniseries was the first large-scale reboot for the character. The previous year had seen the publication of ***Crisis on Infinite Earths***, a 12-issue maxi-series that was produced to simplify the continuity of DC's universe of characters, eliminating several canonical stories and synthesizing others in an effort to make the fictional histories of DC's universe coherent. Byrne, coming from successful runs on ***X-Men*** and ***Fantastic Four***, was DC President Jeanette Khan's pick to revitalize the Superman franchise, and his revisions reflect many of the current trends in comics at the time.

Byrne's most important revision was to diminish the long-standing opposition between Clark Kent and Superman. Under Byrne's authorship, Superman no longer felt so distant from humanity since his powers had only gradually developed and his Clark Kent persona, no longer used simply to cover-up his abilities, was more integrated into his identity. Clark Kent becomes an assertive, likeable fellow in *The Man of Steel*, which means that finally, after nearly 50 years of publication, Lois Lane can believably find him attractive. This innovation allows for a depth of interpersonal relationships not possible with the earlier Superman who merely used Clark Kent as a disguise, and for a Lois whose only male peer at the *Daily Planet* had been a cowardly weakling. Lois no longer assumes that Superman has a secret identity, either, giving more honesty to the interactions between Clark, Lois, and Superman. The Kents likewise become a viable source for interpersonal relationships since Superboy was eliminated from continuity, and Byrne keeps them alive to help Clark transition into his new role of Superman. Even Lana Lang receives new depth as, instead of a bitter rival to Lois for Superman's affections, she becomes a heartbroken childhood friend who is the only outsider to know Superman's secret identity. Superman's power-levels were also toned down to increase the drama of his encounters with supervillains, who no longer had to rely solely on Kryptonite to have a fighting chance against the Man of Steel.

Other elements of the mythos that Byrne eliminated were Supergirl, the bottle city of Kandor, and the numerous Kryptonian artifacts and escaped zoo creatures that were prone to run amok on Earth. Byrne returned Superman to his unique status as the sole survivor of Krypton. Acting on an idea from collaborator **Marv Wolfman**, Byrne also transforms Lex Luthor from a mad-scientist into possibly the only thing that seemed more sinister to an audience in the 1980s: a wall-street fat-cat with a billion-dollar payroll and a heart of stone.

The Man of Steel title was also used in a regularly published series from 1991 to 2003, and Byrne's conception of Superman remained canon for almost two decades until ***Superman: Birthright*** was published (2003–4), once again reworking Superman's origins. His work, though, especially the Lex Luthor renovation, has remained influential in the mythos, with a major impact not only on subsequent comics (paving the way for Superman and Lois's eventual marriage in 1996) but on treatment of the Superman character on television in Bruce Timm's *Superman: The Animated Series* as well as the series from the mid-1990s, *Lois and Clark*, and the new millennium's

Smallville, all of which focus on interpersonal relationships and feature corporate Luthors.

Jackson Jennings

MARVEL BOY. "Marvel Boy" is a name used for a variety of characters in comic books published by Marvel and its precursors. The first Marvel Boy, a **superhero** with the power of Hercules, created by **Joe Simon** and **Jack Kirby**, had only two appearances: one in *Daring Mystery Comics* in 1940, and another (in a version that could be interpreted as an entirely different character) in *USA Comics* in 1943. "I don't recall that one," Simon later said about the character.

The second Marvel Boy, created by **Stan Lee** and Russ Heath, made his debut in *Marvel Boy* #1 in 1950. Bob Grayson is a teenager raised on the planet Uranus, where his father flew in a space ship. He is given a set of powerful accessories by the local aliens and returns to Earth as a costumed hero. The character stopped appearing regularly in 1951, but had a handful of further appearances over the next 55 years. In 2006, writer Jeff Parker re-introduced Grayson in the *Agents of Atlas* miniseries, revising his history in the process. Parker established that Marvel Boy was a member of the group now known as the Agents of Atlas in the 1950s, but then returned to Uranus, where he remained until the present. Now simply called "Bob" by his friends, the character became one of the protagonists of Parker's new monthly *Agents of Atlas* series.

In 1977, another Marvel character using the name Marvel Boy debuted in ***Captain America*** #217. This time, it is young Wendell Vaughn who comes in possession of powerful Uranian artifacts and uses them as a superhero. The character does not keep the Marvel Boy moniker for long, however, and is now better known as Quasar. In *The Thing* #32, published in 1985, a telekinetic youth named Vance Astrovik begins calling himself Marvel Boy. He continues using the name while appearing in *New Warriors* at first, but changes it in 1993. Better known as Justice, he now appears in ***Avengers*: *The Initiative***. Meanwhile, he passed on the Marvel Boy name to a minor character named David Banks in the limited series *Justice: Four Balance* (1994).

In 2000, writer **Grant Morrison** and artist J. G. Jones created the miniseries *Marvel Boy*. Its protagonist is Noh-Varr, a young member of a humanoid alien race from a parallel universe. Noh-Varr is on his way home from a diplomatic mission when his ship is shot down by Marvel Universe super-villain Dr. Midas. The only survivor of the crash, Noh-Varr is imprisoned by Midas, but quickly escapes due to his superior, nano-active physiology, which, among many other superhuman features, is capable of self-repair fueled by the ingestion of matter—such as waste. Following his escape, Noh-Varr declares war on humanity. He carves block-sized expletives into Manhattan and fights opponents such as Hexus the Living Corporation, a parasitic alien life form; a group of very expensive super-soldiers called the United Nations Bannermen; and Oubliette, Dr. Midas's daughter, who is forced to wear a mask by her father at all times and believes herself to be horribly scarred. Eventually, Noh-Varr and Oubliette, who discovers she was lied to, team up to defeat Midas. In the final issue, Noh-Varr is

imprisoned, but announces his intention to turn the prison into the capital of his new empire. A follow-up series by Morrison was promised, but never materialized. Nonetheless, Noh-Varr, now also known as **Captain Marvel**, was re-introduced in 2007 and currently appears in *Dark Avengers*.

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Marc-Oliver Frisch

MARVEL COMICS. One of the two (along with **DC**) publishing houses that have dominated the American comic book industry since the early 1960s, Marvel has produced comics in a wide variety of styles and genres, but it is primarily known for its **superhero** comics. The company's most recognizable characters include **Spider-Man**, the **Incredible Hulk**, and the **X-Men**.

Martin Goodman founded the company as **Timely** Publications in 1939. The Sub-Mariner and the Human Torch were early hits, but Timely had difficulty building on their success until the introduction of **Captain America** in early 1941. The patriotic hero, created by **Joe Simon** and **Jack Kirby**, was an immediate smash. Another important figure at Marvel, **Stan Lee**, came to the company in 1940. Lee's talents lay in writing and editing. When Simon and Kirby left at the end of 1942, Lee became the major editor and writer at the company for the next 30 years.

The fortunes of the company, now operating as Atlas Comics, were buoyed by the general popularity of comics during and immediately after World War II. Though the company continued to rely on its popular **superheroes**, it also diversified into other types of comics, especially as the popularity of superheroes declined after the war. As **crime**, **romance**, and **Westerns** became popular, the company followed industry trends and added these genres to its lineup. By 1950, they were producing more than 80 monthly titles in a wide variety of genres, though many titles were short-lived. In the 1940s and 1950s, the company derived its success primarily by copying what was successful at other publishers rather than by innovation.

The industry decline in the mid-1950s hit the company hard. Although Atlas published some crime and **horror** comics, its lineup was diverse enough that the **Comics Code** had little direct impact. Though almost all publishers suffered from the bad publicity surrounding comics, the situation at Atlas was exacerbated by distribution problems. After the collapse of distributor American News in 1957, the company found itself with no distributor for its 75 monthly titles. It survived only because Goodman struck a deal with DC, under which DC distributed eight Marvel books a month (16 bimonthly titles) through its Independent News distributorship. The 16 titles were filled with completed stories from inventory.

Late in 1958, Atlas began to publish newly commissioned material again. Kirby and other artists returned, and the company produced a number of largely forgettable comics. In 1960, when Goodman learned of the success of DC's **Justice League of**

America, he directed Lee to create a superhero team. Lee and Kirby developed an entirely new superhero team, the **Fantastic Four**, who debuted in *Fantastic Four* 1 (November 1961), by which time the company was publishing under the Marvel Comics brand name. Lee and Kirby adopted a new approach to the genre, making their stories more character driven and their protagonists less idealized. Their general approach, and the Fantastic Four in particular, proved successful. Marvel followed up by introducing more new superheroes over the next several years, sometimes in new eponymous titles like *The Incredible Hulk* (May 1961), *The X-Men* (September 1963), and ***Daredevil:*** *The Man Without Fear* (April 1964), but more often in its remaining mystery and **science fiction** comics. For example, Marvel introduced Spider-Man (by Lee and artist **Steve Ditko**) in ***Amazing Fantasy*** 15 (1962), and **Thor** first appeared in ***Journey Into Mystery*** 83 (1962). These titles not only served as tryout books for Marvel, but also allowed the company to remain within the limits imposed on them by the distribution agreement with DC. This issue forced Marvel to cancel the relatively popular *The Incredible Hulk* title in 1963 (after six issues) to make room for a Spider-Man comic. The limitations of the agreement continued to be a problem for Marvel until 1968, when it signed a national newsstand deal with Curtis Circulation Company.

The Marvel characters are known for their complex (for superhero comics) emotional and psychological traits and for being less than perfect. They are often ambivalent about their roles as superheroes, and conflict among them is common. This approach attracted the juvenile audience that was, at that time, the majority of the comic book audience; but Marvel comics were also very popular on college campuses, and enjoyed an aura of hipness throughout the 1960s.

In the early 1960s, Marvel also introduced an innovation in production, the "Marvel Method." Because Lee wrote nearly all of Marvel's titles, he started working with a method that allowed him to create comics more quickly by relying on the storytelling skills of his artists. Lee would provide a brief plot outline to the artist, who would then be responsible for turning this plot into pictures. Lee would then provide the dialogue. This method worked well because he had talented artists like Kirby and Ditko working with him.

Marvel passed DC as the largest publisher in 1968, when it was finally able to publish more titles because of its new distribution arrangement with Curtis, but sales were down throughout the industry. Sales of superhero comics were flat, and other traditional genres were disappearing. In the 1970s, Marvel developed a new profitable genre with its **fantasy** titles like ***Conan the Barbarian***. Marvel was instrumental in getting the Comics Code revised in 1971. Lee had published an anti-drug story in *Spider-Man* 96–98 (May-July 1971) without the approval of the code (which forbade the very mention of drug use), and the code was relaxed somewhat after that. Marvel also made a move toward socially conscious stories, introducing African American heroes like **Luke Cage** and The **Black Panther**, while having their other characters deal with problems like alcoholism and poverty.

Marvel was wholly owned by Goodman until 1969, when he sold the company to Cadence Industries. The 1970s were a tumultuous period for Marvel; the company had some spectacular failures like the attempts to publish feminist comics (*The Cat*) and to co-opt the underground movement with the short-lived magazine *Comix Book*. At the same time, the company began focusing on the comic book fans that would be the bulk of the future audience for the medium. A new version of the X-Men debuted in 1975, and became a mainstay of Marvel's superhero lineup. Jim Shooter became editor-in-chief in 1977; during his decade-long tenure, Marvel aggressively courted the profitable direct market.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Marvel was also developing its characters into Hollywood properties. Under Cadence's control, the company built a substantial presence in television animation, creating cartoons featuring both its own and licensed characters. In 1985, Cadence sold Marvel (by then the "Marvel Entertainment Group") for $46 Million to New World Pictures, a television and film production company interested in exploiting Marvel's characters.

New World got little chance to exploit those ideas, as financial trouble forced them to sell Marvel to financier Ronald Perelman in 1989. Under Perelman's control, Marvel diversified and expanded its business by leveraging its position in the comic book industry to borrow money and acquire new subsidiaries. As the comic book industry faltered after 1993, the company had difficulty servicing its debt. In December 1996, the Marvel Entertainment Group filed for bankruptcy to reorganize its debt. The bankruptcy was resolved in 1998 when the company was re-merged with Toy Biz (which had been spun off in 1994). In 2005, after the success of the *Spider-Man* and *X-Men* film franchises, the subsidiary Marvel Studios began to produce films based on Marvel characters, instead of licensing the characters to other companies. By 2009, Marvel was still a major part of the comic book industry, but the company itself has become more of a media company, with comics still playing an important role. At the end of August 2009, the Walt Disney Company announced that it planned to purchase full ownership of Marvel for $4 billion in cash and stock, an acquisition that would place Marvel in a position analogous to DC, which is owned by the Time-Warner media conglomerate.

Mark C. Rogers

MARVELS. A 1994 limited comic book series written by **Kurt Busiek** and illustrated by **Alex Ross**, *Marvels* is notable for its synergy of artwork and storyline. It is also notable for its retelling of the history of the **Marvel** universe from the perspective of the unassuming bystanders always on the front lines: the ordinary citizens of New York. A sequel series, *Marvels: Eye of the Camera*, by Busiek and illustrator Jay Anacleto, would follow 15 years later, in 2009.

In traditional superhero comics, stories are told around the interplay of heroes and villains: **Batman** fights the Joker, the **Fantastic Four** tangle with Dr. Doom, and so on. Much like the extras in a movie, the citizens of New York, Gotham, or the like are relegated to the background; their lives are unimportant simply because they do not

have super powers or are integral to the plotline. Not so with *Marvels*. It is the average person who becomes the hero of the story.

Busiek weaves a tale that puts Phil Sheldon—a photographer and budding writer for a local newspaper—at the heart of the story, chasing the exploits of various superheroes living in New York. Through his eyes and photographs we see the origins of some of the most infamous heroes and villains in the Marvel universe. The ordinary and fantastic live side-by-side in New York.

The prologue to *Marvels* opens with a narrative from a Frankenstein-inspired creation: a man made of fire. Fueled by scientific discovery, but shunned by a conservative society, scientist Phineas Thomas Horton realizes the world is not ready for his creation, thus he secures him away from public harm. However, in 1939 the man of fire is freed by accident, once again able to roam the streets in hopes of being able to control his "gift." Thus begins *Marvels* as a new interpretation to the origin of the first (android) Human Torch, the forerunner of the better-known (but very different) character from the Fantastic Four.

With gloriously romantic overtones and emblematic visual aspects of different decades in the 20th century, Busiek introduces such characters as Prince Namor, Angel, **Captain America**, and a newly minted reporter named J. Jonah Jamieson. Through Sheldon's perspective readers find out why he calls the superheroes marvels "Marvels I called them—and that's what they were. Next to that—what were we?" The supremacy of the human race becomes secondary to those whose powers are greater than average people.

Chronologically, the first chapter provides a beginning to the Marvel universe. Ross's artwork brings to life not only the grandeur of the superheroes themselves, but also a glimpse into life during each era covered by the series. Ross's award-winning style fleshes out the people and events in his iconic vivid style to provide the reader an authentic experience.

The second chapter, "Monsters Among Us," reflects the care-free attitude of America during the 1950s and 1960s. Fascination with superheroes still lingers, but at times it gives way to the more mundane and practical aspects of their triumphs: who pays to clean up the mess left in the wake of their battles? Likewise, a fear of those that are different—**mutants**—begins to grow among the masses. Secularism arrives and people feel threatened by those not really all that different from themselves.

Thematically, the second chapter is more about tolerance and understanding than super heroes battling one another. Introducing characters like the **X-Men** and **Iron Man**, the storyline gives *Marvels*'s characters humanistic qualities, like fear and loathing. Riots and xenophobia occur, and readers see an apparent metaphor for the **Cold War** mentality.

The third chapter, "Judgment Day," is grandeur on a global scale: Galactus versus the **Silver Surfer** and the Fantastic Four. It is the traditional scenario most superhero comic books utilize at some point: the battle for the very existence of the planet; but Busiek infuses the characters with the moralistic compass of humans, taking readers

into the "what if" aspects of this battle. Religious and apocalyptic overtones abound as this chapter starts to have Phil and company question what it means to be fallible, until they are saved by the Fantastic Four and return to their normal existence, questioning the need for the marvels at all. Frustrated, Sheldon shouts to a crowd: "Are you so busy digging for garbage you can't even admit to yourselves that you're grateful?"

Finally, the "The Day She Died" echoes the end of Sheldon's career and the beginning of life as an author of Marvels, an homage to the heroes that he spent a lifetime reporting on and defending. He recounts their treatment by the citizens of the planet they have spent a lifetime defending. Central to the chapter are **Spider-Man** and his arch enemies, Doctor Octopus and the Green Goblin. It is here that readers see the impact of death on Phil Sheldon, when Gwen Stacy perishes at the hand of the Goblin. This becomes a question of faith for Sheldon—faith in the marvels that he so vehemently supported and wrote about through the years. In the end, Sheldon realizes that even superheroes are only human.

It is worth noting that *Marvels* is not without a sense of humor. For instance, while referencing a quote about King Arthur, characters that look like John and Jackie Kennedy are in the same elevator with Phil Sheldon. Liza Minnelli and Bea Arthur are seen at a black-tie gala, and Howard Hughes is notably present in the book. The seriousness of the text gives in to these small specks of humor, strategically placed throughout the four chapters. In addition to the text itself, the graphic novel includes some behind-the-scenes commentary on how the artwork was created, source material, and editorials by **Stan Lee** and **Scott McCloud**.

All in all, *Marvels* does more than retell the origins of the Marvel universe and its key figures; its goal is to re-envision and add character and humanity to its long and rich history. Phil Sheldon is the ordinary everyman, but in the end, readers find him anything but ordinary—he is the epitome of what it takes to be a real superhero.

Alec R. Hosterman

MARVEL SUPER HEROES SECRET WARS. *Secret Wars* is one of the first crossover comic book series to blend both the heroes and the villains of the **Marvel** universe in a story that helped re-position the comics giant. It is considered one of the seminal limited edition crossovers that led to other comic book publishers doing the same, like **DC's *Crisis on Infinite Earths***. Yet its genesis was never about developing a great storyline and series for the Marvel universe; instead, the series was conceived as a marketing ploy to sell their upcoming action figures line. Ironically, the action figures didn't make a dent in their niche, but *Marvel Super Heroes Secret Wars* became the best selling comic book series of all time for Marvel.

Published between 1984 and 1985, the 12-part series was conceived of and written by Jim Shooter, penciled by Mike Zeck and Bob Layton, and edited by Tom DeFalco. The series opens with members of the **X-Men** (Storm, Colossus, Cyclops, Magneto, Nightcrawler, Rogue, Wolverine, Professor X, and Lockhead the Dragon); the **Avengers** (**Captain America**, **Captain Marvel**, Hawkeye, **Iron Man**, She-Hulk, **Thor**, and the Wasp);

and the **Fantastic Four** (Human Torch, Thing, and Mister Fantastic); as well as the **Hulk**, **Spider-Man**, and Spider-Woman, transported to "Battleworld," a planet deep in the recesses of the galaxy. There, a voice declaring itself to be the Beyonder, states, "I am from beyond! Slay your enemies and all that you desire shall be yours! Nothing you dream of is impossible for me to accomplish!" Thus begins the secret wars.

In similar fashion, the enemies of the super heroes are also brought to the planet, but are placed in a different fortress, and are given the same ultimatum as the heroes. The villains include the Absorbing Man, Doctor Doom, Doctor Octopus, Enchantress, Kang the Conqueror, Klaw, Lizard, Molecule Man, Titania, Ultron, Volcana, and the Wrecking Crew (Piledriver, Wrecker, Thunderball, and Bulldozer). A "neutral," third party, Galactus, is also brought to the netherworld. Not intimidated by the Beyonder's declaration, Doctor Doom and Galactus both fly off into space to confront the Beyonder, only to be turned away, thrown back into the fray like one would swat a fly at a family picnic. Having both the heroes and the villains see this defeat, and knowing Galactus was presumably the most powerful individual in the universe, the combatants decide to play the war games. But with this defeat, Galactus decides his destiny is not with the villains, much to the dismay of Doctor Doom, and leaves to create his own camp.

After the initial battle in the first issue, the X-Men feel it is in their best interest to break away from the rest of the group and create their own camp as well. As **mutants**, they feel they are unlike the other heroes and disdain the authoritative leadership of Captain America. This causes some animosity among the heroes, fueled by the dissonance of being transported to an unknown world, and in-fighting occurs.

As the series continues, good battles evil in a contest of champions. In book 4, Molecule Man drops an entire mountain on the heroes, who are saved by the strength of the Hulk, holding up the mass. In book eight, the heroes take the offense and go after the villains. These battles become the framework for ***Secret Wars***, but on its own would not make this a significant piece in Marvel's history. Rather, it is in the subplots and character development that the series makes its mark, creating a depth of humanity and realness for readers.

Doctor Doom drives one of these significant subplots. It is his quest for ultimate power that drives him to conclude that he should battle the Beyonder one-on-one, setting his sights on stealing his power for his own use. Siphoning off a part of Galactus's power, Doom mounts an attack against the Beyonder and inevitably steals the source of his power. With the help of the heroes, the Beyonder regains his power and decides to end the games, albeit ever-so-humbled by mere humans.

Secret Wars is a multilayered, complex series that does more than provide a prototypical good superhero versus bad supervillain storyline. It is one of the first to bring together a multitude of company-wide titles into one series, and one (as noted previously) that inspired several other imitators at other comic book publishers. It is in this collaboration that we see the humanity and the every day struggle of learning to deal with egos, both with the humans and the villains.

Another significant aspect of the series is that of an all-powerful being in control of one's fate. The character of the Beyonder is akin to that of an omnipotent being—a god-like individual who has the power to create and to destroy, merely on a whim. This sets up themes of life, death, and what constitutes real power. For instance, in one issue the Wasp dies in battle but then in another she is brought back to life.

In addition, several important changes and additions were made to the Marvel universe. Professor X was able to walk on the Battleworld, and thus joined his X-Men in battle. The villainesses Titania and Volcana were created by Doctor Doom. Julia Carpenter was introduced as the second Spider-Woman. Most famously, Spider-Man gets a new black costume (later revealed to really be an alien symbiote) in book eight. Finally, the Thing decides to stay behind to find himself, a journey self-discovery (thereby leading to She-Hulk becoming the fourth member of the Fantastic Four). When the heroes and villains are transported back to Earth, the events on the Battleworld become part of each book's own lore.

In the end, *Secret Wars* was a financial success; and in 1985, Marvel released *Secret Wars II*, a nine-part series where the Beyonder comes to Earth to battle the superheroes. Likewise, *Secret Wars* spawned such series as the *Infinity Gauntlet*, *the Infinity War*, *the Infinity Crusade*, and ***Civil War***, but none are as impactful and successful as the original.

Alec R. Hosterman

MATT, JOE (1963–). Best known for his unflinchingly revealing and unflattering autobiographical series *Peepshow*, first published in 1992, Joe Matt is an American artist and writer who is well known for writing about things many people would rather keep private. His works generally take his own life as primary subject material, ranging from his suburban childhood and Catholic upbringing to his notorious and well-documented obsession with pornography and allegedly somewhat lax work ethic.

Born in Philadelphia in 1963, Matt began drawing comics in 1987 toward the end of his time studying at the Philadelphia College of Art, though his interest in collecting comics as a child later developed into an extensive accumulation of vintage *Gasoline Alley* strips. Matt's tightly-packed panel style, in which he often directly addresses the reader, developed during this time frame, though his panels gradually became more open and easier to read. (One early self-referential piece pokes fun at how many tiny panels he could pack into a single page.) These strips, spanning 1987 to 1991 (initially published in 1992 as *Peepshow: The Cartoon Diary of Joe Matt* by **Kitchen Sink Press** and republished five years later by Drawn & Quarterly), tend to be single-page stand-alone pieces rather than smaller parts telling an ongoing sequential story.

Matt moved to Canada in 1988 and became part of the "Toronto Three" consisting of himself, **Chester Brown** (***I Never Liked You***), and **Seth** (*Palookaville*), both accomplished comics creators. All published by Drawn & Quarterly, these three creators often reference one another in their works, including illustrated forewords to collections and

in-jokes about convention hyjinx. Some of these appear in Matt's work; *Peepshow*, first published in 1992, shifts in narrative style to tell these longer stories.

The Poor Bastard (1997) collects issues (#1 through #6) in relaying the story of Matt's move to Canada and his relationship and subsequent messy breakup with his girlfriend Trish; this collection is suffused with all the things that make Joe Matt's work so cringingly autobiographical. His "Jam Sketchbook" appeared in 1998, collecting a series of collaborative illustrated works with other notable comics creators including Julie Doucet, Adrian Tomine, and **Will Eisner**. *Fair Weather* (2002) details an event in Matt's childhood (issues #7 through #10) and *Spent*, published five years later, focuses most specifically on Matt's fascination with pornography.

Nominated for four **Harvey Awards** for his work on *Peepshow*, including Best New Talent in 1990, Matt has also worked as a colorist for a number of mass-market superhero comics including ***Batman/Grendel***—*Limited Series* (which earned him a 1989 Harvey nomination). In 2004, there was discussion of translating *The Poor Bastard* into an animated series for HBO to be produced by Matt and David X. Cohen; these plans never came to fruition and the series never appeared. Matt currently lives and works in Los Angeles, where he is working on a book-length work about living in L.A.

Anne Thalheimer

MAUS: A SURVIVOR'S TALE. **Art Spiegelman**'s two-volume account (1986, 1991) of his parents' experiences in Poland during World War II and his own struggles to come to terms with the identity of a second-generation Holocaust survivor won him a special Pulitzer Prize in 1992. Among the book's many visual innovations are its dense black-and-white line drawings, its mixing of images from multiple time periods within the same panel, and its allegorical representations of human beings as animals: **Nazis** as cats, Poles as pigs, Americans as dogs, the French as frogs, and Jews as mice. The covers to both volumes feature expressionless mice, dressed in human clothing, cowering beneath a swastika surmounted by a stylized cat's face. This symbolic choice represents not only the predator-prey relationships existing among ethnic groups during World War II, but also the anonymity that history imposes upon even its most devastated victims.

In 1972, Spiegelman drew the first "Maus" strip, a three-page exploration of the stories that his father Vladek told him about the Holocaust (collected in *Breakdowns*, 1977 and 2008). Its animal characters and references to Nazi brutality and extremist survival measures are familiar to readers of *Maus*. However, the first strip evidences a more conventionally cartoonish style and traditional representation of father-son roles. Here, a relatively young, healthy Vladek narrates his memories to 10-year-old Artie, tucking him into bed at the end of the strip with the admonition, "It's time to go to sleep, Mickey," rather than the heartbreaking admission, "I'm tired from talking, Richieu [Vladek's first son, who died during the war], and it's enough stories for now . . ." that closes the second volume of *Maus*. In this later rendering, an adult Artie stands listening to these words while looking down at the elderly Vladek, already falling asleep in his bed. The work continued to evolve between 1980 and 1986 during its serialization

in Spiegelman and wife Françoise Mouly's underground magazine ***RAW***. The shifts in perspective and style that occur between the initial strip and the final volumes reflect the present-day conflicts between father and son. This relationship becomes as central to the work as its considerations of wartime social and political conditions.

Maus is narrated in three layers: the story of Vladek's and his wife Anja's travails during the Holocaust, Vladek's efforts to explain various incidents to Artie, and Artie's attempts to represent his father's story accurately while grappling with their often discordant relationship. This complex structure helps to illuminate the book's subtitle, *A Survivor's Tale*, which likely refers to the impact of the Holocaust on both Vladek's and Artie's lives. Such ambiguity of meaning is also present in the two volumes' individual titles, *My Father Bleeds History* and *And Here My Troubles Began*, which suggest not only the torment that Vladek must undergo as he recounts the war for his son but also Artie's fight to come to terms with his own guilt. He remains painfully aware that he did not experience the Holocaust, much less die as his parents' first child did, yet he seeks to capture it for his own creative work.

Many of the representational choices that Spiegelman made in *Maus* reflect the violence and deprivations of war. The story's panels are often densely packed with details, as in a panel near the beginning of *Maus I*, where Vladek gets onto his exercise bike to begin narrating the story. His bike represents a way for him to maintain cardiac health, yet the repeated images of his furious pedaling on a stationary machine suggest that he is not progressing into the future. His concentration-camp number is clearly visible on his left forearm, while Artie sits surrounded by books and college pennants from his own past. Spiegelman notes that he learned this economy of design from his father's insistence upon using every inch of available space, a hard-earned lesson from the war. He also illustrates the ways in which history persists into the present day by juxtaposing images of past and present within the same panel, as when Vladek tells Artie about four Jews hanged for dealing goods on the black market. Their dangling feet and anguished faces persist through three additional panels, and their memory brings tears to the contemporary storyline as well. Spiegelman also uses some more conventional comic-book tropes to highlight these themes, including textual sound effects, panels shaped like a Star of David or crossed by enormous swastikas to underline the hunted Jews' sense of vulnerability, and panels whose contents spill into the gutters, suggesting the impossibility of containing such difficult truths.

One of *Maus*'s most important subjects is the father-son relationship. Spiegelman's exploration of generational differences allows him to tell Vladek's story while rejecting many of the narrative conventions central to other accounts of the Holocaust. Readers learn at the beginning of the first volume that Artie has come to visit in order to record Vladek's story for a book he is writing. This apparent reconciliation is hardly a smooth one, however, as Vladek repeatedly tells Artie not to include information that is, however, present in the book. Artie does not allow his father the space to process the events he has witnessed, but chooses instead to judge his actions. Volume I closes, for instance, with Artie calling Vladek a murderer for choosing to burn Anja's diaries.

Artie also refuses to portray his father as a heroic, selfless survivor of disaster; rather, he fights with him over his miserly ways and commiserates with his second wife, Mala, over Vladek's poor treatment.

Maus's groundbreaking qualities exist in both its approach to Holocaust history and its role in bringing increased critical attention and literary respectability to the graphic novel. Spiegelman has noted that he chose his drawing style and animal characters in reference to the anti-Semitic cartoons included in Nazi magazine *Der Stürmer*, which portrayed Jews as rats, as well as period films that contrast portraits of the Nazis as perfectly proportioned human beings with Jews living in crowded, dirty ghettos. He also cites his childhood viewing of Mickey Mouse, Tom and Jerry, and Krazy Kat as inspiration for his characters, though the stark drawings also recall newsreel footage of survivors staring through the barbed-wire fences of concentration camps. The book acknowledges its own artistic lineage in several ways: it includes "Prisoner on the Hell Planet," a 1972 comic whose human characters attempt to deal with the aftermath of Anja's suicide; it confronts the guilt produced by the first volume's commercial success; and it acknowledges its author's individual limitations. Spiegelman's use of sources from popular culture, politics, and personal life makes *Maus* not only an essential intervention in Holocaust studies but also a testament to the powerful historical work of graphic narratives.

Selected Bibliography: Chute, Hillary. "'The Shadow of a Past Time': History and Graphic Representation in *Maus*." *Twentieth Century Literature* 52(2) (Summer 2006): 199–230; Geis, Deborah R., ed. *Considering* Maus*: Approaches to Art Spiegelman's "Survivor's Tale" of the Holocaust*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003.

Jennifer D. Ryan

McCLOUD, SCOTT (1960–). Born Scott McLeod in Boston, Massachusetts, comic book writer, artist, and theorist McCloud is best known for his attempts to understand the comics art form and reshape the comic book industry. In 1982, McCloud received his BFA in illustration from Syracuse University and took a job in the production department at **DC Comics**. While at DC he began working on his own original comic, *Zot!* Eclipse Comics published the first issue of *Zot!* in 1983 and the series ran for 36 issues. *Zot!* won the **Jack Kirby** Award for Best New Series in 1985 and McCloud received the Russ Manning Award for Most Promising Newcomer.

McCloud wrote the first draft of the Creator's Bill of Rights for a 1988 summit of independent comics creators. The document articulated rights—such as full ownership of creations, return of original artwork, and equitable sharing of profits from creative work—that had not generally been granted to creators by the mainstream comic book publishers.

McCloud's fame within and far beyond the comic book industry began in 1993 with the publication of *Understanding Comics*, a nonfiction graphic novel that presented his theories about the inner workings of the comics art form. It is an ambitious work

that, in addition to providing a definition, history and vocabulary for understanding comics, attempts to explain visual communication, symbol use and the artistic process. *Understanding Comics* almost immediately became the most important work in the comics studies field and continues to profoundly influence the work of comics creators and scholars. The book won the industry's two leading awards, the **Eisner Award** and the **Harvey Award**, and was widely and favorably reviewed in the mainstream media.

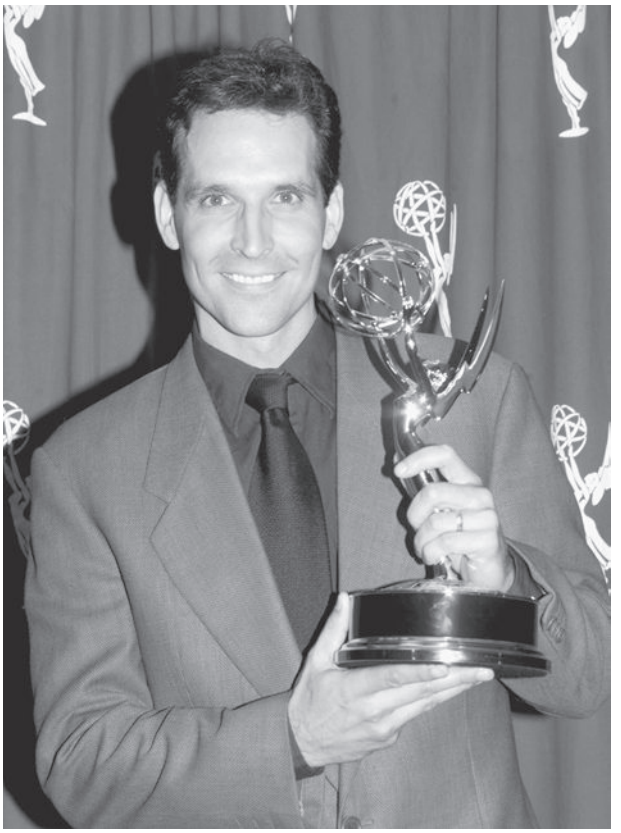
In 2000 McCloud followed-up with *Reinventing Comics*, his manifesto, in comics format, about how the comics industry needs to evolve. He was already well-known in the online comics community as a pioneer and promoter of web-comics, but his enthusiastic portrayal of a digital future for comics in *Reinventing Comics* made McCloud a guru in the web-comics community. McCloud's trilogy of theory in comics form was completed in 2006 with the publication of *Making Comics*, a how-to book for aspiring comic book creators.

The concepts in these works have captured the imaginations of diverse audiences beyond the comics industry and garnered McCloud invitations to speak at Harvard University, Microsoft, The Smithsonian, Pixar, and many other venues. He has been a consultant on projects at a number of institutions, including The National Cancer Institute, The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, and The Xerox Palo Alto Research Center. In 2008 he created a 38-page comic to introduce Google's "Chrome" browser.

Even after he began to establish himself as a theorist, McCloud continued to create comics. In 1997 and 1998 he scripted issues #2 through #13 of DC's ***Superman*** *Adventures*. Also in 1998, McCloud's first attempt at computer-generated artwork, *The New Adventures of Abraham Lincoln*, received lukewarm, or worse, response from fans and critics. McCloud accepted a couple of more assignments from DC, including script and layouts in 2004 for the three part prestige series *Superman: Strength*, but after the 1998 launch of his ScottMcCloud.com Web site most of his comics output has been in the form of web-comics, including *Zot! Online* beginning in 2000. As of this writing, McCloud is at work on a new graphic novel with the working title *The Sculptor*.

Randy Duncan

McFARLANE, TODD (1961–). Originally from Calgary, Alberta, Canada, McFarlane made his artistic debut in American comics in *Coyote* #11 in 1985 for **Marvel Comics**. Soon after, he also began working for **DC Comics** on the series *Infinite Inc.* His continued success led him to add work from both ***Batman:*** *Year Two* and ***Incredible Hulk*** to his portfolio. His significant rise to the top came when he began drawing *The Amazing* ***Spider-Man*** in 1988. Here, McFarlane would craft the famous nemesis, Venom, and with his growing popularity, would be given the opportunity to both write and draw his own *Spider-Man* series in August, 1990. The debut issue sold over 2.5 million copies; the best-selling issues at the time and still one of the best-selling issues of all time.



Animator and executive producer Todd McFarlane poses with Emmy award he won August 28, 1999 at the Primetime Creative Arts Emmy Awards in Pasadena for Outstanding Animated Program for *Todd McFarlane's Spawn* on HBO. © Rose Prouser/Reuters/Corbis

McFarlane took a hiatus from Marvel in August, 1991. By early 1992, he left Marvel altogether to form **Image Comics** with Erik Larsen, **Jim Lee**, Rob Liefeld, Whilce Portacio, Marc Silvestri, and Jim Valentino. Under the new organization, the artists kept the rights to their intellectual properties. As both writer and artist, McFarlane launched ***Spawn*** as his first project launched through Todd McFarlane Productions, his production studio under Image Comics. *Spawn* #1 sold approximately 1.7 million copies, the highest single-issue sale for an independent publisher to date. After the first seven issues, McFarlane brought on additional writer talent while he continued on as artist. In 1994, McFarlane oversaw the **Spawn**/Batman crossover with DC Comics; which was part of the fanfare to drive comic speculation and sales that dominated the 1990s.

McFarlane sought the maximum potential for his intellectual properties. His creation of McFarlane Toys in 1994 provided him a range of merchandizing opportunity for his properties including toys, clothing, and other goods featuring Spawn. This company also picked up other properties to sell merchandise for including *Akira*, *Alien*, KISS, Metal Gear Solid, and *X-Files*. By the end of the 1990s, McFarlane Toys has become a powerhouse within the toy industry. While continuing his work with Image Comics, in 1996, McFarlane also opened McFarlane Entertainment, the film and animation studio which would work with New Line Cinema for the feature film adaptation of *Spawn* (1997) and with HBO for the animated series *Todd McFarlane's Spawn* (1997–99). *Spawn* was also turned into a Japanese **manga** series, *Shadows of Spawn* (1998–99).

McFarlane's legacy comes not just from his establishment of Image Comics and a new business model for the creators of comics; he also stood ahead of the curve in terms of marketing his intellectual properties in numerous venues, leading the way for major players such as Marvel and DC Comics.

Selected Bibliography: Khoury, George et al. *Image Comics: The Road to Independence*. TwoMorrows Publishing, 2007; Vaughan, Kenton, Dir. *Todd McFarlane—The Devil You Know*. DVD. New York: New Video Group, 2002.

Lance Eaton

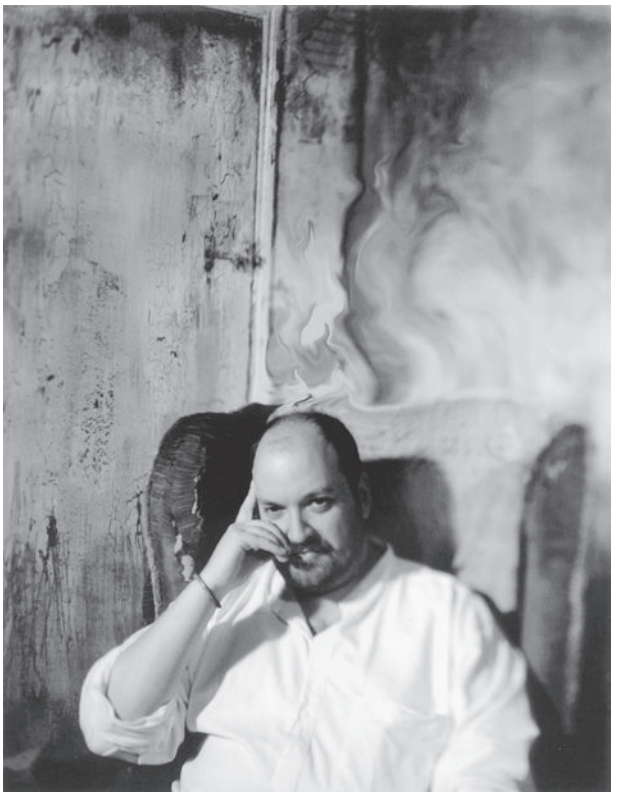
McKEAN, DAVID (DAVE) (1962–). Dave McKean has been a professional illustrator, sculptor, comic book artist and writer, videographer, filmmaker, and musician. After graduating from Berkshire College of Art & Design in 1986, he traveled to New York seeking work. Failing to find work in mainstream comics, McKean illustrated **Neil Gaiman**'s *Violent Cases* in 1987, beginning an ongoing collaboration. After work on ***Hellblazer*** and ***Black Orchid*** (again with Gaiman), McKean began creating covers for Gaiman's seminal series ***Sandman.*** Often manipulated photographs or collages and incorporating digital art in the latter half of the 75-issue run, these covers had a number of distinctive characteristics. The title character was almost never on the cover. The title itself did not always appear bannered atop the cover. Objects from nature (leaves, insects, fish) were often collaged into cover images. Despite these irregular aspects, or possibly because of them, the covers were a popular aspect of *Sandman*.

In 1989, McKean illustrated **Grant Morrison's Batman** story, ***Arkham Asylum.*** Expanding on the ideas **Frank Miller** alluded to in ***The Dark Knight Returns***, *Arkham Asylum* was an exploration of the nature of madness, using the Batman/Joker relationship as a vehicle to examine concepts of sanity. By creating visual analogues specific to each inmate's madness, McKean reinforced Morrison's taut script.

McKean's work draws to mind the chaotic and aggressive style of Ralph Steadman, though the comic artist most often mentioned as similar to McKean is **Bill Sienkeweicz**. This comparison plays out strongly in McKean's 496-page opus ***Cages.*** Completed between 1980 and 1996, the 10-issue series was collected in a single volume by **Kitchen Sink Press** in 1998 and republished by NBM in 1992. McKean's fluid lines and gracefully distorted figures evoke comparison to European comic masters, notably Lorenzo Mattoti.

As of this writing, McKean has illustrated Tarot decks, over 100 CD covers, over 50 book covers, and 20 children's books, 4 of which were written by Gaiman. He has illustrated or contributed to over 30 different graphic novels. Of these, Gaiman wrote four, exclusive of *The Sandman* series. Two others were based on specific rock albums: *Rolling Stones Voodoo Lounge* (art and script by McKean) and *Alice Cooper: The Last Temptation*. McKean collaborated with Cooper on the CD cover and booklet.

McKean's interest in music extends beyond the visual. A jazz/blues pianist and singer, he occasionally performs publicly at conventions. McKean owns his own record label, *Feral Records*, with saxophonist Iain Ballamay. As a videographer and filmmaker, he has collaborated with Buckethead and Bill Bruford. A DVD compilation of his short films, *Keanoshow*, was released in 2008. He contributed design ideas to two of the Harry Potter films. McKean directed the feature film *Mirrormask*, scripted by Gaiman.



Dave McKean, contemplating his direction of the 2005 film *MirrorMask*. Columbia Pictures/Photofest

McKean has worked as a graphic designer for corporate clients including Sony. He won the Alph-Art, Pantera and **Harvey Awards** for *Cages*, best film awards from four European film festivals for *Mirrormask*, and an **Eisner Award** Best Publication Design.

See also: Sandman, The

Selected Bibliography: McKean, Dave. *Dust Covers: The Collected Sandman Covers*. New York: DC Comics, 1997, http://www.davemckean.com.

Diana Green

MEMOIR/SLICE-OF-LIFE THEMES. The term memoir or slice of life describes a form of story that many see as a recent innovation in graphic fiction, concentrating on the realistic details of everyday life rather than the spectacular and fantastic worlds that are often associated with comics. These works offer experimental, novelistic aspects of the medium, explore long and often harsh realities of life and human nature, and inhabit profound, shocking, and disturbing corners of the human experience. Paul Gravett calls them stories that "turn the personal and specific into something universal and inclusive" (20). In reality, slice of life comics existed at the medium's inception.

One of the first comics, *The Yellow Kid*, could be seen as the first slice of life cartoon. *The Yellow Kid* was a doppelganger for the public mentality, silly, violent, quickly entertained, and easily patronized; the kid was a stand-in for New York's teeming immigrant, semi-literate, worker population, the new America of century's end. R. F. Outcault's character first appeared in 1894 in a few cartoons before he became the star of *Hogan's Alley* in Joseph Pulitzer's Sunday edition of his newspaper, *The New York World*. The University of Virginia American Studies Web site lauds Outcault as "present(ing) a turn-of-the-century theater of the city." Speaking in a strange sort of criminal argot of the poor, the Kid caused a sensation. His shirt itself constituted the word balloon for the comic strip and often his messages straddled social commentary and naked advertisement. Holding a record player he said, "listen te de woids of wisdom wot de phonograff will give yer." His pidgin English expressions, his long draping

body sweater/nightshirt, and his Charlie Brown bald hair style (used by the poor to combat lice) made him the darling of the lower classes, giving them a champion and commentator.

Winsor McKay's strip *Little Nemo in Slumberland* (1905–14), while purporting to be a pure fantasy of a child's evening nocturnes, explored the psyche of childhood desires. Nemo would indulge in a fantasy world of eating, playing, and ice skating. McKay's later *Dream of a Rarebit Fiend* (1904–13), explored the fantasies of adults (city life, stock market, subways, etc.) in a similar fashion. When the comic book began to achieve popularity in the 1930s, real societal issues and personal autobiography quietly crept into the publications. Paul Gravett described comics' popularity as "a secret retreat from parents and siblings, a private way of facing fears and fantasies, (and) a trove of big important tales to read over and over" (20). **Joe Shuster** and **Jerry Siegel** were two immigrant kids with dreams of merging into the great melting pot of American society and gave their character **Superman** their same hopes and ambitions. Superman was an immigrant who had lost everything, including his native homeland, his family, and his identity to come to the United States. It was hard for readers to tell where Superman's fiction ended and their truth began. Superhero creators did not neglect real world problems. **Jack Kirby** and **Joe Simon** evoked their own experiences in World War II in their ***Captain America***, *Guardian*, and *Fighting American* superhero strips. Even before his later graphic novels, **Will Eisner**'s long running ***Spirit*** comic strip dealt with inner city squalor, tenements, and society's refuse. Often *The Spirit* was only a supporting character to more complex urban tragedies. Eisner portrayed life's losers with sensitivity and emotional complexity. The post-war Noir period signaled a decline in **superheroes** and a new interest in **romance**, **war**, and **horror**. Returning veterans, as well as comics, had to face the complexities and anxieties of post-war life at home. **EC** Comics used suggestive metaphors and featured stories of **zombies**, cannibalism, and vampirism arguing that the post-war society was filled with predatory forces. Rampant consumerism, unemployment, and higher prices were fears and worries of the postwar recession. Even optimistic space adventures like **DC**'s *Mystery in Space*, reflected new fears about exploration and unconquered worlds.

By the 1960s, the counter-culture was producing **underground and adult comics** that ridiculed conventional society, and was experimenting with autobiographical motifs. **Robert Crumb** used the vehicle of the comic format to discuss the drug culture, but also a cynical and insightful attitude towards his own life. However, it was Justin Green's ***Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary*** that boldly moved into pure autobiography in 1972. Green exposed his complicated guilt about religion and the obsessive compulsive disorder that governed his life. He would dream of women's underwear and nuns without their habits. He conflated his sexual desires and neuroses with his upbringing in a religious school. He agonized about his lusts and felt that his natural human urges were horrific sins. He fantasized about his punishment before the nuns. Others, such as like **Art Spiegelman** and Crumb were emboldened to go further and make their own life stories the center of the their comic world.

Though much of Crumb's early output was episodic in ***Zap***, *Hup*, ***Weirdo***, and other venues, his tales regarding the women in his life were eventually anthologized in the full-length collection, ***My Troubles with Women***. In this album Crumb explored his own obsessions with women, starting with his pre-fame days where he idealized women as an unattainable goal and wrote strips like "Footsy," subtitled, "the true story of how I became a teen-age sex pervert." He admits, "but, I've been lucky—oh so lucky! A few of these wondrous beings have allowed me to have my way with them." This declaration is followed by a typical Crumb image of Crumb glomming on to the leg of an Amazon woman of gigantic proportions. Crumb's images go beyond realism to grotesque caricatures featuring his exaggerated eyes, hideous glasses, an anemic body and a lecherous expression. He writes, "my whole trouble with women is that I'm too much into 'em." Yet Crumb's narrative progresses beyond lecherous infatuation with the female form. Crumb becomes famous and has his fill of women and his fetishes. He writes about one conquest, saying, "she's cute but we're just two sweaty animals going at it, like cows or pigs." Readers are continually reminded of Crumb's low self-esteem, his humor, and his honesty about himself; but Crumb has a wider vision, maturing and growing beyond his mere lusts. He marries Arline, his soul mate of sorts, and becomes a father. Still, his puzzling relationship with women continues. He has a mid-life crisis and writes and draws ironically about his failure to work. He reemerges with "Arline and Bob," a strip about domestic life and the manner in which his young daughter Sophie dominates his life in the same manner women dominated his life before. Only now, Crumb, instead of being dominated by his urges, is dominated by his daughter's urges, whims, needs, and phobias. In the strip, he describes his bouts of depression, sitting in bed, and moping about his life. He then shows his wife Arline the finished midlife strip, and she threatens to cry if he does not draw her in a more flattering manner. Even when happily married and a family man, Crumb still has female troubles.

As the **Comics Code** began to lose its censoring force in the 1970s, more adult comic experiments began to arise. Eisner produced the dark but deeply moving ***A Contract with God*** stories in 1978. Eisner's novelistic depiction of 1930s Jewish tenement life in the Bronx at 55 Dropsie Avenue featured edgy portrayals of people left in a rundown apartment dwelling. Eisner never calls these tales directly autobiographical, but they clearly are derived from his life experiences. There is a cast of losers and wannabes including a pedophile superintendent; a greedy little Lolita child who steals the super's money and kills his dog; a gigolo addict; a broken-down opera diva; a secretary who vacations in the country and dreams of a wealthy husband; and Willie, a young man who loses his virginity to a worldly older woman.

Other comics took a more intellectual view of nonfiction material. **Scott McCloud** chose to talk about the comics medium and explain how the combination of words and pictures was a unique art form. In his seminal, *Understanding Comics* (1993), he explained how comics were a part of his own life and how the comics form has altered how we see the world. McCloud, posing in the comic as narrator and pivotal spokesman for the medium, suggests that the comic medium is a pivotal piece of society's mythic

structure. He sees comics as all-American art form, and like a documentary filmmaker he takes readers behind the scenes, explaining everything from panel structure, to point of view, to styles of comics. Autobiography, comics history, and technique have strangely merged in McCloud's life. Having published several comics explaining the medium, the way he has drawn himself (literally) into the medium has made his life a part of the form he describes.

More often than not, autobiographical comics tell common tales of individual lives, and while earlier autobiographical works of Robert Crumb, Justin Green, and **Harvey Pekar** broke taboos about sex and perversion, later memoirs dealt with simpler slice of life issues portrayed in compelling images and poetic writing. Craig Thompson's graphic novel ***Blankets*** (2003) explores a young man's coming of age in a deeply religious community. In the lengthy narrative, the protagonist begins to question the assumptions of his religious foundation. He falls in love and experiences his first romance, breaking from his religious and family beliefs and tentatively charting a new course for his life. He explores the difficult territory of self-discovery and experiencing a larger world than his origins. Not only is the subject matter adult in the most novelistic way, but Thompson's work treads a fine line between traditions and innovation. Thompson draws in a regular traditional comic style, with wide-eyed characters and gangly cartoon bodies. However, these characters are not caricatures or superheroes, but normal people with small flaws and mild expressions. Thompson's pacing emulates real life and events unfold slowly. His parents enforce a strict church doctrine in his family household, but the adolescent Thompson slowly grows to see a larger world by visits to church camp. There, theoretically, the attendees are to become more devout, but many of the kids go just to escape the watchful eyes of their controlling parents. In one scene, the other students make fun of Thompson for reading his Bible, and he even prays to God to forgive his peers for ridiculing him. More touching is his burgeoning relationship with the kind and good-hearted Raina, a girl he meets at the church camp. Their closeness and growing understanding awaken his passion and normal degree of teenage lust, but Thompson is deeply conflicted about his feelings. Is this temptation or real love? If Raina is a Christian too, than why would she want to have a physical relationship instead of abstinence? Thompson wrestles with his sexual identity and his pangs of first love in an often amusing, confusing, and heartbreaking way that all people who were adolescents remember and ponder in later life.

Some comics blur the lines between fairytale and reality. J. M. DeMatteis and Jon J. Muth's epic fairy tale *Moonshadow* (1985–87) tells the story of a young enchanted boy coming of age among a host of quirky acquaintances. Along the way he sees his mother die, experiences other losses, and grows to maturity. Tinged with elements of philosophy and folk wisdom the story has resonances in our everyday world. When Moonshadow's mother is murdered, he goes to see a slimy funeral director. "Unkshuss talked: I listened. He proposed: I agreed. He billed: I paid." DeMatteis's fantasy world of strange journeys and odd friends is much like Crumb's real world of hollow dreams and faint ambitions, tinged with the stuff of reality. Danny Fingerroth argues that

DeMatteis expresses "a disarming conviction of man's potential and the beauty to be found in life" (94).

Marjane Satrapi's ***Persepolis*** (2003–5) tells the story of her childhood and growth in modern Iran in the time after the Shah and during the blooming power of Islamic fundamentalists. She is shaken by fearful childhood experiences that are described with simplicity but with dark and rich resonances. At one point she is accosted by a league of women fundamentalists who want to report her to the local police for not wearing the traditional women's veil. She cries and lies her way out of prosecution, but it is a frightening, embarrassing experience that terrifies her. She has an uncle who is accused of crimes against the Islamic revolution, and he is to be put to death. He has a choice of one visitor and he requests young Marjane be that one guest. It is an awesome responsibility for a little girl, but she is brave and hugs her uncle. He calls her "the star of his life" and the little girl he wished he had. After his death, the papers write "Marxist spy punished." However, Satrapi's story is not mournful or self-pitying. Bad things happen to people she loves. A neighbor next door is bombed and her playmate is killed, buried in the rubble. She is given a chance to escape at the end of the autobiography's first volume, but she cannot leave her family for fear she will never see them again. It is a simple and moving account of a little girl who wants nothing more than to be left at peace, to play Madonna records, and to be free of war and internal spies.

Not all graphic experiments in nonfiction are such personal tomes. Some like Larry Gonick's *A Cartoon History of the Universe* (1990) seeks to tell a massive story, literally the history of the universe from the Big Bang to the present in a quirky and irreverent way. Gonick is neither a defender or denier of any religious or philosophical view, but he plants them all in the story of man's rise. People, dinosaurs, and mammals are shown full of energy and individualism. His story of King Saul and David is typically funny. Saul's daughter, Michal wishes to marry David and Saul sets an impossible condition. "She's yours—If you bring me 100 foreskins of the Philistines!" David's reply, "No problem." Gene Kannenberg writes that it is an "irreverent, but informative and alternative way of delivering a history lesson packed with quirky facts" (74). Gonick places the dinosaurs and man's precursors on an equal footing, and he has fun with the writers of the Bible and the Greeks, who are by turns inspired and mired in their beliefs and philosophies. In any event the rise of civilization is chronicled with humor and a wise eye towards man's many foibles. While not strictly a memoir, it is one man's quirky view of our cultural history.

Bryan Talbot's ***Alice in Sunderland*** (2007) is an encyclopedic journey into the world of *Alice in Wonderland*, the life of Lewis Carroll, and the town of Sunderland, England, as well as a macrocosmic view of the world and history. Talbot makes remarkable connections between the bizarre, the coincidental, the cosmic, and the minor. The parallels in the life of writer, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (Carroll), his trip down the rabbit hole with Alice, and the larger vision of the world of Carroll and the economic, political, and social events since his era are intertwined. It would be easy to write Talbot off as a strange eccentric with a gift for seeing conspiracies and connections that others cannot

envision, but Talbot has a larger agenda. He is seeking to make a visual codex to the work of Carroll and tie that motif and text to the events of the next hundred years and illustrate the inextricable links between seemingly unrelated events. Danny Fingeroth explains, "He immerses you in history, not just that of Alice and Carroll, but also of England, America, religion, entertainment (including comics), war, disease, birth, death and everything inbetween" (67).

Nick Bertozzi's *The Salon* (2007) is a more limited cultural experiment in history and art but no less exciting than Talbot's gambit. Bertozzi writes about the period of early 20th-century modern art with Picasso, Satie, Braque, Gertrude Stein, Edward Muybridge, and other vibrant personalities existing in turn of the century Paris. He places this remarkable, complex time in the frame of a murder mystery; a mysterious lady in blue paint is killing off avant-garde artists, and Georges Braque, his lusty friend Picasso, the Steins and Gertrude's paramour Alice B. Toklas have to find the cause and murderer or risk the same end themselves.

Spiegelman's ***Maus*** (1986) was a creative experiment that made autobiographical comics not only respectable, but profound. Spiegelman tells the desperate story of his father, Vladek, a concentration camp survivor, but in an unconventional way. Rather than simply another holocaust memoir, he wanted to illustrate the story using the holocaust images to explore ideas about humanity and inhumanity. In his tale, the Jewish people are allegorically portrayed as Mice, the Polish as Pigs, and the **Nazi** oppressors are viewed as cats. This dark metaphorical structure not only produces a view of racism, it uses the comedy structure of Disney cartoons to pointedly undercut and increase the drama. Comedic cats and mice are rarely equated with worldwide tragic events, but here, we are forced to confront the most horrific acts of man's depravity against man in the friendly and winsome guise of a cat-and-mouse cartoon. Reading *Maus* is disturbing for many, because while enjoying the tale, the reader feels guilt for obtaining pleasure from so much human suffering. To complicate matters further, Spiegelman's tale has a modern connection, since his father was a living character at the time and the adult Spiegelman struggles to understand his damaged parent within the comic. As a son, he cannot understand his father's incredible anguish as a survivor, and he consequently cannot comfort this parent who grew up under such extraordinary conditions. As is often the case, Spiegelman finds that those closest to a victim of tragedy can be the least understanding; the event is too close, too prescient, and too demanding for relatives to engage it. Spiegelman's novel shows the private face of suffering.

Daniel Clowes's experiments in the graphic novel format provide a humorous and often surreal lens to critique society. In his popular ***Eightball*** anthology series (1989–) from **Fantagraphics** books, Clowes was able to lampoon contemporary social conditions. Various stories have been revived in separate graphic novels. In *David Boring* (2000) he addresses the protagonist's sexual obsession with a perfect woman, being stranded on a desert island, and the apocalypse. *Like A Velvet Glove Cast in Iron* (2005) is Clowes's *Finnegans Wake*, a disturbed, modern Ulyssean/Kafkaesque journey where protagonist Clay Loudermilk seeks his lost wife, meets bizarre surreal characters, and undergoes

unsettling metamorphoses. In *Art School Confidential*, Clowes ridicules the pretentious world of art students and the pomposity of art education with wry observations such as, "the only thing of less value than one of your paintings will be your BFA diploma." Rocco Versaci argues that Clowes's "real intent is to explore the psychologies of the town's oddball citizens" (17).

Clowes is most widely known for ***Ghost World***, a series of short comic tales from *Eightball* translated into a successful 2001 film, which follows the seemingly aimless wandering (and wondering) of two urban, nomadic, post-high school teen girls who are looking for a meaningful role in life. M. Keith Booker describes Clowes's work as an exploration of "the alienation and ennui of postmodern youth," (87) and *Ghost World*'s teen protagonists are the embodiment of that condition. Enid Coleslaw is the outspoken, angry, punk misanthrope and her friend, Becky Dishwaller is the naïve puzzled cooler partner in their rambling, semiotic approach to the modern city. While Enid critiques boys, jobs, schools, and society, she is also lost and unhappy, stuck in the quagmire between adolescence and true adult life. Yet Clowes carefully removes the outer layers of polite camaraderie and analytically dissects contemporary intimacy between two girl friends that are nearly a singular consciousness. When Enid thinks she is accepted to school at Swarthmore it portends a monumental breakup for partners who have shared their most secret thoughts. When Rebecca complains that Enid does not want her along, Enid retorts, "it has EVERYTHING to do with you, you remember every little detail I wish I could forget"(74). Clowes strikes at the horrible burden of intimacy in a fragmentary society that values aloofness and alienation over any sense of community. *Ghost World*'s visual language underscores the banality and lack of reality of life in postindustrial America, making the girls' estrangement and confusion more plausible.

In *It's a Bird* (2004) writer Steven Seagle and artist Teddy Kristiansen take the figure of **Superman** and work it into a personal memoir of a character dealing with life realities. Seagle's protagonist, Steve, is a comic-book author offered the chance to write the *Superman* strip, which causes him to ponder the problems of omnipotence. His opening line is "what I think about most is the big red 'S'." Danish artist Teddy Kristiansen's work is extremely chilling, showing the influence of Fritz Lang's expressionistic *Metropolis*. Seagle's script plays off of that dark, almost monochromatic world, juxtaposing Kristiansen's dull coloring with the notion of a fantastic world of comic culture. Though Kristiansen's style is abstract, these people are not grotesques, just sympathetic flawed humans worthy of compassion. Seagle's Steve ponders Superman's might while dealing with disturbing family traumas. His father has gone missing, and he is haunted by the fact that he has a genetic propensity for Huntington's Disease, an incurable and fatal genetic condition. Instead of jumping at the opportunity of a lifetime, Steve balks at the idea becoming reticent and prickly. He thinks he cannot write Superman stories and lacks empathy with the character. He proclaims, "there's no access point to the character for me." Steve has watched his mother die, he fears marrying a long time paramour for fear of making more children with the fatal disease, and he fears for his missing father;

he feels anything but super. Seagle sees the massive gulf between puny human experience and the overwhelming cosmic-ness of an omnipotent character like Superman. *It's a Bird* brings the Superman myth to everyone, suggesting that the **man of steel** could make anyone feel inadequate.

It was fitting that one of the greatest innovators of comics, Will Eisner, ended his career on another inventive experimental work. In the late 1970s, inspired by underground comics telling personal tales, Eisner embarked on a series of autobiographical comic projects that illustrated his worldview. Even in *The Spirit*, Eisner purposefully sidelined his protagonist on occasion to focus on a totally inconsequential supporting character. In essence, Eisner was inserting alterative short stories into the superhero medium back in the 1940s; but in the aftermath of 9/11, surrounded by the rage of conspiracy stories and fears of foreign terrorism that haunted the United States, Eisner turned to an absurd and vile primal conspiracy theory that had haunted him his whole life, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This sham document, an obvious forgery created by anti-liberal repressive factions in the Tsarist government of Nicholas II, was intended as a conspiracy theory linking Jewish groups to a plot of world domination as a pretext/rationale for punishing Jews through a series of *pogroms*. Eisner wanted to uncover this conspiracy about conspiracies, and he used the formula he had honed so well in the 1940s, the character-driven mystery suspense tale that he had perfected in *The Spirit* to such superb effect, to explore the bizarre twists and turns in this fable. Here he begins with the tale of Maurice Joly, the French scribe who in 1864 created "The Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu." The work was a critique of Napoleon III and was intended to tarnish his rule and regime. It was used in the creation of the text of *The Protocols*. In 1921 *The London Times* did an expose revealing the absurdity of the document and dismantling its claims, yet it still persisted. In the story, Eisner is embodied by journalist Philip Graves, who seeks to know how the lies of the Protocols persisted so long and have continued to have such a negative effect. He asks a bookseller how such a weapon of mass deception could survive when "that document is shown to be a fake?" The bookseller calmly responds, "no matter people will buy it anyway . . . because they need to justify the conduct they may later be ashamed of."

Using the dependable mystery format, Eisner links the *Protocols* to the larger issue of peoples' fear of social change. Eisner grapples with the kind of conservatism that leads people to believe outrageous stories that support the status quo. Holocaust deniers, 9/11 deniers, and Iraq conspiracy buffs are all part of this unlikely crop of scenarios promoted as truth. Eisner also returns the graphic novel to its origins in didactic instructional materials explaining history and social behavior. Eisner's last work was a fitting end and summation of the graphic novel's progress, invoking novelistic, nonfiction, didactic, and graphic elements in one package.

Paul Gravett said that comics are important because "they are often the first pieces of fiction that a young boy or girl chooses for themselves"(20). Gravett thinks they help us build interior worlds. Rocco Versaci suggests that "we are drawn to others' lives out of the desire to connect with and learn from their stories" (76). What the

memoir/slice of life comic has achieved is to make graphic novels the full partner of other contemporary forms of literature and communication, both liberating the form from ghettoes of superheroes, adolescent fantasy, and crude illustrative styles and linking graphic storytelling to film, other media, and life itself.

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Stuart Lenig

MERCHANDISING AND LICENSING. Merchandising and licensing are twin industry practices that involve utilizing characters and stories created in one medium for the marketing of ancillary products. Licensing refers to the practice of selling or renting the rights to characters for use in other media (television, film, advertising), while merchandising is the sale and creation of products, such as toys, lunchboxes, or videogames, based on those characters. Licensing and merchandising have always been an important part of the American and Japanese comic book industries. However, as large media interests acquired publishers, and the number of media outlets expanded from the 1970s to the 1990s, licensing and merchandising became much more important in the American comic book industry.

Generally, two types of licensing have played roles in the comic book industry. In the first type, properties from other media (largely television and film) are licensed to comic book publishers who then produce comics based on the characters. This has been significant in the American industry since the 1950s. After the adoption of the Comics Code in 1954, Dell became the largest American publisher largely because it held the license to publish comics based on the Disney characters. Dell and its successor company, Gold Key, published many licensed titles through the 1960s, including comics based on such oddities as *The Beverly Hillbillies* television series and Disney's film version of *Swiss Family Robinson*. In this type of licensing, the comic books, produced as extra commodities to profit from the popularity of characters, are the merchandising.

The second type of licensing generally reverses this process. Comic book publishers license their characters to other companies. This process also has a long history in the industry. For example, **DC**'s iconic superhero **Batman** made his comic book debut in 1939; by 1943, the character was appearing in *The Batman*, a 15-episode movie serial. *Batman and Robin*, another serial, followed in 1949. From 1966 to 1968, the campy live-action *Batman* television series was a prime-time hit; it was also successful

in syndication through the 1970s and 1980s and spawned a feature film in 1966. In the 1970s, the character was featured as part of the *Superfriends* cartoon series. In 1989, Warner Brothers, by then the owner of DC Comics, released a darker, massively successful *Batman* film that was followed by three sequels over the next decade. The franchise was rebooted in 2005 with *Batman Begins*.

Each of these media appearances increased the visibility of the character, and expanded his appeal beyond comic books. Batman has become part of the larger American (and to a lesser extent international) culture; many people who have never read comic books can identify the character. This allows DC to license the character's image for a wide range of purposes, from common toys and juvenile clothing to more elaborate art and advertising uses. Successful licensing programs have generally increased the ability of comic book publishers to sell merchandise based on their characters.

In the United States, DC has long been the king of licensing and merchandising among comic book publishers. The company owns **Superman**, Batman and Robin, and **Wonder Woman**, the most widely known characters in the **superhero** genre. DC has relentlessly exploited their name recognition by using the characters in television and feature films. DC has long been part of larger media interests. It was purchased in 1968 by Kinney National Services, which purchased Warner Brothers film studio in 1969 and formed Warner Communications in 1971. Due to subsequent consolidation in mass media industries, DC later became part of Time-Warner, one of the largest international media conglomerates. Even though DC has generally trailed **Marvel Comics** as the largest publisher of comic books since the late 1960s, the company's media connections have ensured that its licensing efforts have been more lucrative.

Licensing and merchandising has also been an important source of revenue for Marvel. In 1969, Marvel's founder Martin Goodman sold the company to Cadence Industries, a conglomerate that used Marvel's characters to market some of their own products, such as children's vitamins. Under Cadence's control, Marvel also developed a substantial presence in television animation. In 1985, Cadence sold Marvel to New World Pictures for $46 million. Three years later, financial trouble forced New World to sell the company to financier Ronald Perelman. Perelman used Marvel's position in the comic book industry to buy companies that enhanced Marvel's ability to sell licensed products. Before it went into bankruptcy in 1996, Marvel had purchased trading card manufacturers, juvenile publishing interests, and part of Toy Biz, a toy company. Marvel financed some of the Toy Biz purchase by granting the company an exclusive, perpetual, worldwide license to make toys based on the Marvel characters.

Despite the fact that Marvel's value to both New World and Perelman clearly lay in licensable characters, the company has historically not been as successful as DC in developing their licenses. As late as 1985, Marvel derived only about eight percent of its revenue from licensing; In the same year, well before the wave of Batman products brought forth by the 1989 film, DC derived over 60 percent of its income from licensing. The success of the ***Spider-Man*** and ***X-Men*** film franchises at the beginning of

the 21st century brought considerable new licensing income to Marvel, and in 2005 Marvel Studios began producing its own films, rather then licensing characters or doing co-productions.

From the 1960s through the 1980s, DC and Marvel were the industry leaders in licensing, just as they were in comic book publishing. Other companies also licensed their characters, but they were less successful, partially because their characters were less valuable. By the late 1980s merchandising and licensing were the driving force behind the American comic book industry. In 1989, the Batman license alone contributed some $390 million to Time-Warner's bottom line. This was more money than was generated by the gross sales of the entire comic book industry.

In addition to the licensing success of the *Batman* film, two other developments in the 1980s brought new attention to the role of licensing in the industry. The first was the success of **Dark Horse Comics**, which began as a small independent publisher that published both creator-owned and company-owned titles. The success of some of these early titles gave the company enough capital to buy licenses from Hollywood films, initially *Aliens*, then *Predator* and *Terminator*. Dark Horse employed these licenses in all sorts of titles and combinations. Dark Horse's new connections in Hollywood also allowed the company to work licensing the other way; several Dark Horse comics, notably *The Mask* and *Timecop*, became feature films. By creating close connections with Hollywood, Dark Horse carved out a profitable niche doing both types of licensing. By the 1990s, much of the company's revenue came from publishing licensed *Star Wars* comics.

The second big development in comic book licensing and merchandising in the 1980s was the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Created by Peter Laird and Kevin Eastman in 1984 as a black and white independent comic, the turtles became a licensing goldmine. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, over $2 billion worth of turtle-related merchandise was sold. The runaway success of the turtles meant that the comic book industry began to be seen as a cheap way to develop profitable licenses.

Many of the comic book publishers that started up after 1990 were explicitly more interested in license creation than in publishing comic books. Video game publisher Acclaim video games purchased Valiant Comics in 1994 for $65 million and developed videogames such *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*, based on their comics' properties. Between 1990 and 1996, comic book publishers were founded by a number of media companies. The clearest attempt at developing licenses was Tekno Comics, which hired celebrities and fan favorite comics creators to develop concepts for comics such as *Leonard Nimoy's Primortals*. Tekno lost money and got out of comic book publishing in 1997, but not before developing some minor licensing agreements. Like Tekno, most of the other companies were short-lived in comics publishing.

While the possibility of a big licensing hit like the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* was slim, most comic book publishers actively pursued opportunities to sell their characters outside the medium in the 1990s, particularly for toys, feature films, and animated television. **Todd McFarlane**, one of the founders of **Image Comics**, licensed

his popular **Spawn** character for a feature film and an adult animated series. McFarlane also developed his own toy company, which he used to market Spawn and other action figures to both the traditional toy audience and adult collectors.

Merchandising and licensing revenue have often been at the center of disputes about creator's rights. **Jerry Siegel** and **Joe Shuster**'s many lawsuits with DC for the ownership of Superman, for example, were spurred by their recognition of the value of the character's licensing rights. While creators may have been reasonably (by industry standards, at least) compensated for the creation of comic books, they have often received no share of the far greater profits derived from the licensing and merchandising of characters they have created.

Mark C. Rogers

MIGNOLA, MIKE (1960–). Though his reputation rests largely on his role as the creator of the ***Hellboy*** series, Mike Mignola is a prominent artist and writer whose work has spanned several titles and characters. He is noted for his distinctive style, which **Alan Moore** once described as "German expressionism meets **Jack Kirby**."

Growing up in the Bay Area of California, Mignola developed an early passion for monster movies and horror novels, and concluded at an early age that he wanted to grow up to be a comic book artist. His initial entry into the comics industry was through a self-published fanzine called *The Comic Reader*. A graduate of the California College of Arts and Crafts, Mignola transitioned from fan to professional when he began providing covers and illustrations soon after his move to New York in 1982. A year later, Mignola got his first series work as the penciler for **Marvel**'s *Rocket Raccoon*. Following its success as a cult title, Mignola provided illustrations, covers and inks with his trademark style for ***Alpha Flight***, ***The Incredible Hulk***, and other **Marvel superhero** titles.

In 1988, Mignola left Marvel to work for their competitor **DC Comics**, which had begun to publish comics with the kind of sophisticated subject matter that appealed to Mignola, such as Alan Moore's ***Watchmen*** and ***The Dark Knight Returns*** by **Frank Miller**. His first contributions at DC were as artist on a *Phantom Stranger* miniseries and on *The World of Krypton*. During his tenure at DC, he was recognized as an accomplished artist, with a distinctly dark and shadowy style, which is evident on the covers for the ***Batman:*** *A Death in the Family* series. He also lent his Kirby-esque art for ***Gotham by Gaslight***, an alternative reality Batman series set in 19th-century Gotham that featured Jack the Ripper.

In 1992, **Dark Horse Comics** signed on for a comic book adaptation of Francis Ford Coppola's film, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and Mignola was hired to provide the inside illustrations. Later, Mignola, along with Miller, Art Adams, and **John Byrne**, went to Dark Horse and pitched a new imprint that featured characters—not merely the retelling of established stories. This finally led to Mignola's signature character, Hellboy. An orphaned demon who fights to save the world from evil, Hellboy formally debuted in 1994 in *The Seed of Destruction*, scripted by Byrne. Eventually Mignola took over writing duties as more Hellboy series were published.

While Hellboy can certainly be considered the most significant creation of Mignola's career, he has also been active in other endeavors. In 2001, he joined the production team for Walt Disney's *Atlantis: The Lost Empire*. The experience helped him when he became the concept artist for Guillermo del Toro's *Blade II*. During this time Mignola and del Toro forged plans to produce a live-action *Hellboy* movie. The project came to fruition when it opened in 2004 to both financial and fan approval—enough to warrant a sequel. Mignola went on to adapt a comic book one-shot for television, *The Amazing Screw-On Head*, about a mechanical head called to the rescue by President Lincoln.

In addition to enjoying worldwide popularity, Mignola has won eight **Eisner Awards** for his writing and illustrating work on *Hellboy*. While he continues to occasionally write and illustrate *Hellboy* issues, he has handed over the reins of the growing franchise to artists, including Ryan Sook and Derek Thompson.

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Richard L. Graham

MILESTONE COMICS. In 1993, the comics business in the United States was booming, and many new approaches were tested on the seemingly ever-growing audience. One of the most distinctive of these was Milestone Comics, a group of comic books published as an imprint of **DC Comics**, but set in a separate universe.

Behind the start of Milestone Comics stood Milestone Media, a group created in 1992 by the African American artists and writers Dwayne McDuffie, Denys Cowan, Derek T. Dingle and Michael Davis. McDuffie was the chief writer/editor and Cowan did all the initial character and other design tasks. Their reason for launching this initiative was in response to the way minority characters had been treated in American mainstream comics, either being included as token characters or simply not being included at all.

The origin story of the Milestone universe was a massive gang conflict, called "The Big Bang," which ended with the police using an experimental tear gas, killing many of the gang members and mutating the rest, giving them various super powers. This was the origin of the majority of the super-powered characters in the Milestone universe, often called the Dakotaverse after the fictional Midwestern city of Dakota in which most of the stories take place.

The first year of Milestone Comics saw the publication of four titles: *Blood Syndicate* by Ivan Velez, Jr. and Chriscross, *Hardware* by McDuffie and Cowan, *Icon* by McDuffie and MD Bright, and *Static* by Robert Washington III and John Paul Leon. The titles were, in effect, clever African American variations on mainstream **superhero** team comics, **Iron Man**, **Superman**, and **Spider-Man**, respectively. *Icon* included a distinctive female superhero, Rocket, as well as a hilarious parody of Marvel's **Luke Cage**, named Buck Wild. The response was good, both from readers and critics, and the following year another three titles were added: *Kobalt* by John

Rozum and Arvell Jones, *Shadow Cabinet* by Washington and Leon, and *Xombi* by John Rozum and Cowan.

When the whole comics industry went into a slump, Milestone similarly suffered. In 1995, they had to cancel some of their lowest selling titles, a trend that continued in 1996 despite the cross-over *Worlds Collide*, which included several major DC comic books, and a number of separate miniseries. Milestone finally shut down their whole comic book line in 1997, ending many of the books in mid-story.

In the aftermath of the closing of all the titles, Milestone Media kept going, mostly as a licensing company, and has had some success, such as the re-launching of the title *Static* in conjunction with the animated TV series *Static Shock*, which ran for 52 episodes between the years 2000 and 2004. A *Static* trade paperback was released in 2009.

In 2008, Milestone announced that the characters from Milestone Comics would be integrated into the DC universe, and this was initiated in 2009, beginning with the introduction of the Shadow Cabinet in the title ***Justice League of America***, which at the time was written by McDuffie, and adding Static to the roster of ***Teen Titans***.

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Fredrik Strömberg

MILLAR, MARK (1969–). Born in Scotland, UK, Mark Millar is a comics writer whose significant works include ***The Authority***, *Ultimates*, and *Wanted*. He has won multiple Eagle Awards amongst others. His work is characterized by religious themes, a polemical style and a postmodernist mix of superheroics and **satire**.

Millar's first comics work was for Trident Comics on *Saviour* (1989–90). During the next decade he worked on titles including *Crisis* (#31, 1989), *Judge Dredd Megazine* ("Red Razors" series 1991–95) *Sonic the Comic*, and *2000 AD* (including Thargs Future Shocks, Robo-Hunter, Tales from Beyond Science and Maniac 5, 1989–93). His work for *2000 AD* also involved the notorious collaboration with **Grant Morrison** on *Big Dave* (1993).

His work for **DC Comics** began to appear in 1994 with ***Swamp Thing*** (issues #140–71; issues #140–43 were co-written with Morrison) to great critical acclaim, although the title did not gain enough sales to avoid subsequent cancellation. He also published the miniseries *Skrull Kill Krew* with Morrison for **Marvel** in 1995. He subsequently continued working for DC on titles such as ***JLA***, ***The Flash***, and ***Superman*** *Adventures*.

In 2000 he took over *The Authority* for DC Wildstorm, but creative differences and delays led him to quit in 2001, although DC would subsequently publish his ***Elseworlds*** style one-shot ***Superman: Red Son*** (2003). His *Ultimate* ***X-Men*** was released from 2001 to 2003 for *Ultimate Marvel* and he also published *The Ultimates* (a new version of Marvel's ***The Avengers***) under this imprint from 2002 to 2007. To date, he has continued to work on titles for Marvel including *Marvel Knights* ***Spider-man***

(2004), *Ultimate* ***Fantastic Four*** (2004, 2005–6), ***Civil War*** (2006) a Marvel summer crossover that garnered exceptional sales, and *1985* (2008). His current work for Marvel includes *Wolverine* and *Fantastic Four*.

Millarworld, his creator-owned line, was launched in 2004, and is published by multiple, competing companies including Avatar, Top Cow, **Image Comics**, and **Dark Horse**. Titles published to date include *Wanted*, *Chosen*, *The Unfunnies*, *Kick-Ass and War Heroes*. *Chosen* is expected to continue publication under Image Comics as part of Millar's proposed trilogy *American Jesus*. A film version of *Wanted* was released in 2008, and *Kick-Ass* is currently being filmed by Matthew Vaughn, although Millar has said he has no interest in moving into the film industry.

Julia Round

MILLER, FRANK (1957–). Born in Maryland, Frank Miller is a comics writer/artist and film director whose significant publications include ***Daredevil***, ***Ronin***, ***Batman: The Dark Knight Returns***, ***Sin City***, and ***300***. He has won multiple **Eisner Awards**, Kirby Awards, and **Harvey Awards**. His work is characterized by realism and brutal themes, although he has come under attack for his patriotic politics, and has been accused of misogyny, exploitative violence, and homophobia.

Miller's first publication was *The Twilight Zone* #84 for Gold Key Comics in September 1978. He followed this with penciling jobs for both **DC** and **Marvel** comics. These included *Weird War Tales* #64 and #68 and *Unknown Soldier* #219 for DC Comics, and *Warlord of Mars* #18, *Spectacular Spiderman* #27–28, and multiple *Marvel Spotlight* and *Team-Up* titles for Marvel comics. He became best known for his work on the series *Daredevil*, which he began illustrating with #158 in 1979. His realistic and evocative depictions of New York brought new attention to the title, which moved from bi-monthly to monthly publication. Miller took over as writer and penciler with #168 in 1981, which also featured the first appearance of his popular character creation, Elektra.

Miller continued to write various *Daredevil* issues for Marvel in the 1980s and also published various works for DC, including the futuristic samurai six-part series *Ronin* (1983) and the four-part miniseries *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (1986), to great critical acclaim. *The Dark Knight Returns* was felt by many fans to be a reclamation of the character's original dark roots and was key in developing the trend for grim and gritty **superhero** comics at this time. Miller also published the origin story *Batman: Year One* (*Batman* #404–7) for DC in 1987.

In the late 1980s, Miller left DC due to a dispute over the proposed comics ratings system and distributed his work via Epic Comics (*Elektra Lives Again*) and **Dark Horse** (including *Hard Boiled*, *Give me Liberty*). His first completely solo work, the film noir-inflected series *Sin City*, was published by Dark Horse in 1991. Later in this decade Miller became one of the founding members of Dark Horse's Legend imprint, which would release the majority of *Sin City*. During this time Miller also published various *Daredevil* and *Elektra* comics with Marvel (including *Elektra: Assassin* (1986)



Author and Executive Producer Frank Miller on the set of the 2007 film *300,* directed by Zack Snyder. Warner Bros./Photofest

and *Daredevil: Man Without Fear* (1993) and contributed work to Image Comics (***Spawn***). In 1998 his graphic novel *300* was released by Dark Horse. In 2001 Miller released the three-part series *The Dark Knight Strikes Again* with DC, for whom he is also currently writing *All Star Batman and Robin* (2005–).

Miller's work has also been featured in cinema, where it often closely replicates the visual style and pacing of his comics. He co-wrote the movies *Robocop 2* (1990) and *Robocop 3* (1993), and also co-directed (with Robert Rodriguez) the *Sin City* movie (2005), with a sequel in production at the time of this writing. His solo directorial debut, an adaptation of **Will Eisner's *The Spirit*** (co-scripted by Eisner and Miller), was released in 2009. Movie versions of *Daredevil* (2003) and *300* (2007) have also been released based on Miller's stories.

Julia Round

MOEBIUS. *See* ***Giraud, Jean***

MOONEY, JIM (1919–2008). James Noel ("Jim") Mooney was born into a privileged New York family. He left high school before graduating in order to attend art class, and while there he got his first job illustrating a Henry Kutner story in *Weird Tales*. An extremely prolific artist whose career lasted from the 1940s into the 21st century, he was the signature artist of Supergirl in ***Action Comics*** from 1959 to 1968.

Other notable characters drawn by Mooney include **Batman**, **Spider-Man**, Tommy Tomorrow, The Legion of Super-Heroes, Man-Thing, Ms. Marvel and Omega the Unknown.

After losing their fortune, Mooney's family moved to Hollywood, California, where Mooney grew up. Seeing the success of comic books, Mooney hitchhiked back to New York where he drew The Moth for ***Mystery Men*** *Comics* in the early 1940. For a few short weeks Mooney then worked at the Eisner & Iger shop, but did not feel that his skills were sufficiently professional when compared to the studio's artists. During World War II, Mooney worked with **Stan Lee** at **Timely Comics** drawing **funny animal comics**. In 1946, Mooney applied for, and got, the job as the Batman artist (replacing Dick Sprang) on the basis of his Moth work (**DC Comics** had once sued him over its likeness to Batman). He especially enjoyed drawing the Bill Finger scripts. He would be with DC for the next 22 years.

During most of his tenure as the Supergirl artist (where he created Streaky the Super-cat), Mooney lived in Los Angeles and had a studio on Hollywood Boulevard. There he was able to do other artistic work and spend time with friends and fans. Mooney left DC Comics in the late 1960s and returned to **Marvel**, where he started inking **John Romita Sr.**'s illustrations for *Amazing Spider-Man* and ultimately would take it over before moving on to pencil and ink other Marvel series.

Relocating to Florida in the mid 1970s, Mooney focused on interior art pages rather than covers, as the location made it impossible to have the necessary editorial meetings. Although he worked in numerous genres and with many major characters, it was the quirky, non-mainstream comics and stories that Mooney enjoyed doing the most since they gave him an opportunity for greater artistic freedom. Man-Thing and Omega the Unknown were highest upon this list. Some five decades after Mooney became a professional artist he finally felt he came into his own in terms of his skill, considering *A Trip to Necropolis* (1989), and *Lakota: The Thunder Makers* (2007), both with writer Mark Ellis, to be his best works. The nickname "Gentleman Jim" (given Mooney by Stan Lee) was an appropriate moniker. Mooney was the consummate professional, extremely amiable and dependable, never late with his work, and able to tell a good story with clean, natural lines. He represents all the legendary comic book artists from the earliest days that saw what they did not as an art form, but as a job that was about entertaining the readers.

Jeff McLaughlin

MOORE, ALAN (1953–). Celebrated English comic book writer, best known for ***Watchmen***, one of the **adult comics** of the 1980s (along with **Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*** and **Art Spiegelman's *Maus***), which contributed to the rise of the graphic novel format. Moore came to the attention of U.S. publisher **DC Comics** with his work for **Marvel** UK, writing *Captain Britain*, and his work for **science fiction** weekly *2000 AD*, to which he contributed a number of twilight zone-style short stories, as well as the very popular *The Ballad of Halo Jones*. However, it was in the

short-lived rival to *2000 AD*, *Warrior*, that Moore had the most freedom, creating ***V for Vendetta*** and *Marvelman* (known as *Miracleman* in the United States). These dark, highly political stories highlighted the bleakness of Britain under the rule of Prime Minister Thatcher, with a brooding sense of dissatisfaction and a clear distrust of authority that indicated Moore's anarchist leanings. When recruited by DC Comics in the early 1980s, Moore was given the ailing ***Swamp Thing*** title. Here, his fascination with the arcane and the political was evident in his reinvention of Swamp Thing as gothic **horror** meets ecological parable. In these stories Moore introduced John Constantine, later to get his own title, ***Hellblazer***, a vehicle for Moore's interest in the occult. These comics became the backbone of DC's Vertigo line of comics for mature readers. Moore became renowned for his elaborate scripts and his ability to deconstruct generic clichés. *Watchmen* is the prime example. Intended as the last word on the **superhero** genre, Moore's complex and intricate story, with a literary handling of narrative, pacing and time, is perfectly matched by **Dave Gibbons**'s artwork, and actually rekindled interest in superheroes. Having become something of a celebrity in comics, Moore's success prompted the British invasion of U.S. comics, and he has been a huge influence on fellow British writers **Grant Morrison**, **Neil Gaiman**, **Warren Ellis**, and **Mark Millar**. DC bought *V for Vendetta*, which had been unfinished at the time of *Warrior's* demise, and Moore completed the story. This was, like *Watchmen*, hugely popular and critically acclaimed, as were his **Superman** stories, the last in the original Superman continuity before it was revised by **John Byrne**. His **Batman** story, ***The Killing Joke***, with artwork by British artist Brian Bolland, was even more celebrated. Building on this success Moore moved towards independent publishing, partly a desire to move away from superheroes but also because he felt ill-used by DC concerning the royalties from *Watchmen*. Moore turned his back on the mainstream to work on projects such as *A Small Killing*, with Oscar Zarate, *Big Numbers*, with **Bill Sienkiewicz**, ***From Hell***, with **Eddie Campbell**, and ***Lost Girls***, with Melinda Gebbie. The last two started in the short-lived *Taboo* magazine, published by Moore's own company, Mad Love. When these independent ventures failed, Moore returned to mainstream comics, despite his feeling that most publishers took advantage of creators. His decision to return was partly based on the fact that **Image Comics**, the new independent publisher, published only creator-owned comics. For Image, he wrote *1963*, a six-issue parody of Marvel comics, before working on **Jim Lee**'s *WildC.A.T.s* and Rob Liefeld's *Supreme*. Moore made the best of this, eventually producing his own ABC line of comics as part of Wildstorm, Jim Lee's company, which was itself part of Image. Highlights were ***Promethea*** and ***The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen***. In the meantime, *From Hell* and *Lost Girls* were completed and Moore published his first novel, *Voice of the Fire*. Several of Moore's comics have been made into Hollywood films, none particularly successfully, although *Watchmen* was a commercial success, and attempted to remain true to its source. Frustrated by such **adaptations** Moore has insisted that his name be removed from the credits of film adaptations of his work. Perhaps more than any other single writer, Moore has shown that comics are

a medium with enormous literary potential, while also using his writing to celebrate what makes comics powerful and unique—their ability to twist time and space together.

Chris Murray

MORE FUN COMICS. Originally titled *New Fun, More Fun Comics* was the first series published by National Allied Publications, Inc., the first of several companies that would eventually merge into **DC Comics**. Its first issue, cover dated February 1935, is often considered the first American comic of all-new material, although Dell's newspaper-ish 1929 series *The Funnies* arguably has a similar claim. National Allied publisher Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson was inspired by The Funnies and British weeklies, adopting the former's tabloid size along with stiffer covers.

The book shrunk slightly and changed its title to *More Fun* with issue #7. With issue #9 it joined National Allied's other title, *New Comics*, in the now-standard size and the word "Comics" was added to the cover (and in the indicia about a year later). Both titles would be bought at auction by ***Detective Comics***, Inc. after Wheeler-Nicholson was forced into bankruptcy. He had already lost his share of the purchasing company, originally a partnership between him and his printer. Afterwards, Nicholson was left only with a percentage ownership in his original title.

Notable early features include the debut of **Superman** creators **Jerry Siegel** and **Joe Shuster** on two series in issue #6. "Henri Duval" was short-lived, but "Dr. Occult" lasted 27 issues and is the oldest character still appearing in the DC universe. His run included one storyline with the character in a caped costume as a trial run for the still unpublished Superman. "Sandra of the Secret Service" was an unusual action feature with a female lead. "Wing Brady," the **Western** "Jack Woods," and "The Magic Crystal of History" were other long-running pre-**superhero** features. Another Siegel and Shuster feature, "Calling All Cars" (later "Radio Squad") ran for 80 issues, by far the longest of the early features. All stories in this period began at no more than one page in length, slowly growing as comic books diverged from newspaper strips. After DC purchased the title, most existing features were cancelled or moved to ***Adventure Comics*** and replaced by a new round of adventure and detective strips.

Superheroes, by then well-established in DC's other anthologies, entered *More Fun* in early 1940 with the Spectre and then Dr. Fate dominating the covers. By late 1941, Johnny Quick, **Green Arrow**, and **Aquaman** had been added, and during the early war years only one non-superhero feature remained. However, in 1943 the comedy feature "Dover and Clover" (twin detectives) replaced "Radio Squad." Dr. Fate and the Spectre exited soon after, but Superboy, one of the last major superheroes, debuted in issue #101.

With issue #108, *More Fun* became the first of DC's anthologies to switch away from superheroes, moving to an all-humor format. The superheroes moved to *Adventure Comics*, with the comedic hero Genius Jones coming to *More Fun* in return. The humorous adventure series "Jiminy and the Magic Book" was the last cover feature to be added, but the new direction was ultimately unsuccessful. In keeping with its

tradition of firsts, *More Fun Comics* became the first of DC's eight main anthologies to be canceled with issue #127, cover dated November 1947.

Henry Andrews

MORRISON, GRANT (1960–). Born and raised in Glasgow, Scotland, Morrison started his professional career in the late 1970s and early 1980s working for **DC** Thomson in Dundee, publishers of *The Beano* and *The Dandy*, while also working for independent comics such as *Near Myths*. At DC Thomson, Morrison wrote and drew issues of the **science fiction** comic *Starblazer*, before turning exclusively to writing. In the mid-1980s he started work for **Marvel** UK, writing short Doctor Who stories, and for the short-lived but very influential *Warrior*, which also featured work by **Alan Moore**. At Marvel UK, which mainly published licensed material, he wrote the Zoids script in ***Spider-Man*** *and Zoids*, turning a story about warring robot dinosaurs into an apocalyptic story about obsession and fate. This was far more than the story deserved, and was an indication that Morrison was ready to tackle a much more demanding project. The opportunity came when Morrison began work for *2000 AD*, creating their first **superhero**, Zenith, in 1987. This was an intelligent deconstruction of superhero comics, at a time when Moore's ***Watchmen*** had made such things extremely marketable, but this was not a cheap copy of *Watchmen*; rather it was about the occult, the apocalypse, and transformation, referencing the poetry of William Blake, and drawing on spiritualist Aleister Crowley, popular fashion and music, and a host of other eclectic sources. It was also about the influence of American comics on British comics, and was carried off with irony and precision, aided by stylish artwork by Steve Yeowell. Following the success of *Watchmen*, **DC Comics** started head-hunting new British talent, and Morrison was the obvious target. Morrison would eventually contribute to the new Vertigo line of adult comics produced by DC; however, his early work with DC saw him revamping second-rate superhero comics such as *Animal Man* and *Doom Patrol*, following a pattern established by Moore with ***Swamp Thing***. In *Animal Man* the story became a platform for Morrison's animal rights views, and ultimately twisted in on itself in a postmodern deconstruction of the comics form itself. Likewise, *Doom Patrol* became a surreal rumination on madness, disability and art that quickly caught the attention of readers, and soon it came under the Vertigo banner.

Never content to simply knock out genre fare, Morrison continued to make a name for himself with his strange vision of **Batman**'s world in the graphic novel ***Arkham Asylum***, with artwork by **Dave McKean**. At this time he was still producing work for the British market, including the controversial stories *St. Swithin's Day* and *The New Adventures of Hitler*, as well as a reworking of Dan Dare, simply called *Dare*. Morrison's most mature and personal work emerged in the mid-1990s, and included *Flex Mentallo* (1996), and arguably his most important project, ***The Invisibles*** (1994–2000). He also wrote the enormously popular **Justice League of America** series *JLA* (1996). Morrison continued to balance personal work with mainstream success, with *The Filth* (2002) and *We3* (2004) on one hand, and ***Marvel Boy*** for

Marvel and ***The Flash*** for DC, and has helmed several radical re-workings of major titles, notably *New* ***X-Men***. His run on *All-Star* ***Superman***, with artwork by Frank Quitely, produced some of the best Superman stories since the 1960s, and in his "Batman R.I.P." storyline, Bruce Wayne disappeared and later appeared to be dead. Beyond comics Morrison has become involved in writing scripts and treatments for films and computer games. He has written two plays and several short stories, many of which are collected in the anthology *Lovely Biscuits* (1999).

Chris Murray

MOTTER, DEAN (1953–). Dean Motter is an American designer, art director, and comic-book writer and illustrator. His first published work as a writer of comics was *The Sacred and the Profane*, printed in the **science fiction** anthology magazine *Star Reach* in 1977–78; he later revived this series in *EPIC Illustrated* (1983–84) in collaboration with artist Ken Steacy. Motter is most often associated with the character Mister X and the two noir-inflected ***Terminal City*** miniseries he wrote for the Vertigo imprint of **DC Comics**. Motter's Web site draws attention to his design work in comics, as Creative Services Art Director at DC Comics in the 1990s, and work outside comics on album covers and other commercial projects.

Motter was the first writer on the stories featuring Mister X, published by Vortex Comics beginning in 1984. He has scripted the adventures of the character for more than 20 years, including most recently another revival of the character for **Dark Horse Comics** (*Mister X: Condemned*). Motter also wrote the series *Terminal City* for DC/ Vertigo, drawn by Michael Lark, and wrote and drew the series *The Prisoner*, a comic-book follow-up tom the popular British TV show, also for DC. His *Batman: Nine Lives* (also illustrated by Lark and published by DC in their ***Elseworlds*** series) won the 2003 **Eisner Award** for publication design. Motter served as art director for DC in the 1990s, and has at different times headed up a design agency.

Mister X was a comic that followed the adventures of the titular architect as he tried to save Radiant City, an urban landscape that was driving its residents insane. X propounded the theory of "psychetecture, the theory that the very shape and size of a room could alter a person's mood or neuroses" (Motter, 77). X felt responsible because his designs for Radiant City should have fostered a utopia, but because corners were cut, the effect was instead to create a dystopia. The visual look of Mister X, bald head and round sunglasses and wearing a sharp lapelled black trench coat, made the character immediately recognizable, and early appearances were drawn by some outstanding talents, including the **Hernandez Brothers**, Ty Templeton, and Paul Rivoche. Later collaborator **Seth** developed a bold new style working on the book that built an artistic bridge to his work on *Palookaville* and elsewhere.

Motter's interest in the urban landscape recurs in much of his work, a significant element in his two *Terminal City* miniseries for DC/Vertigo as well as in his short-lived *Electropolis* book for **Image Comics**. In nearly all of his work, concerns of plot are sublimated to design; as the urban background increasingly dominates the frame,

foregrounded plots sometimes get lost in noir twists that never quite untwist enough to provide satisfying narrative resolutions. That said, Motter's work remains consistently interesting because of his focus on architectural design and forced perspectives, a signature style that is recognizably his as much as it is possible to trace its forbears.

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Matthew Dube

MUTANTS. The term "mutants" has been widely used in reference to mutated humans within genre fiction, particularly **science fiction** from the 1950s onward. It had sparse application in comics despite the growth of **horror** and science fiction comics in the 1950s. However, **Stan Lee**'s usage of the term in ***X-Men*** #1 (1963) to apply to humans whose superhuman powers naturally develop at puberty, has become one of the mostly widely used and recognized tropes within comics. While other publishers have used the term over the years, its current meaning within comics is predominately associated with **Marvel Comics,** and in particular their line of X-Men titles. Lee explained that his reasoning for creating mutants was to avoid repeatedly having to spend time on creating complex and new origin stories.

Though there is some speculation about previous uses of the term mutant prior to Lee, he first used and defined it in *X-Men* #1. In the first issue, the concept of mutants being the next step in human evolution is not directly explained, but the story's villain, Magneto, proclaims, "The first phase of my plan shall be to show my power . . . to make homo sapiens bow to homo superior!" This indicates a separate, higher species of humans with the nomenclature of "superior." Additionally, Professor X explains to the new student, Jean Grey, "Jean, there are many mutants walking the earth . . . and more are born each year." The observations of X and Magneto combined to serve as the foundation for explaining mutants as the next evolutionary step for humankind. Often, this evolution is identified in an "X-gene" that manifests at puberty in the form of a mutant power. However, in that first issue, before the word "gene" became well-known, Professor X simply explained to Grey, "You, Miss Grey, like the other four students at this most exclusive school, are a mutant! You possess an extra power . . . one which ordinary humans do not!! That is why I call my students . . . X-Men for Ex-tra power!" However, given that Professor X's parents worked on the nuclear bomb, there is some indication that this somehow became a catalyst for his mutant manifestation; or at least his parents symbolically represent the influence and relevance of the Atomic Age in mutant narratives.

Initially, Marvel gave mutants singular or a limited range of superpowers; essentially matching one superpower to each mutant. However, as Marvel expanded its universe and its cast of mutants, either current mutants' powers expanded or new characters were introduced with several mutant powers. For example, Jean "Marvel Girl/Phoenix" Grey was initially a mere telepath, but over the years she developed her telepathy further and became a vessel for the Phoenix Force. Some characters manifested multiple mutations, as in the case of Kurt "Nightcrawler" Wagner, who was blue, had three digits per appendage and had a tail, while also being able to teleport. Other mutants, particularly second generation mutants (mutants born of mutants or other characters with superpowers), often had several superpowers. Nathan "Cable" Summers and Franklin Richards are the best examples of these. Additionally, Marvel has hinted that first generation mutants have the potential to go through a second mutation, including Henry "Beast" McCoy, and Emma "White Queen" Frost. While mutant powers can vary significantly, the powers that reappear time and again in popular, strong, or influential mutants include: telepathy, telekinesis, increased healing abilities, superhuman strength, flight, and energy emission (in the form of blasts). Additionally, time-travel, though rarely a power with mutants, has often been central to many storylines among X-titles. While mutants epitomize evolution as the natural progression of humankind in most narratives, Marvel has gone further to explain that the Celestials, god-like beings who visited Earth in its infancy, actually altered human DNA, allowing for later manifestations of powers in both mutants and other super-powered people alike. This idea came to fruition in the series, ***Earth X*** (1999) and, while the series as a whole has not been accepted as part of Marvel's main continuum, this origin of mutant powers has not been completely rejected.

With more than 40 years of stories about mutants, several have emerged as the most powerful, influential or popular. Charles "Professor X" Xavier is not only one of the first mutants (and ultimately, the first Marvel mutant), he is the world's most powerful telepath. Despite occasional respites, he has led the X-Men as mentor, tactical, and field leader throughout most of their run. Although Scott "Cyclops" Summers has served as a leader of an X-team repeatedly since his creation, his influence and even power as a mutant is surpassed by his long-time lover and (currently) deceased wife, Jean Grey. Since joining with the Phoenix Force in *Uncanny X-Men* #100–1 (1979), she has continually challenged her colleagues, her enemies, and entire planets and solar systems. James "Wolverine" Howlett has had the staying power and popularity to rival all other X-Men with a continued success of ongoing and miniseries comic books, a movie, *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (2009), and several video games as well. His tough demeanor, mutant healing factor and adamantium-grafted skeleton have made him a popular antihero over the years, though his potential and power as a mutant have not been particularly more significant than many other mutants. Cable exhibits a similar motif as Wolverine, with cyborg limbs, a dubious moral code, and superior fighting abilities, but has the added bonus of being the temporally displaced son of Cyclops and having several mutant powers, including telekinesis and telepathy. Franklin Richard, the

child prodigy of Susan "Invisible Woman" Storm and Reed "Mr. Fantastic" Richards of the **Fantastic Four**, has been hinted at many times as the world's most powerful mutant and in certainly story arcs this has become true (*Onslaught*; *Earth X*).

Among villains, Erik Magnus "Magneto" Lehnsherr stands as the first and most-common mutant foe of the X-Men. He has organized mutant teams of his own and even established entire mutant colonies. While Magneto's role as nemesis has fluctuated over the years, Apocalypse is the villain that has continually been a threat to X-Men teams and mutants everywhere. Like Magneto, he seeks a mutant-dominated world, but unlike Magneto, he is nearly immortal and has been working towards the goal for thousands of years. Glimpses into the future reveal that his success would mean tremendous devastation for humans and mutants alike. Nathaniel "Mr. Sinister" Essex has teamed with both Magneto and Apocalypse over the years in trying to orchestrate the demise of the X-Men, as well as gaining more mutants for him to experiment with.

Dozens of series have been published over the years featuring mutants. Though most have been miniseries, a significant number of mutant-based ongoing series have survived over the years with various reincarnations or re-launchings. Most mutant series have focused on teams or groups rather than individuals, with *Wolverine* proving to be the only substantial and long-standing solo success. *The Uncanny X-men* has proved most successful with consistent publication since 1963. Launched in 1983, ***New Mutants*** had the staying power for 100 issues before transitioning into the title *X-Force*, which lasted over 120 issues. This series deals with a second generation of mutants who start as students at Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters in *New Mutants* and eventually strike off on their own under the leadership of Cable in *X-Force*. *X-Force* and *New Mutants* were revived as series in 2008 and 2009, respectively. Another spin-off series, *X-Factor*, appeared in 1986 and lasted until its 150th issue in 1998. This series focused on the original X-Men (Angel, Beast, Cyclops, Iceman, and Jean Grey) as they worked for the government to improve human-mutant relations and protect mutantkind. The series was revamped again in February, 2006, as a detective agency for mutants under Jamie "Multiple Man" Madrox. *Excalibur* served as the UK-based version of X-Men from 1988 to 1998, headed by Captain Britain, with a mixture of original mutants and expatriates from X-Men. This series has also been re-launched several times since its original run. The most erratic mutant-based title currently running is *Exiles*, which deals with a cast of ever-changing mutants who jump through the multiverse saving parallel Earths and entire universes from collapse. Though non-mutants occasionally make the team, the crux of membership contains mutants and the title itself suggests it is an "X-title."

In later X-titles and comics, mutants serve as a metaphor for outsider groups in general, but their initial stories in *X-Men* do not evoke a particularly strong theme of outsider status, beyond the typical "super-powered humans" model which certainly was not new within comics in 1963. Their focus in those early issues is to learn to use their abilities and to counteract those mutants who attack and attempt to rule over humankind. In that first issue, Professor X explains of mutants, "Not all of them want

to help mankind!! . . . some hate the human race, and wish to destroy it! Some feel that the mutants should be the real rulers of Earth! It is our job to protect mankind from . . . from the evil mutants." In those early issues, the X-Men are met with applause and admiration among humans. In *X-Men* #2, Angel is accosted by a group of teenage girls enamored with him, while Cyclops is thanked by a group of construction workers. Resentment and angst do not have a presence in the first few issues.

Magneto and the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants create much of the groundwork for alienation and antagonism between humans and mutants in issue #4, but the metaphor of mutant as representative outsider was still negligible. Human-mutant relations took a turn for the worse in *X-Men* #14 with the first appearance of the Sentinels, mutant-hunting robots created by Bolivar Trask. They would return in stronger new forms and larger numbers in the years to come. However, this issue revealed the strong antagonism and growing application of mutant as outsider narrative that mutant-related titles and stories have capitalized on ever since.

For much of the 1980s and 1990s, academics and fans have drawn parallels between mutants and various minority groups, especially in terms of ethnicity or sexual orientation. For example, some discussions have proposed Charles Xavier as the Martin Luther King Jr. of mutants with his utopian vision of peaceful human and mutant coexistence, with Magneto as the Malcolm X figure who believes mutants have to violently achieve their ends. In the *X-Men* movies in the 2000s, the language used to explain being a mutant corresponds to that of non-heterosexual identity, with scenes where teen mutants "came out" to their parents or parents tried forcibly to remove the mutant (homosexual) gene from their children.

The Sentinels became the first in a line of mutant hunters who capture or execute mutants for the protection of mankind, or at the behest of a villain. Over the years, they have gone through many transformations as different X-Men enemies (Bolivar Trask, Stephen Lang, Sebastian Shaw, Cassandra Nova, etc.)and have modified and re-launched against the X-Men or the mutant population in general. The repeated and haunting fear is the capture, enslavement, and eradication of mutants in a form akin to the Jews and other minorities in the Holocaust. In several story arcs, this fear is solidified when glimpses of the future reveal a world ruled by Sentinels, with mutants mostly dead or enslaved. This was best captured (and habitually returned to) in the storyline "Days of Future Past" in *Uncanny X-Men* #141–42 (1981). This genocide analogy was pushed further in *X-Men* #181 (1984) when the long-time adversary of mutant-kind, Senator Robert Kelly, began work on launching the Mutant Registration Act, a law requiring forced registration for all mutants and thereby marking them much like any exploited group in a society where genocide occurs. Although used sporadically in the comics throughout the 1980s and 1990s, it never developed much further on its own, but it did act as a prototype for the Superhuman Registration Act; a law that spawns the events in the major crossover series ***Civil War*** (2006).

Many other mutant-killers and hate groups have been created over the years to reinforce the theme of mutant as ultimate outsider and victim. In *Uncanny X-Men*

#210 (1986), the Marauders entered the scene as a group of hired mutant assassins killing the Morlocks and extracting the mutant DNA for their employer, Mr. Sinister, an archenemy of all X-teams. The Friends of Humanity serve as the stereotypical hate-group akin to anti-Semitic groups in the real world. Since their first appearance in *Uncanny X-Men* #299 (1993), they have continued to threaten, harm, and even kill mutants within the Marvel universe. Under guidance of the Reverend William Stryker, the Purifiers are a fundamentalist cult seeking to purify the human race of mutants by violent means. Though first appearing in *Marvel Graphic Novel* #5: *X-Men: God Loves, Man Kills* (1982), it has only been after the "House of M" saga that they have taken on a more prominent role in several X-titles.

Marvel has created many external and direct threats to mutants over the years, but in the 1990s, Marvel began experimenting with indirect mutant extermination. The first came in 1993 with the conclusion of the crossover series, *X-Cutioner's Song*. In the final scene, the Legacy Virus is unleashed in the world and shortly thereafter, Illyana "Magik" Rasputin becomes the first casualty. The Legacy Virus infected many mutants, both popular and unknown throughout the 1990s, until Marvel writers created a cure. The Legacy Virus served as an analogy for HIV/AIDS, playing on the fears of the general population about means of transmission and anxiety of groups typically associated with the disease. Within the Marvel universe, a cure was created for the Legacy Virus, but in order for it to take effect one mutant had to be infected and die; Peter "Colossus" Rasputin, brother of Magik, sacrificed himself to end the plague.

The second major attempt to limit or reduce the ever-expanding cast of mutants came in 2005 with impact of the "House of M" story arc. During the run of *New X-Men* in the early 2000s, mutants became less of a tiny, feared minority and more of a subculture that was becoming increasingly fashionable among younger people. Mutants lived openly, clustering in their own neighborhoods in cities such as New York. However, this took the X-Men away from their traditional focus, so "House of M" and "Decimation" were written to return to prior status quo. The story focused on the attempts of Pietro "Quicksilver" Maximoff to protect his catatonic sister, Wanda "Scarlet Witch" Maximoff, from Professor X and others who looked to kill the Scarlet Witch since her power of probability was causing significant rifts and catastrophes within the world. Before they can intervene, her powers reorder the universe into a world where homo-superiors reign over homo-sapiens. Led by Wolverine, a cohort of superheroes realizes the change and seeks out the leading and most powerful mutant family (Magneto's family) to correct the altered reality. In the ensuing battle and revelations, the Scarlet Witch returns the world back to the way it was with one exception; in what is referred to as the "Decimation," the world's population of mutants has been reduced to less than 200, with several major mutants being depowered, including Professor X, Magneto, Robert "Iceman" Drake, and Quicksilver. This arc allowed Marvel Comics to regain control and reconstruct X-titles continuity while also returning to some of the roots of alienated and feared outsider status.

Despite repeated hunts for and attempted elimination of mutants, there have been several places that mutants have congregated in large numbers over the years. Some of these places were refuges; other places served as exile. The most obvious has been the X-Mansion, the property of Professor Xavier in Westchester County, New York. In the post-House of M world, the X-Mansion becomes a sanctuary for mutants. Eventually, the mansion comes to be protected by the Sentinel Squad O*N*E, an elite group of Sentinels with human operators mandated to protect the surviving mutants. This dubious relationship is understandably questioned by many of the older mutants who have been subjected time and again to Sentinel attacks. The sewer tunnels of New York City serve as home to the Morlocks (*Uncanny X-Men* #169, 1983), a collection of mutants whose physical mutations prevent them from properly integrating into common society. Over the years, the Morlocks have faced repeated resistance, infiltration, and attacks from mutants and humans who seek to either control them or eradicate them. Though they are essentially disbanded after the effects of the Decimation, there is still some indication that they will regroup in the near future. For a brief time, Magneto establishes his Asteroid M, an asteroid in Earth's orbit converted into a space station that serves as a mutant paradise for mutants wishing to escape the persecution and violence of human life. However, Magneto's benevolence is limited to mutants whom he deems genetically redeemable. Mutant town, or District X, serves as essentially a ghetto for mutants for much of the 2000s before Decimation, after which less than a handful of the hundreds of residents still have any power. Though Muir Island has never quite been a refuge for the general mutant population, it has served as the base of operations for Excalibur as well as a major research facility for Moira MacTaggert, Professor X, and other people for the purpose of studying and containing mutants.

The fictional island country of Genosha has served many purposes for the mutant population over the years. Initially, the island was a fully functioning and advanced civilization built upon the backs of mutant slaves. Appearing in *Uncanny X-Men* #235 (1988), the island served to represent real world issues as an African country (Genosha is located north of Madagascar) with a government-ordained apartheid easily invoked images of South Africa during this time. The X-Men, along with X-Factor and the New Mutants, undermine the government and its leaders. In the aftermath, Genosha attempts a more egalitarian government but is often subjected to attacks from mutants seeking revenge for past wrongdoings. Eventually, Genosha is given over to Magneto as a nation for mutants. However, the refuge that Genosha represents comes to an end in *New X-Men* #115 (2001) when the villain Cassandra Nova kills the vast majority of Genoshan citizens. The island had been used several times since this event but has been considered a deserted and desolate place.

By the 2000s, the proliferation of X-Men properties in comics, televisions series, films, video games, and books provided many avenues for consumers to understand mutants as the ultimate "others" who are simultaneously ostracized and fetishized by popular culture, similar to contemporary renderings of queer and non-Western identities. The evident duality of a subculture being both potentially beneficial and

detrimental to the world correlates strongly with the U.S. culture in a post-9/11 paradigm.

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Lance Eaton

MYSTERY MEN. Bob Burden's *Mystery Men* was a cult satirical **superhero** team series that first appeared in 1987, in a two-part, backup story in *Flaming Carrot Comics* #16 and #17. Burden's best-known character was published by Aardvark-Vanaheim, Renegade Press, and then **Dark Horse Comics** from 1984 to 1993. Born in Buffalo, New York, in 1946, Burden has won the Ignatz Award, The Inkpot Award for Outstanding Achievement in Comic Arts, and the **Eisner Award** for Best Single Issue. Republished by **Image Comics** since 2005, current incarnations of the title are listed as *Bob Burden's Original Mysterymen. The Original Cult Comic Classic*. Burden's work is characterized by self-aware postmodern humor about comics and superheroes in a similar fashion to Steve Gerber's ***Howard the Duck*** (1973) or **John Byrne**'s run on *The Sensational She-Hulk* (1989), but his independent status allows for more outrageous parodies. "The Flaming Carrot" wears a large carrot-shaped mask with a perpetually burning flame at the top, a white shirt, red pants, and flippers. His origins as revealed in issue #7 of *Flaming Carrot Comics* were that of a man who had a nervous breakdown after reading 5,000 comics in a single sitting for a bet.

The Mystery Men are down-at-heel, second-string blue-collar superheroes in a "world of superheroes." In its comic book incarnation, the team has included Flaming Carrot Man, The Shoveler, Jackpot, Mr. Furious, Screwball, Captain Attack, Bondo Man, Jumpin' Jehosaphat, Red Rover, The Strangler, The Spleen, The Metro Marauder, Hummer, Disc Man, Jumo the Magnificent, The Whisperer, Mystic Hand, Star Shark, the Zeke. Members invented for the movie include the Bowler, the Blue Raja, the Sphinx, and Invisible Boy. The comic and film explore the idea of the underside, ground level experience of superheroics before the trope became more popular in comic book series such as Keith Giffen and J. M. DeMatteis's *Justice League International*. If this trope was still a cult novelty among comic readers it was even more of an unknown quantity for movie-going audiences, so it is ironic that the Mystery Men characters gained wider prominence via Kinka Usher's 1999 film *Mystery Men*.

With its tagline, "They're not your average superheroes," *Mystery Men* spoofed the idea of the superhero team, a concept that cinematically had yet to reach its current prominence with the likes of the ***X-Men*** trilogy. Set in Champion City, the film concerns The Shoveler/Stan Belarsy (William H. Macy), Mr. Furious/Roy or the



William H. Macy, Ben Stiller, Hank Azaria, Janeane Garofalo, Paul Rubens, and Kel Mitchell in the 1999 film *Mystery Men*, directed by Kinka Usher. Universal/Photofest

self-created alter ego "Phoenix Dark" (Ben Stiller), and The Blue Raja/Jeffrey (Hank Azaria) as superheroes with negligible, if any, powers that must save the day when the city's **Superman** archetype, Captain Amazing/alter ego Lance Hunt (Greg Kinnear) disappears. The film is generally well-liked and has maintained a cult status, but in keeping with many **adaptations** of comic books before the recent renaissance, *Mystery Men* almost disguises its comic book sources rather than celebrating them.

Lorcan McGrane

MY TROUBLES WITH WOMEN. Originally released in 1992 by Knockabout Comics, and reprinted in 2000 by venerable underground publisher Last Gasp, *My Troubles with Women* collects 10 autobiographical stories by **Robert Crumb** (three in collaboration with his wife Aline Kominsky-Crumb) that first appeared in the comic books ***Zap*** and *Hup* and the magazine ***Weirdo*** between 1980 and 1989. The stories represent Crumb's ongoing work almost two decades after he emerged as the most prominent and influential creator of **underground comics**, or "**comix**," in the late 1960s. Like a few other survivors of that movement, Crumb's original location in the counter-cultural underground mutated into the realm of **alternative**, or independent comics, a shift also marked by Crumb's own transition from audacious autobiographical stories exposing his sexual fantasies (and frustrations) to more gentle chronicles of his life as a husband and father. However, the collection only surveys a decade's worth of what has been a career-long exploration of the women Crumb depicts as both the muses and demons driving his consistently controversial art.

Indeed, the title of the collection, from a story published in two parts in 1980 and 1986, could easily extend to most of Crumb's life and career: the rather mild term "troubles" only hints at a genuinely troubling aspect of his work (and many other underground comics) as a whole. Despite the liberation of the imagination that underground comics asserted, encouraging artists like Crumb to challenge cultural repression and self-censorship by exposing their most personal fantasies, this cathartic artistic freedom often led to shockingly misogynist images and narratives. In Crumb's case, indulgence in the sexual liberation of the 1960s and 1970s was often expressed in his comics by fantasies of physical domination, with women's bodies twisted into positions that allow Crumb's cartoon surrogates to have their way with them, an understanding of "free love" that appeared in direct conflict with the simultaneous women's liberation movement, which Crumb frequently parodied. While the misogyny of many male comics artists seems tacit or unconscious, Crumb perhaps deserves some credit for confronting his obsessions with brutal honestly. (This collection judiciously omits most of Crumb's racialized sexual fantasies, often centered around self-consciously stereotypical characters like the naïve black woman Angelfood McSpade, who wears mock-native dress and speaks in comic Negro dialect.)

The stories in *My Troubles with Women* depict Crumb as both unapologetically nostalgic for past indulgences and transgressions and grateful (as the opening story, "I'm Grateful! I'm Grateful!" from 1989 insists) for his settled married life and recent fatherhood. Another story, "Memories Are Made of This" (1988) recalls an earlier, awkward seduction before Crumb (as often, in direct address to the reader) swears that he has learned his lesson. "Footsy" (1987) is a richly illustrated memory of the origins of Crumb's infamous fetish for women's legs and feet, also explored in the more elaborate history of Crumb's psyche in "My Troubles with Women, Part II" (1986), which suggests more fully than earlier material that Crumb's difficulties with normative masculine identity, dating back to adolescent humiliations, are deeply intertwined with his ongoing views of women.

Four stories in the collection—"Arline 'n' Bob and That Thing in the Back Bedroom" (1983), "Uncle Bob's Mid-Life Crisis" (1982), "Our Lovely Home" (1988) and "Dirty Laundry Comics" (1986)—were all originally published in *Weirdo*, and depict Crumb's current married life and devotion to his precocious daughter Sophie (eventually a cartoonist herself), indicating that Crumb's gratitude for domestic life and fatherhood are sincere even if sometimes viewed with characteristic irony. In the three of these stories produced in collaboration with Aline Kominsky-Crumb, her flat and inconsistent drawings of herself contrast effectively with Crumb's familiar self-portraits in his cross-hatched, rounded style, visually representing the personality differences that define their unusual partnership. However, Crumb chooses to conclude the volume with "If I Were a King" (1987), another richly illustrated story that revives Crumb's most troubling fantasies (also on view in other stories in the collection), including his physical domination of one of his pantheon of imposing "beast-women." The fantasy concludes with an all-too familiar image of Crumb on

top of a pile of comatose women, stuffing his penis into one of their mouths. Although an epilogue brings Crumb out of his fantasy, to be chastised by a "Lil' Hitler Pig," who calls him a "poor twisted devil," the shock effect is hardly vanquished by this final admonishment. Crumb's women are consistently objectified, often as bodies to be literally contorted for Crumb's self-caricatures to climb onto and penetrate; their misuse (often presented as passive or willing) is hardly tempered by Crumb's consistent presentation of himself as thoroughly dominated and deranged by their powerful stature, and in his later work, such as this volume, the image of Crumb as a self-identified pervert seems designed to be purposely unsettling alongside his depictions of himself as a doting father and subservient husband. Here and elsewhere, Crumb can be both narcissistic and masochistic, indulging and berating himself in turn: his claims to have reformed his life do not, he reveals, control his fantasies, which have remained consistently disturbing, stubbornly maintaining his emotional immaturity despite the remarkable accomplishment of Crumb's images. Indeed, if Crumb's depictions of women (at least in his narrative work, rather than his more flattering portraits) seem to have never developed beyond adolescent fascination and revulsion, this collection offers examples of his mature style as an artist. Such contradictions are perhaps at the heart of Crumb's career, an odd balance of hard-won artistic legitimacy and a still disreputable status, both in some measure celebrated by his fans.

A number of subsequent publications have also focused on Crumb's representations of women and sexuality, though these are again persistent themes of a now long career: both the gentle *Gotta Have 'Em: Portraits of Women* (Greybull Press, 2003) and the unapologetic *Robert Crumb's Sex Obsessions* (Taschen, 2007) were packaged as fine art collector editions. *The Sweeter Side of R. Crumb* (MQ Publications, 2006) also seeks to temper the artist's reputation as a misanthropic sexist. In addition to their collaborative work, collected in *The Complete Dirty Laundry Comics* (Last Gasp, 1993) and *Crumb Family Comics* (Last Gasp, 1998), Aline Kominsky-Crumb's perspective on her famous husband is provided by sections of her *Need More Love: A Graphic Memoir* (MQ Publications, 2007).

Corey K. Creekmur



NAT TURNER. In the historical comic, *Nat Turner*, artist **Kyle Baker** portrays the well-known Virginia slave uprising of 1831 from the perspective of the enslaved black man and self-proclaimed Christian prophet, Nat Turner. Kyle Baker Publishing initially produced the comic as a four-part series in 2005, but it was later re-issued in two volumes through **Image Comics** and appeared as a single graphic novel in 2008, from Abrams. Illustrated in black and white, *Nat Turner* contains virtually no dialogue and relies instead on the brutality and sorrow of Baker's arresting images, as well as narration from attorney Thomas R. Gray's 1831 publication *The Confessions of Nat Turner* to re-imagine one of the largest, most violent slave insurrections in the antebellum South. Baker's comic adapts *Confessions of Nat Turner* by expanding upon its assessment of Turner's motives; yet *Nat Turner* ultimately departs from Gray's account by minimizing the diabolical traits that white observers attributed to the slave rebellion. Where Gray viewed the insurrection as devious and desperate, and articulated Turner's silence as monstrous resignation, Baker's portrait endows Turner with dignity and courage as he struggles to free his people through righteous violence.

To develop Turner's heroism, *Nat Turner* begins with an origin story that illustrates key details of his mother's life and capture in Africa. Within the large borderless panels and splash pages, Baker's heavily-inked sketches use the large, expressive eyes of her emaciated face as the lens through which the reader experiences the horror of the Middle Passage and the New World auction block. The second part of the comic recounts young Nat's childhood as he learns to negotiate the restrictions of slave life, secretly learns how to read, and begins to develop a self-affirming religious identity. Bloodshed dominates Baker's depiction of Turner's upbringing; around him enslaved blacks are beaten, separated from their families, and humiliated without provocation. When Turner's own

wife and children are sold, he cries out to God for justice, interpreting signs such as a solar eclipse as a divinely-sanction call for vengeance.

The final two sections of *Nat Turner* illustrate the slave uprising of August 1831 that resulted in the death of over 50 white adults and children. Baker's visual narrative is unflinching in its depiction of carnage through crude images of bloody axes, headless bodies and limbs that echo the prior treatment of slaves. The illustrations also highlight the unraveling of the rebellion by depicting participants such as the slave Sam, whose violent impulsiveness acts as a foil against Turner's methodical preparation. The stately image of Turner, broad-chested with sword in hand, is further juxtaposed by the shortsighted behavior of the recruits who resort to drinking and stealing during the night. Nevertheless, Baker carefully maintains the humanity of Turner's imposing figure from his capture to the moment of his execution, as he quietly confronts the hanging rope and, with his chin lifted, ascends from murderer to martyr.

In addition to being favorably compared to historical comics such as **Art Spiegelman's *Maus*** and Ho Che Anderson's ***King***, Baker's complex rendering of Nat Turner adds a new dimension to creative interpretations over the years by Harriet Beecher Stowe, William Henry Shelton, Robert Hayden, William Styron, and other writers and artists. *Nat Turner* has also received several industry awards including an **Eisner Award** for Best Reality-Based Work (2006) as well as Glyph Comics Awards for Story of the Year (2006) and Best Artist (2006, 2008).

Qiana J. Whitted

NAZIS. "Nazi" is a widely used abbreviation derived from the fascist National Socialist Party that ruled Germany under Adolf Hitler from 1933 to 1945, committing some of the most egregious atrocities in modern history. The Nazis have long been staple villains in comics, notably **superhero** comics. In the same year that the Nazis took power in Germany, the modern American comic book format was born. By the end of the 1930s American comics were full of anti-Nazi imagery, from humor comics to the newly established superhero genre. Such popular propaganda sprung up all across America, ridiculing the enemy from the pages and covers of comics and magazines, on billboards and over the airwaves via radio, and through the cinema screen, with newsreels, animated cartoons, and Hollywood films pitting themselves against the propaganda being produced by the Nazis. Much of this imagery demonized the enemy as monsters, or ridiculed them, making the enemy, be they Nazi or Japanese, appear inhuman, monstrous, or laughable.

Humor comics, including those based on Disney and Warner Bros. animated characters, followed the example of animated films, poking fun at the enemy. Superhero comics adopted this strategy too, but being more orientated to adventure they usually drew more from the war films Hollywood was producing, such as *Confessions of a Nazis Spy* (1939) or *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943), focusing on fantasies of espionage rings and brutal combat with the enemy. However, whereas Hollywood films were heavily

censored by the government to ensure that the right kinds of messages were communicated, the comics industry was far less regulated and therefore provided some of the most extreme examples of caricature and rhetorical exaggeration found in propaganda and popular culture of the period. In superhero comics, Nazis became supervillains, and World War II, as represented in comics, became a thrilling adventure against the forces of evil and oppression.

Superhero comics helped to fight the isolationism of the American people in the run up to war. Even before the attack on Pearl Harbor and American intervention in late 1941, superheroes routinely fought against war profiteers, spies, and saboteurs. One of the reasons for this eagerness to attack the Nazis was that many comic artists, writers and publishers were Jewish and used their comics to highlight the dangers of the Nazi state. As early as December 1939, The Sub-Mariner was shown on the cover of *Marvel Mystery Comics* #4 attacking a U-boat. The cover of ***Action Comics*** #54 (1942) showed **Superman** tying a periscope in a knot, although *Pep Comics* #2 (February 1940) was more violent, showing The Shield shooting the crew. The German U-boat menace was a very topical theme, as the main threat to American interests in 1940 came from the U-boats prowling the Atlantic. U.S. President Roosevelt attempted to use this threat to encourage Americans to support intervention, and comics like this followed his lead. Soon comics indulged in extreme fantasies, showing armies of spies, sympathizers, and saboteurs undermining American industry and morale. The most famous example is ***Captain America*** from **Timely Comics** (which would later become **Marvel**). On the cover of first issue (March 1941) Captain America bursts into a Nazi bunker full of invasion plans and film footage detailing an ongoing sabotage campaign, thereby justifying Captain America's pre-emptive strike. Captain America is identified as "The Sentinel of our Shores" and does what most Americans longed to, punching Hitler firmly on the jaw. Interestingly, this occurred at a time when many superhero comics, notably those produced by National (later **DC Comics**) only made oblique references to the enemy—perhaps because they felt **Superman**'s powers would allow him easily to defeat the Nazis, thus diminishing the importance of real-world fighting men. Following the example of Charlie Chaplin's film *The Great Dictator* (1940), an imaginary enemy was often substituted for the real one, although it was always clear who the intended target was. This was emblematic of the restraint of National as opposed to the brash streetwise nature of Timely's comics. However, one of the most overt attacks on the Nazis came in the form of MLJ's ***Daredevil*** *Battles Hitler* (1941), which, despite being rather crude in terms of its artwork, story, and politics, certainly made its message clear—the Nazis were a menace that must be stamped out. At this time most of the major publishers were featuring stories, or at least covers, that dealt with the war in some way. There was no lack of inspiration from Hollywood films, advertisements, propaganda posters, and political cartoons, all of which employed similar rhetorical strategies and comparable imagery in representing the Nazis. However, while few Americans had anything but contempt for the Nazis, most Americans did not want to get involved in another European war.

When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in December 1941 the mood of the nation changed overnight. America declared war on the Japanese, Nazi Germany and the United States declared war on each other, and popular culture, which had been acting as a form of unofficial propaganda for so long, was finally vindicated. Primed and ready to fire, mass culture became a weapon against the enemy. Roosevelt knew that while the American people were eager for revenge against the Japanese, the war would not be won if the Nazis prevailed in Europe. In propaganda and popular culture images of the Nazis, and to a lesser extent, the German people, became increasingly aggressive. Superheroes took particular delight in attacking hordes of Nazi troops, or attacking Hitler himself, encouraging Americans to see the Nazis as the epitome of evil. This was not difficult, and comics also offered Nazi supervillains, such as Captain Nazi (*Master Comics*), The Red Skull (*Captain America*). These villains were usually cruel, monstrous, and perverse. In comics, as in other forms of popular culture, Nazis were particularly interested in assaulting women and poisoning children, or else destroying American industry. German officers were sadists and German troops were mindless automatons or ogres. Indeed, much of the imagery, especially in Timely comics, was drawn from horror films. For some reason Nazi strongholds were invariably gothic castles, and they employed medieval torture methods on helpless victims. The level of hatred and ridicule directed at the Nazis was challenged only by the levels of hatred directed towards the Japanese. In comics, as in reality, the war against Japan took on the hateful aspects of a race war, and propaganda and popular culture were extremely racist and irresponsible in promoting hatred of the Japanese as a people. This did not happen in terms of the German people. The Nazi leaders were despised, officers and troops were dealt with violently, but by and large the German people were presented as victims of their own government. As Western Europeans, the Germans had a similar racial heritage to the majority of Americans, so there was little mileage in presenting the Germans as a corrupt race of people.

While most superhero comics were content to deliver propagandist messages that were quite blunt and obvious a small number offered something more considered. One example is **Will Eisner's *The Spirit*** story, "The Tale of the Dictator's Reform" (1941), which imagined Hitler coming to America and being impressed with its people. Vowing to end the war, he returns to Germany only to be murdered by his lieutenants and replaced with a double. The story went beyond images of Hitler as a monster and suggested that rather than Nazism being driven by one madman it was instead a corrupt system, and that fascism was the actual enemy that had to be defeated. Such stories were rare, with most comics preferring to simply utilize the war as a convenient backdrop for adventure stories, or else, to make a simplistic point about combating the evils of the Axis.

Nazis appeared in other genres besides superheroes, notably **war comics**. Some of these comics were aimed directly at troops fighting overseas, so were particularly scathing about the enemies' courage and equipment, often suggesting that the Nazis and the Japanese were poorly trained and badly supported. This was intended to boost morale,

but when such stories were contradicted so clearly by experience they could have the opposite effect. Interestingly, reality conflicted with comics in other regards too, as the majority of stories involving Nazis concerned spy rings and espionage on American soil. In reality, Nazi sabotage of American industry was practically nonexistent, and the few spy rings that existed had little success and were rounded up quite efficiently by the FBI, so never really posed much of a threat. If one were to believe the comics however, there were hundreds of plots and an army of saboteurs.

When the war ended in 1945 superheroes continued to fight the Nazis for a time, as there was a backlog of stories to work through. However, in time the superhero genre faltered, in part because it was so heavily invested in propagandist attacks on the enemy that, without Nazis or Japanese to fight, the superhero was largely redundant. In time, though, Nazis would reappear, first in the **war comics** of the 1950s, then again in the 1960s, when a revival of Captain America by **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby** brought Captain America's wartime exploits back to life, along with his old antagonist the Red Skull, and new Nazi villains, such as Baron Zemo. When Captain America was revived as a character in the Marvel universe of the 1960s, having been frozen in a block of ice since the end of the war, his enemies came with him, refigured as supervillains. However, by this time there was a new generation of readers and Nazis villains, when they appeared, had much less impact. By this time Nazis had been diluted somewhat in the popular consciousness by endless Hollywood films and television shows like *Hogan's Heroes*, which made the Nazis seem like buffoons. In addition, sensitivity about the Holocaust made the use of Nazi characters a cause for concern. Thus, for a time, the Red Skull was reconfigured as a communist, rather than a Nazi.

In the 1970s there was resurgence in fan and collector interest in what became known as the **Golden Age** of comics, roughly speaking, the war years. This resulted in Roy Thomas's homage to the comics of the 1940s, *The Invaders* (1975). This comic featured the previously untold wartime exploits of Timely's Golden Age heroes, Captain America, The Sub-Mariner, and The Torch, along with some more obscure 1940s characters, and a handful of new ones. *The Invaders* ran for four years. In the course of this run they faced the Red Skull, Hitler, and Masterman, a Nazi version of Captain America, who was an amalgam of various Nazi villains, notably Captain Marvel's wartime nemesis, Captain Nazi. Interestingly, this was also a time when Neo-Nazi groups were increasingly on the rise, as were instances of Holocaust denial. The reappearance of Golden Age heroes to defeat the Nazis all over again had a strong appeal for some older readers, but in the main, *The Invaders* was for lovers of nostalgia. The taste of the average comics fan at that time was for more cynical comics.

Allusions to 1940s comics and World War II continued to appear throughout the 1980s, in comics such as **Dave Stevens's *The Rocketeer***, which drew heavily from 1930s and 1940s radio adventures and movie serials such as *King of the Rocketmen*. This was another appeal to nostalgia, and perhaps a little old fashioned for most readers, but it was clear that creators seemed to continually return to the war. There was some connection between the war and comics that could not be broken. In Britain, **Grant Morrison** and

Steve Yeowell's superhero series *Zenith*, which ran in the British weekly **science fiction** comic *2000 AD* from 1988 to 1993, took World War II as its starting point, and in a direct allusion to *The Invaders* Zenith faced a resurrected Nazi supersoldier called Masterman. Here Morrison played with the occult associations of the Nazi party, elaborating on conspiracy theories that linked prominent Nazis with the Thule Society and occult practices. Rumored links between Nazis and the occult would also figure prominently in **Mike Mignola's *Hellboy***, which began appearing in 1993. Also in 1993, wartime superheroes once again came to the fore in the four-part miniseries *The Golden Age*, published by DC Comics, which examined the fate of DC's 1940s heroes in the years immediately following the end of the war. By the end of the series the first of a new breed of superhero for the atomic age, Dynaman, who represents the coming superhero of 1950s and 1960s comics, is revealed as the villain, a superhuman body housing the transplanted brain of Adolf Hitler. Once again, World War II was the event that defined the superhero genre's origins. This was also the case in 1996, when a collaboration between Marvel and DC, Amalgam Comics, produced Super-Soldier by **Dave Gibbons**, a hybrid version of Captain America and Superman. In the story, Super-Solder fights a Nazi war machine, "Ultra-Metallo," who is programmed to destroy the White House.

In the wake of the attacks on American on September 11, 2001, many comics returned to imagery from World War II, presenting the ambiguous war on terror in terms of the certainties associated with the earlier conflict. This was particularly evident in the new volumes of Captain America comics, which featured versions of famous World War II propaganda posters as covers. Marvel Comics returned to the war in the first issue of **Mark Millar**'s *The Ultimates* (2002), a post-9/11 version of ***The Avengers***, and **Image Comics** re-launched their modern version of Captain America, SuperPatriot, in 2004. As a patriotic superhero, the latter has a host of Nazi enemies, including a Nazi supervillain who seems to be an amalgam of The Red Skull, Captain Nazi, and Masterman. Indeed, SuperPatriot even encounters a giant robot ape which houses the brain of Hitler.

In spite of the rather clichéd and superficial treatment of World War II in most comics, there have been several thought-provoking and intelligent responses to the war, such as **Art Spiegelman's *Maus*** (1973–91), which tells the story of the Holocaust, and portrays the Nazis as cats, the Jews as mice. However, for the most part Nazis have been, and continue to be, stock villains who represent evil and oppression.

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Chris Murray

NEW MUTANTS. The New Mutants **superhero** team first appeared in *Marvel Graphic Novel* #4 (1982) written by **Chris Claremont**. They launched their own title with

New Mutants #1, with a cover date of March, 1983. Most notably, New Mutants was the first ***X-Men*** spin-off ongoing series. Its success generated later ongoing X-Men series including *X-Factor*, *X-Force*, and *Generation X*. The premise of the series centers on a group of mutants who are just coming into their abilities and learning to use or master their powers. In real time, it had been 20 years since the X-Men first appeared, and though within the **Marvel Comics** universe they had not grown by 20 years, it was abundantly clear that the members of the X-Men should now be adults. *New Mutants* gave the opportunity to explore the complex issues of adolescent identity complicated by mutant powers and bigotry. The series would also prove a testing ground for characters (heroes and villains) in determining if they were successful enough to make it into the *X-Men* main series or into other splinter series later on. *The New Mutants* also provided staunch competition for the revived *New* ***Teen Titans*** (1980) from **DC Comics**.

Much like the relaunch of X-Men with *Giant Size X-Men* #1, the New Mutants' roster took on a diverse representation of cultures, some of which had not been previously represented in Marvel Comics. The team included Cannonball (American), Karma (Vietnamese), Mirage (Cheyenne), Sunspot (Brazilian), and Wolfsbane (Scottish). Other early members would include Magma, Magik, Warlock and Cypher, while former X-Factor wards Boom Boom, Rictor, Rusty Collins and Skids would join later. Bird Brain and Gosamyr were also members for short periods, and Kitty Pryde was briefly demoted to the team from the X-Men. Though often successful in their missions and challenges, the overall life of the New Mutants has been chaotic and traumatic. Several team members have been lost through death (Cypher and Warlock), loss of powers (Magik), and desertion (Wolfsbane, Rictor, and Sunspot). Partway into the series, Xavier leaves both X-Men and New Mutants, giving direction over to Magneto, who has rehabilitated himself. Magneto returns to a more sinister character as he assumes a position within the Hellfire Club, thus reinforcing the theme of abandonment that runs so strongly within the series from its leaders to the individual characters. Whether orphaned, abandoned, or disowned, most of the New Mutants, the original and later members, are parentless and their time with the New Mutants does not always offer substitute parental support.

Their adventures bring them to far-off places, including the Norse mythological Asgard and even outer space; often they are fighting foes much more powerful than themselves including the Hellfire Club, Freedom Force, Legion, Mutant Liberation Front, Shadow King, and Silver Samurai. However, often these external threats prove no more compelling than the group dynamics of the New Mutants and the burgeoning identities of the different characters as they deal with their own inner adolescent turmoil while also contending with the tragedy their team experienced.

The most significant run of the series came in its last 15 issues, when Rob Liefeld took over as penciller and eventually writer (with Fabian Nicieza) for the last three issues of the series (#98–100). Though the series as a whole maintains a dark edge to it, the final run of the series transforms the *New Mutants* into a small militant organization led (forcibly) by Cable, who first appeared in *New Mutants* #87. Cable is

later discovered to be Cyclops's son who has been sent to the future. With Cable at the helm, the New Mutants face off against the Mutant Liberation Front, whose leader, Stryfe, is physically identical to Cable. Cable continues to lead the New Mutants in the absence of any other X-Men willing or able to take over the responsibility. However, when the X-Men and Professor X eventually return, Cable is challenged for leadership of the young mutants, accused of treating them as soldiers, not children. In a final break that ends the series, Cable and his followers splinter off from the X-Men and Xavier's School to form X-Force, with the initial roster consisting of Boom-Boom, Cannonball, Domino, Feral, Shatterstar, and Warpath—with the rest of the New Mutants quitting entirely or defecting to other teams such as X-Factor and Excalibur.

Though the ongoing series ends with issue #100 in 1991, the concept behind New Mutants carries on almost continuously in various series through 2009, as in the transition into X-Force with much of the same team members. By 1994, *Generation X* was launched, the third ongoing series of adolescent mutants under *X-Men* titles. Though the first issue's title, "Third Genesis," declares it the successor to *Giant Size X-Men* #1 (the issue's subtitle was "Second Genesis"), it also fits appropriately as a successor to *New Mutants* as a third series and class of mutants starting their education at Xavier's School. The series ran parallel to *X-Force* until it was cancelled in 2001, with *X-Force* canceled a year later (though the original premise of *X-Force* was significantly altered for the last 14 issues). During this time, Marvel released a miniseries, *New Mutants: Truth or Death* (1997). Marvel also released a second *New Mutants* miniseries in 2003 that ran for 12 issues and transitioned into *New X-Men: Academy X* in 2004. The series deals with some of the original members of New Mutants and Generation X returning to Xavier's School to become teachers and mentors to another young group of mutants. This series (after dropping the subtitle with issue #19) ran until 2008. It was replaced by *Young X-Men* (2008–9) and finally by a new ongoing series, *New Mutants* in 2009. Though the plots, reasons, and actions of the adolescent mutant teams are different, they often reflect the social and cultural dynamics of youth culture in specific ways that the adult teams cannot capture. The mixture of teenage angst, being accepted by peers, real world events, and saving the world meshed together well enough to have continued appeal for readers.

Lance Eaton

NICIEZA, FABIAN (1961–). Fabian Nicieza is a prolific American comics writer who has also held production, editorial, and executive positions in the publishing industry. Nicieza was born in Argentina and came to the United States at an early age. Best known for his work on **Marvel**'s *The New Warriors*, *X-Force*, and ***X-Men*** in the 1990s, he has written hundreds of comics—mainly **superhero** stories for **Marvel** and **DC** Comics, but also for other genres and publishers. Recurring features of Nicieza's stories include an emphasis on complex, at times convoluted plots; an abundance of references to back story and popular culture at large; diverse characters; and an awareness of social issues.

Holding a bachelor's degree in communication, Nicieza entered publishing in 1983, in a production capacity at Berkley Books, a paperback publisher. In 1985, he applied for a position at Marvel's book department and was accepted, but soon joined the company's burgeoning advertising department instead before moving on to work as an editor. In addition to being on staff at Marvel, Nicieza began to write for the publisher. His first professional comics work appeared in *Psi-Force* #9 in 1987, followed by a steady stream of other stories.

Nicieza's breakthrough as a writer came in 1990, when he launched *The New Warriors* with artist Mark Bagley. The series proved a sleeper hit whose sales kept climbing. Later that year, Nicieza joined artist and co-writer Rob Liefeld on ***New Mutants***, where he co-created the characters Deadpool, Domino and Shatterstar, among others. Liefeld and Nicieza relaunched the series as *X-Force* in 1991, and its debut issue became the best-selling American comic book since World War II. When Liefeld and fellow artist **Jim Lee**, who had broken the sales record of *X-Force* #1 with *X-Men* #1 after only two months, left Marvel to found **Image Comics** in 1992, Nicieza became the sole writer of both *X-Force* and *X-Men*. By 1993, he was one of the most prolific writers in the industry, his name sometimes appearing in more than 10 comics per month. During this period of wild commercial success, Nicieza wrote series like *Cable*, *Deadpool*, and *Nomad*, among others.

In 1995, Nicieza, no longer on staff, left both *X-Force* and *X-Men* due to disagreements with editorial. In 1996, while producing less and less work for Marvel, Nicieza co-wrote the **DC Comics** miniseries ***Justice League:*** *A Midsummer's Nightmare*. In the same year, he joined Acclaim Comics, publisher of series such as *Turok* and *X-O: Manowar*, as editor-in-chief, eventually adding the roles of publisher and president. Although the creators assembled by Nicieza included names like **Kurt Busiek**, **Mark Waid**, and **Garth Ennis**, his line of comics failed to gain traction in an increasingly difficult comics market. Nicieza resigned from Acclaim in 1999.

Between 1999 and 2008, Nicieza wrote numerous comics for Marvel, notably the series *Thunderbolts*, *Gambit*, and *Cable & Deadpool*, but also for other publishers, including *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* for **Dark Horse**, various **Superman** and **Batman** projects for DC and *The 99* for Kuwaiti company Teshkeel Comics. In 2008, Nicieza signed an exclusive contract with DC. He has since co-written the weekly 52-issue series *Trinity* with Busiek and is set to helm the monthly title *Azrael* starting in October 2009.

Selected Bibliography: Martin, Madalyn. "Acclaim Entertainment Names Fabian Nicieza President and Publisher of Acclaim Comics." (April 14, 1997). Acclaim Entertainment, http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Acclaim+Entertainment+Names+Fabian+Nicieza+President+and+Publisher+of . . . -a019309402; McLelland, Ryan. "Valiant Days, Valiant Nights: Interview with Fabian Nicieza." (September 8, 2003). Valiant Com ics.com, http://www.valiantcomics.com/valiant/valiantdays/FabianNicieza-Interview.doc; Wilson, Keri. "Fabian's Thunder: Fabian Nicieza." *Sequential Tart* (November, 2001). http://www.sequentialtart.com/archive/nov01/nicieza.shtml.

Marc-Oliver Frisch

NIKOPOL TRILOGY, THE. *The Nikopol Trilogy* is a 170-page **science-fiction** comic by the Belgrade born Parisian artist Enki Bilal (1951–). It consists of three comics (created originally in French): *La Foire aux Immortels* (literally "The Carnival of Immortals" but published in English as *Gods in Chaos*) of 1980, *La Femme piège* (*The Woman Trap*) of 1986 and finally *Froid Équateur* (*Equator Cold*) of 1992. The French title *Trilogie Nikopol* dates from 1995 when the French publisher *Les Humanoïdes Associés* collected the three stories in one volume, which was not Bilal's intention because he wanted every part to be quite different. Consequently there are three more or less separate stories but with various links among them: for instance, some characters as Nikopol, his son Niko, and the rebelling Egyptian god Horus reappear. The action moves from Paris in the first part, to London and Berlin in the second part, and finally to Africa in the last story.

The first part, *La Foire aux Immortels*, originally serialized in the French comics monthly *Pilote*, was a major step in Bilal's development as an artist, because it was the first time he drew and wrote a long story by himself and it was the first completely done in what has been called direct coloring. From then on Bilal would continue to use this technique of fully-painted-artwork in his comics and illustration work—except for his most recent album *Animal'z* (2009). In fact, this style would make him widely respected. In general Bilal's color scheme has a rather monochromatic feeling, as it is built around greys, but on the other hand a few prominent colored patches (foremost in yellow or red) show up now and then. Together with this somber palette of grey tones his baroque, decadent fictional worlds would become his trademark, not only in his comics but also in his other artistic work (illustrations, paintings, set design, films). At the time of the first publication, Europe was still in a rather gloomy atmosphere: the **Cold War** had been heated up by the installations of new nuclear arms, while the oil crisis of the 1970s provoked an economic recession with old industries closing down, causing skyrocketing unemployment. The idea of a pessimistic future was not solely shared by punks but also by artists in larger circles of Western European culture. For instance European comics saw a remarkable boom of post-cataclysmic stories (e.g., Howard's & Ezquerra's *Judge Dredd*, Auclair's *Simon de la Fleuve*, Hermann's *Jeremiah*). In the first part of the *Nikopol Trilogy*, readers learn that two nuclear wars were fought between 1990 and 2023, and that a fascist regime had been installed in Paris. Except for the male elite that is allowed to live in the center, the 2023 Paris is a rather disastrous place, in spite of some technological progress (new flying devices) it is clearly a world in decay. Though it all looks extremely grim and dark, Bilal injects some humorous elements, such as the Egyptian gods playing the famous board game Monopoly, or the unrelentingly procreating greyish flying "angels." Sources of inspiration for Bilal are multiple: from Baudelaire's poetry (which is often quoted by Nikopol) to the Egyptian gods of Roger Zelazny's science fiction novel *Creatures of Light and Darkness* (1969).

The comic struck a chord among adult readers and was an immediate critical and commercial success in France. When the second part was published, six years after the first, Bilal was already an acclaimed and well-known artist; *La Femme piège* was

celebrated at the Angoulême festival, a year later Bilal himself was awarded the Grand Prix at the 1987 Angoulême Festival, and the third part was picked as best book of the year by the important literary magazine *Lire*.

Perhaps due to his bicultural upbringing, Bilal is an excellent builder of strange but fascinating worlds. This trilogy lays the foundations for his later work; most of his films and his comics would refer in one way or another to the universe created in the *Nikopol Trilogy*, most explicitly in *Immortel (ad vitam)* (2004), which is a very free filmic version using some characters and scenes from the trilogy but placing them in the new setting of a futuristic New York.

The first part of the trilogy was for the first time published in English in ***Heavy Metal*** as *The Immortals' Fete* (1981), while the complete trilogy was published in a single volume by Humanoids Publishing in 1999. In addition to the *Nikopol Trilogy*, Bilal has created other science fiction comics, such as the *Monstre Tetralogy* (1998, 2003, 2006, 2007) and *Animal'z* (2009). As of 2009 he had also directed three feature-length science fiction films: *Bunker Palace Hotel* (1989), *Tykho Moon* (1996), *Immortel (ad vitam)* (2004).

Selected Bibliography: "Enki Bilal Interview." *The Comics Journal* 129 (May 1989).

Pascal Lefèvre



"OMAHA" THE CAT DANCER. The creation of Minneapolis-based artist and writer Reed Waller, *Omaha* first appeared in the APA (Amateur Press Association) anthology *Vootie*, whose stated mission was the promotion of **funny animal comics**, including Disney and Warner Brothers characters, as well as original characters. Contributors created and published original material, which was collated into anthologies and redistributed to contributing members.

Dan O'Neill's *Air Pirates Funnies* was a 1971 underground anthology comic. Its central story concerned the sex lives and drug use of Mickey Mouse and other Disney characters. Disney sued for copyright infringement, bringing national attention to the comic. In 1978, in part inspired by O'Neill's work, Waller created his character *Omaha* in *Vootie*. As extensions of the ideas in *Air Pirates Funnies*, Waller gave his story political overtones and plausible continuity. The characters had active emotion-based sex lives. Waller made the characters more human than animal, inspiring the term anthropomorphic, a term Waller disliked, preferring funny animal. After reading issues of *Vootie* featuring Waller's nascent *Omaha* strips, **Kitchen Sink Press** publisher, Denis Kitchen, approached Waller about the prospect of a book. A 36-page *Omaha* story debuted in *Bizarre Sex* #9 in 1981.

Bizarre Sex #9 sold very well, and *Omaha* #1 was published in 1982 by a small Minneapolis publisher. However, Waller had ceased working on *Omaha* during issue #1. A variety of suggestions led to him offer the writing responsibility to his then-spouse Kate Worley. After issue #2, the title moved back to Kitchen Sink. Working collaboratively, Waller and Worley produced 20 issues of *Omaha*, as well as short *Omaha* stories for several political and/or sexual anthologies, and other work.

In Worley's writing, characters confronted disability issues, mental health concerns, blue laws and sexuality. The latter two are especially significant because Waller

and Worley were the first comic creators to come out as bisexual. The relationships of bisexual character Shelley Hine and gay character Rob Shaw rang truer as a result. Shelley was also disabled, bringing that issue to the forefront.

In 1987, Friendly Frank's Comic Store in Chicago was raided. Six comics were seized, including two issues of *Omaha*. The Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, an organization dedicated to protecting the rights of comic creators, publishers, and retailers, began as a result. *Omaha* was the subject of further obscenity charges in Toronto and New Zealand in 1990. All charges were eventually dismissed.

Waller was diagnosed with colon cancer in 1991. His outstanding medical bills resulted in two benefit comics, titled *Images of Omaha*, again published by Kitchen Sink. Some of the most respected people in comics contributed to the benefit books, demonstrating the aesthetic respect *Omaha* commanded. Following Waller's recovery and an acrimonious breakup with Worley in 1994, the same year *Omaha* moved to **Fantagraphics**, the title was discontinued indefinitely, after four issues with that publisher.

In 2002, the rift between Waller and Worley was sufficiently mended and the two resumed work on *Omaha*. Kate Worley died of lung cancer in 2004. Her widower, fellow writer James Vance, began working with Waller on concluding the storyline from Kate's notes and manuscripts. As of this writing, the series is being concluded episodically in NBM's *Sizzle* magazine, with a final collection pending on the work's completion. In addition to spurring the creation of the erotic funny animal subgenre of comics, *Omaha* was nominated for three **Eisner Awards** in 1989, two in 1991, and won a Squiddy Award for Best Ongoing Series in 1994.

See also: Underground and Adult Comics

Selected Bibliography: Kitchen, Denis. *The Complete Omaha, Vol. 7*. New York: NBM Publishing, 2008.

Diana Green

100 BULLETS. A monthly series from **DC**'s Vertigo imprint that ran for 100 issues between 1999 and 2009, written by **Brian Azzarello**, with art by Eduardo Risso, *100 Bullets* is based largely on a single premise: *What if you could get away with murder?* As the series begins, unsuspecting individuals from various walks of life are approached by a man identifying himself only as "Agent Graves." Graves reveals to these individuals that certain misfortunes, tragedies, or traumas in their lives have been willfully caused by specific parties. Graves then provides each of his targets with an attaché case that identifies the perpetrator(s) and provides "irrefutable evidence" that his claims are true. Most importantly, each case contains a gun and 100 rounds of untraceable ammunition to be used as the bearer sees fit. Crucially, Graves never explicitly instructs those receiving an attaché to kill; rather, he tantalizes them with information and opportunity: whatever they choose to do, their actions will

be above the law. The discrepancy between the reprisal offered by Graves and the means he provides to ensure it is indicative of the series' ongoing examination of the excesses of violence and authority. These excesses are recorded in the series' title itself, and visually reiterated as each new attaché is put into play: if retribution can ostensibly be attained with one pull on the trigger, then providing 100 bullets is disturbingly disproportionate, a point that serves to enhance the ominous premise of consequence-free revenge.

Although Graves's bullets prove to be untraceable, some recipients of the attachés nevertheless find that the promise of carte blanche is not enough to compel them to kill; others find that Graves's form of payback does not provide the peace they were seeking, or they do not follow his instructions. For example, Graves's first contact, Isabelle Cordova, ends up taking more vengeance and killing additional felons, while Graves's second client, Lee Dolan, chooses not to take revenge. More significantly, a grander plot explaining Graves's motivations slowly begins to take shape, becoming exponentially intricate with each issue. Readers learn that the briefcases are used by Graves in some—but not all—instances to recruit potential members of the Minutemen, a group of seven lethal and nearly unstoppable assassins associated with a powerful collective known as the Trust. The Trust is led by the heads of 13 "families," with the Minutemen acting as both their enforcers and as a kind of internal security mechanism that ensures no one family in the Trust gains a disproportionate share of power or influence. Should one Trust family make a move to destabilize or weaken the position of another, the Minutemen are mandated to respond in kind. A conflict between Graves and the Trust is revealed in snippets, as is the clandestine influence that the Trust has exerted throughout its long history (the Trust's role in the assassination of JFK is implied in a number of issues). Through a steady trickle of veiled conversations and layered flashbacks, it comes to light that the earliest incarnation of the Trust crossed the Atlantic and deployed seven killers of the original Minutemen to slaughter the original colonists at Roanoke. This killing was an act of revenge by the Trust because the Trust had offered the kings of Europe complete autonomy over the new world in exchange for relinquishing control of the old world (Europe) to the Trust. England ignored the offer and was punished by having its colonists murdered. Forgoing interest in European matters, the Trust staked a bloody claim to what would become the United States of America, and their descendants have reaped the benefits ever since. Graves once headed the modern-day collection of Minutemen, but he disbanded them and put them into hiding after the Trust seemingly violated its agreement with them in asking for the Minutemen's involvement in another grand crime of comparable magnitude; some of these hidden Minutemen have their memories wiped clean and are placed in mundane lives until they are reactivated by a mysterious watchword—*Croatoa*—that hearkens back to Roanoke and America's origins. Certain attachés are given to "sleeping" Minutemen as Graves, now ostensibly devoted to destroying the Trust, manipulates various players among constantly shifting factions comprised of the families of the Trust, and the Minutemen past, present, and future.

The series is rife with unrelenting brutality. Acts of violence—sometimes calculated, sometimes shockingly random—pervade nearly every issue, ranging from the absolutely savage to the grimly humorous. Extraneous violence even takes place in the background of many panels in such threatening forms as muggings, ravenous dogs, and drunken posturing. Risso renders this vicious world and its inhabitants with expressive and often elegant linework. His economical style, combined with his deft handling of shadows and silhouettes, gives the series its distinctive atmosphere of perpetual danger and tension, an atmosphere that is everywhere etched in the wrinkles, scars, snarls, and sensuous curves of the main characters. Risso also displays a remarkable array of page-layouts and pacing techniques that propel visceral confrontations and intense conversations alike, setting everything against richly-detailed backdrops (enhanced by particularly effective coloring) extending from inner-city slums to decadent highrises.

The other distinguishing feature of *100 Bullets* is its language. Characters exchange cryptic, fragmented dialogue that refers to events the reading audience has never been privy to; interlocutors constantly finish each others' sentences with razor-sharp puns; rivals spar with veiled truths, pointed threats, and expletives galore. Language is, as in much of Azzarello's work, not just a means of communication, but an expression of power. Fittingly, the series involves a devilish investment in onomastics: character names include Cole Burns, Wylie Times, Will Slaughter—one hardly bats an eye when, at a well-advanced stage of the series, readers learn that Graves's first name is Philip. Causal naming practices even help to order the series' trade paperback collections: the initial collection is *First Shot, Last Call*, followed by *Split Second Chance*; the 10th volume is *Decayed*, and so on. Its interest in emblematic language and names suggests that *100 Bullets* is a kind of modern morality play, though such a comparison is both apt and misleading. The backbone of the series involves temptation and opportunity assaulting the morality of individuals who are jolted from a seemingly mundane existence and forced to reflect on how their lives have been shaped by great personal tragedy produced by forces beyond their control. While this underlying emphasis on sanctioned retribution and the possibility of redemption provides so much of the series' energy, *100 Bullets* is much more than an allegorical struggle between virtue and vice. That is, the series as a whole greatly complicates simple distinctions between right and wrong. In blurring—if not destroying—the line between good and bad, right and wrong, the series returns time and again to matters epitomized in Graves's Faustian bargain: humankind's thirst for power and control, the violence upon which this power inevitably depends, and the widespread and always irreversible ramifications of life's decisions. If its intimate noir sensibilities help sustain the story's intensity, it must also be said that the series has a truly all-American scope: seemingly all major American cities—from New York to Los Angeles, New Orleans to Seattle—become a part of the narrative's landscape, immediately recognizable through the combination of Risso's stylized detail and Azzarello's sharp ear for regional dialects, as well as slang and street talk. The series also employs both women and ethnic minorities in major roles, further extending its scope. *100 Bullets* is momentous not only for the duration of the collaboration between Azzarello and

Risso (a modern day rarity), but for the undeniable synergy that these two creators were able to sustain from start to finish.

J. Gavin Paul

O'NEIL, DENNIS (1939–). Working his way up from editorial assistant, Dennis "Denny" O'Neil would become an acclaimed and prolific writer of comic books and novels and one of the most influential editors of American comic books, overseeing, most notably, the entire line of **Batman** titles. Born and raised in St. Louis, O'Neil was working as a crime-beat reporter in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, in 1965, when Roy Thomas, who had just accepted a job with **Marvel Comics**, encouraged O'Neil to take the **Marvel** writer's test. Subsequently, O'Neil soon joined what he calls the "second generation" of Marvel writers, the first writers to follow in **Stan Lee**'s footsteps. During his initial tenure at Marvel, O'Neil worked on such diverse titles as *Millie the Model*, *Kid Colt*, and ***Doctor Strange***.

In 1967, O'Neil began moonlighting for **Charlton Comics** under the editorship of Dick Giordano, writing under the pseudonym Sergius O'Shaughnessy, a name borrowed from a Norman Mailer novel. O'Neil worked on such Charlton titles as *The Prankster* and *Wander* until the company folded its **superhero** line in 1967. O'Neil followed Giordano to **DC**, where he initially worked on titles like *The Creeper* and *Bomba the Jungle Boy*. Soon, though, O'Neil began writing for ***Justice League of America*** as well as stories featuring some of the League's original members: **Wonder Woman**, **Green Lantern**, and **Batman**.

One of the recurrent trends of O'Neil's work as writer and editor has been the re-humanization of superheroes. Early on at DC, O'Neil developed a storyline that saw Wonder Woman surrender her powers. Later, he greatly weakened the essentially omnipotent **Superman**. In a different vein, he turned the wealthy and aloof **Green Arrow** into a poor political activist. A decade later, after returning for a time to write for Marvel, O'Neil sent **Iron Man**'s alter ego, Tony Stark, on a six-month alcoholic binge.

In 1970, O'Neil wrote his first solo Batman story, "The Secret of the Waiting Graves," which teamed him up for the first time with an important long-term collaborator, artist **Neal Adams**. Later that year, O'Neil and Adams began developing the highly acclaimed Green Lantern/Green Arrow series in which the socially aware Green Arrow introduces a naïve Green Lantern to some of the woes facing American society. Many consider the short-lived series a turning point in comic book maturity, moving the genre beyond the realm of adolescent fantasy.

In 1986, O'Neil became the group editor of all of DC's Batman series, which included, at the time, ***Detective Comics***, *Batman Comics*, and a few other titles. By the time of his retirement in 2000, O'Neil was editing 12 monthly Batman titles as well as graphic novels, miniseries, and one-shots, along with writing for the Batman spin-off *Azrael*. During his tenure, he oversaw the most significant evolution of the Batman character, changes that O'Neil says "went back and took what was implicit" from the original character. O'Neil helped return Batman to the brooding detective **Bob Kane** and Bill Finger first envisioned. Subsequently, O'Neil supervised some of

the most acclaimed Batman storylines, including ***The Dark Knight Returns***, *A Death in the Family*, *Knightfall*, and *No Man's Land*.

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Jason S. Todd

OPTIC NERVE is an ongoing comics series created by Adrian Tomine in 1991, while he was midway through high school in Sacramento, CA. Originally published as a mini-comic three pages long and with a paltry print run of 25 copies, the series is now one of Canadian publisher Drawn & Quarterly's best-known series. The first seven issues, consisting of a combination of semi-autobiographical stories alongside fictional stories, were all printed as mini-comics of ever-increasing length closer and closer to the industry-standard 32 pages. As mini-comics with very limited print runs, they quickly sold out, while Tomine became increasingly well-known. He began a comic strip for *Pulse!* for Tower Records the following year, which brought more attention to his mini-comics work.

In 1994, when he was just 20, Drawn and Quarterly picked up *Optic Nerve* and began major publication and distribution of the series. It became extremely popular; as a result, Tomine and his series garnered a great deal of attention, though not all of it was positive. For example, the letters pages of his issues often include at least one letter where Tomine's readers take him to task for a variety of things, including his visual similarity to other comics artists (most notably **Daniel Clowes**, whom Tomine acknowledges as one of his major influences). Others cite his sad characters as being too entrenched in pop culture, too affected, of being too "emo" or "hipster" in his portrayals of them. Much of the work was informed by those around him, with a decidedly autobiographical aspect to the dialogue and characters.

However, despite this fan feedback, *Optic Nerve* gained momentum and widespread critical acclaim with the nomination of the series for a "Best New Series" **Harvey Award** and Tomine's win of a Harvey Award for "Best New Talent" in 1995. In this same year, the first seven issues of the series, long out of print in the original mini-comic format, were collected in *32 Stories*. This title has proved so popular that Drawn & Quarterly re-issued the series as a new boxed set in April 2009 with redesigned packaging and promotion, recognizing nearly two decades of work.

In 1997, the first four issues of *Optic Nerve* produced for Drawn & Quarterly were reprinted as *Sleepwalk and Other Stories*, one of Drawn & Quarterly's best-selling collections. Tomine continued work (along with finishing a degree in English from the University of California at Berkeley) on the series, publishing the second *Optic Nerve* collection, the critically acclaimed *Summer Blonde*, in 2002. Reprinting issues #5 through #8 of the series, *Summer Blonde* particularly showcases Tomine's skill at capturing various characters through dialogue so true to life that it feels almost like you are eavesdropping on their conversations.

One of the stories from this collection, "Bomb Scare," was included in Dave Eggers's *The Best American Nonrequired Reading* published by Houghton Mifflin in that same year, and Tomine was still publishing *Optic Nerve* as of early 2009, despite a hiatus between 2001 and 2004. He has also developed a career in commercial illustration work, including the creation of CD covers for a variety of bands and magazine covers ranging from *The New Yorker* to *Rolling Stone* and *Time*. All of these include the crisp and distinctive line work associated with his comics images. His style, both in *Optic Nerve* and in his commercial work, is crisp and clean, with bold lines and savvy detail, such as a hipster girl sitting in the back of a New York tourist bus, with her parents arm's length away snapping photos of Radio City Music Hall while she reads a J. D. Salinger book.

Published in 2007, Tomine's collection *Shortcomings* is made up of a narrative arc spanning issues *Optic Nerve* #9 through #11, taking a total of about five years to reach publication in collected form. This is his first work that is a multi-issue storyline; generally his pieces have tended to be more like a series of short stories and vignettes rather than a longer related piece divided over issues and published sequentially. This collection is also one of the first times that Tomine talks about racial issues and stereotypes in some great detail. Earlier stories deal with quirky characters; in "Summer Job" from *Optic Nerve* #2, readers learn about Eric, who is working a summer job at a photo reproduction place; in another, the story revolves around a woman scouring the "I Saw You" section of her local paper thinking there are ads placed there for her. There are characters who place prank phone calls, invite people they have recently met to funerals, and are generally profoundly lonely and unusual individuals sharing odd moments of similarity. They have more in common than they think. They share a sensibility about the world, the people in it, and their own intersecting identities.

More than anything, though, *Optic Nerve* is a series about identity. Some of it is Tomine's own, as a Japanese American cartoonist writing about race but without making race the primary defining lens of the work he produces. Some of it is simply about being in the world: Ben Tanaka, the primary protagonist of *Shortcomings*, is abrasive and conflicted. As a Japanese American man, Tanaka jokes about stereotypes about Asian men but seems intent on not questioning the double standard that makes it acceptable for him to pursue a series of blonde women, but causes him to condemn his former girlfriend Miko when she begins dating a white man, even though Ben learns about this situation long after they have broken up and she has moved across the country to New York. Meanwhile, what precipitated their breakup wasn't so much that Ben simply took Miko for granted, but more her discovery of his porn stash—focusing on imaging of white women. **Race** is an issue throughout *Optic Nerve*, but Tomine explores it in a different way, by calling stereotypes into question or simply giving them voice, such as when Ben says to his lesbian Korean friend Alice, who's passing for straight at a family wedding, "Why don't we just tell them that I'm Korean while we're at it?" "All Asians might look the same to you," she jokes, "but my family would spot your Japanese ass a mile away."

Anne Thalheimer



PALESTINE. An award-winning work of comics journalism by artist and journalist **Joe Sacco**, *Palestine* was published serially in nine installments from 1993 to 1995. The installments were collected in one volume published in 2001 and introduced by the eminent activist-academic Edward Said. Based on interviews and observations conducted by Sacco during a two-month stay in the winter of 1991–92 in Palestinian territories occupied by Israel, the comic takes readers from the spontaneous eruption of the First Intifada (uprising) of Palestinians against Israeli military occupation in1987 to the intifada's waning days in 1992. Historical interludes also describe the mass expulsion of Palestinians from what is now Israel-proper by Zionist terrorist groups in 1948.

The narrative begins with Sacco having a discussion with two men in Cairo, one absorbed in a love affair, the other absorbed in regional politics. The opening introduces us to Sacco's method, in which his presence—more explicit than in his later works—is an integral part of the narrative. Nearly everything he portrays is based on his observations and interactions with others, which inform and are informed by his impressions, perceptions, and emotions. The scene also sets the approach to the subject matter of the rest of the narrative, which highlights the ways and extent to which the everyday concerns of Palestinians run up against political realities largely outside of their control.

Indeed, *Palestine* is the story of occupation, about the daily indignities suffered by an entire population living under the yoke of the brutal military rule of Israel. Sacco does not hide readers from the conflicts within Palestinian society, such as the class differentials in the Gaza Strip between businessmen with large houses and unemployed people living in refugee camps, where houses have sand for floors, or the domestic abuse faced

by many women, or the sometimes violent confrontations between different Palestinian political factions. However, like the ubiquitous "Palestinian room" where copious tea is served and young men sit around sharing stories, the one set of experiences that cuts across all differences is that of Israeli occupation. Every Palestinian has some connection with death, injury, destruction of homes, displacement, imprisonment, economic deprivation and/or generalized humiliation that is a direct, unmediated result of the violence of Israeli occupation. The psychological ramifications of occupation are also emphasized, as when one Palestinian asks, "Every home here has someone who is imprisoned, who has died, who is wounded . . . *this* is the childhood?" There is simply no escape, and all of Palestine (especially the Gaza Strip) is a prison—hemmed in on all sides by Israeli military outposts and regulated completely by Israeli military bureaucracy. Even those Palestinians who do manage to leave the occupied territories have no guarantee that they will ever be allowed back.

The concept of separation is central to *Palestine* as narrative and Palestine as lived experience. At one point, Sacco refers to parallel universes as in **Marvel Comics**: on the one hand, a seemingly normal cityscape in Jerusalem, with people in love, traffic, tourism, and so on; on the other hand, hidden beneath the surface, a world of brutal torture. The former world is largely for Israelis, whereas the latter is reserved exclusively for Palestinians. Sacco also notes the separate standards of justice for Israeli settlers who illegally occupy Palestinian land, and Palestinians who defend themselves against the violence of the former—settlers are rarely caught for murder, and when tried receive mild sentences; Palestinians caught for murder, however, typically receive life imprisonment and their families face collective punishment. Reminiscent of apartheid South Africa, there are even separate roads for the Israeli settlers and the indigenous Palestinians. In the closing chapter, two Israeli women discussing politics with Sacco in Tel Aviv declare that they simply do not want their normal lives (which, Sacco notes, are very Western lives) interrupted by the occasional burst of Palestinian violence. "We don't think about this stuff all the time, and we get a bit tired of hearing about it!" The very next morning, Sacco bumps into a friend in the Palestinian city of Nablus. Their seemingly normal reunion is almost immediately interrupted by violence—stones, settlers, and soldiers in a scene that is by now all too familiar to Sacco and to the reader. The contrast is clear: Israelis live in a universe where they have the choice to become tired of discussing violence, because violence is abnormal; Palestinians live in a universe where there is no choice but to discuss violence because of the omnipresence of a brutal Israeli occupation; in a society where violence is never normalized but it is the norm, it is the absence of violence that is abnormal.

Sacco's emphasis on Palestinian views might appear to be contradictory to objective journalism that ostensibly represents both sides of a conflict. However, his work seeks to deconstruct both the notions that Palestinians are a homogenous group of people and that mainstream journalism is anywhere near balanced: "I've heard nothing but the Israeli side most all my life. . . ." To counter the imbalance in mainstream media and the actual imbalance of power that sees a group of Israeli soldiers with automatic rifles

standing under an awning while making an unarmed Palestinian boy stand in the rain and answer their questions, Sacco embeds himself with the people of Palestine. Indeed, the absence of Palestinian leaders or official spokespersons in his story is also indicative of his attempts to present the everyday lived experiences of Palestinians.

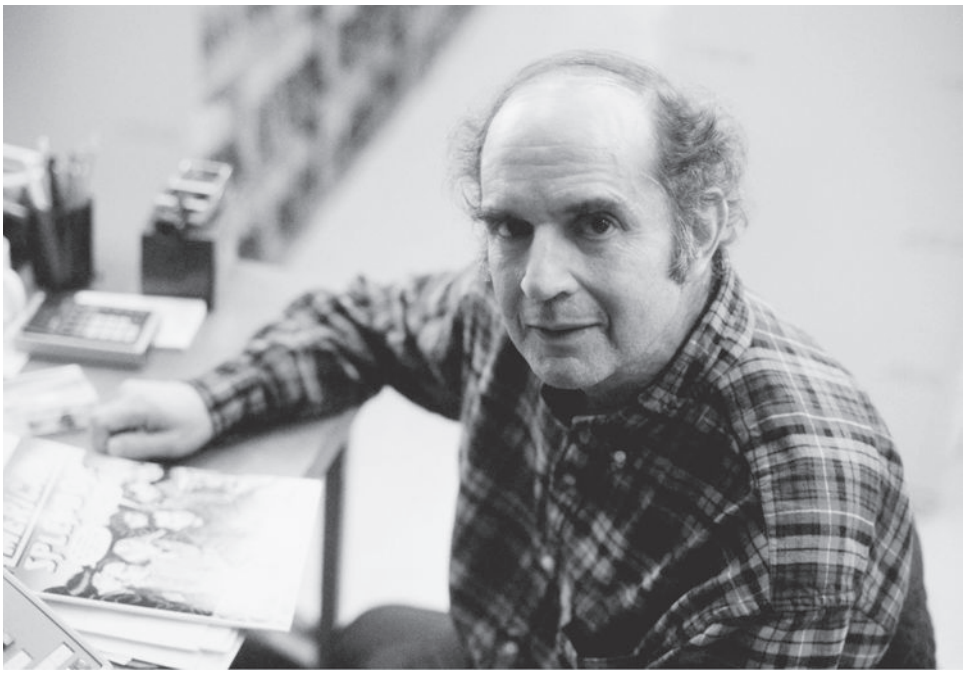
Yet, more than a narrative that seeks to upset in some small way a very large imbalance, *Palestine* is also a call to action. When interviewees ask Sacco what good his words or the words of supposedly pro-Palestinian people in the West are, he has little to say in return. The question is directed not only at Sacco, but at the reader who has—like the voyeur-cum-vulture Sacco—consumed the grief, pain, and suffering of Palestinians. It is not enough, Sacco implies, and the Palestinians in the narrative make clear, to feel sympathy for the Palestinian cause; the point is to take concrete actions to influence Western governments—and in particular the American government without which the Israeli state could probably not survive—to approach the conflict in a way that recognizes the rights of Palestinians to land and to humanity. There can be no solution, Sacco notes, "until this central fact—Israeli occupation—is addressed as an issue of international law and basic human rights."

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Noaman G. Ali

PEKAR, HARVEY (1939–). Harvey Pekar is a prominent comic book writer and memoirist as well as a widely published jazz and book critic. Born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, Pekar lives in neighboring Cleveland Heights with his third wife, Joyce Brabner, and their adopted daughter. He is best known for his autobiographical series ***American Splendor*** (1976–), which provided the basis for a 2003 award-winning film adaptation of the same name. He has also written a series of nonfiction graphic novels, including *Our Cancer Year* (1994, with Frank Stack and Joyce Brabner), *The Quitter* (2005, with Dean Haspiel), *Macedonia* (2006, with Heather Roberson and Ed Piskor), and *Students for a Democratic Society: A Graphic History* (2008, with Gary Dumm, Paul Buhle and others). Pekar also worked with Buhle to produce two volumes designed to give voice to working class and oppositional cultural perspectives: *Studs Terkel's Working: A Graphic Adaptation* (2009) and *The Beats* (2009). Maintaining his interest in music, Pekar wrote the libretto for *Leave Me Alone!*, a jazz opera that premiered at Oberlin College in 2009.

Pekar was inspired to publish *American Splendor* as a result of his friendship with underground comix legend **Robert Crumb**, who contributed artwork to the first and subsequent issues. The occasionally published comics anthology centers on Pekar's life and in particular his experiences working as a file clerk in a large VA hospital in Cleveland, from which he retired in 2001. While Pekar self-published *American Splendor* for many years, **DC Comics** assumed the role of publisher from 2006 to 2008 via its Vertigo imprint. The list of artists who have contributed to *American Splendor* over the years—including Alison Bechdel, **Chester Brown**, **Eddie Campbell**, Hunt Emerson, Bob



Harvey Pekar as the "real Harvey," in the 2003 film *American Splendor*, directed by Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini. Fine Line Features/Photofest

Fingerman, Drew Friedman, Gilbert **Hernandez**, Josh Neufeld, Spain Rodriguez, **Joe Sacco**, and Jim Woodring—is a de facto *Who's Who* of **alternative comics**. The fact that Pekar was invited to become the first guest editor of Houghton Mifflin's *Best American Comics* series (2006–) speaks to his sterling reputation in the comics field. While many of his artistic collaborators have been established figures, Pekar has made a special effort to encourage up-and-coming cartoonists who have undoubtedly benefited from their association with one of the most famous personalities in independent comics.

Pekar first gained national prominence as a result of his multiple guest appearances on television's *Late Night with David Letterman* in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He was eventually banned from the show for his confrontational personal style and pointed on-air criticism of NBC's corporate owner General Electric. The success of the *American Splendor* film, which starred Paul Giamatti and Hope Davis, further added to his cultural cache. He has leveraged this reputation to help secure publishing deals with trade publishers such as Ballantine, Doubleday, and the New Press. His most recent publishing effort to date (2009) is an **adaptation** of Studs Terkel's *Working*, published by the New Press. Like Studs Terkel, Pekar has a remarkable eye for transforming the prosaic details of everyday life into the stuff of serious entertainment. He has a sturdy work ethic, and he has found a way to make creative use of his somewhat curmudgeonly persona. Along with his longtime friend Crumb, he played a major role in inspiring the alternative comics surge of the past two decades.

Kent Worcester

LA PERDIDA. Created by Jessica Abel, the comic book *La Perdida* (literally translated as "The Lost") was first published serially in five installments by **Fantagraphics** Books from 2001 to 2005. A collected version was reprinted by Pantheon Books in 2006. The rather small original format (6.75" × 8.5") of the comic labels it as an independent comic. *La Perdida* was awarded with a **Harvey Award** in 2002 as "Best New Series" and was translated into French, Spanish, and Italian.

The New York-based comic-artist Abel (born 1969) started to draw comics while taking courses at the University of Chicago, where her work was first published in the student anthology *Breakdown*. After graduation she tried unsuccessfully to enter the world of comics. After receiving a Xeric Grant for her independently published comic book *Artbabe*, Abel produced a professionally printed version which put her on the map of independent comics. From 1997 to 1999, Abel's second volume of *Artbabe* was published by Fantagraphics Books, which won her a Harvey Award and a Lulu Award as "Best New Talent" in 1997. Her work was featured in various publications such as the *Best American Comics* anthology. Recently she produced a secondary comic book on comic books with her husband and comic-artist Matt Madden called *Drawing Words, Writing Pictures*.

Although Abel sums up the content of *La Perdida* very briefly as "a story about finding yourself by getting lost," the comic book offers a much more complex tale. The story is set in Mexico City, where the female protagonist Carla, in search of her heritage, must recognize that reality does not match with her romanticized image of the Mexican capital. On this quest "to find herself," concepts of belonging and of authenticity are questioned. While the façade of the exotic Mexico slowly fades away, Carla is confronted with the everyday life of expatriates and local inhabitants of the city. Influenced by these encounters Carla seems to lose herself and has to struggle in order to regain her sense of identity.

The story begins with a short prologue that shows the protagonist reviewing the events of the last year in retrospective. The reader is given single panels as flashbacks that foreshadow the complete story to come. Guided by retrospective observations in the captions, Carla arrives in the capital and meets up with Harry, a friend of hers. His apartment offers a point of refuge but also a starting point of a journey. Its simplistic white walls present an almost clinical space in the midst of the crowded cityscape of Mexico City. Similar to the following issues of *La Perdida*, issue one ends with a cliffhanger when Carla rips away the wallpaper on Harry's white walls.

The following two issues contrast the indigenous Mexican culture with the world of the expatriates Carla wants to ignore. She moves in with her Mexican boyfriend Oscar and discusses questions of cultural belonging with their friend Memo. In heated debates Carla tries to defend her search for identity, which seems to Memo as the mere luxury of a spoiled American daughter. A different perspective is provided by Carla's brother Rodriguez, who grew up with their Mexican father. His easy-going mentality is exactly what Carla is looking for ("Yeah isn't it funny how visitors can give you a new perspective?"). During his short vacation, Rodriguez takes Carla to places she has not

been before and gives her a skeleton doll as a departure present. This souvenir from the famous Mexican holiday, the Day of the Dead, acts as a precursor of the events to come.

Without noticing, Carla succeeds in turning invisible: no longer being an expatriate, she has adapted to Mexican everyday life and blends in perfectly. Yet she begins to wonder if this is the life she wants to lead. When friends of Memo and Oscar abduct Harry in order to get a ransom, Carla is stuck with her new identity and is held as a prisoner in her own house. With the help of some friends she is able to free herself from imprisonment to tell her tale.

In order to construct these cultural differences on the printed pages of *La Perdida*, Abel uses language as a tool to express this otherness. While all the captions are Carla's or the narrator's internal monologue, the dialogues constantly shifts between English and Spanish. While the first two issues of *La Perdida* present Spanish and English sentences next to each other, the English passages tend to fade away in later issues. Sentences such as "You should make attention" offer further insight into the problems of communication. From issue three onwards almost everything printed in English should resemble Spanish dialogue; only some English phrases are displayed in parenthesis. Abel also introduces the reader into Mexican vernacular by adding special terms of the Mexican slang, which are translated in footnotes.

While these narrative techniques are rather innovative, Abel's drawing style is certainly influenced by America's independent scene. Yet her work with brushes gives her a unique outlook that she uses for *La Perdida*. With simple strokes of her finer brushes, she conveys the characters' emotions, while thicker lines are used for the backgrounds. Another trademark of Abel is her lettering, which gives the language its unique appearance.

The process of becoming, of change, is also displayed on a visual level. Abel's evocative black-and-white drawings tend to alter slightly over the course of the five issues of *La Perdida*: for example, facial features change. This leaves graphic space for the characters to evolve, especially as the protagonist Carla blends in with Mexican culture more easily. Scenes of Mexican everyday life are depicted as darker and more crowded, and clearly stand in contrast to the blazing white of Harry's apartment.

La Perdida is an imaginative journey not only in terms of displaying a different culture but also in thinking of a way to depict these differences visually in a comic book. While introducing her life in Mexico City in a retrospective, Carla's adventures are always contrasted by the captions that already encompass its outcome. This mode of displaying a duality of cultures is mirrored visually by Abel's unique lettering and her brushwork. Various levels of communication additionally evoke a process of adapting into an unfamiliar society, and yet always feature the constant struggle not to lose one's self.

Daniel Wüllner

PÉREZ, GEORGE (1954–). George Pérez was born in the South Bronx, New York, to parents who emigrated from Puerto Rico. He was a lifelong fan of **superhero** comics and started drawing at an early age. He ended his formal education after high school and

tried to break into comics by working on fanzines and showing his work at conventions. **Marvel** artist Rich Buckler saw Pérez's folio and hired him as an assistant in 1973. Perez's first professionally published story was a backup in *Astonishing Tales* #25. Pérez left Buckler for personal reasons, but was immediately hired by Marvel to draw the Man-Wolf series in Marvel's *Creatures on the Loose* and the Sons of the Tiger series in *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu*. While working on these series, Pérez was hired to replace Buckler on ***Fantastic Four***, and also took on a regular assignment on ***Avengers*.** Pérez's work on these titles gave him a reputation as an artist who could draw team superhero comics and actually enjoyed doing so. Most artists hated such assignments because they involved drawing more characters for the same page rate.

Pérez worked at Marvel throughout the 1970s, but in 1980 he was hired to draw **DC**'s new series *New* ***Teen Titans***. He took this job because he was also offered ***Justice League of America***, but *NTT* soon became one of DC's top-selling titles. By now Pérez was a major superstar, and he was the natural choice to draw the ***JLA/Avengers*** crossover in 1983. Negotiations on this project collapsed, leading Pérez to leave Marvel for 10 years. In 1985 he drew ***Crisis on Infinite Earths***, which gave him a reputation as an artist of "crossover" series (i.e. those featuring large numbers of characters from one or more superhero universes). His first major writing assignment was on the post-*Crisis* revival of ***Wonder Woman*.** Pérez spent much of the late 1980s and early 1990s working on smaller projects such as *Sachs & Violens* and ***Incredible Hulk:*** *Future Imperfect*, but he returned to monthly comics in 1998 for a three-year run on *Avengers*. Health problems, including diabetes, have made it difficult for Pérez to maintain a monthly schedule, and most of his recent work has been on high-profile limited series such as *JLA/Avengers* and *Final Crisis: Legion of Three Worlds*.

Pérez is the preeminent contemporary artist of crossover and superhero team titles, largely because of his superb compositional ability (which made him a sought-after cover artist) and his willingness to draw large numbers of characters. The cover of *JLA/Avengers* #3 alone features at least 200 characters. Pérez's artwork is also famous for its tight rendering and richness of detail. As a storyteller, Pérez consciously strives not to repeat the same layout on consecutive pages, and tends to include an unusually high number of panels on each page. His habit of giving fans more for their money has diminished his speed and volume of work, but has helped make him one of the biggest stars of contemporary superhero comics.

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Aaron Kashtan

PERSEPOLIS, by the Iranian born Marjane Satrapi (1969–), is not only an autobiographical comic of her personal and family life from the age of 10 to 24, but also offers a view of Iran's historical transformation during that time. It begins around the time of

the revolution against the regime of the Shah in 1979 and ends with Satrapi's escape to Western Europe in 1994. Being a descendant of the royal Persian family dethroned by the father of the last shah, her account is willingly subjective. Though the regime of the shah was autocratic and very repressive towards its opponents, life was much easier for Marjane's modern family (her mother for instance did not have to wear a veil). The author presents herself as a child with extremely high aspirations (in her imagination she was talking to God). This enduring sense of superiority may explain her sometimes very critical tone, even towards family members, though her main target remains the Islamic dictatorship with its backwards beliefs. Satrapi presents a nuanced picture of her native country: she shows, for instance, that not all Iranians were so happy about the new Islamist regime and illustrates how the Iranian people tried to find ways to cope with it (e.g. organizing illegal parties with alcohol and dancing). She could of course not have produced this comic in her native country, but living in Paris she found the ideal working environment in the **alternative comics** movement: the French artist David B. guided her and the alternative French printing house *L'Association* put out the first part in 2000. Jean-Christophe Menu (Bellefroid, 2005, 13) of *L'Association* was afraid that they were taking a huge risk publishing the first volume of *Persepolis* by a then completely unknown Iranian artist: "The phenomenal success of Persepolis [. . .] is hallucinant. We could not have expected that. We thought to take a big risk when we published the first volume of Persepolis at 3,000 copies. Four years later, we had already sold more than 200,000 copies of the four volumes." By 2004 all four volumes of *Persepolis* were published in French; they have now been translated into many languages with similar success. The sequence is easily the best-selling comic of **L'Association**'s catalogue. Not only are the sales statistics stunning for a new artist, but the comic has exercised an important influence on the field. Like ***Maus*** by **Art Spiegelman**, *Persepolis* has attracted many readers who normally would not read comics. Both artists made a comic about a crucial historical and the repercussions on their family situation. Both comics were published in a format smaller than usual, a format resembling a novel. Though both comics were first published in parts, their final and integral versions each comprise more than 200 pages. Like *Maus*, *Persepolis* came at an opportune moment: just before the most spectacular terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. From that moment on the threat of Islamic fundamentalists seemed more serious, though it was not their first strike and several others would follow. Those shocking acts have considerably raised interest in Islamic fundamentalism in Europe and the United States, including the events that are central to *Persepolis*. Other factors may also help to explain the success of *Persepolis*, including the fact that this comic was made by a young woman who opposes religious dogmatism and is living as a modern woman in the West, without a veil.

That Satrapi is proud of her country does not hinder the appeal of her work; instead it strengthens her credibility. The fact that readers get the events from the perspective of a young girl works efficiently and excuses the rudimentary drawing style. *Persepolis* proves again that one doesn't need to have refined artwork to sell a comic as long the content is interesting enough. In 2007 the comic was adapted with critical and public

success into an animated film by Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud, who himself is a celebrated French comics artist (working under the pen-name of Winshluss). After *Persepolis*, *L'Association* published (in 2004) another comic by Satrapi, *Poulet aux prunes* (*Chicken With Plums*, 2006) about Nasser Ali Khan, a renowned Iranian musician related to the family of the author. Again she has joined forces with Paronnaud to adapt this comic to the big screen, but this time it will be a live-action film.

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Pascal Lefèvre

PHANTOM LADY. Phantom Lady originated in the first issue of *Police Comics* (from **Quality Comics**) in 1941. In what had already become a comic book tradition, Phantom Lady is a rich girl when she is not fighting crime. The first panel of Phantom Lady's first story reads: "The society columns record the activities of Sandra Knight, debutant daughter of Senator Henry Knight . . . no one suspects that the frivolous Sandra is also The Phantom Lady, whose battle against spies and public enemies constantly make headlines." Artist Arthur Peddy designed her in a yellow costume with green cape, and gave her a kind of reverse flashlight, her "black ray," which blinded people. She also came with the requisite boyfriend, state department investigator Don Borden, who, even though Sandra Knight and Phantom Lady looked exactly alike (she did not even wear a mask) never caught on. The original Phantom Lady, while decently drawn, was not particularly memorable, and was interchangeable with many of the other superheroines who were being included in **Golden Age** comic books at that time. Neither she nor they survived for very long, and the original Phantom Lady's last appearance in her original run was in *Police Comics* #23, 1943.

Phantom Lady's stories were produced for Quality by the **Eisner**-Iger Shop. In 1947, that shop was producing work for Fox Comics, which became the new publisher for Phantom Lady, who got her own book, which lasted until 1949. She also got a complete new look, with a blue costume and red cape. Her new artist, the stylish and flamboyant **Matt Baker**, restyled her hair, giving her bangs and a passing resemblance to then-popular pinup queen Bettie Page. Baker, one of the rare African American artists in comics during the 1940s, excelled in drawing women. During Baker's all-too brief life—he died prematurely from a congenital heart condition—he drew jungle queens, aviatrixes, girl detectives and superheroines; they were always beautiful and always strong. Some of his best were Fiction House's Tiger Girl and Sky Girl, and the sarong-clad South Sea Girl, Alani, queen of "The Vanishing Islands," which he drew for Seven Seas Comics—and Phantom Lady.

It has been argued by male writers that Baker's women were drawn to appeal to men, and while that is certainly probable, they also appealed strongly to a female audience. His dashing and glamorous women have a kind of 1940s noir movie-star

appeal. He also had a flare for fashion and paid loving attention to details of clothing and hair styles, at a time when the average male comic artist was satisfied to clothe his heroines in a featureless red dress. It should be noted that Phantom Lady's costume of blue shorts and a matching halter top, much-heralded by male critics and fans as eye-poppingly sexy, contains more fabric than what the average woman wears today on the beach. There is not a navel to be seen.

Phantom Lady's most famous—or infamous—cover, no, 17. from 1948, was featured in **Fredric Wertham**'s famous condemnation of comic books, *Seduction of the Innocent*. The superheroine stands on a dock, tied to a post, but not very well tied, as she has already made headway in undoing her ropes. Looking directly at the readers, she flashes her black ray at them. Her halter top is cut lower than usual, and exposes a generous expanse of pointed breast. Wertham described the cover as producing "sexual stimulation by combining 'headlights' with the sadist's dream of tying up a woman." A perusal of Golden Age comic books will reveal far stronger and more objectionable bondage scenes, including those in which the woman's clothing is ripped and she is being whipped. An equal perusal of "bad girl" comics of the 1990s will reward the prurient reader with breasts twice the size of Phantom Lady's. Still, because of this inclusion in Wertham's book, although all issues of Phantom Lady are extremely valuable to collectors, the price on #17 is now astronomical.

Phantom Lady was at her most interesting when she interacted with other women, and this happened often in her stories. In "The Condemned Venus," from *Phantom Lady* #14, 1947, she actually gets herself arrested and put into prison so that she can free her friend Kitty Manders, who, believing her husband is a killer, has taken the rap for him and has been condemned to death for murder. Together, on the lam from the law, they kidnap the governor and find the real killers.

"A Shroud for the Bride," in the same issue, is a kind of dark Cinderella story. Porky Mead, an alcoholic millionaire, breaks three dates to attend a masquerade ball with a pretty waitress he has picked up. ("Porky an' me is gonna get married," says the waitress.) A shot rings out and his date falls to the ground, dead. Phantom Lady learns that the victim was wearing a costume meant for someone else—one of the three jealous women who had been stood up by Porky. Stealing the dead girl's shoe, she tries it on each of the woman, knowing the shoe will fit the murderer.

Phantom Lady was revived by **DC** in the 1970s (in the Freedom Fighters, along with other Quality characters) and still makes occasional appearances in her civilian identity as the grandmother of Manhunter Kate Spencer. Also, two successor Phantom Ladies, Dee Tyler and Stormy Knight, have since been published. Dee Tyler was written by Len Strazewski and drawn by Chuck Austen with an even skimpier costume than her predecessor. Stormy Knight was created by writer Justin Gray and artist Jimmy Palmiotti, based on notes from **Grant Morrison**. The character is remembered today by mostly male writers and fans as being outrageously over-the-top in blatant sexuality. A fresh look at the comic, especially compared to the more recent treatment of women

in comics, will reveal strong representations of beautiful women, and more glamour than pornography.

Trina Robbins

PLANETARY. A 27-issue series published by the Wildstorm imprint of **DC Comics** and written by **Warren Ellis** with art by John Cassady, *Planetary* is both the name of the series and of the organization within the series that seeks to uncover the secret history of the **superhero** world in which it is set. The series began publication in 1999, but has been plagued with delays and taken multiple hiatuses over the 10 years between *Planetary* #1 and *Planetary* #27. Besides the series proper, three stand-alone, one-shot stories have also been published, *Planetary/**The Authority:** Ruling the World* (2000), *Planetary/**JLA:** Terra Occulta* (2002), and *Planetary/**Batman:** Night on Earth* (2003). While these are not essential to the main storyline, *Planetary/Batman: Night on Earth* did utilize the same creative team as that of the regular series and certainly reads as if it could be an issue of the series. *Planetary* has also been released in a series of collections: *Planetary: All over the World, and Other Stories* (Volume 1) collects *Planetary* #1–6, *Planetary: The Fourth Man* (Volume 2) collects *Planetary* #7–12, *Planetary: Leaving the 20th Century* (Volume 3) collects *Planetary* #13–18, *Planetary Vol. 4* collects *Planetary* #19–27, and *Planetary: Crossing Worlds* collects the stand-alone one-shot stories.

The Planetary Field Team, a three-person group of superhumans, is funded by the Planetary Foundation and consists of Elijah Snow, Jakita Wagner, and The Drummer. Snow possesses the ability to subtract heat from his immediate area, while Wagner enjoys super-strength, super-speed, and virtual invulnerability. The Drummer operates as something of an informational "black hole" in that all things, especially computers, give him information. For instance, even a cup of coffee indicates its temperature to him (*Planetary* #23). The members of the Planetary Field team have been described as "archaeologists of the impossible."

Planetary's agenda of aiding mankind and making a finer world with the knowledge it acquires puts it directly at odds with the four Voyagers, the secret masters of the world. The four comprise four superhumans, Randall Dowling, Jacob Greene, William Leather, and Kim Suskind, modeled after **Marvel Comics' Fantastic Four.** Here, Ellis indulges in a bit of commentary on the American comics market. The four dominating the world of Planetary beginning in 1961 is no coincidence; 1961 marks the year that Marvel began publishing the *Fantastic Four.* It is also the year that the superhero genre began its dominance, to the extent that virtually all other genres disappeared of the American comics market. "The things these scum have cost us since 1961 . . ." (*Planetary* #6) serves as a condemnation of superhero comics and the American comics market, as well as a lament of what was lost in their dominance of said market.

The overriding plot structure of the first 12 issues of the series concerns itself with the mystery surrounding the identity of the Fourth Man of Planetary. The resolution of this mystery changes the focus of Planetary's agenda from that of mystery archaeologists to that of combating the four and their interests. This puts not only the Planetary

Field Team, but the entire Planetary Foundation in direct conflict with the four who destroy an entire Brazilian Planetary office building in an attempt to kill Snow, Wagner, and the Drummer. Snow methodically removes two members of the four, Leather and Greene, before finally confronting Dowling and Suskind and retrieving all of their hoarded knowledge.

Planetary is unique with respect to its covers, which change in both format and style with every issue and lend themselves to the contents of each issue much more so than typical superhero comics. For instance, the cover of *Planetary* #2 alludes to Japanese monster movie posters, while *Planetary* #3 suggests the widescreen still of a Hong Kong action film. Other covers hint at **Neil Gaiman's Sandman** (*Planetary* #7), **Doc Savage** paperback reprints of the 1970s (*Planetary* #5), and 1950s monster cinema (*Planetary* #8).

In *Planetary*, Ellis digs at the roots of the superhero sub-genre, what he terms superhuman fiction, and spotlights many of the early 20th-century pulp antecedents for modern superheroes. He also utilizes thinly disguised versions of existing characters such as **Superman**, **Green Lantern**, **Wonder Woman**, the **Shadow**, **Tarzan**, Doc Savage, and the Lone Ranger in an attempt to show why these characters have endured. By stripping the characters back to their respective cores, Ellis illustrates why the "mad and beautiful ideas" that spawned these characters remain compelling decades later.

Ellis brings a modernist sensibility to *Planetary*. Snow, in particular, seems very much a representative modernist man cast adrift in a postmodern world, unable to initially place himself in that world. He suffers from the postmodern condition of a lack of historicity in that his memories (his past) have literally been taken from him, at least until he recovers both his memories and sense of purpose in *Planetary* #12. With or without his memories, though, his driving motivation remains to discover a history that has been lost or hidden, and to put the pieces of the puzzle of history back together. This is no more apparent than in the cover of *Planetary* #26, which depicts Snow staring at the reader, holding the last piece of the puzzle which comprises the cover. In discovering the secret history of the 20th century, he rediscovers not only his own history, but a unifying sense of purpose that will carry him far into the future. Snow is dedicated to keeping the world strange, as he believes it should be. He and the entire Planetary organization fight what the German sociologist Max Weber called rationalization, or the tendency of capitalism to strip the world of magic, reducing all aspects of life to a routine sameness.

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Productions, 2010; Ellis, Warren, et al. *Planetary: Crossing Worlds*. La Jolla, CA: WildStorm Productions, 2004.

Will Allred

PLASTIC MAN. A **Quality Comics superhero**, Plastic Man first appeared in *Police Comics* #1 (August 1941), written and drawn by Jack Cole. In the first story, readers are introduced to Eel O'Brien, a career criminal and former orphan. On a routine break-in at a chemical company, O'Brien is shot by a night watchman and falls into a vat of acid. Abandoned by his gang, a disoriented O'Brien passes out near a mountain. He awakens to find himself in a monastery, where a kind monk hides him from questioning police. Following this act of charity, O'Brien vows to reform. This vow receives a boost when he discovers the effects of the acid—he can now bend, stretch, or mold his body into any shape. Altering his face to form a new identity, he begins wearing goggles and a suit of red, yellow, and black. In this guise, he adopts the name Plastic Man. As O'Brien, he now works undercover to capture criminals, beginning with his old gang.

After his first appearance, Plastic Man soon became one of Quality's most prominent characters. While his origin had appeared in the final pages of *Police* #1, Plastic Man took over as the lead feature of the monthly series with issue #5. At the same time, the page count on the strip increased from 6 to 13. This was followed by a self-titled series. The undated *Plastic Man* #1 was released in 1943. Issue #2 was dated August 1944, with a third following in spring 1946. From that point, the series followed a quarterly schedule until #12 (July 1948), when it became bi-monthly.

While other superheroes had a rigid format, Plastic Man could become anything. This allowed the strip to have a looser, wilder form of storytelling. The increasingly comedic bent was aided by the introduction of sidekick Woozy Winks, a portly bumbler who assisted the hero on his adventures in *Police Comics* #13.

Initially, Plastic Man fought few super-villains, as most of his foes were racketeers and gangsters. As Cole found his footing, both the drawings and the stories got broader and more exaggerated. He defied expectations of the superhero genre, with villains such as Sadly-Sadly Sanders, a man so pathetic people could not help but throw their money at him (*Plastic Man* #26), and The Green Terror, a gardener whose creations include a plant that breathes enough carbon dioxide to smother a man (*Police Comics* #58).

This experimentation extended past the stories to the look of the series. At a time when many crime-fighters were interchangeable square-jawed tough guys, Plastic Man's bright, cartoony appearance stood out. He fooled criminals into thinking that he was a lamp, or a table, or a rug, only to revert to human form and catch them red-handed. As Cole's visual style developed, the strip became increasingly packed with visual information. Panels often contained several sight gags which could be easily missed by the casual reader.

Despite the unique style of the strip, *Plastic Man* still relied heavily on superhero conventions for much of its humor. Consequently, the series fell out of favor along with

other superhero titles in the early 1950s. *Police Comics* #102 (October 1950) was Plastic Man's last appearance, as it switched to a straight police procedural with the following issue. *Plastic Man* itself continued for another six years, even becoming monthly with #49 (November 1954).

For the last several years, however, both series had become Jack Cole creations in name only. Beginning in the late 1940s, a succession of ghost writers and artists had taken over. In 1956, after several years of lackluster sales, Quality Comics closed its doors. *Plastic Man* was published until the very end, with a total of 64 issues. He would soon find a home at a new company, as **DC Comics** acquired the company's stable of superheroes. It wasn't until 1966 that Plastic Man received a new solo series, however. Written by Arnold Drake and drawn by various penciler included **Gil Kane,** it ran for 10 issues, ending in 1968. In the years that followed, the character made guest appearances in various series. A second attempt at a solo series was made in 1976, written by Steve Skeates with art by **Ramona Fradon**. It too lasted for 10 issues, numbered 11 through 20. Despite these series, Plastic Man's most prominent appearances in his first 30 years as a DC property were not in comic books at all. *The Plastic Man Comedy/Adventure Show* aired on ABC Saturday mornings from 1979 through 1981.

Following his integration into the DC universe proper after ***Crisis on Infinite Earths***, the character got a major push with a four-issue miniseries (1988–89). This series, written by Phil Foglio and drawn by Hilary Barta, added a dark edge as it revealed that the chemical infected the hero's brain to see everything in a cartoony way. He was no longer simply light-hearted. Instead, he was brain-damaged.

The latter part of the next decade saw Plastic Man back to his old self as he joined the **Justice League of America. Grant Morrison** and later writers mostly used the character as comic relief. Some darkness remained, however. During his run, writer Joe Kelly revealed that Plastic Man had a son from a brief relationship 10 years earlier. The boy, named Luke, later took the name Offspring and began operating as a superhero in his own right.

In 2004, DC debuted a new Plastic Man series written and drawn by **Kyle Baker.** Unlike previous revival attempts, it was more in the vein of the **Golden Age** series. Plastic Man was once again a lawman (now an FBI Agent) operating as a double agent in his O'Brien identity, aided by the long-unseen Woozy Winks and the sensible Agent Morgan. The focus was on wild antics, and the series featured exaggerated versions of many other DC characters. It won the 2004 **Eisner Award** for Best New Series. However, DC canceled it in 2006 after 20 issues. Since that time, Plastic Man has once again been relegated to guest-star status.

Anthony Strand

PLAYBOY, THE. This collection of comics by Canadian cartoonist **Chester Brown** reveals his adolescent misadventures in suburbia while discovering, obsessing over, and, eventually, accepting his relationship to pornography. Originally serialized in the *Vortex*

Comics editions of his series *Yummy Fur* (which began as a self-published mini-comic), this autobiographical tale demarcated a split between his earlier, slightly surreal work with characters like *Ed the Happy Clown*.

Published by Drawn & Quarterly as a 170-page collection in 1992, *The Playboy* begins in 1975 when Brown is 15, growing up in a suburb of Montreal called Châteauguay. The opening panel centers on an illustration of what will later be revealed as a *Playboy* centerfold model. The second panel takes place in the clouds as Brown's id, (represented by a shirtless caricature of the cartoonist with demon wings), is lounging in thin air. His id appropriately serves not only as the narrator of the story, but also as an instigator.

As Brown's devilish id continues its narration, we see the young protagonist attending a church service. Brown is occupied with fantasies concerning a nude model he had seen on the cover of *Playboy* magazine in the convenience store the day before. After church ends and he has lunch at home with his family, Brown rushes back to the store to purchase his very first issue of *Playboy*, trembling, sweaty hands and all.

Thus begins a vicious cycle. Brown's near-addiction to pornography starts a binge-and-purge habit as a young man pursues self-discovery. "Chester managed to avoid the temptation of buying last month's *Playboy* but this month . . . well here he comes with something hidden under his shirt."

Each *Playboy* magazine Brown purchases, he hides under a plank of wood in a field or forest. As time passes, Brown rarely finds his latest issues left untouched when he returns, which leads Brown to experience cathartic guilt and the aforementioned *Playboy* purging paranoia. Time passes as Brown graduates high school and attends college where he continues his pornographic habits. This time, however, the purging is in response to his first real relationship with a woman, so he does not have to lie when she inquires about his pornography consumption. They break up amicably after several years and Brown finds himself having to fantasize about nude *Playboy* models in his second romantic relationship with a woman: "With my next girlfriend I found that in order to maintain an erection I had to imagine that I was having sex with one of my favorite playmates."

Brown comes to the discovery that he prefers masturbation to the actual sex act. At the end of this comics collection Brown confesses he maintains a four-inch thick stack of his favorite "photos of naked women," ultimately coming to terms with his formerly "guilty" habit and sexuality.

What rings true as a timeless facet in Brown's work concerning *The Playboy* is the nakedness of the story, his ability to allow himself to be the character whose beliefs and behavior are out of step with his rules, as he tries desperately to figure it all out. Brown's autobiographical work, beginning with *The Playboy*, sparked a confessional comics renaissance not seen since the hedonistic grandfather of autobiographical comics, **Robert Crumb**, began to lay it all out on the table in the swinging 1960s.

See also: Underground and Adult Comics; Memoir/Slice-of-Life Themes

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Jared L. Olmsted

POLITICS AND POLITICIANS. Whether they feature **superheroes**, spy smashers, or countercultural bomb-throwers, comic books have from their earliest days been inextricably bound up with politics. Like other forms of mass culture, comic books both reflect and participate in the public sphere, registering and helping to shape popular opinion about political questions such as civil rights, international relations, and the role of government in private life.

Comic books emerged in the 1930s, the era of the Great Depression and the New Deal, a period when many Americans began to question and revise their understandings of American values and to deepen their engagements with politics. When superheroes—powerful crusaders usually created by working-class writers and artists—emerged, their adventures were often motivated by a blend of populism and leftism. **Superman**'s earliest foes included crooked industrialists and politicians whose most nefarious quality was their indifference to the economic hardships of ordinary Americans. Indeed, one early story featured Superman speaking up on behalf of a young juvenile delinquent, blaming his troubles partly on his miserable social situation, and eventually demolishing the slum the young man called home to make way for government housing (***Action Comics*** #8, 1930). When Superman's popular success led to a horde of imitators such as **Green Lantern** and Hourman, these new characters often also emulated his politics. Comics historian Bradford Wright notes that although comics creators rarely criticized national political figures directly, their focus on "the failings of local government and the dangers of provincial demagogues" highlighted the "need for outside intervention and tacitly stressed a common interest between public welfare and a strong federal government" (24).

As World War II intensified in Europe, comic books in the United States shifted their emphasis from the internal problems of the nation to the external threat of the Axis powers. Comics helped to mold national consensus about the possibility of U.S. participation in the war. Perhaps the best-known example in this regard is the cover of **Joe Simon** and **Jack Kirby's *Captain America*** #1, released early in 1941, an iconic image of the patriotic hero socking Adolf Hitler in the jaw. Although **Nazi** villains were not unusual in comics by 1941, it was also common for superheroes to battle against foreign agents who wanted to drag the United States into a fight that many Americans thought it should avoid. The publication of *Captain America* #1 brought that tension home to Simon and Kirby in a very direct way: while the comic was a major success, they also received hate mail and even death threats from isolationists and Nazi sympathizers (Wright 36). Captain America was not the first patriotic hero, nor would he be the last, as a multitude of characters—whether star-spangled or not—leapt into

the war effort after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. As William Savage observes, "comic books became an integral part of the Allied propaganda machine, emphasizing the need for a maximum war effort by portraying the enemy as the inhuman offspring of a vast and pernicious evil" (10). Japanese soldiers in particular were often caricatured as monstrous, slavering beasts.

After the close of the war, superhero comic books slipped into escapism, social irrelevance, and general unpopularity. Not even the menace of communism provided a compelling motivation for superheroes in this era. A telling example is that of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby's *Fighting American* (1954–55), whose patriotic title character did not meet with the same success as his more famous predecessor. The Fighting American began as an earnest communist-smasher, but the chronicles of his exploits—which involved vanquishing foes such as "Poison Ivan" and "Super-Khakalovitch"—quickly turned to lighthearted **satire** of **Cold War** political attitudes. Neither approach was enough to keep the book afloat. Among the new genres that arose to take the place of superhero tales, none was more engaged with political issues of the post-war era than **crime** and **horror** comics, especially those published by **EC** Comics. EC titles spun often grisly tales of murder and betrayal, but their stories also often took the United States to task for failing to live up to the ideals for which it had so recently gone to war, and for succumbing to the paranoia of anticommunist politicians such as Joseph McCarthy. *Shock SuspenStories* (1952–55), primarily featuring tales written by **William Gaines** and **Al Feldstein**, was the primary venue for EC's most pointed social commentary. Stories such as "In Gratitude" (#11, 1953) and "The Whipping" (#14, 1954) took on the evils of racism and segregation, while "The Patriots!" tackled the issue of anticommunist hysteria. EC's **war comics**, *Frontline Combat* and *Two-Fisted Tales*, edited and usually written by **Harvey Kurtzman**, tended to emphasize the futility of war and to critique post-war American exceptionalism. Even the more fantastic genres were sometimes pressed into the service of EC's social satire: *Weird Fantasy* #18 (1952) features an African American astronaut's exploration of an alien world divided and diminished by segregation.

Although EC's frequent renderings of decapitations and other forms of dismemberment were among the more overt targets for anti–comic book crusaders like Dr. **Fredric Wertham** and Senator Estes Kefauver, the **Comics Code** that emerged from this time of crisis did as much to blunt EC's political commentary as it did to tame its representations of violence. Among the code's regulations were prohibitions against depicting politicians, government officials, and other authority figures in a negative light. Although Kurtzman took his penchant for satirical broadsides to the wildly popular *Mad* magazine, the loss of EC's dissenting voice meant that most comic books in the later 1950s and early 1960s continued to enforce a vision of a Cold War-era United States whose major problems stemmed not from internal strife, but from the forces of communism. Although the short-lived war comic *Blazing Combat* (1965–66), from **Warren Publications**, questioned the morality of the Vietnam War in a manner that recalled Kurtzman's work, other war comics such as Dell's *Jungle War*

Stories and **Charlton Comics**' *Fightin' Army* portrayed the conflict as a noble and necessary struggle against the forces of communism. The Cold War was an important backdrop for **Marvel**'s revitalization of the superhero in the early 1960s: The accident in space that gives the **Fantastic Four** their powers is the result of their urgent mission to beat the Soviets to the Moon, and superheroes such as **Iron Man** and Captain America found themselves facing off against communist enemies far more threatening than those so easily trounced by the Fighting American. However, as Matthew J. Costello observes, by the end of the 1960s, the Cold War consensus was beginning to fray, and "the virtue of the government also [became] more ambiguous" (74). Both Marvel and **DC** found that they could not keep representations of real-world political unrest out of their comics, but their responses to it were always carefully calibrated. Frequently, superhero comics presented exaggerated versions of right-wing and left-wing responses to political issues, with the star of the book advocating a moderate middle ground. **Batman** and **Spider-Man** both found themselves confronting militant activist groups with whom they sympathized but whose methods they deplored (*Amazing Spider-Man* #68, 1969, *Batman* #230, 1971). As Bradford Wright observes, "in an American society facing deepening political divisions, Marvel's superheroes worked to preserve what remained of the vital center. DC's superheroes tended to take the same position" (235).

Although mainstream comics were constrained in their ability to respond to the political upheavals of the day, a new model of comics creation and distribution was emerging in the late 1960s, one that offered its artists enormous aesthetic and ideological freedom: **underground comics**, or "**comix**." Because they were primarily distributed through venues such as "head" shops and record stores instead of through news vendors, and were thus free of the restrictions of the Comics Code, the undergrounds had license to offer graphic depictions of sexuality, violence, and drug use. Comix creators gravitated toward pointed satire of American mass culture and politics as well. The underground comics as a group offered no single coherent political vision; many were only "political" in the broad sense that their celebration of the counterculture functioned as an implicit critique of mainstream American values. However, within the diverse and idiosyncratic group of underground creators were several artists who placed politics at the center of their work. These included Manuel "Spain" Rodriguez, whose Marxist hero "Trashman" waged revolutionary violence against a fascist United States government in a bleak, dystopian future. Skip Williamson regularly satirized leading political figures of the day in the pages of *Bijou Funnies* (1969–70); he also brought together a group of underground cartoonists to create *Conspiracy Capers* (1969), a comic dedicated to defending the Chicago Seven. Explicitly political anthology titles including *Slow Death Funnies* (1969) and *All-Atomic Comics* (1976) leveled criticisms at a variety of powerful and destructive forces in American life, including the nuclear power industry and corporate agribusiness. Female underground cartoonists such as **Trina Robbins** and Lee Mars published a wide array of titles that brought **feminism** to comics, including *It Ain't Me, Babe* (1970) and *Wimmen's Comix* (1972), which dealt with political issues of particular

interest to women, including reproductive rights, workplace discrimination, and the sexism prevalent in American culture—even in the counterculture. Gay and lesbian-focused titles such as Roberta Gregory's *Dynamite Damsels* (1976) and the anthology *Gay Comix* (1980–91), created by Howard Cruse, provided a venue for post-Stonewall reconsiderations of the intersections of the personal and political.

Although underground comics contained the most detailed and sustained treatments of the counterculture in the 1960s and 1970s, some mainstream writers and artists sought to examine the ways in which the counterculture was re-shaping the political landscape in the United States. The most notable of these was Captain America creator Joe Simon, who was responsible for two unusual, original, and short-lived series at DC Comics that explored the phenomenon of active, sometimes radical, political engagement among young people: *Brother Power the Geek* (1968) and *Prez* (1973–74). Lasting a mere two issues, *Brother Power* starred a tailor's dummy who comes to life in a hippie community and sets out to understand the nature of his existence. Simon's ambivalence about the counterculture is plainly evident: Although the hippies are portrayed as friendly and accepting, they are also depicted as directionless. While Brother Power appreciates his new friends, he is motivated to make something of himself, first running for political office (where he intends to promote "Love, Peace . . . Flower Power" (#1) and then becoming plant foreman at a factory making missiles for space exploration—where he eventually employs his hippie friends on the assembly line. Developing and extending some of its predecessor's themes, *Prez* is an exploration of the relationship between youthful idealism and political pragmatism, and of the ways in which revolutionary or subversive political energies can be appropriated and redirected by those who would see the status quo preserved. Its title character, Prez Rickard, "First Teen President of the U.S.A.," is swept into the U.S. Senate and then the White House following the 1971 constitutional amendment extending suffrage to 18-year-olds. Winning the presidency with a "Truth-and-Love campaign which polarize[s] the generations" (issue #1) Prez initially seems to represent a radical break with political orthodoxy, as evidenced by his diverse and unusual cabinet: Prez enlists his own mother to serve as vice-president, and he recruits a (rather stereotypically characterized) Native American youth named Eagle Free to serve as director of the Federal Bureau of Investigations. Yet though he promises a new and peaceful approach to the problems of the United States, his eventual compromises on the use of military force turn his once enthusiastic constituency of young people against him. Although the series ended before Simon could explore this tension further, *Prez* still stands as a fascinating consideration of the United States' political landscape in a complex time.

Another offbeat comic from a mainstream publisher which frequently dealt with political issues was Marvel's ***Howard the Duck*** (1976–79, 1986), written by Steve Gerber. In 1976, the anthropomorphic title character decided to mount a third party campaign for the presidency of the United States, appealing to a public uninspired by either Jimmy Carter or Gerald Ford. After dumping a smooth-talking campaign adviser who has written all of his speeches before finding out what his candidate believes on the

issues, Howard chooses to run as a "people's candidate" (#8) who rejects the extremes of "animalistic conservatism and "jellyfish liberalism" (#7) and favors educating and empowering individual voters to understand and make decisions about matters of war and economics. His campaign mainly functions as a vehicle for Howard's scathing critique of the cheap materialism and consumerism of American life. As one shocked voter remarks, "My god, he's telling the truth! He'll be dead in a week!" (#8). Although Howard is driven from the race in short order by a phony sex scandal, his candidacy served as a way for writer Gerber to satirize American politics as shallow, superficial, and ultimately destructive to democracy.

Political questions began to move to the forefront in the superhero comics of the 1970s as well. Costumed adventurers were beginning to find a political voice, and in most cases they were critical of the status quo in the United States. Writer **Dennis O'Neil** brought an earnest political relevance to his run on DC's ***Green Lantern/Green Arrow***; in O'Neil's hands, the title characters frequently engaged in adventures that brought them into conflict over liberal and conservative versions of the American dream. O'Neil's premiere issue (#76, 1970) featured liberal gadfly Green Arrow chiding his sometime partner, Green Lantern, for his simple-minded approach to law and order—an approach that neglects the larger social problems underlying crime, including political corruption and racism. As an African American man tells Green Lantern, "I been readin' about you . . . How you work for the blue skins . . . And how on a planet someplace you helped out the orange skins . . . and you done considerable for the purple skins! Only there's skins you never bothered with—! The black skins! I want to know . . . How come?!" The heroes set out to investigate what Green Arrow calls the "hideous moral cancer [that] is rotting our very souls," taking on issues such as industrial pollution, the powers of the mass media, and the plight of Native Americans.

In Steve Englehart and Sal Buscema's *Captain America*, the title character vanquishes a racist, red-baiting 1950s version of himself, a victory which seems to suggest a rejection of a jingoistic, nationalistic American past (#153–56, 1972). However, Cap's further adventures complicated that cautiously optimistic conclusion: the "Secret Empire" storyline that ran through issues 169–73 (1974) reflected Watergate-era disillusionment with the American government and a growing cynicism with the political process itself. In these issues, Captain America finds himself the subject of a vicious smear campaign by the Committee to Regain America's Principles. CRAP—a clear allusion to Richard Nixon's CREEP (Committee to Re-Elect the President)—runs advertisements seeking to convince the public that the Sentinel of Liberty is a dangerous vigilante working in opposition to America's principles. As Cap and his partner the Falcon discover, CRAP is merely a front group for a shadowy cabal known as the Secret Empire, who intend to take over the United States. In a dramatic final confrontation in the Oval Office of the White House, Number One reveals himself to Captain America as a high-ranking politician who hungers for power that would not be "constrained by legalities" (#175). The revelation shakes Cap's faith in the very concept of America and leads him to take on a new identity, that of Nomad, the Man without a Country, for a short time.

Although not all of Captain America's adventures in the political realm were so dark, they did often continue to reflect a dissatisfaction with the limitations of the status quo in American politics. In the waning days of Jimmy Carter's presidency, Captain America even mulled a run at the nation's highest office himself. *Captain America* #250 (1980), written by Roger Stern and Don Perlin, features a story in which the New Populist Party seeks to recruit the hero to run on their ticket and defy the deeply entrenched two-party system. As one enthusiastic NPP member tells him, "People wouldn't have to settle for the lesser of two evils—they'd actually have someone to vote *for!*" Cap eventually decides against running, believing that he is better suited to preserve the American dream than to engage with the daily compromises of political reality.

Few politically focused comics of the 1980s shared the mostly upbeat attitude of Stern's Captain America. British comics scribe **Alan Moore** extrapolated from Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's extreme conservatism to create the bleak, dystopian future England of ***V for Vendetta*** (1982–88), while his run on ***Swamp Thing*** featured a character, Nukeface, who becomes poisonous to those around him when he unwittingly drinks improperly stored toxic waste; pages crowded with newspaper clippings about the dangers of toxic waste suggested the urgency of the problem (#35–36, 1985). In ***The Dark Knight Returns*** (1986), **Frank Miller** portrays **Superman** as the passive dupe of a corrupt United States government led by a glib Ronald Reagan. The 1980s also saw the rise of **alternative comics**; distributed through the burgeoning direct market but creator-driven and unaffiliated with the major publishers, alternative comics faced few impediments to engaging with political questions in a sophisticated manner. **Howard Chaykin's *American Flagg!*** (1983–89) satirized a United States in which government-controlled mass culture had robbed American citizens of their ability to uphold the responsibilities of participatory democracy. In the first volume of ***Love and Rockets*** (1982–96) many of Gilbert **Hernandez**'s "Palomar" stories critiqued United States involvement in Latin America. **Dave Sim's *Cerebus*** (1977–2004) began as a pulp genre pastiche but eventually became a complicated and controversial treatment of the themes of corrupting power, the intersection of religion and politics, gender roles, and the relationship between politics and art. Another important creator from the world of alternative comics, Paul Chadwick, began in the 1990s to use his sensitive man-monster **Concrete** to explore political questions. The most notable result was *Concrete: Think Like a Mountain* (1996) a miniseries which dealt with the ethical implications of extremism in the environmental movement.

In recent years, treatments of political questions in comics have often been inspired by the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as by domestic debates over civil rights. **Art Spiegelman**'s *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004) not only reflects upon the trauma of 9/11 but also criticizes the way in which the George W. Bush administration exploited the attacks for political gain. Superheroes, always potent metaphors for the uses and abuses of power, have often been pressed into the service of political narratives. Superman villain Lex Luthor briefly served as President

of the United States, and Iron Man took a turn as Secretary of Defense. **Brian K. Vaughan**'s ongoing series ***Ex Machina*** (2004–) offers a more sophisticated take on superheroes in politics; it stars Mitchell Hundred, also known as the superhero the Great Machine, who finds himself serving as mayor of New York after he successfully defends one of the World Trade Center towers from Al-Qaeda. *Ex Machina* deftly complicates the distinction between the superhuman action of costumed adventurers and the all-too-human process of politics. Perhaps the highest profile mainstream comic book to tackle politics in recent years is Marvel's 2006 miniseries ***Civil War***. Its central conflict, involving a law requiring superhumans to register with and become agents of the government after a disastrous accident, has been widely interpreted as an allegory for the ongoing debate over the role of civil rights in a time of war. Not every comic to deal with politics in recent years has been so grimly serious, however. In early 2009, comic book enthusiast Barack Obama made an appearance in the pages of *Amazing* ***Spider-Man*** #583, in a story in which Spider-Man thwarts his old foe the Chameleon's attempt to disrupt Obama's inauguration—and gets a fist bump from the President in return.

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Brannon Costello

POST-APOCALYPTIC NARRATIVES. Though "apocalypse" or "Armageddon" originally refers to the Christian concept of the end of the known world as a result of the war between the Anti-Christ and Jesus Christ, a post-apocalyptic narrative is not necessarily spiritually derived. While some stories invoke Christian motifs and theology, others do not. Typically, the term "post-apocalyptic" refers to a world that has suffered a single or multiple cataclysmic events. Therefore, post-apocalyptic narratives speculate about life after a civilization's destruction and how the survivors attempt to rebuild civilization. These narratives often reflect the fears and anxieties of the times that produce them; projecting the concerns and anxieties in question into an extreme all-destructive power or event. The civilization's destruction can be a result of internal or external threats. Common triggers can include any one or more of the following: environmental

devastation or destruction, plague, alien invasion, war, nuclear destruction or radiation, and genetic contamination.

Post-apocalyptic narratives are often confused with dystopian narratives but are distinctly different. Post-apocalyptic stories focus on the rebuilding or dealing with the destruction of organized civilization, whereas dystopian narratives deal with problematic ongoing societies that are often highly structured. There is also occasion to lump post-apocalyptic narratives with invasion or conquest narratives which again, do not necessarily fit together thematically. Therefore, stories from the classic comic strips and pulp fiction of *Buck Rogers* (1929) and *Flash Gordon* (1934) are not classified as post-apocalyptic, because civilizations are still intact.

Several authors contributed to the development of the post-apocalyptic genre and therefore, influenced comics' own developments of genre conventions. Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826) is marked as the first modern post-apocalyptic narrative, though it was never as popular as later stories. Richard Jefferies's *After London* (1885) was similarly popular at the time but did not necessarily have long-lasting influence. By contrast, H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895), *War of the Worlds* (1898) and many more of his writings were popular throughout the 20th century and influenced plotlines for comics, films, and sequel novels by other authors. However, the early 20th century had a good share of popular post-apocalyptic narratives including M. P. Shiel's *The Purple Cloud* (1901), William Hope Hodgson's *The Night Land* (1912), Jack London's *The Scarlet Plague* (1912), Karel Capek's play, *R.U.R.* (1921), and Edgar Rice Burroughs's *The Moon Men* series (1926).

One could argue that the earliest comic to deal with a post-apocalyptic event was the **Superman** narrative, given that it takes place in the aftermath of the destruction of the planet Krypton. Meanwhile, Superman, like many **superheroes** after him, continually fought the apocalyptic destruction of society. On occasion, superhero stories will venture into post-apocalyptic settings, but usually as an alternative-universe or time-traveling accidents such as the story "Superman Under the Red Sun!" in ***Action Comics*** #300, where Superman is sent to the future by his enemies. Some one-million years in the future, Superman finds a decayed world where humans are virtually nonexistent and Earth's sun had become red.

From the rise of comic books through the early 1950s, few comics featured post-apocalyptic stories. Featured in *Hit Comics* #1 (1940), the "Blaze Barton" feature was essentially the first post-apocalyptic narrative in comics, though its direction and themes only marginally resemble how the genre is understood today. Initially the story revolved around Blaze Barton, his boss Professor Solis and Solis's daughter Avis, who have created a fortified city to protect against the increasing heat as Earth tilts extremely close to the sun. When they emerge from the city, they find that much of humanity is dead and Earth's vegetation and animals have mutated. Early plots had them rebuilding Earth while also encountering new monstrous or humanoid creatures. However, by *Hit Comics* #5, Earth had prospered enough that Blaze was sent on to explore the galaxy. Blaze Barton continued in *Hit Comics* until issue #13 when the series abruptly stopped.

Many comics stories have dealt with the eminent destruction of Earth, but it is typically either saved at the last minute by the story's protagonist, or the end of the world serves as the punch line for the story. Often, these latter stories were there to prove a point or teach a cautionary lesson. The stories revealed how Earth fell into decay, but few went beyond that to establish any substantial "life after the end of the world" scenarios. For example, in *Weird Tales of the Future* #6 (1953), the story "Plaything" features a perfect utopian Earth with civilization prospering until unexplainable environmental devastation destroys society. To explain the destruction, the narrator pulls back to show Earth as a toy for a child-like god who has decided to play catch with it. These kinds of stories attempted to reinforce the unexplained forces of the universe and how susceptible humankind was to the whims of nature.

Other narratives were informed by a sense of the futility of all human undertakings. These particularly were influenced by the destruction and devastation of World War II. In "Return" from *Weird Science* #5 (1951), the story focuses on a shuttle of scientists that leaves Earth just prior to atomic war, and returns some 500,000 years later to see if life still exists. They encounter a world of oversized humans who had not technologically progressed beyond the world in which the travelers had left. When they inquire as to what happened, they discover that the world is ignorant of the long ago atomic war and trace their history back only 200,000 years. The story ends with the present-day scientists, aware of impending doom, deciding to take a shuttle into space; thereby creating a cycle of avoiding or ignoring the destruction. "Flight of the Future" from *Weird Tales of the Future* #2 (1952) also presents a desolate future. The story tells of a murderer who escapes to a future by volunteering for suspended animation. He reawakens 20,000 years in the future, when humanity has decayed into hulking imbeciles. The only human alive turns out to be the man he believed he had killed in the past. In the final scene, the two last intelligent humans kill one another, leaving the lumbering masses to further devolve.

While the **Comics Code** in 1954 did not specifically forbid post-apocalyptic narratives, Part A, Section 6 states that "In every instance good shall triumph over evil and the criminal punished for his misdeeds," and Part B, Section 2 states that "Inclusion of stories dealing with evil shall be used or shall be published only where the intent is to illustrate a moral issue and in no case shall evil be presented alluringly nor as to injure the sensibilities of the reader." Such restrictions severely limited the types of narratives told, since the destruction of civilization by most means implied evil triumphing over good. Publishers often avoided this potential conundrum by placing post-apocalyptic stories on other planets, thereby bypassing any debate about the moral representation of a destroyed Earth. The main exception to this came in the form of the ***Classics Illustrated*** adaptation of *The Time Machine* (1956), which followed the published adaptation of Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1955).

However, the mid-20th century was awash in post-apocalyptic themes in books, radio, and film. Many started as novels only to be turned into films (and some even comics) later on. Films such as *War of the Worlds* (1953), *The Time Machine* (1960),

The Last Man on Earth (1964), *Planet of the Apes* (1968), and *The Omega Man* (1971) all started as novels but eventually made their way into comics.

The comics industry was still capable of creating its own original material in this genre as well. **DC Comics** began the story of the Atomic Knights starting in *Strange Adventures* #117 (1960). After civilization's demise in the Hydrogen War of 1986, the Atomic Knights, under Sergeant Gardner Grayle, fight against the Black Baron, the ruler of a small Midwest fiefdom. These characters were featured in 15 stories and then occasionally appeared in the *Hercules Unbound* series (1977). DC Comics also launched *Kamandi: The Last Boy on Earth* (1972), which centers on a youth who lives in a world where anthropomorphic animals dominate the world, often stalking him as prey. The story had grown out of the story, "The Last Enemy," in the anthology comic *Alarming Tales* #1 (1957). In 1964, Gold Key Comics launched *Mighty Samson*, a series following a hide-clad warrior wandering the northeast region of the United States after a nuclear war. The series ran intermittently and barely made it to issue #32 (1982). **Marvel Comics** also played with post-apocalyptic themes in the 1970s with its creation of the character Deathlok in *Astonishing Tales* #25 (1974). After a fatal wound, Luther Manning is resurrected into the cyborgnetic body, Deathlok, in a future where the United States has all but been destroyed by factions. Eventually, Manning returns to his original time, but for a while he attempts to right the wrongs of the disheveled future. In 1975, **Charlton Comics** ran *Doomsday +1*, a 12 issue series in which a nuclear war results in the near annihilation of mankind; the crew of a returning space shuttle finds themselves in a very different world than the one they left.

From the 1980s to the 2000s, the standard triggers for an apocalypse continued to be ecological or environmental disaster, war (nuclear or otherwise), plague, or, particularly in the 2000s, **zombies**. Ironically, this range represented the Biblical Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Pestilence, War, Famine, and Death. The other major theme to emerge at this time, almost never addressed or referenced previously in comics, was post-apocalyptic worlds based upon religious or spiritual beliefs. Series such as *Curse of the Spawn* (1996), *Just a Pilgrim* (2000), *Ascend* (2004), and *Therefore Repent* (2008) all rely heavily on specific Christian elements of the build up to and aftermath of the Apocalypse. This was in part fueled by the rise in popularity of Christian fiction, particularly apocalyptic fiction, including *The New York Times* best-selling series *Left Behind*, by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. Other series have spoofed the religious-oriented apocalypse, including *Jesus Hates Zombies* (2007) from Alterna Comics. This collection of shorts features the second coming of Jesus, a bat-wielding, jeans-wearing wanderer of a nearly abandoned Earth dishing out death to zombie horders.

Xenozoic Tales (1987) best represents the ecological disaster narrative. Environmental devastation and a series of cataclysmic natural disasters force humanity to resorts to underground cities for nearly six centuries. Upon reemerging, they discover that the world has been reclaimed by dinosaurs and other life forms, leaving humanity to attempt to recreate civilization. The war motif can be found in *Ex-**Mutants*** (1986), a series that takes place in the future after war has destroyed civilization and mutated

the population. Five genetically-corrected people (ex-mutants) are sent to help bring hope to humanity, though with little success. ***Y: The Last Man*** (2002) illustrates the plague theme in post-apocalyptic narratives. After the near-instant violent death of the male population, Yorick, the sole male survivor in a world of women, works with others to figure out what happened and how to keep the human race alive.

The series *Deadworld* first appeared in 1987 and has continued to be published sporadically through the 2000s. Here, a zombie apocalypse is triggered when a portal is opened that ushers in King Zombie and a horde of zombies that wreak havoc upon the world. The series has been praised more for its violence and gruesome drawings than its plotline. By contrast, **Robert Kirkman's *The Walking Dead*** series (2003–) focuses more on the humans in the wake of zombies destroying the known world and has continued to receive acclaim from the industry.

Both British comics and Japanese **manga** have also had prominent influence in shaping post-apocalyptic narratives for American comics. The British **science fiction** weekly comic series, *2000 AD* (1977) has featured numerous narratives dealing life after civilization's demise. Yet the most influential series to come out of *2000 AD* is inarguable "Judge Dredd," first appearing in *2000 AD* #2 and in every issue since. After the "Apocalypse War," the world has broken down into giant city-states barely maintained by the Judge system: law officials who act as judge, jury, and executioner to any violators. Though the comic series never gained serious ground in American culture, it was used as source material for a big-production Hollywood film of the same name in 1995. Judge Dredd in some ways evoked similar themes and landscapes to those explored by authors such as Philip K. Dick and William Gibson, where despite a world with increasing technology, world systems continue to break down in the face of corporate greed and manipulation, a decaying public sphere, and increased dependence on technology that reoriented life to the point of being foreign to its readers. To this end, *Tank Girl* drew more on contemporary visions of the punk and popular culture when it appeared in *Deadline* (1988). The series focuses primarily on a former bounty-hunter who is now hunted by others. As the title suggests, she commandeers and drives a tank through her adventures in the ruined landscapes of civilization. Finally, **Alan Moore's *V for Vendetta*** (1982–88), while perhaps best viewed as a dystopian narrative, depicts a dystopia that arises in the aftermath of a nuclear war.

Manga became increasingly popular in the United States in the early 1990s, also influencing the production of a number of manga-influenced American comics. Some of the earliest and still most popular manga focused on post-apocalyptic situations; a genre thoroughly explored by a culture that had witnessed first hand the catastrophic effects of nuclear power. In *Akira* (1982), a motorcycle gang in Neo-Tokyo is torn apart as one member, Tetsuo Shima, gains psychic abilities and another, Shōtarō Kaneda, attempts to stop him from abusing his power. Both are pulled into a larger range of events in a post-nuclear war world with some people developing new abilities while others are unwilling lab experiments. *Fist of the North Star* (1983) follows the exploits of Kenshiro, a martial arts fighter who roams a world destroyed by nuclear war, taking down

warlords and villains who prey upon the innocent. In the United States, Epic Comics began publishing *Akira* in 1988, and Viz Communications started *Fist of the North Star* in 1989. However, one of the earliest English translations of Japanese manga also offered what could be considered a real-world account of a post-apocalyptic situation. Originally serialized in 1973, the series ***Barefoot Gen*** first appeared to U.S. audiences in 1976. The story tells the story of Gen, a survivor of the Hiroshima bombing and his attempts to rebuild life among the ruins of Hiroshima with most of his family dead. The series reflects many of the experiences that the author, Keiji Nakazawa experienced as a survivor of the event.

Both Marvel and DC Comics have played around with the idea of post-apocalyptic futures for their continuity-based characters. Despite the many "Crisis" series that DC has published over the years, their real attempt at depicting a world in the aftermath of civilization's destruction and its ultimate revival came in 1996 with **Mark Waid** and **Alex Ross**'s miniseries ***Kingdom Come***. Here, after many of Earth's original superheroes have retired or died, a new generation of super-powered people proves less responsible than their predecessors, generating widespread chaos. Eventually, Superman is coaxed out of retirement and joins up with others in an attempt to reestablish order, but with so many fronts and factions, he, **Batman**, **Wonder Woman**, and others are barely able to hold off nuclear destruction.

By contrast, Marvel has tread rather deeply into post-apocalyptic stories over the years and done so in such a way as to keep it relevant to mainstream continuity. One of the earliest storylines to do this was "Days of Our Future Past" in *Uncanny* ***X-Men*** #141–42 (1981). Though this story is initially set in a dystopian future where mutants were killed or herded into internment camps, it gives birth to a variety of future post-apocalyptic narratives taking place over the following three decades in which numerous time travelers visit their past (the X-Men's present) to prevent the future disruption. There, events were often focused around the assassination of Professor Charles Xavier as well as Senator Robert Kelly. The assassination of Charles Xavier also triggers the major crossover storyline known as "Age of the Apocalypse" (1995). Through the use of time travel, Xavier is killed even before he creates the X-Men. The world is reformed through the machinations of the evil immortal mutant, Apocalypse, who privileges mutants while also letting the world decay and fracture.

Building off the success of *Kingdom Come*, Ross and Jim Krueger created the ***Earth X*** series, a 42 comic series in which Earth becomes a central battleground for god-like beings. In the wake of the battle, the heroes, villains, and humans of Earth further mutate and eventually even defeat death. Marvel's most recent post-apocalyptic series, *Marvel Zombies* (2005), explores the concept of superhero zombies ravaging the known universe (and eventually multiverse) in search of more living beings to eat.

For most of its history, the post-apocalyptic narrative has fallen primarily into the genre of **science fiction**, but increasingly, in the second half of the 20th century, **horror** has also featured its share of post-apocalyptic titles influenced by Richard Matheson's novel *I Am Legend* (1954), and George Romero's *Living Dead* film series (beginning

in 1968), as well as Stephen King's novel *The Stand* (1978). **Western** motifs inflected through such films as *A Boy and His Dog* (1974) and *Mad Max* (1979), as well as novels including Stephen King's *Dark Tower* series (1982) and David Brin's *The Postman* (1985) grew influential in the post-apocalyptic comics by the beginning of 2000s. Thus, both **Garth Ennis**'s *Pilgrim* miniseries (2001) and King's adapted and newly created *Dark Tower* comic series (2007) evoked a Western style. In any case, with a foreboding sense of millennialism upon the lead-up to the second millennium C.E., followed by heightened tension between the West and Islamic worlds in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, the decline of U.S. hegemony, and the forthcoming Mayan date for the end of the world in December of 2012, contemporary concerns and anxieties have fueled a burgeoning interest in post-apocalyptic narratives in comics and all forms of storytelling.

Lance Eaton

PREACHER (1995–2000) was created by writer **Garth Ennis** and artist Steve Dillon, and originally released serially by **DC Comics**' imprint Vertigo. The series was collected in a trade paperback series of nine volumes. Ennis's best-known work to date, *Preacher*'s violent, humorous, and often absurd depiction of American culture and mythology has gained a large cult following and garnered Ennis numerous industry awards.

Preacher tells the story of Jesse Custer, a disillusioned preacher forced into ordination by his evil maternal grandmother, Marie L'Angelle, and her henchmen, Jody and T. C. During a sermon in his tiny Annville, Texas, church, Jesse is possessed by Genesis, the forbidden offspring of an angel and a demon. Genesis imbues Jesse with the Word of God, which forces anyone hearing it to obey his commands. Following his congregation's immolation, Jesse sets out to hunt down God and force the deity to answer for his flawed governance of creation, meanwhile battling such foes as the Grail, a conspiratorial network controlling the governments of the world and protecting the bloodline of Jesus Christ.

Jesse's quest reunites him with his ex-girlfriend Tulip O'Hare, a college-dropout turned hit-woman, and Cassidy, a 100-year-old Irish **vampire**, whose hard-drinking, party-loving attitude immediately endears him to Jesse. After Jesse falls out of an airplane during their escape from the Grail, Tulip believes he is dead and completely breaks down, turning to alcohol and tranquilizers, which Cassidy is all too happy to provide. After six months of running from the Grail and reluctantly living and sleeping with Cassidy, Tulip comes to her senses and seeks refuge at her friend Amy's house, where she is discovered by and reunited with Jesse.

For most of the series, Cassidy is Jesse's best friend and drinking buddy. Although he dedicates himself to helping Jesse complete his quest, Cassidy falls in love with Tulip, and gradually reveals himself to be a monster, as he all but kidnaps and rapes Tulip while they both believe Jesse to be dead. He finds Tulip shortly after her reunion with Jesse, and he and Jesse arrange a final meeting to hash out their differences. Before the meeting, Cassidy makes a deal with God: Cassidy will incapacitate Jesse long enough

for God to rid him of Genesis, which will allow God to escape Jesse. In return, both Jesse and Cassidy survive the ordeal, since Genesis can only be removed upon Jesse's death and since Cassidy intends to let the sunlight destroy him in front of Jesse. Cassidy and God reach this agreement unaware of the deal Jesse has made with the Saint of Killers to have God killed.

Jesse encounters a host of nemeses on his journey, beginning with his demented grandmother and her lethal enforcer, Jody, who killed Jesse's father. Shortly after their quest begins, Jesse and Tulip are captured by Jody and his sidekick T. C., and taken back to Angelville, the L'Angelle family's plantation. Jody kills Tulip in front of Jesse in an attempt to break his will, which nearly works until God brings her back to life and tells her to warn Jesse off of his quest. They eventually escape, killing Jody, T. C., and Marie L'Angelle in the process.

Jesse's main opponent is Herr Starr, who leads the Grail, bent on bringing about Armageddon and ruling the world from behind its puppet messiah, a hopelessly inbred degenerate spawned by years of interbreeding within Christ's bloodline. Starr refuses to serve a warped messiah, and focuses on Jesse Custer, with his Word of God, as the most likely replacement. At the series' climax, Starr kills Jesse and then dies in a gunfight with Tulip.

Jesse also has to deal with the Saint of Killers, set on Jesse's trail by the angels who let Genesis escape in the first place. A former Confederate soldier turned bounty hunter, he is killed while attempting revenge on the bandits responsible for the deaths of his wife and daughter. Condemned to Hell, he is unable to let go of his hate, and is offered the position of Saint of Killers by the Angel of Death, who has grown weary of his duties. Indestructible and furnished with a pair of Colt revolvers that can kill anything, the Saint destroys armies in his attempt to kill Jesse. Jesse finally convinces him that God is at fault for his family's death, and sets the Saint on the deity's trail instead.

After Starr finally manages to kill Jesse, Genesis is set free. No longer having to deal with Genesis, God returns to heaven to take up his throne, from which he will be invincible. He arrives to find the Saint of Killers waiting amid a host of dead archangels. The Saint then blows God away, finally earning his rest. In the meantime, through Cassidy's deal with God, Jesse is brought back to life without Genesis or the Word of God, and Cassidy, who dies from exposure to sunlight shortly after Jesse is shot, comes back to life as a human. The series ends with Jesse and Tulip's reunion, while Cassidy sets about returning to life as a man.

Despite the Nietzschean resonance of God's death, *Preacher* is mostly an examination of American mythology, specifically frontier and Western narratives. *Preacher* dramatizes Richard Slotkin's argument that the defining American myth is that of the Anglo-Saxon **race** revitalizing itself through savage warfare on the frontier. According to Slotkin, the persistence of this myth accounts for the periodic resurgence of **Westerns** in popular culture, while *Preacher* suggests the extent to which **religion** is central to this national-racial myth. Jesse Custer, whose name derives from the near-mythological Western figures of Jesse James and George Armstrong Custer, is the quintessential

self-made man; he educated himself from the public library and lives by his wits and the skills he learned "back home" from Jody—riding, shooting, and mechanical skills. Although a man of the cloth, Jesse's idols are his father and John Wayne, who appears periodically as a manifestation of Jesse's conscience. However, characters such as Amy and Tulip provide a far stronger female presence than is typical of the traditional Western. The series ranges from the bayous of Mississippi to the Grand Canyon and the deserts of Arizona, from New York to San Francisco, and culminates at the Alamo. Though an Irish writer, Garth Ennis writes like a patriotic American, and he seems to forgive America's faults because of its deeply ingrained belief in the ability to start over—though it is also the case that many of the most sinister forces in the series are distinctively American.

Preacher also further explores the disdain for religion Ennis expressed in his earlier original efforts *Troubled Souls* (1989) and *For a Few Troubles More* (1990), exploring the fallout of the early 20th-century Protestant-Catholic conflict in Ireland. From the millennial Grail, to the evil Marie L'Angelle, to a God who deserts his creation, every religious organization or figure depicted in *Preacher* is self-serving and power-seeking, and the series ultimately calls for America to desert the religion it no longer needs.

Preacher won two **Eisner Awards**, in 1998 and 2001 respectively. It also won Ennis the Comics Buyer's Guide Award for "Favorite Writer" five years running, from 1997 through 2001, and was nominated for a host of Eagle Awards in 1999, winning for "Favourite Colour Comic Book."

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Grant Bain

PRIDE OF BAGHDAD is a graphic novel released in September, 2006, by **DC**-Vertigo, written by **Brian K. Vaughan** (***Ex Machina***, ***Runaways***, ***Y: The Last Man***) with art by Niko Henrichon (*Barnum!*). The story revolves around a pride of four lions living in the Baghdad Zoo at the time of the 2003 U.S. invasion on Iraq. After the zoo is bombed, they escape into the war-torn streets of Baghdad. Throughout their travels, they encounter other animals both friendly and antagonistic who introduce them to the world outside the zoo; but before they escape the city, they are shot down by U.S. Armed Forces. The concept was inspired by actual news reports of lions escaping from the zoo and roaming Baghdad until killed by U.S. forces. Vaughan fictionalizes the lions' internal experience as a means to engage in conversation about the invasion of Baghdad and the Iraq War.

The escaped lions include three adults: Zill, the alpha male who slides back and forth from being reasonable to being violent; Safa, a wounded elderly lioness who still maintains matriarchal influence, despite her acceptance of being caged; and Noor, primary partner to Zill and romantic about life in wild. They are joined by Ali, Noor's cub, who

has known nothing but captivity. At the onset of the story, Noor is attempting to forge a peace and overthrow the zoo's human regime to gain freedom for all of its animals, but her potential allies hold no faith in the lions and their carnivorous predisposition. While Ali begs for more stories about life in the wild, Safa reflects on the violence, subjugation, and even rape she experienced in the wild from Zill and his kin. After an explosion that destroys their cage and sets free the pride, all but Safa move forward with many of the other animals as they stampede away from the fire and destruction. Along the way, Ali is kidnapped by a fanatical group of apes who wish to physically mark Ali so that he is part of their group. The cub is rescued by Safa, and the pride regroups and exits the zoo. Their progression leads them to encounter an aged turtle who warns them of the havoc and destruction experienced by him and his family in the last war (the first Gulf War). After averting a collision with U.S. tanks, the lions find themselves wandering the streets of a desolate and dead Baghdad, filled with human corpses. They follow a pack of horses only to find themselves entering the Republican Palace where they encounter a beaten and dying lion, Rashid. The dying lion is not the only curious creature held in captivity in Saddam's palace. A bear, Fajer, attacks the pride and a fierce battle ensures. While they do win against the savage bear, Safa loses her other eye. At the end of the day, the pride comes together on a rooftop to watch the setting sun—a privilege denied them while in captivity. Just after sunset, the lions are shot down by U.S. soldiers, who claim the animals were charging toward them.

The story itself runs parallel to the actual invasion of Baghdad and U.S. political intentions of dismantling weapons of mass destruction and installing a democracy. In interviews, Vaughan admits to no overall theory for his commentary but rather challenging the doctrine of preemptive strikes and interrogating the concepts of freedom and liberty in a post-9/11 culture. These concerns inform the text at different moments. Often skeptical and realistic about life before imprisonment, Safa's statement, "Freedom can't be given, only earned" evokes the anxiety about the pride's newly found freedom as well as the U.S. goals and mission. Later, the pride will encounter an antelope that Noor had been attempting to convince to join in the zoo rebellion. Isolated, the antelope is easy prey; but Noor lets it go with the reminder, "Let them all know that the antelopes could have been free ages ago if they had just been brave enough to trust me." The underlining commentary suggests that the different political and religious groups in Iraq might have earned their own freedom without the U.S. invasion. Meanwhile, The pride of lions has not attained but has been (temporarily) handed freedom: a not-so-proud moment. However, they are thrown into a world they do not fully comprehend; and in the end they cannot truly attain their freedom, as it is robbed from them by those who had initially, albeit unintentionally, liberated them—the U.S. Armed Forces. The suggestion that the American invasion was anything but the liberating event it was claimed to be is inescapable.

Unlike other successful ventures of Vaughan, *Pride of Baghdad* was planned and executed as a graphic novel from the beginning. It was well-received upon its release, winning accolades and awards, including the Best Original Graphic Novel of 2006 by

IGN.com. Independent publishers had directly dealt with the Iraq War by 2006 and both **Marvel** and **DC** had evoked parallels with Iraq (through often unnamed Middle-Eastern countries or even Kahndaq, the Middle-Eastern kingdom of DC Comics' Black Adam). *Pride of Baghdad*, however, was the first wide-release comic to deal directly with the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Lance Eaton

PRIEST, CHRISTOPHER (1961–). Christopher Priest (born James Christopher Owsley) has been active in comics for over three decades, carving out a reputation as a writer of compelling, sophisticated, and original adventure genre stories. Priest also holds the distinctions of being the first African American editor at **Marvel** Comics (1984) as well as at **DC Comics** (1990), and of being the first African American to pen stories for either of the two major publishers without a collaborating writer. He is sometimes referred to as Christopher J. Priest to distinguish him from the well-known British **science fiction** and **fantasy** author Christopher Priest.

Priest began his career as an intern (as James Owsley) in 1978 at Marvel Comics, where he formed a friendship with writer and editor Larry Hama, an important early mentor. Priest eventually became Hama's assistant editor and soon began to try his hand at writing as well. He contributed several short pieces to *Crazy*, Marvel's humor magazine, and published his first **superhero** work with 1983's *The Falcon* limited series. Promoted to editor in 1984, Priest was given the reins of Marvel's three regular **Spider-Man** titles, where he helped launch the careers of renowned creators such as, Peter David, **Kyle Baker,** and Joe Quesada. After an editorial shake-up at Marvel, Priest left for DC, where he contributed stories for ***Action Comics*** *Weekly* and wrote the *Unknown Soldier* miniseries (1988). In 1990, Priest became an editor at DC, where he was eventually placed in charge of the Impact Comics line, DC's attempt to reach a younger audience. Priest was also instrumental in the genesis of **Milestone Comics**, a creator-owned line distributed by DC that featured an ethnically and racially diverse creative team and cast of characters. After changing his name for personal reasons in the early 1990s, Priest eventually left his editorial post but remained active in comics as a writer.

Though Priest's work is wide-ranging and diverse, a survey reveals several distinctive characteristics, including the (frequently humorous) defamiliarization of genre conventions, the examination of the ethical and political ramifications of the superhero, and a nuanced and mature approach to non-white characters in a genre with a long history of racial stereotyping. These themes are evident in early works, such as his 1987 *Spider-Man vs. Wolverine* one-shot, a story that places the title characters in physical and ideological conflict over the morality of killing, and his run on *Power Man and Iron Fist* (#111–25, 1984–86), in which Priest offers a complex treatment of **Luke Cage** (Power Man), a character whose depiction was to that point still largely tied to his roots in the blaxploitation genre.

Priest's later career includes such notable work as his lighthearted adventure series with frequent collaborator M. D. Bright, *Quantum and Woody* (1997–98), as well as

several increasingly ambitious treatments of **race**, **politics**, and the superhero genre. His short-lived series for DC, *Xero* (1997–98) tells the story of a blond-haired, blue-eyed super-assassin whose secret identity was an African American basketball player; as scholar Marc Singer has noted, the series raised important questions about the implicit whiteness of the superhero ideal. Priest is perhaps best known for his critically acclaimed five-year run on Marvel's ***Black Panther*** (1998–2003). Priest revitalized the largely neglected character by focusing on his role as king of an enormously powerful and technologically advanced African nation in an uneasy relationship with the United States and other so-called first world powers.

After the cancellation of *Black Panther*, Priest worked on two acclaimed but short-lived series, *The Crew* (2003), ***Captain America****, and the Falcon* (2004). Since their cancellation he has been largely inactive in comics, focusing his attentions instead on his work as a minister.

Brannon Costello

PROMETHEA. Created by writer **Alan Moore** and artist J. H. Williams III, *Promethea* is a monthly comic book series originally published between 1999 and 2005. The series was one of the initial four titles published under the America's Best Comics (ABC) imprint of **Jim Lee**'s Wildstorm Comics. Moore, the primary creative force behind the small line of comics, was given substantial creative freedom; however, he was displeased that **DC Comics** purchased Wildstorm shortly after arranging his distribution deal. Although that corporate decision did not affect the content of Moore's comics, he had made a prior pledge to never again work for the large publisher. Nevertheless, ABC remained under DC's umbrella during the entirety of *Promethea*'s 32-issue run. With the exception of a short flashback sequence in issue #4 illustrated by Charles Vess, Williams was responsible for all of the artwork; consequently, the comic was frequently off its intended monthly published schedule to accommodate Williams's intricate style and the intense demands Moore placed upon his artist. Like the other ABC books, *Promethea* re-imagines the **superhero** genre, principally by blending it with other genres and disparate influences. Yet, within Moore's body of work at ABC, *Promethea* is where his various obsessions—such as the occult and magic, a skewed perspective on the superhero genre, and the purposes of **fantasy** and art—coalesce most evidently and, as many critics argue, successfully.

The plot of *Promethea* is frustratingly difficult to summarize. Sophie Bangs, a college student living in New York City, is conducting research for a term paper on a fictional, female character known as Promethea, who has appeared, over the years, in various incarnations and in different media. Sophie learns that "Promethea," existing as an idea, is a link between the physical, "real" world, and the Immateria, the realm of fantasy and imagination. Like many artists before her, Sophie is able to channel Promethea's powers—which alters Sophie's physical appearance and demeanor—by producing creative works about Promethea.

The 32-issue series is roughly structured into three acts. Act I involves Sophie adjusting to life as Promethea and learning more about her powers, magic, and those whom

Promethea inhabited before; Act II sees Sophie on a mystical journey through the 10 *sephiroths*, or spheres, that comprise the conception of the universe as described by the mystical teachings within Judaism known as Kabbalah; and Act III has Promethea fulfilling her cataclysmic prophesy to "end the world." Moore makes the argument that humanity's notion of reality is inextricably entwined with human imagination, and that stories and fantasy define reality, as opposed to reflecting it. Although not a totally original postulation, *Promethea* is nonetheless noteworthy in the way it not only manifests its core theme, but also serves as a meta-text that actualizes it, using a story to comment upon the functions and significance of other stories. It is also notable for its particularly effective use of the combination of image and text to further its own storytelling.

Superficially, *Promethea* corresponds to the conventions and expectations of the superhero genre. Sophie, a relatively recognizable and relatable character, is bestowed with remarkable powers through somewhat mysterious sources. Although these newfound abilities beleaguer her personal life, she is nonetheless compelled to use them for the welfare of others. Sophie is not the first, or only, super-powered person in the world of *Promethea*, and she occasionally allies herself with New York's premiere "science heroes," The Five Swell Guys, whose powers and history go largely unexplained. Yet, unlike most other superhero comics, Moore does not strive to represent a recognizable reality. New York City in the year 1999, as depicted in the series, is similar to the New York of the "real world," yet has clearly been transformed by the presence of "super" people and advanced technological progress: flying cars and "living" gels are seen as commonplace by the general populace. Whereas most superhero comics present fantastic elements as intrusions into a world that otherwise reflects our own, *Promethea* offers a world where verisimilitude and fantasy are inextricably, blatantly entwined.

The interconnectedness of fiction with reality in Moore's vision of New York City points to *Promethea*'s central concern: the roles of art, story, and imagination in human understanding. According to *Promethea*, when a person dreams or engages in creative thought, they enter the ethereal realm known as "The Immateria." This land is comprised of possibilities and thoughts, which can travel back to the physical plane; however, the translation from notion to reality is not perfect—the idea of a chair is not the same as an actual chair. The means to which these translations occur are stories, or more precisely, metaphors. Moore configures the indivisible relationship between imagination and reality around the importance of metaphor, and uses the mystical representational models of the Kabbalah and Tarot as means of illustrating how symbolism and story create meaning and participate in constructing the human framework of existence.

The interrelationship of fantasy with reality is made explicit as Sophie prepares to depart on her mystical tour through the Kabbalah's map of existence, whose 32 paths correspond to *Promethea*'s number of issues. As she begins her journey, Sophie meets the personified Universe: a celestial woman entwined with a glowing serpent. When told that the woman represents imagination and the snake indicates earthly, growing things, Sophie asks if the snake's head is at the woman's feet to represent imagination "growing

up out" of material life. The snake replies, "No. It'sss there becaussse I am her ssservant." In other words, physical existence does not result in or engender imagination; rather, the material world is subordinate to and dependent upon human creativity. Promethea—who is a living story, or a story come to life—embodies this philosophy.

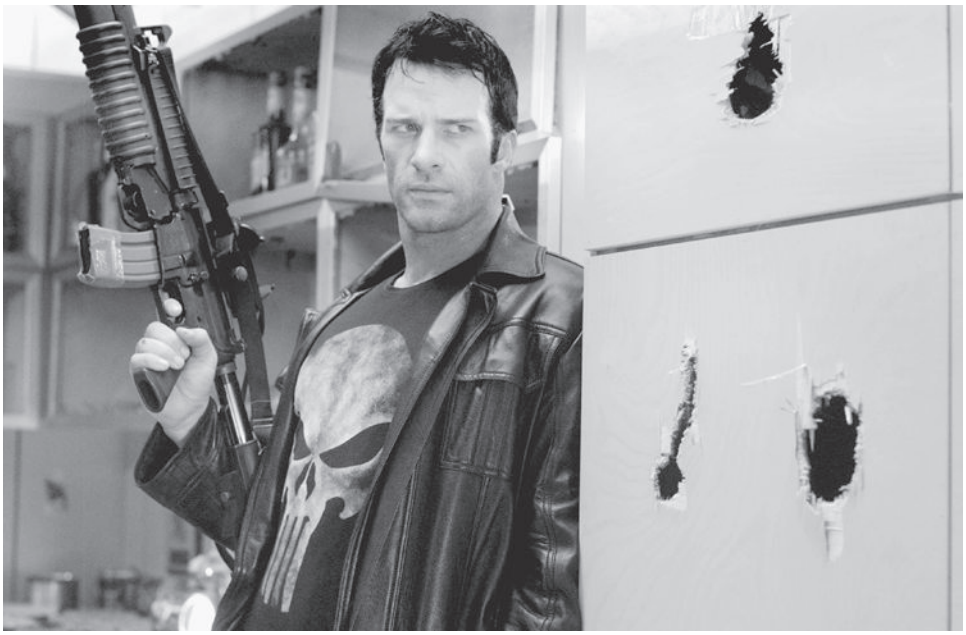
In *Promethea*, Moore demonstrates how reality is constructed through all forms of metaphors and stories, ranging from pulp fiction to religious myths to language itself. By the end of the series, Promethea has fulfilled her destiny to end the world, although not the physical realm, but the "world as we know it" by initiating a global moment of transcendence. In this new world, the division between imagination and reality is weakened, and ideas coexist in harmony rather than conflict. For example, a newly-enlightened friend of Sophie's tells her, "So, like I have this Baptist business going on, but at the same time . . . well, I'm sort of worshipping this pagan hearth-goddess called Hestia," to which Sophie replies, "Yeah, well, that's okay. It's okay to worship everything." The egalitarian pantheism that Promethea initiates illustrates Moore's reverence for stories and ideas as powerful, yet adaptable, entities that cooperate to create our notion of reality, and rejects a concrete vision of reality reflected by a universal "Truth."

Jackson Ayres

PUNISHER, THE. **Marvel Comics**' popular ultra-violent character, the Punisher was created in 1974 by writer Gerry Conway, and artists **John Romita, Sr.** and Ross Andru as a recurring guest feature for various ***Spider-Man*** titles. The Punisher was a frequent antagonist of Spider-Man, yet was portrayed as a sympathetic figure, neither hero nor villain. The Punisher dresses in a characteristic black uniform with a stylized skull emblazoned across the chest. While the Punisher lacks super powers, he makes up for this by wielding a variety of guns and other weapons. The character would later appear as a feature character in his own titles, where he has been portrayed as a troubled anti-hero engaged in a "one-man war on crime."

Like many popular characters, the Punisher's motivations are based in personal tragedy. His alter ego, Frank Castle, was a Marine and Vietnam veteran. Castle returns home to New York City and a promising future with his wife and two young children. While the family is walking through Central Park to find a place to have a picnic, they accidentally come across a mafia execution. Castle is then a witness to his family's murder, an event that motivates him to extreme ends in his drive for vengeance. The Punisher is not merely satisfied in eliminating the particular gangsters responsible for his loss; he extends his revenge to anyone guilty of criminal activity. What made the Punisher an original and successful character was his individual moral stance and his ruthless willingness to kill his foes. As a result, there are few recurring villains through various *Punisher* stories, because so few of them survive their encounters with Frank Castle.

The first true phase of the Punisher's popularity as a character was in the 1970s and early 1980s, when the character was a recurring feature in various Marvel titles, including *The Amazing Spider-Man* and ***Daredevil:*** *The Man Without Fear*. The character's first



Thomas Jane as Frank Castle, a.k.a. the Punisher, in the 2004 live-action film by the same name. Photofest

appearance, in *Amazing Spider-Man* #129, features the Punisher hired by the villainous Jackal to assassinate Spider-Man (at the time a suspected criminal in Marvel continuity). The Punisher's attempt on Spider-Man's life is interrupted when the Jackal, concerned that Spider-Man is too much of a challenge for the Punisher, secretly attacks Spider-Man and causes him to fall off of the rooftop the two are fighting on. Although Spider-Man survives this fall, neither the Jackal nor the Punisher are aware of this, nor is the Punisher aware of the Jackal's interference. The Punisher is enraged at the Jackal for so casually accepting Spider-Man's accidental death; although the Punisher would have taken Spider-Man's life as a retributive act of justice, the Punisher considered Spider-Man's accidental death both a failure and injustice on his own part. The Punisher begins to question the Jackal's motives, and in a subsequent encounter with Spider-Man he learns the true nature of the Jackal's treachery. The Punisher never fully accepts that Spider-Man is truly innocent, but the two often find themselves working toward the same goals in subsequent issues. By 1975, the Punisher was a solo feature in *Marvel Preview* #2, one of Marvel's black-and-white magazine format titles, which featured the first telling of the Punisher's origin story. In *Amazing Spider-Man* #162 (1976), one of the Punisher's few recurring foes was introduced: Jigsaw, a former hitman for a crime family. His name refers to his face, which appears to have been stitched together from pieces, owing to his having been thrown out of a plate-glass window previously by the Punisher.

Punisher remained a guest character until 1986, when Marvel debuted a five-issue miniseries, *The Punisher: Circle of Blood*, written by Steve Grant and Jo Duffy, and

drawn by Mike Zeck, Mike Vosburg, and John Beatty. The story features the return of Jigsaw and the escape of the Punisher from Rikers Island Penitentiary. The popularity of the title led to the creation of an ongoing *Punisher* series the following year, further feeding fans' interest in the character. The ongoing series also introduced the character Microchip, who assists in creating and maintaining the Punisher's arsenal of weapons and gadgetry. Spin-off titles were additionally created, including *Punisher: War Zone* and *Punisher: War Journal*; the character's story was turned into a motion picture starring Dolph Lundgren in 1989.

Despite the character's explosive popularity and franchise status, interest in the character waned by the mid-1990s, and by 1995 all of the ongoing titles featuring the Punisher were canceled. In the latter half of the 1990s, Marvel attempted to revive the character twice, with little success. In 2000, however, Marvel successfully re-launched *The Punisher*, first as a 12-issue miniseries (published under the title *Welcome Back, Frank*), then as a regular ongoing title that has remained in publication in various incarnations since that time. Writer **Garth Ennis** and artist Steve Dillon, the creative team behind the DC/Vertigo series ***Preacher***, were the creators responsible for the Punisher's successful relaunch, though a variety of other artists and writers would contribute to the *Punisher* titles. Ennis used the Punisher character as a vehicle for a variety of storytelling possibilities: his characteristic contempt for super powered characters led to stories in which, for example, Frank Castle shoots Wolverine in the face with a rifle and rolls over him with a steamroller. Other stories feature Frank fighting an eastern-European prostitution ring, assisting Nick Fury and the American government in covert operations in Russia, or battling Irish mobsters both in New York and Ireland. Ennis also wrote various *Punisher* side-projects, such as *Born*, drawn by Darick Robertson, depicting Castle's days as a Marine in Vietnam, *The Tyger*, drawn by **EC Comics** legend **John Severin**, and *The End*, drawn by Richard Corben, depicting Frank's future death. *The Punisher* lasted 37 issues as a Marvel Knights title before it was moved to the Marvel MAX adult-oriented imprint with a new #1 issue in 2004. Ennis's run on the Marvel MAX *Punisher* title lasted until issue #60, and was subsequently retitled *The Punisher: Frank Castle*. Marvel also created a new main-continuity *Punisher* title, and licensed two new *Punisher* films, one in 2004 starring Thomas Jane, and another in 2008 titled *Punisher: War Zone* starring Ray Stevenson. Far more than many recurring characters, Frank Castle has earned legendary status as a comics character.

Robert O'Nale



QUALITY COMICS. Founded by Everett M. "Busy" Arnold, Quality Comics was an American comic book publishing company from 1939 to 1956. Before Quality, Arnold helped Bill Cook and John Mahon publish their Centaur line of original comic books. Seeing them struggle, Arnold began publishing Centaur publications filled with reprinted comic strips like *Joe Palooka* and *Mickey Finn*, beginning with *Featured Funnies* #1 (1937). Later renamed *Featured Comics* (1939), the series became the first of Arnold's Quality Comics. It and Arnold's second book, *Smash Comics*, featured original material. Centaur properties that carried over into Quality Comics included American comic books' first masked hero, the Clock.

Noting the comic book market's success, *Register and Tribune Syndicate* sales manager Henry Martin feared that newspaper strips might lose readers to them, and arranged for Arnold to print a tabloid-sized comic book supplement for newspapers. ***The Spirit*** debuted in 1940 as one of the insert's three titles, all created and jointly owned by **Will Eisner**. Quality Comics became known for quality art, much of it purchased from the Eisner-Iger workshop. Eisner creations for Arnold's comic book line included Doll Man (*Feature Comics* #27, 1939), Uncle Sam (*National Comics* #1, 1940), **Black Condor** (*Crack Comics* #1, 1940), and the Blackhawks (*Military Comics* #1, 1941). Eisner typically introduced these creations and then turned each over to other artists and writers to carry on. Chuck Cuidera's scripts with **Reed Crandall** and Bob Powell's art would popularize the *Blackhawk* tales. Lou Fine illustrated Uncle Sam and Black Condor in *Crack Comics*, before becoming best known for illustrating *Hit Comics* covers and, despite using the house pseudonym E. Lectron, working on the Ray in *Smash Comics*. By 1942, when other comic book publishers relied heavily on in-house or freelance talent, Quality continued purchasing content from independent

studios. At their peak, Quality's nine titles collectively sold over one million copies per month. As the popularity of superhero comics declined, Quality Comics' new ventures included producing **romance** comics and the adventures of treasury agent *T-Man*.

When Jerry Iger left Quality Comics, he took the **Phantom Lady** from Quality to Fox Features, where the character became sexier to the point of controversy. During the United States Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency's 1954 hearings and the **Comics Code** Authority's resultant creation, Quality remained among the few publishers with content considered consistently suitable for children. Nevertheless, Arnold closed a financially troubled Quality Comics in 1956, selling many creative properties to **DC Comics**, and retired.

Over the decades, Quality characters appeared sporadically in DC Comics publications. Uncle Sam, the Human Bomb, and several others became the Freedom Fighters, a superhero team from the parallel universe of **Earth X** where World War II had never ended. One of the most durable Quality characters would prove to be **Plastic Man**, Jack Cole's "India Rubber Man" character that enjoyed several DC revivals and appeared in animated cartoons. All of DC's Quality characters became part of the same continuity as other DC Comics characters as of ***Crisis on Infinite Earths*** #11 (1986).

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Travis Langley



RACE AND ETHNICITY. The history of comics has been complicated by authors' considerations of racial and ethnic identity at least since the many 19th-century depictions of African slaves in English and American abolitionist cartoons. However, caricatures of African physiognomy that portrayed blacks as ignorant savages quickly became more common in European humor magazines and early American comics created by artists like the German cartoonist Wilhelm Busch and the Americans Richard Outcault, Frederick Burr Opper, and Winsor McCay. These authors' black characters prepared the ground for hundreds of later African and African American stereotyped comics characters whose history bears remarkable similarities to the evolution of American minstrelsy. The swollen lips, enlarged eyes, simply drawn faces, and predisposition to slapstick that distinguish characters like Sambo Johnson, Mickey Mouse, and **Felix the Cat** were also customary features of the minstrel stage from the late 18th century on. Many 19th-century British newspapers employed minstrel references to depict the Irish as a race of savage, subhuman degenerates, while American political cartoons expressed anxiety about increasing immigrant populations through exaggerated portraits of Italian, Jewish, and Irish citizens. Though many more recent artists have sought to undermine these and other ethnic stereotypes through complex characterization and socially conscious storylines, several mainstream publications continue to include few or no non-white characters.

Comics have engaged with the intersection of modern racial and political issues since 1932, when **Jerry Siegel** and **Joe Shuster** created **Superman** for ***Action Comics***. Like many other Jewish American artists of the early 20th century, especially those working in film and theater, Siegel and Shuster espoused popular social views in their creative work. Such affiliations with the public imaginary served as a tool of

assimilation for many immigrants, helping to undermine widespread nativist views in favor of a patriotism in which, theoretically, all citizens could participate. Superman's strong-arm opposition to the growing threat of **Nazi** Germany aligned his creators with the voice of the contemporary American military. A few years later, fellow Jewish American comics artist **Will Eisner** began drawing ***The Spirit***, a 12-year-long serialized comic that followed the title character's attempts to fight crime in the fictional Central City. Though the Spirit's black sidekick, Ebony White, initially possessed stereotypical traits, Eisner assigned him a more complex and prominent role after World War II, and also introduced additional black characters. Siegel's, Shuster's and Eisner's characters also stand in stark contrast to the comic parodies of Jewish life that were popular in contemporary Nazi magazines such as *Der Stürmer*. Both Superman and the Spirit suggest that Jewish American artistic production could help to overcome social prejudice against ethnic minorities while promoting the new role of the United States as an emerging superpower.

In subsequent years, comics artists transformed a popular **superhero** convention, physical mutation, into a metaphor for racial diversity and difference. The most prominent example of this device is **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby's *X-Men*** (1963), which follows a group of superheroes whose powers manifest as a result of genetic mutation. Several of the **mutants**' genetic traits are accompanied by changes in physical appearance that simulate unique racial identities as well. Beast, who possesses superhuman strength and intelligence, has blue fur, fangs, and claws; Nightcrawler, a German character with the ability to teleport, has blue fur, yellow eyes, and a forked tail; and Wolverine, whose enhanced ability to heal enabled the implantation of an indestructible metal skeleton and claws, has body hair and a physical stance resembling a wolf's. Although the majority of the characters are Caucasian, the series also includes Storm, an African American women whose ancestors are Kenyan; the Native American Apache; and Sunfire, from Japan. The X-Men often tangle with the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, whose leader, Magneto, is a Jewish concentration-camp survivor. Both groups battle social prejudice; though the X-Men seek to end the crimes that the Brotherhood perpetrates, the organizations are united in a struggle to combat society's fear of the unknown.

In 1993, African American publishers **Milestone Comics** created *Blood Syndicate*, a group of mutated characters with similarly unusual powers. However, this group's genetic differences have an identifiable origin—a radioactive gas that police used to break up a gang war—and its members, racially diverse before their mutations occurred, focus more on personal problems than on social justice. The group includes, among others, Brick House, an African American woman whose DNA fused with a brick wall to create physical invulnerability; Fade, a gay Latino man who can travel through solid objects; Third Rail, a Korean American man who can absorb and use electricity; and Wise Son, a Black Muslim man who cannot be physically harmed. Their experiences in the inner neighborhoods of the fictional city of Dakota demonstrate the real consequences of violence as well as the lack of easy solutions; the group eventually disintegrates because of internal dissension, most of the problems it had faced still unsolved.

Another specifically racialized perspective on superheroic abilities and responsibilities appeared in the United States in the 1970s, when a series of comics capitalized on the popularity of blaxploitation film characters like Shaft, Foxy Brown, and Dolemite. The most popular comics character in this vein was **Marvel's Luke Cage,** who first appeared in *Luke Cage: Hero for Hire* (later re-titled *Power Man*) in 1972. Cage gains his superpowers while unjustly imprisoned, when he volunteers for an experiment that gives him Superman-like strength and impenetrable skin. Unlike most superheroes up to this point, Cage exploits his abilities for a profit and consciously promotes his macho image. Marvel took advantage of this success by featuring a character introduced in ***Fantastic Four*** #52 (1966), the **Black Panther**, in their *Jungle Action* series from 1973 until 1976, then in his own self-titled book with two subsequent revivals. In his more recent incarnations, the character has typically been in the hands of African American creators such as **Christopher Priest** and Reginald Hudlin. This character's success was due in part to the title's resonance with contemporary Black Power movements. Other blaxploitation characters included **DC**'s Black Lightning, who fought inner-city crime and drug use and earned recognition for his refusal to join the **Justice League of America** as its sole black member; and Marvel's short-lived Black Goliath, who could increase his size at will.

At the same time that American superheroes were undergoing a series of physical and ideological transformations that reflected the country's social preoccupations, Asian artists were developing a genre that would become one of the most commercially successful branches of comics. **Manga** appeared as a substantive entry into the field just after World War II, covering a wide range of subjects that includes **romance**, mystery, **horror**, sports, **history**, and more conventional action-adventure stories. Though many Western readers associate manga primarily with Japan, it has long been a popular form in Taiwan, Korea, and China as well. Part of the reason for manga's cultural specificity exists in its heavy reliance upon textually represented sound, which can be linked to oral features of the Japanese language. Its characters' exaggerated facial features—which include enlarged eyes, tiny mouths, and larger-than-life emotional reactions—invoke cultural **satire** and stereotype, but also recall Japan's centuries-long oral storytelling tradition. Manga has become one of the best-selling genres in the United States, France, and Germany, among other countries. Perhaps its most important contribution to the histories of comics and of print publication more generally has been its readers' expanded awareness of global cultural identities. A high consumer demand for titles such as ***Barefoot Gen***, *Sailor Moon*, and *Ghost in the Shell* has resulted in the proliferation of related popular-culture fields like anime films, while American comics like Aaron McGruder's *The Boondocks* and the popular online *Homestar Runner* incorporate visual traits drawn from anime and manga.

Some comics artists have reacted to the commercial popularization of their art form by creating series and graphic novels that engage with racial and ethnic identity through dialogue with literary precedents, social issues, and historical events. Such historical revisionism generally takes one of two forms: representations of real history that address details or perspectives left out of more conventional accounts,

or superhero origin stories that offer alternatives to the genre's mainstream standbys. In these superhero chronicles, a non-white main character often undergoes a set of challenges that contrast with the experiences of Superman, **Batman**, **Spider-Man**, and other comics superstars, pointing to the ways in which ethnic origins help to shape social experience. In Milestone Comics' *Icon: A Hero's Welcome* (1996), a compilation of the first eight issues of *Icon*, for instance, the title character comes to Earth when his spaceship crashes in a field—an origin story that has prompted some critics to label him a "chocolate-dip Superman." However, Icon is an adult alien who takes on the form of an African American baby boy before emerging from his craft, simply because it is 1839 and he has landed in a field tended by black slaves. He continues to live as a black man into the present, making the most of his immortality, but profits from his skill at business rather than helping others with his alien powers. It is not until he meets Raquel Ervin, a 15-year-old African American girl who tries to rob his house with a group of friends, that he gains a social conscience. Raquel renames herself Rocket, becomes Icon's sidekick, and teaches him the value of using one's abilities for the greater good. The series is notable for its attention to such issues as teen pregnancy, drug use, racial prejudice, and economic inequality. Icon and Rocket also interact with the Blood Syndicate, which exists in the same universe.

Icon only indirectly addresses the potential shortcomings of the American dream that Superman and his fellow heroes represent. However, Marvel's *Truth: Red, White, and Black* (2004), created by Robert Morales and **Kyle Baker**, deliberately challenges the easy equation that many superhero comics draw between physical prowess and patriotism. The book's main character, Isaiah Bradley, is a soldier on whose unit the U.S. government secretly tests a "super soldier" serum while they are serving in World War II. As a result, Bradley gains immense strength but is imprisoned for 17 years after a mission goes wrong. What the government covers up during this time is that Bradley was the original **Captain America**—a black man. The truth is not revealed until Steve Rogers, the white Captain America who has received all the public acclaim, learns about Bradley's existence and tracks him down to his New York City apartment, where he is living with his wife and a wall full of photographs, unable to speak due to brain damage sustained during his imprisonment. The book's final panel shows the two Captain Americas standing with their arms around each other's shoulders, smiling broadly. Rogers's costume is crisp and fitted, while Bradley's is in tatters, draped loosely over his T-shirt. Morales and Baker based their story on a number of historical sources, including accounts of the Tuskegee syphilis experiments, and slotted its new perspective on Captain America into the Marvel universe chronology. Morales and Baker's work, along with similarly satirical titles such as McGruder and Baker's ***Birth of a Nation*** and John Ridley's *The American Way*, suggest that many artists exploit their genre's often overstated visual elements in order to critique persistent issues of race and class. The field's many other black superheroes—including DC's **Green Lantern**, Amazing Man, and Cyborg; Milestone's Static; and Marvel's Blade,

Falcon, and Shard—also participate in ongoing conversations about unequal social opportunities and skewed cultural representation.

Graphic novels that narrate real historical events often personalize the trauma accumulated through disaster and deprivation by incorporating a narrator who experiences the events first-hand, or by considering the cultural mythologies that provide a framework through which to interpret that history. Ethnic identity thus helps to shape a book's unique historical perspective. **Art Spiegelman's *Maus*** (1986, 1991) is the best-known example of the former approach, featuring the story of his parents' sufferings during the Holocaust alongside World War II historiography and autobiographical ruminations on his identity as a second-generation survivor. All of the book's characters are historically real people, and all of the events he describes in the 1940s and 1980s actually occurred; Spiegelman gestures toward fictionalization only in his decision to represent ethnic groups as different animals, rather than as humans with distinctive facial features. Kyle Baker's two-volume ***Nat Turner*** (2005, 2007) also narrates a story of historical trauma, Turner's leadership of one of the largest slave rebellions to occur in the United States. Turner was captured just over two months after he and a small group of allies killed more than 60 whites in Southampton Country, Virginia. Although there is no observer character to put the events into a more personal perspective, Baker's decision to include almost no text (other than quotations from *The Confessions of Nat Turner*), and his smudged black-and-white drawings encourage readers to supply the narrative thread themselves. Filmmaker and founder of Virgin Comics/Virgin Animation, Shekhar Kapur, also created *Devi*, a graphic novel chronicling the adventures of Tara Mehta, an Indian woman who becomes a heroine prevailing against the forces of darkness in the fictional city of Sitapur. By invoking the mythology associated with Devi, both the Sanskrit word for "goddess" and the female embodiment of the divine essence in Hinduism, Kapur succeeded in carving out a space for Indian history and culture in the world of graphic novels. His company's other titles, which include *Ramayan 3392 AD* and *The Sadhu*, suggest that Indian ethnic identity could become as dominant a presence in comics as it is in film and music.

Many treatments of racial and ethnic identity in comics have also grown out of autobiographical works that focus on a central character's hesitation between fidelity to his or her native culture and assimilation into mainstream cultural practices. The rather astonishing proliferation of independent graphic novels since the early 1990s can be attributed, at least in part, to renewed reader interest in the genre of autobiography as well as a growing sense of transnational or global identity. In several instances, the narrator seeks to regain a set of cultural traits that he or she perceives as lost, but along the way various experiences result in a rejection or transformation of that sense of self. The narrative often includes a series of moments in which the main character comes to terms with what he or she perceives as an outsider or immigrant status as well, prompted by an engagement with the social issues prominent in a particular historical moment. One key example can be seen in **Joe Sacco's *Palestine*** (1996), which narrates the author's encounters while living for two months in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The book centers

primarily on the Palestinian inhabitants' experiences of deprivation and frustration with unequal social conditions. Sacco focuses more on his interviewees' words than on his own experiences, though he does participate in, and comment on, the events unfolding around him. His role is ostensibly journalistic, but he becomes close to some of the people that he interviews and eventually acknowledges the shortcomings of his own story: its lack of objectivity and the need to represent the Israelis' lives more fully. His attitude toward his subjects shifts in kind, as he rejects an earlier desire to win awards from his work in favor of trying just to absorb the atrocities visible everywhere. The visual depictions of Sacco also change over time, as he first appears both physically and emotionally detached from the scene, standing on a wall above Jerusalem, but is later shown walking through marketplaces and city streets, drinking tea with Palestinian men, and guiding others through the very geographies that were once alien to him.

Marjane Satrapi's ***Persepolis*** (1999–2003) provides another important illustration of the mass appeal that ethnic autobiographies hold for diverse populations of readers. This graphic novel spans a 14-year period in Satrapi's life, from her girlhood in Iran to a period spent at a French high school in Vienna to her return to Iran, when she reflects upon her country's chaotic history and the possibility that she could live a more productive life elsewhere. Satrapi is careful to narrate contemporary political events in Iran alongside her personal experiences in romance, education, and work, suggesting that her sometimes misguided or impetuous behavior was a result in part of repressive social conditions. Satrapi also co-wrote and co-directed the animated film adaptation of her novel, which won the 2007 Cannes Film Festival Jury Prize. This event highlights not only the permeation of independent graphic narratives into other media, a milestone that superhero comics achieved long ago, but also Western audiences' increasing acceptance of and identification with other cultural experiences.

Although *Persepolis* includes some comedic moments to illustrate the main character's personal difficulties, it does not rely upon humor as a central narrative device, as many recent ethnic autobiographies have done. Gene Luen Yang's ***American Born Chinese*** (2006) alternates among three geographically and chronologically diverse narratives: the rise to power, downfall, and intellectual reawakening of the mythological Monkey King; the Chinese American Jin Wang's experiences of assimilating into the American school system and dealing with the traumas of adolescence; and the slapstick adventures of Danny, a white American teenager who represents Jin's fantasy self, and his visiting cousin Chin-Kee, whose exaggeratedly stereotypical traits repeatedly humiliate him. As the three stories progress, it becomes clear that their similar themes are meant to convey a joint message. Jin must learn to accept his own ethnic background and cultural traditions, refusing to succumb to either embarrassment over his ethnic roots or scorn for other Asians, before he can be comfortable in his own skin. The book concludes with Jin's discovery that his longtime friend Wei-Chen Sun is really the son of the Monkey King, sent to live among humans as a test of virtue. When Wei-Chen begins to crave human vices, the Monkey King takes his place in Jin's life as Chin-Kee.

In the end, the book's many cultural clashes, framed as farce, illustrate Jin's complicated negotiation of ethnic identities.

Jessica Abel's ***La Perdida*** (2006) offers another important example of the historically conscious ethnic autobiography, in the tradition of other Latino graphic novels like Ilan Stavans's *Mr. Spic Goes to Washington* (2008) and the **Hernandez Brothers**' collected ***Love and Rockets*** stories. The main character, Carla, moves from the United States to Mexico City as a way of coming to terms with her mixed-race background and her Mexican father's early abandonment. Though she lives in Mexico for a full year, she spends much of her time partying and fighting with various boyfriends. Her tenure there ends when she discovers that a group of her male friends have kidnapped her wealthy American ex-boyfriend and are holding him for ransom. After police unravel the kidnapping plot, she is forced to return to the United States and is forbidden to return to Mexico. Her essence may remain "lost," as the title suggests, since she never visits her father or loses the sense that she is exploiting a culture to which she has only tenuous links, but she succeeds in recognizing her own shortcomings. Abel's careful depiction of Carla's transition into Spanish fluency and the book's glossary of key terms render this graphic novel a crucial indicator of comics' new investment in issues of transnational identity and culture.

As the field of comics continues to diversify, more authors are responding directly to the genre's classic titles, heroes, and styles, while others see comics as a forum in which to create new perspectives on traditional literature and mainstream versions of history. **Alan Moore**'s *Supreme* (2002, 2003), for instance, parodies the uniform white American patriotism of heroes like **Superman** through an endless parade of Supremes at every age and a blindingly white costume. Paul Chadwick's ***Concrete*** (ongoing) tackles such issues as environmental decay and terrorism through a once-human hero who suffers social isolation after his brain is preserved within an impenetrable concrete body. **Harvey Pekar** and Gary Dumm's *Students for a Democratic Society: A Graphic History* (2008) represents an increasing number of nonfiction histories, dealing particularly with moments of social change, that are being produced in graphic form. Several literature series, including *No Fear Shakespeare* and *Graphic Classics*, take advantage of the form's visual characteristics in order to stress lesser-studied elements of classic literature such as gender roles, class concerns, and racial and ethnic identities. These trends suggest that diversity and difference have emerged as dominant preoccupations of modern comics.

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Jennifer D. Ryan

RALL, TED (1963–). Ted Rall is an acclaimed editorial cartoonist and columnist. He is currently president of the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists, a group dedicated to the promotion of editorial cartooning and association between editorial cartoonists. Rall publishes three cartoons and one column weekly through Universal Press Syndicate.

Rall was inspired to try editorial cartooning after meeting artist Keith Haring on a subway platform in Manhattan in 1986. He posted cartoons in his neighborhood in New York until he succeeded in syndicating his work in a number of weekly newspapers. Eventually he became syndicated by now-defunct San Francisco Chronicle Features, and moved to Universal Press Syndicate in 1996. Rall's cartoons espouse his politically liberal perspective, and are distinct in a number of ways from established traditions of editorial cartooning. Unlike traditional editorial cartoons, Rall uses multiple panels in a strip format instead of a single panel, a style typically used by cartoonists in alternative weekly papers. Rall also avoids traditional caricature styles in his cartoons: in traditional caricature, an artist will emphasize and exaggerate the physical appearance of a known person in order to suggest something about that person's personality. Rall infrequently illustrates known figures; instead, he prefers to satirize the reactions and behaviors of anonymous, everyday people. Frequently Rall does caricature known figures, yet sometimes he does not: Rall's depiction of former President George W. Bush is as "Generalissimo el Busho," a haggard, angry figure in a fascist military uniform who bears no physical resemblance to Bush.

Rall has also applied his craft to extended graphic narratives. Rall created a graphic novel parody of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as *2024: A Graphic Novel*, and documented his travels through Afghanistan as a correspondent for radio station KFI and *The Village Voice* in the book *To Afghanistan and Back*, both published by graphic novel publisher NBM. Rall also edits a series of collections of cartoons by new editorial cartoonists in the *Attitude* series, also published by NBM.

Robert O'Nale

RAW. The brainchild of New York underground cartoonist **Art Spiegelman** and his wife and co-editor Françoise Mouly, *RAW* was from the start a groundbreaking graphics magazine and the premier anthology of its day for experimental and international comics. From 1980 to 1991, the sporadically published *RAW* helped to develop innovative cartooning talent outside of mainstream comics and assembled a stylistically diverse body of work that explored the formal and narrative capabilities of comics as a medium. With lavish production values unprecedented in a comics publication, *RAW* also promoted the idea of comics as a serious art form. Moreover, through its forays into book publishing and especially its serialization of Spiegelman's landmark ***Maus***, *RAW* influenced the developing concept of the graphic novel as an artistically and commercially viable form.

RAW emerged from Mouly's experiments in printing and her burgeoning interest in comics as well as from Spiegelman's editorial work with the underground magazine *Arcade* (1975–76) and his dissatisfaction with existing venues for publishing comics.

After a 1978 trip to Europe during which they met many future *RAW* contributors, Mouly and Spiegelman agreed at the beginning of 1980 to publish a magazine of comics, graphics, and illustrated writing. Though *RAW* would explore the intersection between comics and other visual and literary arts, its primary intent was, in Mouly's words, "to make it manifest how good comics could be." The first volume of *RAW* (issues #1–8) focused on showing a wide range of visual work that had not been published before. It drew some of its talent from veterans of underground comics, including Bill Griffith, Kim Deitch, Justin Green, and **Robert Crumb**, though *RAW* used their work sparingly and went beyond the familiar underground content of sex, drugs, and violence. Moreover, *RAW* nurtured a new generation of alternative cartoonists, many of whom were students, teachers, or alumni of New York's School of Visual Arts, where Spiegelman taught and which offered considerable financial support to the magazine. Regular contributors included the **post-apocalyptic** punk artist Gary Panter, the pointillist and caricaturist Drew Friedman, urban chronicler **Ben Katchor**, **horror** master Charles Burns, and Spiegelman himself. *RAW* also introduced American readers to prominent international cartoonists such as France's Jacques Tardi, the Netherlands' Joost Swarte, Argentina's José Muñoz and Carlos Sampayo, and Japan's Yoshiharu Tsuge. By providing a common venue for cutting-edge cartoonists, *RAW* created a virtual community of contemporary artists and became the center of an international comics avant-garde. Moreover, throughout its run, *RAW* reprinted a judicious selection of comics from the turn of the century through the 1940s, including work by Winsor McCay, George Herriman, Milt Gross, Boody Rogers, and **Basil Wolverton**.

The early *RAW* presented contributors' work to its best advantage through an innovative format and impressive production values. Establishing the format of the first eight issues, *RAW* #1 was oversized (10½" × 14¼") to showcase its artwork. As with subsequent issues, the first issue was prepared to exacting standards on quality paper; according to a 1985 *Village Voice* article, Mouly approved just 3,500 of about 5,000 copies of *RAW* #1. Despite its relatively large printings, which reportedly ran as many as 7,500 copies, the first volume became a hybrid of the mass-market and the handmade with such features as a full-color image glued by hand onto the cover (#1) and a hand-torn cover (#7). At a time when Tribeca's Printed Matter was first bringing widespread attention to publications made by artists, *RAW* magazine emerged as an art object in itself, with extras that included comics booklets, trading cards and bubble gum (#2), an audio flexi-disc (#4), and mail-in stickers (#5). The cover for #3 with a Panter illustration even won a 1981 *Print* magazine design certificate.

Through 1986, *RAW*'s generous size and attractive presentation encouraged experimentation over narratives and shorter over longer works; content followed format. Because most of *RAW*'s early pieces were one or two pages, lengthier entries tended to stand out. Some noteworthy examples from the first volume include Muñoz and Sampayo's neo-noir "Mister Wilcox, Mister Conrad" (#3), Francis Masse's topsy-turvy "A Race of Racers" (#4), and Crumb's biographical "Jelly Roll Morton's Voodoo Curse" (#7). However, by far the most important work to appear in *RAW* was

Spiegelman's own epic Holocaust memoir *Maus*, one chapter of which was included as a small-format supplement in each issue from #2 onward.

With the 1986 publication of the first volume of *Maus* by Pantheon Books, Spiegelman and Mouly began their partnership with commercial publishers. Since 1982, *RAW* had released a series of "*RAW* One-Shots," stand-alone forerunners of today's graphic novels, featuring individual magazine contributors such as Panter, Sue Coe, and Jerry Moriarty. Pantheon and later Penguin continued this series, but Spiegelman and Mouly lost some of their creative control as they had to conform to industry production standards. Pantheon's reprinting of material from the first three issues of *RAW* in *Read Yourself Raw* (1987) brought a retrospective note to the magazine, but *RAW* itself was revived by Penguin in 1989 after a three-year hiatus. Even with Spiegelman and Mouly at the helm, *RAW* was a very different magazine under Penguin. Most important, it became *Maus*-sized, reduced to a digest format, but it grew in length to 200 pages, allowing it to show more work by more artists and reorienting it towards extended narratives. Despite *RAW*'s expansion and its mainstream distribution, it ended its run in 1991 after three issues with Penguin and the publication of volume two of *Maus*. By that time, though, *RAW* had fulfilled its mission of bringing together like-minded creators to show what was possible in making and publishing comics and validated their work as part of commercial culture.

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Michael W. Hancock

RED SON. *See* ***Superman: Red Son***

RELIGION IN COMICS. Religion is frequently a topic of comics, whether it involves the traditional organized faiths or goes beyond those to encompass a broader view of religion. As represented in comics, religion frequently extends beyond recognized modern institutions into the realms of myth, the supernatural, allegory, and outright fiction. Though only overt in select cases, the interaction between comics and religion is quite multifaceted. Comics have served as the medium for religious narrative, religious commentary, religious expression, pro-religious material, anti-religious sentiment, or simply for spiritual subtext. Conversely, comics have been used as the tool of religious organizations, creators, seekers, or critics. Given the plasticity of their dealings, comics and religion need to be considered separately first in order to assess the larger picture.

Creators' religions have been a frequent topic of academic and journalistic attention. Much, for example, has been made of the fact that a surprisingly large number of the

medium's foremost creators have been Jewish. These include the creators of **Superman**, **Jerry Siegel** and **Joe Shuster**; the creator of ***The Spirit*** and early proponent of the graphic novel, **Will Eisner**; the creator of **Batman**, **Bob Kane**; and the creators of numerous **Marvel Comics** titles, **Stan Lee** (born Stan Lieber) and **Jack Kirby** (born Jacob Kurtzberg). The climate in which these pre-World War II Jewish artists worked became the inspiration behind Michael Chabon's Pulitzer Prize–winning novel *The Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*. Since that era, a number of other notable Jewish creators have made their marks in the field, among them Stan Goldberg (***Archie***), **William Gaines** (*MAD*), **Art Spiegelman** (***RAW***), **Harvey Pekar** (***American Splendor***), Joe Kubert (*Sgt. Rock*), **Trina Robbins** (*Wimmen's Comix*), **Howard Chaykin** (***American Flagg!***), and Peter David (***The Incredible Hulk***).

Outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition, the U.S. comics industry has felt the influence of writers and artists from other faith groups. Companies such as the Egypt-based AK Comics and Dr. Naif Al-Mutawa's Teshkeel Comics have brought Islamic English-language works to the fore, as have stateside creators such as G. Willow Wilson (*Cairo*) and Toufic El Rassi (*Arab in America*). The eight-volume story of ***Buddha*** has been translated from its original Japanese by **Osamu Tezuka** into English by publisher Vertical. Further, Liquid Comics (originally Virgin Comics) features a stable of Hindu talents; an adapted, New Age version of the Vedanta also appears in the chaos magic practices of **Grant Morrison** (*Invisibles*, *Vimanarama*). Along similar lines, Neo-Pagan voices can be found in the work of **Alan Moore** (***Watchmen***) and Holly Golightly (*Sabrina*).

Devout Christian authors and their products also fill significant corners of the field. **Mike Allred**, most popularly known for his **superhero** work on *X-Statix*, has produced *The Golden Plates*, a comic-book account of the Book of Mormon. Christian comic books themselves have become a cottage industry, with Jack Chick and his proselytizing Chick Tracts having continued publication since the early 1970s. International Christian publishing company Zondervan has expanded into comic books with their line of Z Graphic Novels including *Hand of the Morningstar*, *Kingdoms: A Biblical Epic*, and their series of *Manga Bibles*. Zondervan's should not be confused with *The Manga Bible* by British artist Siku nor with the *Manga Bible* from Living Bible publisher Tyndale. Even mainstream creator **Mark Millar** has begun exploring his own Christianity, starting with the miniseries *Chosen*, the first in his planned *American Jesus* trilogy.

In addition to these, a number of biblical accounts have been transposed into the comic book medium by faithful and non-faithful alike. The small press Archaia has released several works among its other **fantasy** and genre titles dealing with re-readings of the Bible: *The Lone and Level Sands*, a telling of Exodus from the Egyptian royal family's point of view; *The Secret History*, the story of ageless immortals living through biblical times into modern history; and *Some New Kind of Slaughter*, a compilation of flood myths from all time periods, including that of Noah's era. (The publisher has also produced series based on the Greek pantheon, *Hybrid Bastards*, and Mayan and Aztec apocalyptic lore, *The Long Count*.) Portions of the Hebrew Bible have been

turned into graphic novels, such as *Samson: Judge of Israel* and *Testament* from Metron Press, *Daniel: Prophet of Dreams* from Cross Culture Entertainment, and J. T. Waldman's *Megillat Esther* from the Jewish Publication Society of America. In addition to those already listed, the Christian Bible has seen numerous treatments in the medium, including *The Comic Book Bible* from Barbour Publishing, *The Illustrated Bible: Complete New Testament* from Thomas Nelson, and *The Lion Graphic Bible: The Whole Story from Genesis to Revelation* from Lion UK. Finally, *Rex Mundi*, an alternate world Holy Grail quest as murder mystery, gives both a sympathetic portrayal of Judas and a different account of Jesus's fate.

A chief mainstream source of religiously-themed works is the Vertigo wing of **DC Comics**. As a mature readers (adult) line, the Vertigo imprint has served as a home for the spiritual, Gaea philosophies in *The Saga of* ***Swamp Thing*** and the mystic, paranormal underworld of ***Hellblazer*****:** *John Constantine*. Notably, **Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*** series—a mixture of pantheism, Abrahamic monotheism, polytheism, and henotheism—conducted its remarkable 75-issue run under the Vertigo banner, in addition to various specials and related miniseries. It led to *The Dreaming*, an exploration of the eponymous Sandman's kingdom, and *Lucifer*, the exploits of the first fallen angel now liberated from reigning over Hell. Vertigo also produced **Kyle Baker**'s graphic novel *King David*, a semi-comical staging of the Goliath-slayer's rise to power, and the entirety of **Garth Ennis** and Steve Dillon's ***Preacher***, the gruesome story of a divinely-powered, lapsed clergyman's search for God in order to hold the Creator accountable. Like *Sandman*, *Preacher* had a 75-issue run, though largely confined to Judeo-Christian material. More recently, Vertigo has generated the postmodern Bible update *Testament*, the sexually charged *American Virgin*, and the Eastern-focused *Crossing Midnight* series, yet all three were canceled short of their creators' full visions.

A majority of the comics foregoing scriptural adaptation to address religious concerns of impact has arisen from independent presses or the graphics branch of major prose publishers. Originally published by Baronet Books in 1976, Eisner's ***A Contract with God*** was not only shaped around the Jewish tenement communities of Eisner's childhood but its title story directly addressed the issue of faith in the face of unjust loss. Popularly credited as the first "graphic novel," *A Contract with God* has since been reissued by Titan, **Kitchen Sink Press**, DC Comics, and W. W. Norton. From 1977 through 1991, Spiegelman developed ***Maus: A Survivor's Tale***, the memoir of his father's ordeals as a World War II-era Jewish concentration camp survivor and their subsequent relationship. Serially published in his ***RAW*** magazine, *Maus* was first collected in 1986, earning the 1986 Pulitzer Prize Special Award among other accolades.

Pantheon Books brought Marjane Satrapi's award-winning French-language ***Persepolis*** memoir to an American readership beginning in 2000. The book and its follow-up editions detail the childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood of Marjane as a Muslim girl coming of age and being impelled to leave post-war Iran. Her youthful course towards becoming a self-appointed prophetess is quickly derailed by

the incursion of fundamentalist rule and her wider encounters with a disappointing world. Satrapi's studio-mate, Joann Sfar, has also had his French series *The Rabbi's Cat* translated into English and brought to American audiences by Pantheon. *The Rabbi's Cat* tells the story of a local Algerian rabbi who, along with his pet cat, must cope with the threatening arrival of a council-appointed rabbi from France and foreign suitors for the rabbi's daughter. Outside incursion also frames the majority of **Joe Sacco's *Palestine***, a **Fantagraphics** book-length collection of comics journalism reporting on modern Palestinians' turmoil and faith. While Sacco may be a Christian American presenting an international readership with a particular people's perspectives, Craig Thomson, creator of ***Blankets***, depicted his own childhood in an evangelical Christian community for a wider comic book reading audience through the publisher Top Shelf Productions. Thomson's own sexual awakening first conflicts then negotiates with the agapic love of Christianity through his first girlfriend, Raina. The relationship ultimately falters as does Thomson's faith.

Many comics are critical of religion and suspicious of faith's pernicious effects. For instance, Thomson's work on *Blankets* would not have been possible without Justin Green's pioneering underground work, ***Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary***. In it, the title character, Green's autobiographical alter ego, faces his conflict with the church in the wake of his sexual and compulsive obsessions. Other underground innovators, such as **Jaxon** and Frank Stack, produced titles like *God Nose* and *The New Adventures of Jesus* that have been considered blasphemous in their casual and even crass depictions of Christian divinity. More recently, creators such as **Robert Kirkman** and Tony Moore have published the irreverent *Battle Pope* series featuring a foul-mouthed, hard-drinking, super-powered, philandering Pope John Paul II and his sidekick Jesus fighting demons in a post-Rapture landscape. James Munroe and Salgood Sam also leverage a post-Rapture landscape in their graphic novel *Therefore, Repent!*, turning the remaining human population into the fortunate ones, free of false belief. Even the 1998 Stan Lee/**Moebius** collaboration on the cosmic ***Silver Surfer: Parable*** has been seen as a staunch critique of religion and morality, returning the world-eating Galactus character to the role in which Lee and Kirby first imagined him for ***Fantastic Four*** #48: a God surrogate.

Such stand-ins for religious figures are not always necessary. A number of fictional comic-book characters, even those featured in mainstream superhero titles, exhibit—to varying degrees, largely determined by their current writers—dedication to specific real-world faiths. When popularized by **Frank Miller**, the vigilante **Daredevil** had his Catholicism emphasized throughout the "Born Again" storyline. His alter ego, Matt Murdoch, had his life dismantled by the Kingpin of Crime, only to find his long-lost mother had become a nun. Similarly, as a member of Marvel's **X-Men**, the demonic-looking Nightcrawler became engaged for a time in studying for the priesthood, despite his Roma upbringing. Much of that involvement, though, was written away by subsequent inheritors of the *X-Men* books. More consistent has been the dedication of the Marvel character Marc Spector to his Egyptian god Khonsu as the vigilante Moon

Knight. Raised Jewish, Spector pledged himself to this deity in exchange for saving his mortal life. Complicating this, however, is Spector's own tenuous sanity, putting such devotion in a suspect light. Conversely, only in recent years has the Fantastic Four's Ben "The Thing" Grimm acknowledged his Jewish identity, something he quashed as a youth on the mean streets of New York; and the late Boston Brand's posthumous dedication to Hinduism as Deadman is also questionable, given no evidence that he was a believer until after he died and was reconstituted as a ghost. Further, while the Savage Dragon is a self-professed atheist, he has apparently met the Devil and God personally.

The supernatural is often folded into religion as a dogma-less, flexible theology with overt visual/physical results. This likely occurs due to the perceived overlap between demonic magic and the Judeo-Christian-Islamic concept of Satan and fallen angels. In addition to Gaiman's Lucifer, most of the major superhero publishers have a multitude of Satan-like or Hell-linked characters (e.g., Mephisto, Neron, Blaze, Satannish, Hades, Satanus, Malebolgia, Hela, etc.), all of whom occupy a realm not unlike Hell; sometimes these kingdoms even overlap and the "Satans" go to battle against each other, such as in the series *Underworld Unleashed* or *Reign in Hell*. Angels themselves play a variety of roles in the superhero genre, from adversaries (e.g. The Saint of Killers in *Preacher*) to allies (Zauriel in ***JLA***) to weapons (**The Punisher**, briefly). Most often, though, this manner of religion is characterized more as supernatural sorcery or witchcraft, empowering would-be heroes like **Ghost Rider**, Zatanna, Hellstrom, Jason Blood, Brother Voodoo, The Doctor of ***The Authority***, and **Dark Horse Comics**' eponymous ***Hellboy*.** In fact, in the case of the latter Hellboy, his native infernal realm is conceived little in the way of Christian soteriology, but instead his Hell is a Cthonic, Lovecraftian portal to the supernatural. These other portrayals sometimes further reduce the supernatural/religious into a form of super-science: rational, tamable energies just beyond the ken of modern investigation. **Image Comics**' *The Atheist* was predicated on the idea that stoic logic can investigate and defeat infernal possession. Alternately, **Kurt Busiek's *Astro City*** particularly plays with comics' religious/supernatural overlap in the Confessor, a **vampire**/priest hero. Through this brand of over-encompassing inclusion, a Norse god such as **Thor** can fight alongside a magic practitioner such as the Scarlet Witch, a technological **Iron Man**, and a devout Catholic such as Dagger all against an emissary of a monotheistic divinity (e.g., The Living Tribunal).

The superhero genre has also fashioned a large number of fictional religions for its storytelling purposes. Whether these faiths are being created as analogies to real-world denominations, as politically-correct straw men, as serious reflections on the concept of organized religion, or as easy targets for vilifying is to be determined on a case-by-case basis. In many estimations, the Triune Understanding depicted in Busiek's ***Avengers*** series is a riff on the Church of Scientology. Though they were responsible for the empowerment of the Avengers' ally Triathlon, the Triune Understanding was also linked to a pernicious alien race, making their motives dubious. Decades earlier, Jim Starlin further developed a malevolent incarnation of his Christ-figure Adam Warlock—who had died and resurrected for Counter-Earth—into the leader of the Universal Church

of Truth. This alternate version of Warlock, now dubbed the Magus, could be read as Starlin commenting on the errant nature of institutionalized or papal Christianity, while the heroic Warlock retained pure Christ-like nobility. In the 1990s, Starlin would return to this theme through another of Warlock's discarded aspects, the Goddess, who would lead an apocalyptic sect of followers in what can be read as another critique of turn-of-the-century religious millennial alarm. Along with the Triune Understanding and Universal Church of Truth, Marvel Comics has also made religion the main impetus for many alien races' aggressions, notably the shape-shifting Skrulls and their foiled plans to infiltrate Earth, as prophesied by their scripture.

DC Comics has developed its own fictional religions, as well. Most notable among them would be the creation by Jack Kirby—and later development by **Grant Morrison**—of the New Gods. Though they often behaved and interacted with other extraterrestrial species as merely a powerful pantheon of warring aliens, the New Gods have taken on much more cosmically divine features in Morrison's later interpretations. Similarly, the inhabitants of planets Rann (the adopted home of Adam Strange) and Thanagar (the original world of Hawkman) have each become imbued with religious fervor in their 21st-century portrayals, leading to the miniseries *The Rann-Thanagar War* and *The Rann-Thanagar Holy War*. Also, following the death of Conner "Superboy" Kent, aka Kon-El, a human group led by Wonder Girl form "The Cult of Conner," based on Kryptonian technology and the belief that he can be resurrected; they are, however, broken up by a band of heroes who had themselves been previously resurrected.

The issue of resurrection and rebirth following mortal death is a particularly recurring theme in superhero comics. In fact, one of the few religious rituals consistently depicted in comics is the funeral (as opposed to, say, baptism or confirmation). Frequently, it is made as a universal, non-denominational service, though a casket, a congregation or funeral party, prayer leader, and some form of prayer book remain fixtures. Despite this reliability and apparent sincerity, an extraordinary number of characters have proven actual biological death—not a "fake death" or death-like state—to be temporary: **Aquaman**, Captain Britain, Colossus, Dr. Doom, Elektra, Elasti-Girl, **The Flash**, **Green Arrow**, **Green Lantern**, Hawkeye, Hawkman, Hellcat, Lex Luthor, Marvel Girl, Metamorpho, The Punisher, The Red Skull, Robin, **Spawn**, Thor, Wonder Man, **Wonder Woman**, and so on. Supposedly, in the case of DC Comics, the hero Kid Eternity, Agent of Chaos, was holding the metaphysical door between life and death open, allowing such ease of return for dead souls. In the case of Marvel Comics, several of these resurrections have been explained away either as the result of magical instability on the part of the Scarlet Witch or as the result of Skull imposters.

Of the many intersections between this medium and religion, the one engagement that has yet to take place is the creation of a new theology from a comic. These works have been used to contemplate religion, criticize it, degrade it, reflect it, honor it, and even proselytize for it. Given the increased quantity of these connections and the rising validation of the medium among U.S. audiences, the possibility of faith arising from panels is no longer impossible.

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A. David Lewis

RETCON. Short for retroactive continuity, "retcon" is used as a verb to denote the process of revising a fictional serial narrative, altering details that have previously been established in the narrative so that it can be continued in a new direction or so that potential contradictions in previous events can be reconciled. The process is especially common in comic books, which traditionally seek continuity in their narratives over time, but which often involve large and complex narrative constructs that tend to get out of hand. This is especially the case with large publishers such as **DC** and **Marvel**, which generally attempt to maintain consistency among most of their various titles. With so many titles involved, however, discrepancies inevitably arise. Multiple Earths, parallel dimensions, and alternate timelines become the homes of different versions of the same characters, introducing potential confusion for readers. Retconning allows writers to revise existing stories, fill in missing details, or substitute entirely new versions of events.

The term "retcon" can also be used as a noun to designate the specific comics (or other works) that are published in this process of revision. The process of retconning is used in comics when it is felt that a narrative has become too complex or unwieldy and needs to be simplified, or when it is felt that a character's history has gone in a direction that is difficult to build upon and carry forward. **John Byrne**'s revision of the origin of **Superman** in the 1986 miniseries ***The Man of Steel*** is a prominent example of retconning in comics, though the most important example is probably **DC's *Crisis on Infinite Earths*** (1985), a 12-part series that includes all the company's major characters and resolves a number of contradictions in their backstories.

M. Keith Booker

RICHIE RICH. First appearing in Harvey Comics' *Little Dot* #1 (1953) in a story drawn by Steven Muffatti, Richie Rich continued as the protagonist of a back-up series in that title and other Harvey anthology series until finally graduating to his

own book in 1960. Within the decade, Richie Rich would become Harvey's most popular character under the creative eyes of artists Warren Kremer and Ernie Colón.

Some debate exists over the creation of Richie Rich. Harvey Comics co-owner Alfred Harvey has claimed credit for the character, but Warren Kremer, who was responsible for many designs of Harvey characters, has also claimed to be the creator. At the height of his popularity in the early 1970s, Richie Rich comics sold more than 1,000,000 copies per month. At the point of highest saturation, Harvey Comics produced 33 Richie Rich titles in a single month, and he has starred in over 50 titles total.

Dubbed "The Poor Little Rich Boy," Richie Rich's stories originally focused on how the boy's wealth and privilege kept him from enjoying most of the more carefree pleasures of childhood. His girlfriend, Gloria Glad, rejects Richie's exorbitant gifts in an effort to keep him humble. As the series increased in popularity, Richie's adventures became more fantastic and often focused on the advantages that his enormous wealth provided. These adventures frequently took place on the international stage (or, in some cases, interplanetary) and were strongly influenced by comic predecessors like ***Tintin*** and Little Orphan Annie. In his world, Richie is a celebrity who is recognized worldwide for his wealth and adventures.

Richie's father owns Rich Industries, a multinational corporation, located in the city of Richville, that produces a wide variety of products. These products, usually invented by Professor Keenbean, often serve as the impetus for Richie's adventures. Richie Rich has a large supporting cast, including Cadbury the butler, Irona the robot maid, Dollar the dog (a rare breed of "Dollarmatians" with dollar signs in place of spots), his girlfriend Gloria, his best friends Pee-Wee and Freckles Friendly, child comedian Jackie Jokers, Billy Bellhops, and others. Richie's most common nemesis is his cousin, Reggie Van Dough. Reggie is the antithesis of Richie—a spoiled, rich child who uses his wealth to play practical jokes on others. Reggie always gets his comeuppance, but such lessons never have a lasting effect on him.

Covers to Richie Rich comics usually depict the boy using money for purposes other than currency: he carpets his floor and decorates his walls with it, he plays in piles of bills, and dollar signs often appear in his presence. Covers also depict Richie treating other signs of wealth, like gold, jewels, and oil, as playthings.

Harvey Comics ceased publication in 1982, only to return for a brief period from 1986 to 1994. Richie Rich also starred in his own Saturday morning television cartoon series beginning in 1980, and he was the subject of two feature films, the first (1994) starring Macaulay Culkin as the poor little rich boy.

Andrew J. Kunka

ROAD TO PERDITION. This graphic novel by writer **Max Allan Collins** (*Dick Tracy*) and artist Richard Piers Rayner (***Hellblazer***, ***Swamp Thing***) was published in 1998 by **DC Comics** under its Paradox Press imprint. Sam Mendes directed the award-winning 2002 film adaptation of the same name, which was written for the screen by David Self. Collins's inspiration for the 300-page novel was Kazuo Koike and Goseki

Kojima's important **manga**, ***Lone Wolf and Cub***, the epic story of a shogun's enforcer, wrongly accused and widowed, who is forced to travel the road of vengeance with his toddler son in tow. *Road to Perdition* offers a distinctly American version of this father/son story.

Set in prohibition-era Rock Island, Illinois, the novel tells the tale of Michael O'Sullivan, devout family man, ex-soldier, and Irish crime boss John Looney's chief lieutenant. The story is seen from the point of view of O'Sullivan's son, Michael Jr., who narrates his childhood from a vantage point decades later in order to set the record straight, years after pulp writers and historians alike have established O'Sullivan's notoriety as the "Angel of Death." The story begins when young Michael stows away in his father's backseat and witnesses Connor Looney, the crime boss's slightly psychopathic son, turn a routine shakedown into a cold-blooded murder. Additionally, he witnesses his father's loyalty and efficient, unflappable skills with a Thompson submachine gun.

Because the Looneys suspect that Michael or O'Sullivan might betray Connor and the family's interests, the elder Looney orders a hit on his faithful servant, while Connor murders O'Sullivan's wife and younger son, leaving O'Sullivan and Michael on the lam, forced to defend themselves from Looney's long reach. Correctly fearful of O'Sullivan's vengeance and skills, Looney sends Connor into hiding under Al Capone's protection, and O'Sullivan launches an offensive against the revenue streams of both the Looney and Capone families, with the intent of making Connor's protection a



Tom Hanks as Michael O'Sullivan and Tyler Hoechlin as Michael Sullivan Jr. in the 2002 film *Road to Perdition*, directed by Sam Mendes. Dreamworks/Photofest

losing financial proposition. O'Sullivan and son thus begin their crime spree against Midwestern banks and their dirty deposits from Capone's and Looney's gambling, bootlegging, and extortion revenue. Looney increases the bounty on O'Sullivan's head to a quarter million dollars, and O'Sullivan provides Eliot Ness with a paper trail to indict the elder Looney in exchange for permission to continue his efforts to find and kill Connor Looney. When O'Sullivan burns and robs the mob's riverboat gambling operation, Capone decides that Connor Looney is more trouble than he's worth and hands him over to O'Sullivan, who gives him what he deserves. Unfortunately, in the end, O'Sullivan also must pay for his sins, himself shot down by an assassin, who is in turn shot down by young Michael.

Collins based his well-researched story loosely on actual characters and events: Rock Island-area crime boss John Looney did have a betrayed lieutenant, and the riverboat *Quinlan* did burn. Rayner's impressively detailed black-and-white art depicts Ness, Capone, and Frank Nitti, Capone's right-hand man, with nearly photorealistic historical accuracy. However, it is O'Sullivan and Michael, the most fictional of the book's characters, who bring the story to life. Following the murder of his wife, O'Sullivan wants to drop off Michael at a relative's farm in Perdition, Kansas, but mobsters are watching the farmhouse. Neither can he entrust Michael to any law enforcement agency in the Midwest; he tells Michael that all are corrupted by mob money: "There are no police in Chicago . . . just killers in blue uniforms" (121–22). The only way that he can make sure that Michael is safe is to keep him near, and readers see both anguish and tenderness in his face when he leaves Michael in the car while he tends to the business of retribution. Father and son develop a powerful emotional bond over the course of their violent adventure, one that would not likely have occurred if their lives had not been disrupted by violence.

Unlike *Lone Wolf and Cub*'s toddler son, *Perdition*'s Michael is nearly 10, capable of helping his father achieve vengeance by driving the getaway car and sometimes handling a gun, old enough to develop a deep relationship with his stoic father. O'Sullivan's serious demeanor with Michael during their long car rides and hotel stays is frequently tempered with displays of simple, genuine approval of his son's behavior. When Michael follows his instructions to wait until he returns, he says, "Good lad." On the country road where he teaches Michael to drive, he offers supportive praise: "You're doing fine." Never does he show anger or violence toward Michael. Neither does he wish that Michael follow in his occupational footsteps: "Be whatever you want—as long as it's not like me" (239). Unable ever to return home, Michael and his father are sealed off from their former lives, and Rayner strategically emphasizes this psychological loss and emotional distance when he shows the characters looking out through the car's windows, which reflects the city or the countryside outside, one image superimposed upon the other, neither complete. In the novel's many action scenes, Rayner's depictions of violence are both chaotic and beautiful; O'Sullivan leaps, lunges, and springs with the utmost grace, and his bullets do not miss. The angles of depiction are unpredictable, and the choreography is elegant.

While *Road to Perdition* qualifies as both a graphic crime novel and graphic historical novel, Collins's expert development of the father/son relationship and Rayner's exquisite artwork elevate the novel beyond generic limitations and expectations.

Anthony D. Baker

ROBBINS, TRINA (1938–). Trina Robbins is the world's foremost comics "herstorian," having written several major books on women in comics. She is also an important cartoonist in her own right, and a pioneer in publishing female comics artists. Robbins made her debut working in **underground comics**, or "**comix**," in the early 1970s, and was one of the very first female comics artists to emerge in these formative years for comic art. Robbins's first comics were printed in the *East Village Other*. She later joined the staff of the feminist underground newspaper *It Ain't Me, Babe*, where she produced the first American all-woman comic book, also titled *It Ain't Me, Babe*, in 1970. She would go on to become increasingly involved in creating outlets for, and promoting, female comics artists—who at the time were few and often not invited to the all-male underground comix anthologies.

Robbins next major project was the anthology *Wimmen's Comix*, started in 1972 and run by a group of female artists. *Wimmen's Comix* turned out to be an important springboard for a whole new generation of female comics artists, including Mary Fleener, Melinda Gebbie, **Phoebe Gloeckner**, Roberta Gregory, Aline Komisky Crumb, Carol Lay, Diane Noomin, Lee Marrs, Sharon Rudahl, Dori Seda, Carol Tyler, and Penny Van Horn. The magazine folded in 1992.

Even though she has always worked to promote other female artists, Robbins has also had the time to work as an artist herself, in the 1970s producing underground comix magazines like *All Girl Thrills* and *Girl Fight*. In the 1980s she, among other things, worked as penciler on ***Wonder Woman*** for the major publisher **DC Comics**. In the 1990s and into the 21st century she has worked on the comic *GoGirl*, with artist Anne Timmons for **Image Comics**.

Always working with a feminist goal, Robbins soon realized that the literature about comics was not paying enough attention to female creators, characters, and readers. In the 1980s she therefore set out to produce the very first book about comics from a decidedly female perspective. The result was *Women and the Comics*, published in 1985 and co-written by Catherine Yronwode. Since then, Robbins has become the world's leading comics herstorian, producing a number of books about comics, writing articles, curating exhibitions, and giving lectures.

Robbins has also written several books on other themes, but always from a feminist perspective. Today she is, among other things, producing scripts for biographical comics like *Hedy Lamarr and a Secret Communication System* and *Florence Nightingale: Lady with the Lamp*. Robbins won a Special Achievement Award from the San Diego Comic Con in 1989 for her work on *Strip AIDS U.S.A.*, a benefit book she co-edited with **Bill Sienkiewicz** and Robert Triptow. She was also one of the founders of the non-profit organization *Friends of Lulu*, created in 1994 to

promote readership of comic books by women and the participation of women in the comic book industry.

See also: Feminism

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Fredrik Strömberg

ROCKETEER, THE. Created in 1982 for Pacific Comics by writer/artist **Dave Stevens**, the Rocketeer is the alter ego of stunt pilot Cliff Secord, who is able to fly with the aid of a high-tech rocket pack. The character's physical appearance was based on the creator. However, there were obvious influences from other sources. Inspired by cliffhanger movie serials of the 1940s, the narrative drew on numerous influences. **Doc Savage** served as the inspiration for the nameless inventor of the rocket pack. The look of pin-up queen Bette Page inspired the character of Secord's girlfriend Betty. Stevens's friend and aesthetic inspiration Doug Wildey, creator of *Jonny Quest*, was the basis for Secord's friend and mentor Peavey. Stevens completed two Rocketeer stories, the original eponymous story and *Cliff's New York Adventure*. Though not named, **The Shadow** and his cadre are the catalysts of the second story. In the second storyline, Lothar is modeled on actor Rondo Hatton, who also appears in the 1991 Disney film adaptation of the series. Also in the second storyline, the magician The Great Orsinio is based on Orson Welles. Eclipse Comics serialized and collected the first story, and Comico published the second as a miniseries, later collected by **Dark Horse**. After the first book was adapted to film by Disney Studios in 1991, a graphic novel **adaptation** of the film was published by Hollywood Comics, written by Peter David and illustrated by Russ Heath. David authored a prose novelization of the film as well.

The first narrative begins with Secord as a down-on-his-luck stunt flyer. After a stolen rocket pack is stashed in his plane, he is thrust into a series of adventures involving **Nazis**, government agents, and organized crime. The first storyline of two is set in 1938 California, and uses the vehicle of the air show as a framework for adventure. Originally running as a backup story in Mike Grell's *Starslayer*, the series took advantage of its backup feature format to set up cliffhanger endings. Within this framework, the Rocketeer flew onto crashing planes, fought his way out of experimental aircraft piloted by Nazis, and escaped a hospital bed to run in search of his lady love—the stuff of true adventure. The first storyline offered an open-ended conclusion. As it proved quite popular, a second story was begun.



A poster for the 1991 film *The Rocketeer*, directed by Joe Johnston. Buena Vista Pictures/Photofest

In the second story, Cliff finds his way to New York. In contrast to the relatively open spaces of 1938 California, the milieu of the late-1930s New York club scene presents Secord as a fish out of water. The first storyline was to some extent a pastiche of the **Doc Savage** stories. The second was a pastiche of The Shadow. Both grew from Stevens's fascination with the 1930s. This fascination is also evident in the attention to detail in the art. Ranging from the accuracy of the Bulldog Diner to effectively capturing the technical aspects of stunt flying planes of the era, the look, pacing, storyline, and dialogue all read as a period piece rather than pastiche. To a great extent, the period look and feel carried over to the film.

However, the original narrative was altered for the film. In addition to the overt substitution of Howard Hughes for Doc Savage, offered merely as a throwaway gag in the original story, a matinee idol, a **Nazi** dirigible and a mob boss were added. Most significantly, the story was self-contained, as there was no guarantee of a sequel. Fan opinion is widely divided on the film. There was also some disappointment that Stevens was not assigned the art chores for the film's one-sheet. Some hold the film to be one of the most successful adaptations of a comic, while others were bitterly disappointed.

However, no such division exists on the comic stories. Stevens's work was widely recognized for its detail, expression, composition, fluid storytelling, and anatomies. The latter proved Stevens's forté. His rendering of a voluptuous, yet realistic and friendly female form echoed the work of 1940s pin-up artists, especially Gil Elvgren and Vargas. Stevens briefly succeeded Vargas as a pinup artist at *Playboy*.

Some regard Betty as the most significant contribution made by *The Rocketeer* to the comics. This character's look and aesthetic were consistent with the "good girl art" tradition of **Matt Baker** in the 1940s, and **Al Williamson**'s and **Frank Frazetta**'s renderings of sensuous women in the 1950s. This art also drew substantially on, and was a catalyst

in renewing mainstream interest in the career of bondage pinup girl Bette Page, whom Stevens befriended after publication of *The Rocketeer*. Stevens's work on the character Betty was also reminiscent of "nose art" from World War II aircrafts. Stevens's pinup art proved so popular that it detracted from his narrative work, proving more lucrative. This disparity was partially due to the time taken on each comic page, reflected in the visual detail. However, he never lost interest in *The Rocketeer*.

Stevens's hope and plan for *The Rocketeer* was to allow other creators to take a turn with the character in a series of individual stories. Aside from some pinup pages in the individual issues, this never materialized. Stevens's own work on the title was slow to appear for two reasons. First, Stevens earned a better living doing commercial art and storyboard work than he did doing comics. Second, Stevens had leukemia, which eventually caused his death in March 2008. He was quite private about his condition, so the specific onset and its effect on his artistic output are unknown, but he is reported to have had the condition for several years before his death, so it seems likely to have limited his artistic output on *The Rocketeer*. Stevens's *The Rocketeer* won the Russ Manning, Inkpot and Kirby Awards.

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Diana Green

ROMANCE COMICS. Romance comics became an important phenomenon in American popular culture soon after World War II. However, contrary to some of the myths about the post-World War II comic book scene, they did not explode onto the newsstands overnight. Romance comics did not really catch on until the second half of 1949, but when they did, they became an American cultural institution read by untold millions of girls and women for more than a quarter century. By the mid-1970s, however, romance comics virtually disappeared, only occasionally resurfacing in the form of **satire**, or from independent publishers or in other **underground** comics. The original corporate romance comics, published almost entirely from 1947 to 1977, are now collected with enthusiasm by a handful of comic book and pop cultural historians and art enthusiasts.

The romance genre, so common in a variety of print sources during the first three-quarters of the 20th century, remains a powerful source of print revenue in the form of paperback (and hardcover) romance novels. Many of these stories continue to provide the fantasies that comic books and pulp magazines once did, along with their higher-caliber brethren, the "slick" fiction-filled magazines that have also disappeared from American culture.

Romance novels first comprised only a tiny fraction of the burgeoning paperback book industry, from its modern origins with the first Pocket Books shortly before World War II to the beginning of the Harlequin Romance line in the mid-1960s, which began an explosion of romance paperbacks that continues today. Instead,

more than 7,500 pulp magazines were devoted to romance from the 1920s through the 1950s. Only the **Western**—featuring nearly 10,000 issues of the approximately 40,000 total issues published from 1896 to 1960 in more than 1,000 pulp titles—was a more dominant genre (and a number of pulps combined the two genres). Concurrently, hundreds of romance stories appeared every year for more than six decades in the weekly or monthly "slicks," such as *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Coronet*, *McCall's*, *Liberty*, and *Redbook*, along with the multitude of newspaper Sunday supplements of the era, plus the movie magazines and the lower-brow "true confession" magazines, which were printed on slick paper but had more in common with the pulp market. Beginning with the first of the modern pulpwood paper publications for adults, generally recognized as Frank Munsey's *Argosy* in 1896, romance stories appeared in many of the general-interest pulps before the pulp market exploded during the 1920s.

Pulps, indeed, were huge influences on the people who published, created, and in many cases read the nearly 150 romance comic book titles that suddenly appeared in the second half of 1949 and the first half of 1950. Street and Smith's *Love Story Magazine*, the best-remembered of the romance pulps, ran 1,158 issues from 1921 to 1947 and was so popular it was among the few pulps published weekly during most of its existence. *All-Story Love Tales*, begun by the Munsey Company and much later sold to the prolific pulp purveyor Popular Publications, ran 582 issues from 1929 to 1955. *Ranch Romances*, published from 1924 and the last pulp standing when it disappeared in 1971, ran 860 issues from three publishers. Many other titles from several leading publishers enjoyed huge commercial success, including *Thrilling Love*, *Rangeland Romances*, *Sweetheart Stories*, *Cupid's Diary*, and *Love Book Magazine*.

Comic books, though, were late to come to the romance profit party. The early modern comic books, with origins in the mid-1930s, were primarily anthologies of newspaper strips (including a few with romantic elements) until **Superman** debuted in ***Action Comics*** #1 (June 1938). It took more than a year, but Superman and fellow costumed hero **Batman**, who began in ***Detective Comics*** #27 (May 1939), brought about dozens of highly successful costumed heroes who began fighting crime in 1939–41, before World War II took center stage. By the end of the war, hundreds of colorful, bizarre, and fanciful characters had been created. As the **Golden Age** of Comics waned in the 1946–50 period, the vast majority of these characters disappeared until a handful of the best were revived and/or modernized in the late 1950s and 1960s, creating the **Silver Age**. Replacing them on post-war newsstands were **crime** comics, **horror** comics, humor comics, **fantasy** comics, Western comics, and romance comics.

Before romance could gain a foothold, however, the teen humor genre came first, complete with dozens of adolescents longing, panting, and scheming for the attention of the opposite sex. Following the template of Andy Hardy in the movies and Henry Aldrich on the radio beginning during the Great Depression, **Archie** Andrews made an inauspicious debut in the MLJ company's **superhero** titles *Pep Comics* #22 (December 1941) and *Jackpot Comics* #4 (Winter 1941–42). Archie was not the first teen in comics—his own company created the earlier non-related Wilbur for

Zip Comics #18 (September 1941)—but Archie eventually became by far the most successful teen in the funny books. He and his coterie of Betty, Veronica, and Jughead, plus many other characters, have been entertaining readers young and older ever since.

The first comic book directly marketed to girls—and featuring a smattering of romance in the text features—was the highly successful *Calling All Girls* #1 (September 1941) from the publishers of *Parents' Magazine*. Like the Archie titles, this and several much less successful imitators was a bridge to romance comics. Squeaky clean *Parents' Magazine* kept *Calling All Girls* going for more than two decades in a variety of formats, although the comic strip elements were gone by 1946. The firm left the comic book business in 1949 and did not participate in the blooming of romance comics.

The iconic comic book creators and entrepreneurial business partners **Joe Simon** and **Jack Kirby** established the romance genre in comic books virtually single-handedly, beginning with the first romance comic book, *Young Romance* #1 (September–October 1947) for the small Crestwood Publications line, otherwise known as Feature and Prize. Earlier in the same year, working for the second-tier publisher Hillman Comics, Simon and Kirby dropped strong hints of romance in the teen-humor title *My Date*, which ran from #1 (July 1947) through #4 (January 1948). An obscure 1946 one-shot with a romantically themed cover, *Romantic Picture Novelettes*, was merely a compilation of *Mary Worth* newspaper strip reprints.

Beginning in 1940, the Simon and Kirby team wrote and drew **superhero** adventures few competitors could match. They created ***Captain America*** #1 (March 1941) for **Timely/Marvel** Comics and produced the first 10 issues before moving over to larger National Comics (now **DC** Comics), for which they made the Boy Commandos a huge hit during World War II. Kirby, one of the most prolific comic book artists of all time, ultimately became most influential for his Silver Age work at Marvel, most notably with his co-creation of the **Fantastic Four** in 1961; but for the first two decades of his career, Kirby's most significant contribution to comic books was the co-creation of the romance genre with the immediate commercial hit *Young Romance*.

"I wondered how they (female readers) would accept a comic book version of the popular *True Story Magazine*, with youthful, emotional yet wholesome stories supposedly told in the first person by love-smitten teen-agers," Simon writes in his memoir, first published in 1990 (122). "Visually," he continues, "the magazine love stories seemed a natural conversion for comic books" (125). He could not have hit a longer, more timely grand slam in the comic book industry, which was in desperate need to re-tool because of the rapidly waning interest in superhero themes. The first story in the first issue of *Young Romance*, "I Was a Pick-Up!" could not have been more different than what had been appearing in any other comics designed to appeal to female readers. Such flamboyant stories, in fact, helped lead to the formation in September 1954 of the self-censorship industry organization, the **Comics Code** Authority.

Young Romance and Simon and Kirby's sister title *Young Love*, which debuted in 1949 for tiny Crestwood Publications, thrived with exciting, often highly original covers and

themes. Even when 80 percent of the dozens of romance titles that had entered the field by 1950 were killed or suspended that year during industry turmoil, *Young Romance* and *Young Love* emerged as best-sellers on a monthly basis. In his memoir, Simon recalled that *Young Romance* #1 was a "complete sellout" and noted million-plus copy sales quickly became routine for both titles. In 2004, when comics historian Jerry Weist polled 44 leading people in the industry for a book entitled *The 100 Greatest Comic Books*, *Young Romance* #1 was the only romance comic book included, ranking 28th. In a sense, *Young Romance* #1 became a surrogate for an entire genre that existed without continuing characters like Archie or Captain America, but through tales of love set in an endless variety of backgrounds and situations.

Just as *Action Comics* #1 presented Superman for nearly a year without any superheroic competition, *Young Romance* had the love field to itself for nearly a year until Martin Goodman's Marvel Comics (also known as Timely) came up with *My Romance* #1 (August 1948). Goodman's company was long noted for its success with knock-off themes—indeed, Timely's *Captain America* #1 followed the first patriotic hero, MLTs The Shield, to the newsstands 14 months later.

Next in line was the sleazy minor-league publisher Victor Fox, also never one to miss a trend, although destined to remain in comics for less than three more years. Fox converted the radio teen humor **adaptation** of *Meet Corliss Archer* #3 to *My Life* #4 (September 1948), which began two years of a flood of somewhat lurid, short-lived titles from Fox. Fawcett, a major publisher of superhero and Western comics for whom Captain Marvel and Hopalong Cassidy made millions of dollars, jumped in next when it converted the superhero title *Captain Midnight* #67 to *Sweethearts* #68 (October 1948). Unlike the other three pioneering romance publishers, Fawcett boldly began *Sweethearts* as a monthly, perhaps with the knowledge that it was a comic book version of *True Confessions*, the same publisher's hugely successful adult "slick" magazine. Indeed, Fawcett was the only comic book publisher to begin a monthly title of any of the 147 romance titles to appear on the stands in 1949 and 1950. Fawcett also began *Life Story* as a monthly in 1949.

Interestingly, Fawcett did not market *Sweethearts* to the readers of its other comic books. The other Fawcett titles carried neither house ads nor listings for *Sweethearts*—this from a publisher that heavily plugged and listed all of its titles in all of its other comic books. The original readers of the early romance comics in 1947–50—mostly girls from 12 to 20 years old who grew up knowing only the hardships of the Great Depression, followed by World War II—eagerly grabbed the romance comics for a glimpse of what now seemed like the possibility of happiness and prosperity. On the other hand, many of the parents of these adolescent females, reared well before comic books got going in the mid-1930s, were not even aware of what the colorful pamphlet-style comic books were, since they did not yet exist during their childhoods in the era before the Depression.

All told, *Young Romance*, *My Romance*, *My Life*, and *Sweethearts* combined had only 15 issues with 1948 dates, also including the first two in 1947 from *Young Romance*. Publishers failed to pick up the pulse-pounding pace much in the first half

of 1949, when only 42 romance issues hit the stands with dates of January through June. St. John and Harvey, then both minor publishers, got into the field with the fifth and sixth romance titles respectively, *Teen-Age Romances* and *First Love*. The always-enterprising Simon and Kirby then produced *Young Love* #1 (February–March 1949) and quickly followed with the first Western-romance hybrid, the short-lived *Real West Romances*, with #1 (April–May 1949), thereby precipitating an ill-fated craze for Western-themed romance comics over the next year. (Despite their rapid demise, these comics represented an interesting attempt to merge traditionally male- and traditionally female-oriented genres.)

Thus, over a 21-month span through June 1949, there were a grand total of only 57 issues devoted to romance. An explosive expansion followed. With publishers rapidly becoming aware of sales figures, no fewer than 256 issues dated July through December 1949 had romance themes, covering 118 titles and 22 publishers, including no fewer than 64 issues dated December alone—more than in the first 21 months of the genre's existence. In all, more than one in five comic books published in the second half of 1949 was devoted to love. Marvel Comics produced 27 titles, totaling 47 issues in 1949; during the same 12 months, Fox's numbers were 18 titles and 52 issues, not counting a plethora of rebound/reprint 25-cent giant issues.

Ironically, the two companies that would eventually dominate the romance field, National (DC) and **Charlton**, took few early chances as romance publishing began. DC, which published more than 900 romance comics through 1977, was a minor part of the second-half rush in 1949, beginning the highly successful 180-issue run of *Girls' Love Stories* and starting the hybrid *Romance Trail*, which lasted only six issues. Charlton, a minor song-hits magazine publisher that was just beginning its line of comics, converted *Tim McCoy Western* #21 to the five-issue run of the obscure *Pictorial Love Stories*, beginning with #22. Charlton went on to publish more than 1,400 romance issues, dominating the numbers, if not the quality, of the 1960s and 1970s when the only serious competitor was DC. Charlton and DC together produced well over one-third of the nearly 6,000 romance issues published from 1947 to 1977.

Heart Throbs #1 (August 1949) began a successful seven-year fling with romance for **Quality Comics**, which had been one of the leading heroic publishers of the Golden Age, with many of the most imaginative costumed heroes, illustrators, and cover artists. In fact, Quality creations **Blackhawk**, **Plastic Man**, and Dollman even managed to hold onto their own titles in the face of the industry's costume hero purge of 1949–50. By the second half of 1949, however, Quality decided to focus on other genres, including starting 14 romance titles from August 1949 through January 1950. Quality came up with the most evocative titles in the industry, including *Heart Throbs*, *Love Letters*, *Flaming Love*, and *Campus Loves*, and often set stories in exotic locations, ranging from South Seas islands to Hollywood film sets.

Simon and Kirby's Crestwood titles had serious competition not only from Quality, but also from publisher Archer St. John's comic line, which was a solid second-tier producer of numerous genres for a decade beginning in 1947. Not long after St. John began

producing comics, the stylish **Matt Baker**, one of the few African American artists in comics, shifted to St. John from action-oriented circulation standout Fiction House, which produced no romance comics except for a 12-issue run of *Cowgirl Romances* in 1950–52. Baker's shift was fortuitous, since it gave him the opportunity to illustrate with a lavish, bravura style many of the best-written of all romance comics, notwithstanding Simon and Kirby's frequent gems. Baker, with a slick, realistic style reminiscent of syndicated comic strip superstar Alex Raymond, produced nearly 12 dozen gorgeous covers and a multitude of equally beautiful romance stories for St. John, which produced 165 romance issues from 1949 to 1955 along with several rebound/reprint giants. (Three more non-Baker issues followed in a last-gasp 1957–58 effort before the firm expired a little over two years after the original publisher's death.)

The St. John romance issues, among the most popular with collectors and historians, featured numerous stories grounded in psychological reality by Dana Dutch, whose career had largely languished in obscurity until comics historian John Benson wrote two books devoted to St. John, Baker, and Dutch—*Romance Without Tears* (2003) and *Confessions, Romances, Secrets and Temptations* (2007). These remain the only scholarly studies of romance comics history dealing with a single company, other than compilations of reprints from the likes of DC and Marvel. Had the St. John firm been better capitalized, it would be better remembered for the excellence of its all too short-lived romance line. The longest-running title, *Teen-Age Romances*, lasted only 45 issues.

So powerful was the 1949 phenomenon of romance comics that National even tried to change the emphasis of several stories featuring one of the firm's few remaining superheroes, the iconic **Wonder Woman**. There was always a hint of romance in the Amazon princess's adventures, which began in December 1941, the same month Archie first appeared. Yet a handful of 1949–50 adventures and covers in *Sensation Comics* clearly stressed romance at the expense of the usual colorful action for which Wonder Woman was noted as, by far, the most successful costumed heroine of all time.

Eventually the romance craze was unsustainable. The number of love comics dated January through June 1950 was a phenomenal 332—compared to the 322 issues of all types of comics produced in all of 1939. Thus, in the fiscal year from July 1949 through June 1950, there were no fewer than 588 romance issues from all companies combined, or nearly five dozen per month on the average. This does not even count the romance themes prominent in the likes of Wonder Woman and Marvel's *Venus* title, which turned the Goddess of Love into a costumed heroine.

The Love Glut, as comics historian Michelle Nolan has dubbed this period of comic book history, soon became the quickest genre blood-letting in comics history, absent censorship. Romance comics dated in the second half of 1950 totaled but 164 issues, a collapse that included only 61 issues dated October through December 1950. The Love Glut led to serious financial complications at Marvel, Fox, and Quality, among other firms. Even mighty National canceled *Romance Trail* and suspended *Secret Hearts*, which reappeared in 1952, cutting the goliath firm's romance line from

four titles to two. Marvel killed 25 of 30 romance titles that appeared early in 1950, most of which did not make it beyond a second or third issue. Likewise, Fox abandoned all 21 of its short-lived love titles; soon, the entire firm disappeared. Major league publisher Fawcett killed or suspended 13 of 17 titles in 1950, and first-tier comic producer Quality concurrently purged or suspended 22 of its 30 titles in all genres, including all 14 romance types.

In all, only 30 of 147 romance titles, including Simon and Kirby's ever-popular *Young Romance* and *Young Love*, survived the Love Glut of 1950 unscathed. Several other titles were resumed in 1951 and 1952, when romance rallied strongly on the comic book racks before enduring a steady but slow decline, in large part because of the influence of television. Never again, however, would there be the likes of the romance craze of 1949–50.

EC Comics, best known for the **horror** and **fantasy** titles that helped precipitate the Comics Code Authority, killed its three short-lived romance titles, but not before producing the parody of all parodies. "The Love Story to End All Love Stories" in *Modern Love* #8 (August–September 1950), the company's final romance issue, featured satirical murders and the suicide of publisher T. Tot, a victim of the glut. (There really was a Tony Tot Comics sub-publishing company at EC.) "Put out anything . . . even . . . horror!" shouts the distraught Mr. Tot. Just before the luckless comic book tycoon's demise, respected creators Jack Lyman and Joe Curry sadly announce they are financially ruined and leap from Mr. Tot's penthouse window (ironically, at this time Joe Simon and Jack Kirby were among the few successful romance creators and were not suffering from the glut). This manic story would not have been out of place when editor **Harvey Kurtzman** began *Mad* as an EC comic book in 1952, though by then the romance market had stabilized.

In 1951, this stability permitted numerous titles to return, allowing for a market of 403 romance issues across 28 companies, including nine firms with but a single love title. There was, however, no genuinely new ground to be covered in the world of four-color love, other than St. John's introduction of *Wartime Romances* #1 (July 1951) one year into the Korean War. Romance went on to a single-year high of 522 issues in 1952, or one of every six of the record of 3,164 comic book issues—give or take a few sometimes listed issues that may or may not exist. The first wave of the baby boomers, born 1946–50, helped offset the negative influence of early commercial television on comic book circulation in the 1950s. Even so—until the late 1980s explosion of independent publishers and fan artists, along with the flooding of the market by Marvel and DC—corporate comics began a long, slow decline in circulation and title numbers following the highs of 1952.

Romance comics gradually lost out with all the rest, incrementally declining in numbers almost every year. The Comics Code Authority, which began placing its stamp in the upper-right hand corner of comics dated variously February, March, and April of 1955, would no longer allow cleavage, lingerie, or titles like "I Was a Pick-Up!" Censorship, of course, resulted in the death of horror and most **crime** titles, but romance

persisted. There were 347 romance issues in 1955, the first year of censorship, followed by 296 in 1956, although the ensuing demise of publishers like Quality, St. John, Ace, and Lev Gleason inevitably resulted in a significant decline in romance-themed issues. By 1959, there was a decade-low 160 issues, mostly from Charlton, DC, and Joe Simon's output for Crestwood/Prize, along with two titles each from Marvel, and the tiny American Comics Group. Marvel suffered a massive distribution-company related collapse midway through 1957 and only two romance types remained among the 16 bi-monthly titles the once and future comic king could produce in an agreement with DC's distributor.

The long-running likes of *Young Love* and *Young Romance* from Crestwood/Prize (and, beginning in 1963, from DC following their purchase), along with success stories like DC's *Girls' Love Stories*, *Girls' Romances*, *Secret Hearts* and *Falling in Love*, plus ACG's *My Romantic Adventures* and *Confessions of the Lovelorn*, were the exception rather than the rule in the mercurial comic book industry. Even before the mom-and-pop stores and other grocery, drugstore and newsstand distribution outlets began to encounter serious problems in the 1960s, far more comic titles quickly vanished than succeeded on crowded newsstands. Superman and Batman, not to mention Captain America and the later Fantastic Four and Amazing **Spider-Man**, were the exception, not the rule. A few **funny animals** types, such as Donald Duck, Uncle Scrooge, and Bugs Bunny, lasted for decades, but most failed sooner or later.

Romance comics were no exception to the erratic nature of comic book circulation. During their 1947–77 run, there were some 301 love titles. Only 103—about one-third—lasted as long as a dozen issues, and fully 113 titles ran four or fewer issues. Only 15 romance titles ran to at least 100 issues, so, in hindsight, the odds were greatly against love.

Ironically, other than Simon and Kirby's epic *Young Romance* #1, the Holy Grail for most romance comic collectors is the once thoroughly obscure *Daring Love* #1 from the tiny publisher Stanmor, except for the many collectors who treasure above all else Baker's St. John ouevre and eagerly pursue the rare reprint giants for which he did extraordinary covers.

Daring Love #1 (September-October 1953), with a now-famous "roll-in-the-hay" cover, is distinguished by the first published artwork of **Steve Ditko**, who went on to co-create Spider-Man with Marvel editor **Stan Lee**. Ditko did the first 38 issues of *The Amazing Spider-Man* before leaving in a creative dispute with Marvel, but those 38 are among the most treasured in the collecting hobby.

Some of the romance failures were distinguished, such as Simon and Kirby's four-issue run of *In Love* in 1954–55 as part of the duo's ill-fated self-published Mainline imprint. The first three issues featured what was still a rarity in romance comics—nearly book-length "novels." *In Love* #1 featured "Bride of the Star," one of the few baseball stories in romance comics; #2 was a soap opera entitled "Marilyn's Men," and #3 was "Artist Loves Model," the story of the frustrations of the nicely-named comic book illustrator Inky Wells.

Another noteworthy attempt at lengthy hybrid stories was Fawcett's three-issue run of *Love Mystery*, which was a victim of the 1950 Love Glut. The title included six nicely done stories that melded intrigue with romance. There were also remarkable period pieces such as "There's No Romance in Rock and Roll" from *True Life Romance* #3 (August 1956), one of several unsuccessful 1950s romance titles from the tiny publisher Ajax. In this story, a girl is forced to choose between a boy who loves the new rock-style tunes and one who prefers classical music. Having made the right choice, at least according to the author, the girl says, "Gee, I can't believe that I ever enjoyed that horrible rock and roll stuff—it's just plain noise!" Her clean-cut fellow responds, "Right! It'll never take the place of a sweet love song . . . by the way, let's get some records to share." This amazing tale was unearthed and reprinted as a curiosity piece in the satirical reprint title *My Terrible Romance* in 1994 by independent New England Comics.

When The Comics Code Authority was formed, formal rules of engagement, so to speak, were laid down for the publishers. The only major publishers not to participate were squeaky-clean Dell, which did not produce crime, horror or romance comics, and Gilberton, which published ***Classics Illustrated***. Sexual imagery of all types was forbidden, right down to visible cleavage; meanwhile, respect for sanctity of the home, for marriage, for parents and for good behavior was always to be encouraged. No longer would there be titles like "The Savage In Her!" (*Young Romance* #22, June 1950). Controversy and conflict were out; dewy-eyed romance and domesticity were in.

The tiny American Comics Group, which for the most part published whimsical and character-driven romance stories from 1949 to 1964, inexplicably veered toward the sensational for a few months in 1954, only to be driven back to the mainstream by the Comics Code. "Jailbird's Romance"—billed as "The Most Sensational Confession of Outlaw Love Ever Published"—appeared in *My Romantic Adventures* #49 (September 1954), followed by an insane asylum epic, "Love of a Lunatic," in #50. In sister title *Confessions of the Lovelorn*, "I Sold My Baby" was the feature of #52 (August 1954), followed by "Heart of a Drunkard" in #53, "The Wrong Side of the Tracks" in #54 and "I Take What I Want" in #55. The code, if nothing else, produced a shift to titles like "The Man in My Past" and "My Own Heart," along with far tamer covers.

Likewise, stories like "I Joined a Teen-Age Sex Club!" in Harvey's *First Love* #13 (July 1951) were strictly forbidden. Harvey used a lot of pre-code reprints during the final years of its romance line in 1955–58, so the likes of "Sinful Surrender" in *First Love* #27 (April 1953) became "Foolish Dream" in the post-Comics Code *First Love* #61 (February 1956). Conflict-ridden dialog was expunged or rewritten; cleavage was covered over. Even advertising of questionable products was revised or dropped. The pre-code romance stories from DC, Marvel, and Charlton, however, generally required few changes, since those publishers had long since begun producing relatively tame romance stories.

By 1959, when Charlton produced 15 romance titles—more than any publisher had tried since the Love Glut year 1950—the low-rent firm dominated the genre in bulk, if not quality, since DC still had a headlock on production values in its five titles

(the line expanded to seven when DC purchased Crestwood's then-venerable *Young Romance* and *Young Love* in 1963). Charlton published 72 of the 160 romance issues produced in 1959, most of them generically bland. Charlton tried stirring up a little controversy with its *High School Confidential Diary* #1 (June 1960), which top-billed "Reckless Rebels Tearing at Life . . ." perhaps in response to the spate of films dealing with juvenile delinquency in the late 1950s and early 1960s. These stories, of course, promised a lot more than they could deliver under the strictures of the Comics Code.

In the historic DC reprint compilation *Heart Throbs*, published in 1979, only two years after the last original DC romance issue, editor Naomi Scott spotlighted romance comics for the first time among books aimed at collectors as well as the general public. Among her observations were these telling lines: "Interestingly enough, romance comics were written and drawn primarily by men. Even the advice columns, with bylines attributed to Jane Ford and Julia Roberts, were written by men. Over the years there were women artists and story editors, but until recently the comic industry was dominated by men. That may have had something to do with the romance comic point of view—and why we (as girls) were never quite sure they were right" (11).

Scott also made this accurate observation: "Romance comics were popular for almost 30 years because they showed a simpler life. Love, romance and marriage were ends in themselves; problems were limited to finding the right mate, the person who would share the rest of your life. They satisfied a kid's need to know what was ahead, to know that dreams could come true and that life was a simple matter once you found your man. They were done in the same spirit as the Doris Day and Debbie Reynolds girl-next-door films of the fifties. In the late fifties and early sixties, television was stealing a large share of the comic book market—action-adventure comics, as well as romance. But the changing morality of the sixties and seventies killed romance comics forever" (12).

Before romance comics died, however, DC tried to make them topical in ways they never had been from the venerable firm. Since beginning to produce love stories in 1949, DC had often recycled plots and lines, but had consistently produced new art to account for changes in fashion. However, the situation began to change when DC produced its first serial in the long-running *Girls' Love Stories*. This epic starred April O'Day, Hollywood Starlet, who debuted in #104 (July 1964) and ran through #115 (November 1965). During the mid- and late-1960s, several other serials appeared in DC's love titles. The company's first serial character was Bonnie Taylor, airline stewardess (as they then were known), who ran in *Young Romance* #126 (November 1963) through #139 (December 1965–January 1966). DC picked up *Young Romance* with #125 (September 1963) and acquired *Young Love* concurrently with #39 (a renumbering complication of the original series), which began a serial starring the registered nurse Mary Robin.

Another early indication of DC's attempt to make romance comics more "hip" was the appearance of images of The Beatles in *Girls' Romances* #109 (June 1965) and *Heart Throbs* #101 (May 1966), though not the Fab Four themselves. Following the "Summer of Love" in 1967, DCs romance artists gradually phased in different fashions and lingo. DC first put hippies on a cover in a two-part story in *Girls' Romances* #135 and #136

(September and October 1968) entitled "My Time to Love." The heroine tells the hippie fellow, "Oh, Kip . . . I do love you . . . but you know how my parents feel about you . . . and that crazie, hippie life you lead!"

Black faces began to appear in a few stories of the 1970s, and editor/writer Robert Kanigher penned a 13-page story of interracial romance, "Full Hands, Empty Heart," for *Young Romance* #194 (July–August 1973). Kanigher, an innovator on several fronts and an outstanding editor and writer for DCs first-rate **war comics** since the 1950s, showed courage with this effort. In this story of the romance of a black female nurse and white male doctor—a twist on most interracial stories of the time, in which the black person was usually male—the doctor dies while saving the nurse from a drug-addled patient. "If we don't learn to love each other, the world will always be a jungle," the nurse says, holding the dead doctor. She finishes the tale saying wistfully, "In some worlds there's no color, only people."

Joe Simon briefly returned to romance as a DC editor in the 1970s, creating stories like "Daughter of Women's Lib" in *Young Love* #106 (October–November 1973); but neither images of The Beatles nor updated fashions, or even stories dealing with interracial love, hippies and women's liberation, could save DCs romance comics from falling circulation. Likewise, Marvel's experiment in bringing the genre back with two titles on a bi-monthly basis as the 1970s dawned ended six years later with *Our Love Story* #38 (February 1976) and *My Love* #39 (March 1976). Meanwhile, other than a few reprint issues, Charlton's extensive romance line ended in 1976.

By that time, DC had already dispatched *Secret Hearts* with #153 and *Girls' Romances* with #160, both in 1971. *Girls' Love Stories* disappeared with #180 and *Falling in Love* with #143, both in 1973; and *Love Stories* died with #152 in 1973 (the new title continued from *Heart Throbs* after #146). Finally, the pioneering *Young Romance* ended with #208 in 1975—the record for a romance comic—and *Young Love* vanished with #126 in 1977, with a last gasp of six issues after the title seemed to have been killed with #120 in 1975 along with *Young Romance*. Romance comics had thus come full circle, and romance in popular culture was left for movies, television, and paperback books.

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Michelle Nolan

ROMITA, JOHN, JR. (1956–). An artist noted for his professionalism, consistency, and speed, Romita Jr. has spent nearly the entirety of his career detailing the **Marvel** universe and its characters. Since the late 1970s, he has styled every major figure in Marvel Comics, enjoying extended runs on titles such as *The Amazing* ***Spider-Man***, ***Iron Man***, *The Uncanny* ***X-Men***, ***Daredevil***, ***The Punisher***, ***The Incredible Hulk***, ***Thor***, and ***Wolverine***. Despite this extensive resume, much like his father, **John Romita Sr.**,

Romita Jr. is most synonymous with Spider-Man. Though he has long since moved out from his father's shadow, the influence of the elder Romita can be seen in the energetic layouts and dynamic poses of Romita Jr.'s pages. Romita Jr.'s linework is distinctive in its angularity and grittiness; his comics are also recognizable for their effective use of shadow and detailed backgrounds.

Romita Jr. possesses a remarkable range; he has proven himself adept at creating both the grand, often cosmic scale required for the adventures of characters like the X-Men and Thor, as well as realistic urban environments. His fondness for New York—the city of his birth—shines through in much of his work (and perhaps helps to explain some of his fondness for Spider-Man). Romita Jr.'s work on Spider-Man is enriched with many of the city's identifying characteristics: majestic skylines, crowded streets, water towers, intricate networks of fire escapes, endless rows of brownstone buildings. Even the filthy, dangerous corners of Hell's Kitchen that were so integral to his work on the monthly *Daredevil* series in the 1980s and the limited series exploring the hero's origin, *Daredevil: The Man Without Fear* (with writer **Frank Miller** in 1994), speak to his commitment to detail. Shortly after the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York City, Romita Jr. and writer **J. Michael Straczynski** devoted an issue of *Amazing Spider-Man* to memorializing the victims; in it, Spider-Man, along with numerous Marvel heroes and villains, surveys the horrors of Ground Zero and attempts to comprehend the damage done to his city.

Romita Jr. entered creator-owned comics with *The Gray Area*, a three-issue limited series involving a dead New York cop exploring supernatural realms, co-written by Glen Brunswick and published by **Image Comics** in 2004. More recently, Romita Jr. has collaborated with writer **Mark Millar** on *Kick-Ass*, a creator-owned venture from Marvel's Icon imprint. This series, which has subsequently begun development as a major motion picture, involves violence that is more graphic and disturbing than most of Romita Jr.'s previous work.

Of contemporary artists working in mainstream comic books, Romita Jr. is among the most prolific. His ability to produce issue after issue without the assistance of a fill-in artist is becoming increasingly rare. During one span from 1998 to 2000 he was doing full pencils on two monthly series—*Peter Parker: Spider-Man* and *Thor*. This kind of productivity is almost unheard of in modern monthly comics. He returned to *Amazing Spider-Man* in 2008, becoming one of a rotating team of creators contributing to the title's weekly publication schedule. In yet another testament to his capabilities, Romita Jr. is set to pencil a 60-page story in an upcoming anniversary issue, *Amazing Spider-Man* #600.

J. Gavin Paul

ROMITA, JOHN, SR. (1930–). Born in Brooklyn, New York, John Romita graduated from the School of Industrial Art (now known as Art and Design) in 1947. Milton Caniff and Noel Sickels were his primary early influences and he was a great admirer of **Jack Kirby** and **Gil Kane**. His first work was penciling a 15-page **romance** story for ***Famous Funnies*** which was never used. In 1949 he was asked by a friend who

worked for **Timely Comics** to ghost pencil pages for him. Ultimately, this would help Romita meet Timely's art director, **Stan Lee**. Romita's first credited work was for "The Bradshaw Boys" in *Western Outlaws* #1 (February 1951) for Atlas Comics. He drew a number of stories in different genres and participated in the short revival of **Captain America** in *Young Men* #24–28 (Dec. 1953–July 1954) and *Captain America* #76–78 (May–September 1954).

Moving over to **DC comics** in 1958, Romita was assigned to work solely on romance titles. Tired of penciling and just wanting to ink, he returned to **Marvel Comics** to work on an ***Avengers*** issue. However, Lee had him do pencils over Jack Kirby's ***Daredevil***—a title he enjoyed working on. This would lead to a two-part story guest starring **Spider-Man** (16–17, May–June 1966). Impressed with Romita's handling of the character, Lee handed him *The Amazing Spider-Man* (*ASM*) after co-creator **Steve Ditko** quit. Thinking it was a temporary job, Romita copied Ditko's style but after six months, he realized that the book was now his. It is Romita's version of Spider-Man that is now best remembered.

Working with the Marvel Method, where Lee would provide an outline of the story to the artist, Romita plotted many of the *Spider-Man* stories; sometimes even as he drove along with his family. Even his son **John Romita Jr.** (now himself a top comics artists) helped provide ideas. The two Romitas collaborated on *Amazing Spider-Man* 500. Romita's favorite issues of the series were #108 and #109, as he was able to play with some of his Milton Caniff influences.

Romita was responsible for the infamous "Death of Gwen Stacy" issue and drew the artwork that introduced Mary Jane Watson to the world (*ASM* #42). Romita left the series in the early 1970s to become the art director at Marvel, where he helped shape its new characters. He also worked on special projects such as children's books and coloring books, as well as overseeing "Romita's Raiders"—an apprentice program for new Marvel artists. From 1977 to 1980, Romita provided the artwork for the syndicated *Spider-Man* newspaper strip.

Romita once commented that he was a storyteller first and an artist second. "Art is only a tool, just like the lettering on the paper. If you don't tell a story, the best art in the world is a waste." After retiring, he has returned to contribute artwork to special Spider-Man events, including the 2007 USPS Spider-Man stamp.

Selected Bibliography: Lee, Stan, Tom DeFalco, Roy Thomas, Roger Stern, John Romita Sr. *Marvel Visionaries: John Romita Sr.* New York: Marvel, 2005; Thomas, Roy, Jim Amish, and John Romita, Sr. *John Romita: And All That Jazz*. Raleigh, NC: TwoMorrows Publishing, 2007.

Jeff McLaughlin

RONIN. While rising to fame with his run on **Daredevil** for **Marvel Comics**, the six-issue-miniseries *Ronin* for **DC Comics**, written between 1983 and 1984, can be seen as a landmark in the work of **Frank Miller**. Not only did he help strengthen the acceptance

for creators' rights with his first creator-owned comic, but he also evolved as a comic artist on a visual level. Each of the six issues spans over 48 pages, a rather uncommon format for American mainstream comic books at that time.

In *Ronin*, Miller tells the story of a samurai warrior who, after losing his master, Lord Ozaki, sets out on a journey to kill his master's murderer, the demon Agat. Although the story starts out in 12th-century Japan, the demon and the ronin are transported into the New York of a **post-apocalyptic** future, where their battle continues. Simultaneously Miller depicts a completely different storyline about moral and human evolution that is altered by biogenetics, presented in the form of the Aquarius complex, a cooperation that develops new technologies based on bioorganic material. Both stories intertwine and thus reflect on each other when the samurai takes over the body of one of Aquarius' test subjects, the amputated boy Billy.

The story of *Ronin* is constructed out of a collage of different classical genres. While the prologue of the comic is situated in feudal 12th-century Japan and clearly resembles visually and thematically Eastern comic books such as ***Lone Wolf and Cub***, the story is interrupted by a sudden time-travel into the future where a new protagonist is constructed as a symbiosis of two characters that overlap each other. The shape-shifting demon further strengthens this doppelganger motif when he takes over the role of Aquarius' director, Mr. Taggart. Although the setting, a dystopian New York City, resembles that of a **science-fiction** movie, the hard-boiled dialogue and the stand-off-like confrontations between the characters refer back to the classical **Western** genre.

In contrast to other comics of the same time, *Ronin* offers a positive female figure for identification, Officer Casey McKenna. As one of the three founders of the Aquarius complex and leader of its security force, she reminds the male characters and the readers of her status as a woman and also invites them to reflect on their own ways of thinking: "Gentlemen, it's the 21st century. You've got to have open minds."

Miller not only confronts his readers with gender issues but also with the society they are living in. While he is sometimes criticized because of the right-wing political implications of some of his comics, in *Ronin* he displays nearly all facets of the political spectrum, from a right-wing conservative to a leftist libertarian world-view. Although *Ronin* includes a wide range of racial slurs (such as "nip" or "chink"), Miller certainly does not present these stereotypes as acceptable. He rather reconstructs an over-exaggerated vernacular language in order to question the readers' perception for such terms and their implied meanings. After a rather heated debate about racial heritage, an African American character replies to his interlocutor, clearly recognizable as a **Nazi**, very ironically: "There goes the neighborhood."

What is more striking in *Ronin* than Miller's interest in politics is his use of visual methods (with the help of his color-artist Lynn Varley) to construct a world that challenges readers' typical reading habits. His panel designs offer more than a display of the action taking place; Miller rather structures the readers' perception of timing and pace and gives him a sense of direction on the two-dimensional printed page. Only some pages of the comic book are displayed in a traditional panel structure. From

the second page onwards, Miller shows the difference between vertical and horizontal panels, using filmic devices such as close-ups and makes extended use of splash pages. *Ronin* predates the strict visual codex of black, white, and one supplementary color Miller would use in ***Sin City***, beginning seven years later.

Miller closely connects the visual design of the comic book with its content. For the biogenetics housed in the Aquarius Complex, Miller uses a drawing technique that simulates biological organisms: tiny circles and fine lines connecting them resemble heaps of cells or molecules that construct more complex forms. This graphic method is not only used on the micro-level of the inside of the Aquarius complex, which appears as a giant living organism sheltering the characters, but also outside the complex. On a splash page that appears slightly changed in every single issue of *Ronin*, Miller displays the control the Aquarius Complex and its biogenetical engineered metabolism has over humanity. It literally spreads like a virus over New York City.

Another visual uniqueness can be witnessed in Miller's graphic handling of battle scenes. His break with more traditional modes of comic narration includes vivid violence with a special focus on the timing of the action. At the beginning of issue #3, for example, Casey McKenna reviews a videotaped battle between the ronin and her soldiers. The panels are not structured from left to right, but from top to bottom, and are printed in black and white in order to resemble a filmstrip. The strips exceed the format of the page and continue on the next page in a different scene. These panels are sometimes disrupted by an image of Officer McKenna, whose commentary describes the otherwise silent pictures of the film. Miller puts this device to a two-fold use: on the one hand he sets the comic visually apart from the medium film by placing its disrupted images in the sequence of a film-strip; on the other hand he evokes the feeling and speed that only films can produce in the viewer's mind.

With *Ronin*, Frank Miller created a heterogeneous comic book that blends various visual techniques and uses different genres in order to construct a reality that questions the society readers are living in. While Miller's ***Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*** stands out because of its revolutionary reading of preceding *Batman* comics, *Ronin* introduces new standards for graphic storytelling and creates a perfect symbiosis of graphic narration and content.

Daniel Wüllner

ROSS, ALEX (1970–). Alex Ross is an American writer, penciller, inker, colorist, letter, editor, and cover artist. While artists like **Mike Allred**, **Frank Miller**, and **Alan Moore** were placing a postmodern spin on the canonical **DC** and **Marvel** characters during the 1980s and 1990s, Ross created a postmodern take on the **superhero** canon by creating photo-realistic art and extremely true-to-life stories of superheroes relating to the real world. As Ross explains on his Web site, "Fans appreciate that [I] had an obvious affection for the characters [I] paint, demonstrated by [my] attention to detail and the fact that [I] took the time to make these characters look so believable," (www.alexrossart.com). He is best known for creating a series of graphic novels that combine the realism of

his art and storytelling: ***Marvels*** (1994), ***Astro City*** (1995), ***Kingdom Come*** (1996) and the "Earth" series ***Earth X*** (1999), *Universe X* (2000), and *Paradise X* (2002).

Ross was born in Portland, Oregon, and grew up in Lubbock, Texas. His mother believes that he was destined to be an artist because at the age of three he would take pieces of paper and try to quickly draw whatever was being advertised on television during a commercial break. While his mother applauded his artistic ability, his father, a minister, was his moral compass, something that proved important when writing stories for characters like **Superman**. He remembers the defining moment of his childhood as being his discovery of the existence of **Spider-Man** from watching *The Electric Company*. Ironically, Ross would go on to be one of the foremost storytellers of the Spider-Man mythology during the 1990s, even helping design the superhero's costume for the 2002 film.

Having impressed Marvel editor **Kurt Busiek** with the art he created at the American Academy of Art in Chicago, Ross was asked to collaborate with Busiek in 1993 on a story about the average person on the street and their relationship with the superbeings of their world. Busiek was so impressed by the final product, *Marvels*, that he and Ross started designing characters the following year, for a monthly series for **Image Comics** that would explore the use of narrative perspective similar to the way that they experimented with it in the creation of *Marvels*. In *Astro City*, they conceived and designed over 50 superheroes and villains and used an ever-evolving cast of characters to tell an extended story about a city filled with superheroes. Not only were many stories told from the perspective of villains or individuals without superpowers, many issues were told from the first-person perspective with the panels reflecting the framing of the narrator's eyes. After the initial concept stage, Ross only continued to design the covers of subsequent issues preferring to continue with his own work looking at the connection between reality and superheroes.

Ross's follow-up to *Marvels* was a limited series for DC, *Kingdom Come*, which explored the future of DC's stable of superheroes, as they fought the passing of time, and each other, for personal, professional, and moral reasons. In 1997, *Wizard* magazine asked Ross to imagine a dystopian future for the Marvel characters, similar to the material that Ross had created DC in *Kingdom Come*. This issue of *Wizard* sold incredibly well, leading to *Wizard* partnering with Marvel on an additional issue in 1999 that featured a section called the *Earth X Sketch Book*. The *Sketch Book* was expanded into three miniseries that tell the story of **Captain America**, as he takes the reincarnation of **Captain Marvel** (Mar-vell) on a journey to repopulate the Marvel canon.

Selected Bibliography: Alex Ross Web site, (www.alexrossart.com).

Jason Gallagher

RUCKA, GREG (1969–). A multi-talented writer whose work includes novels, screenplays, animated features, and comic books, Greg Rucka is well regarded for his ability to craft narratives that are sympathetic to the humanity of his sometimes far-from-human characters. Known throughout the industry for skills honed as a crime novelist, Rucka has consistently proven himself a reliable comics writer by stressing the importance of

story in a medium prone to visual excess and thin plotlines. Starting what would later become a pattern with his very first work in comics, Rucka is also known for writing strong female characters in his creator-owned properties as well as in corporate-owned, mainstream **superhero** titles.

Something of a rare breed in the world of comics, Rucka has a high degree of formal education. Graduating first from Vassar College, he went on to earn a Master's degree from the University of Southern California. His work is marked by deep, well-researched symbolism and extensive use of allusion—a tradition of writing not uncommon among erudite fiction writers.

Prior to the debut of his first comic book *Whiteout* (1998), created in collaboration with artist Steve Lieber and published through Oni Press, Rucka had already penned the first three installments of his Atticus Kodak novel series to critical acclaim. *Whiteout* and its sequel *Whiteout: Melt* (2000), both following U.S. Marshall Carrie Stetko as she investigates crimes in Antarctic research stations, received similar praise and helped solidify Rucka's place as a professional comic book writer. Still with Oni, Rucka next turned to what would be his longest-running creation, *Queen & Country* (2001–7), a British spy series centered on MI6 agent Tara Chace.

Transitioning into more opportunities at mainstream publishing houses, Rucka found his skills most at home in ***Detective Comics*** (1999–2002) and ***Batman*** (1999–2000), though his reach included the extended family of Batman titles at **DC Comics**. Fans and critics alike took particular notice of Rucka's stories that explored Batman's crime-solving prowess—that is, Batman's ability to live up to the "detective" moniker. During this time Rucka also dedicated a significant amount of energy to building the mythos of previously ancillary female Batman characters, including **Catwoman**, Batgirl, Oracle, and Huntress.

At **Marvel Comics**, Rucka contributed his vision to numerous characters in the House of Ideas pantheon. Interspersed at various times throughout the 2000s, Rucka wrote stories featuring **Black Widow**, **Spider-Man**, Elektra, **Daredevil**, and Wolverine, among others.

Today, most of Rucka's ongoing work can be found at DC, where he has left his mark on nearly all major characters in the DC universe. Having previously spent time on *Detective Comics*, Rucka has gone on to write ***Wonder Woman***, *Adventures of* ***Superman***, and ***Action Comics***. He has also played major contributing roles in crossover events such as *Infinite Crisis*, *52*, *Countdown*, and *Final Crisis*. Despite the breadth of Rucka's oeuvre, however, his most acclaimed work at DC—including *Gotham Central* and *Checkmate*—sticks closely to his crime- and spy-influenced roots.

Joshua Plencner

RUNAWAYS. The popular series *Runaways* tells the story of a group of youths who discover that their parents are part of a murderous super-villain cabal, and that they themselves possess superpowers. **Brian K. Vaughan** and Adrian Alphona created the series in 2003 and produced 24 issues of the title before **Joss Whedon** and Michael Ryan took over the title for six issues; writer Terry Moore and illustrators Hubert

Ramos and Takeshi Miyazawa then produced nine subsequent issues, with Kathryn Immonen and Sara Pichelli scheduled to follow them.

Forced to go on the run, the runaways of the title plot to take down their parents' syndicate and atone for the previous generation's crimes by using their own powers for good. Since they have a very loosely constructed idea of themselves as a team, there is no cohesive group identity and no group costumes (much to the disgust of Molly, the youngest character). In contrast to other **superhero** groupings, there is a higher ratio of female characters and the group is diverse in age, **ethnicity**, and sexual orientation.

Runaways combines innovative content (fantastic plots and heroics often take a backseat to human relationships and themes regarding the journey to adulthood) with the traditional style and continuity of the **Marvel** universe of superhero narratives. Featuring quick-moving storylines that nonetheless give the reader emotional food for thought, a plethora of popular culture references, and engaging, well-rounded characters, the series has attracted both young adult and adult audiences.

Each of the multiple artists and inkers who have worked on the series has brought different artistic styles with them, but all share common features that complement and further construct the *Runaways'* world: a large color palette, realistically proportioned bodies, and clothing reflecting current trends in young adult fashion. While the art has changed significantly over the years, the individual characters are still instantly recognizable with their original personalities intact. As the series develops under new creative teams, it seems to have lost touch with the generational conflict of previous story arcs. The membership of the group, however, does not remain static as some of the characters are killed and still others, also runaways, are invited to join them in their quests for justice. The core characters include de facto leader Nico Minoru, a Japanese American who began the series as a 16-year-old Goth and is a sorceress like her parents. The son of mad scientists, Chase Stein turns 18 early in the series and is the most rebellious and unpredictable of all the characters. He possesses the world's most powerful gauntlets and, since the death of his girlfriend and fellow member of the group Gert Yorkes, has had an empathetic connection with the dinosaur Old Lace. Karolina Dean is a 16-year-old alien whose natural form is visually fluid, often depicted with waves of rainbow-like light enveloping her humanoid structure. Her early struggles with her homosexuality were treated respectfully and gradually at the onset of the series but her confidence has grown, particularly as result of her relationship with her Skrull fiancée, Xavin. Molly Hayes, the youngest member at age 11, is a mutant with superhuman strength and invulnerability. She provides a foil for much of the angst of the older members of the group as well as providing insight for crisis situations.

The various series of this title have been collected in diverse formats. There are, to date, three volumes of oversized hardcover editions: Volume 1 collects the premier single issues #1–18; Volume 2, the newly numbered issues #1–12, and the 2006 Free Comic Book Day crossover issue with ***X-Men***; and Volume 3 gathers the remaining issues that were produced by Vaughan and Alphona (#13–24). Ten digest-sized trade collections, mostly in soft cover, include the material collected above (but grouped in

individual story arcs) as well as subsequently published material. *Pride and Joy* (#1–6) introduces the main characters and their relationships with their parents, providing the initial main generational conflict concept and thrust of the series. *Teenage Wasteland* (#7–12) continues the saga of the parents' search for the runaway children with the involvement of Marvel's original teen runaway crime fighters, Cloak and Dagger. *The Good Die Young* collects the final issues from the first volume, #13–18, relating the last battle with the evil parents and the identity of the team mole. Five individual digests compose the second volume of the series: *True Believers* (#1–6), in which a wide variety of evil characters in the Marvel universe swarm to Los Angeles to fill the vacuum left by the defeat of the Pride; *Escape to New York* (#7–12) continues the adventure with Cloak and Dagger and the New **Avengers**; *Parental Guidance* (#13–18) centers on Molly Hayes's exploits with a youthful street gang; *Live Fast* (#19–24) focuses on decisions that must be made for the entire group; and *Dead End Kids* (#25–30) by Whedon and Ryan takes the group back to New York as well as a century into the past. The next two digests feature writer Moore and artists Ramos and Miyazawa in their supernatural spin on the adventures: *Dead Wrong* (#1–6) and *Rock Zombies* (#7–10). A film version of the comic is forthcoming with scripting by Vaughan.

There have also been a number of tie-ins with other series, notably ***Civil War: Young Avengers/Runaways*** (also called *Civil War: Young Avengers & Runaways* in the collected edition), a miniseries tie-in to Marvel Comics' Civil War crossover event. The miniseries was written by Zeb Wells with art by Stefano Caselli. Young Avengers co-creator Allan Heinberg and Runaways co-creator Vaughan served as creative consultants to Wells. A second team-up between the characters from *Runaways* and *Young Avengers*, *Secret Invasion: Runaways/Young Avengers*, was written by Chris Yost with art by Miyazawa. *Mystic Arcana*, published in 2007 as a series of four one-shot titles contains an individual main story followed by a back-up story whose plot continues through all four books. The main story in each book focuses upon a different fictional character, each of whom in previous Marvel publications have had associations with magic. In *Mystic Arcana: Sister Grimm*, Nico Minoru discovers her family's heirloom, the Black Mirror.

Runaways has been recommended by various library organizations for teen readers. It has won the 2006 **Harvey Award** for Best Continuing or Limited Series and Shuster awards, "Voters Choice—Outstanding International Creator" (2006, 2007), and was nominated for the Georgia Peach Award for Teen Readers in 2007.

Gail de Vos

RUSSELL, P. CRAIG (1951–). Craig Russell is a prominent illustrator, writer, and adapter. While earning his BFA in painting at the University of Cincinnati, awarded in 1973, he began drawing professionally for **Marvel**. After apprenticing under Dan Adkins, Russell's first penciling job was *Morbius, the Living* ***Vampire***. Russell's opinion of his first published work is unclear, as he does not include it in his Opus listings (Russell lists all

his work by Opus number, much like a classical composer). During this time, Russell also taught at Kent State University for two years and received a fellowship for comic creation from the Ohio State Arts Council.

His early Marvel work garnered significant attention in the mid- to late 1970s, when he became especially well known for his signature *War of the Worlds* (***Killraven***) series in *Amazing Adventures*. His compositions are posed and statuesque, reminiscent of Caravaggio in dramatic intent. Russell's quiet, delicate line and fluid composition, comparable to contemporaries Barry Smith and Mike Kaluta, helped define the quasi-Renaissance style that marked much of **Marvel**'s most visually-significant 1970s work.

Following this, his work adapting Michael Moorcock's *Elric* achieved substantial fan and critical attention. A **Dark Horse** reprint of the run incorporated an adaptation of the **Neil Gaiman** short story *One Life Furnished in Early Moorcock*, also published later as a stand-alone comic. Russell inked the first of **DC's *Elseworlds*** stories, the 1989 ***Gotham by Gaslight***, a Victorian **Batman** story that was penciled by then relative newcomer **Mike Mignola**. Russell has successfully illustrated Batman before and since, but critics and fans consider this book a landmark.

Russell has distinguished himself in his creation of a body of comic book and graphic novel work based on operas, especially Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Wagner's Ring cycle. He has also adapted Kipling's *Red Dog*, *Fairy Tales of Oscar Wilde*, and *I Pagliacci*. His *Salome* uses Art Noveau elements to advance the narrative.

Russell was among the first mainstream comic artists to come out as gay. While he has been supportive of the gay community and defines himself as "just your average gay Libertarian comic book artist" (*Famous Comic Book Creators*), little of his work has dealt overtly with his sexuality. Working with co-creator David Singleton, Russell created a wordless story that occupies half of *Gay Comics* #23.

The work Russell has done illustrating Gaiman's writing may be his best known recent output. His work on ***Sandman*** #50, a 32-page story titled *Ramadan*, won an **Eisner Award** as best story of 1994. Additionally, Russell adapted the *Sandman* character Death in the story *Death and Venice*, in the anthology *The Sandman: Endless Nights*. More recently, Russell has written and illustrated a graphic novel based on Gaiman's story *Murder Mysteries*, and completed a graphic novel version of Gaiman's *Coraline* in 2008. Russell is completing a comic book adaptation of Gaiman's *The Dream Hunters*, originally illustrated by Yoshitaka Amano.

Russell has won Eisner, Inkpot, **Harvey**, Shazam and Parents' Choice awards. He remains prolific in the field.

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Diana Green



SABRE. A 38-page trade paperback written by Don McGregor and illustrated by Paul Gulacy that was first published in 1978, *Sabre* became the first publication issued by Eclipse Enterprises, which would go on to become Eclipse Comics. It can also lay claim to being one of the first graphic novels, appearing in the same year as **Will Eisner's *A Contract with God***, which is widely (though not quite accurately) cited as the first graphic novel. *Sabre* is also historically important because the original paperback was sold exclusively through comic-book stores, proving the viability of that method of distribution for longer and more expensive comics. The initial *Sabre* paperback, once again in print in a 20th-anniversary edition published by **Image Comics** in 1998, was followed by a 14-issue comic-book series, the first two of which reprinted the original black-and-white graphic novel in color. All of the *Sabre* comics feature the same eponymous African American hero, given his name by his favorite weapon, though he also totes a fancy high-tech pistol.

Sabre and his beautiful-but-deadly (white) lover-sidekick, Melissa Siren, have no actual superpowers, but both are preternaturally tough, courageous, and skilled in combat. Sabre, in particular, has become a hero and has developed his own staunchly held code of beliefs, tempered in the fires of a difficult upbringing in a series of rehabilitation centers, none of which were able to quell his fierce individualism and resistance to oppressive authority. He continues in this vein in the comics, which take place in a **post-apocalyptic** America in which the social system has collapsed beneath the pressures of greed and conformism. As Sabre explains to Melissa in one key (postcoital) conversation, his rebellion against society began when he realized that most in the general population were being "narcotized" by their "sensory video systems," a sort of futuristic form of television. As he puts it, "the materialistic carrot held under their

noses" has caused most people to give up their individuality, while "I.Q. scores and salaries became more important than a sense of honor, or a measure of dignity in dealing with yourself or others."

Melissa shares Sabre's romantic rejection of the coldly calculating world around her, though from a different point of view that arises from her status as the first "test tube fetus," a product of a project designed, in a mode somewhat reminiscent of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, to do away with sexual reproduction altogether, freeing up humans for "more important things." Melissa, however, feels that something important has been lost in freeing conception from its "orgasm origins." That something, she concludes, is "magic," a quality that is entirely lacking in the thoroughly routinized world in which she grows up.

In the *Sabre* graphic novel, the total triumph of consumer capitalism has led to an almost total collapse of civil society, creating a post-apocalyptic atmosphere of chaos and despair in which a few unscrupulous individuals have seized power, creating a (rather dysfunctional) dystopian state, the power of which is resisted by only a few determined rebels. The routinization theme is emphasized in the way Sabre and Melissa must make their way across a bizarre Disneyland-like amusement park in order to try to free a group of rebels who have been taken captive by the dark powers who run the park. The implication is clear: any apparent magic in this world is a mere simulacrum of magic, contained and commodified, bottled for mass consumption in carefully controlled doses. This park is run by the Overseer, a mysterious and sinister figure, though much of the actual work is carried out by his henchman Blackstar Blood, a villain with a certain sense of honor; this honor ultimately leads him to come to the aid of Sabre and Melissa at a crucial moment, helping them to defeat the Overseer, though even more powerful enemies remain on the horizon.

Sabre's romanticism now seems a bit quaint, while its portrayal of Melissa is a bit sexist: despite the fact that she is strong and courageous, she functions in the text largely as a sexual object who must be rescued from a sexual fate worse than death by the hyper-masculine Sabre. Sabre himself is a hero somewhat in the Blaxploitation vein, though his swashbuckling style is modeled more directly on Errol Flynn's Captain Blood. Indeed, Sabre's **race** is largely beside the point, serving mainly to help establish his status as an outsider to the society around him, a status he shares with more mainstream African American comic-book heroes such as **Luke Cage**.

Selected Bibliography: McGregor, Don. *Sabre.* Fullerton, CA: Image Comics, 1978.

M. Keith Booker

SACCO, JOE (1960–). Joe Sacco is best known for practicing comics journalism, often reporting on politically volatile conflict zones. Born in Malta and raised in Australia, California, and Oregon, Sacco studied journalism at the University of Oregon, where he later published an alternative magazine before working as a news writer for *The Comics Journal*. After editing the humor anthology *Centrifugal Bumble-puppy* (**Fantagraphics**,

eight issues, 1987–88) he focused on his own work in *Yahoo* (six issues, Fantagraphics, 1988–92), shifting from humor strips to autobiographical and documentary material, including accounts of Sacco's travels with a rock band in Europe and stories exploring his fascination with war. Issue #4, "Airpower through Victory," is a fully annotated history of modern military air attacks, followed by a vivid account of his mother's experience of World War II on Malta. Issue #5, "How I Loved the War," points towards Sacco's work in the next decade, while issue #6 sympathetically illustrates Susan Catherine's story of her life as a stripper.

His turn toward both autobiography and accounts of war confirmed Sacco as the most prominent artist employing comics as journalism or *reportage*. ***Palestine***, his first major work, chronicled Sacco's trip to Israel and the Occupied Territories in the winter of 1991–92: serialized in nine issues (1993–95), *Palestine* was issued in a two-volume edition in 1994 and 1996 (winning an American Book Award), and in a collected edition featuring an introduction by Edward W. Said, in 2002. A 15th-anniversary "Special Edition" with valuable supplementary material, was published (like all previous versions, by Fantagraphics) in 1997.

Influenced by New Journalism, Sacco's comics allow his point of view to color the stories he gathers, although he often presents himself unflatteringly. While relying on photographs as sources for his drawings, he often employs visual distortion and jarring panel designs, with images eluding conventional borders, or humans drawn as if viewed from above or below through a fish-eye lens: the overall effect of Sacco's work, balanced between representation and interpretation, is to acknowledge the subjectivity inherent in even the most responsible attempts at objective journalism.

Some of Sacco's shorter pieces were collected as *War Junkie* (Fantagraphics, 1997), followed by three powerful books on the Bosnian war, including *Safe Area Goražde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992–1995* (Fantagraphics, 2000), *The Fixer: A Story from Sarajevo* (Drawn & Quarterly, 2003), and *War's End: Profiles from Bosnia 1995–96* (Drawn & Quarterly, 2005). *Notes from a Defeatist* (Fantagraphics, 2003) reprints autobiographical material; some of Sacco's early and recent work on music, including posters and album covers, is collected in *But I Like It* (Fantagraphics, 2006). More recently, his stories on the Iraq War have appeared in mainstream publications, including *The Guardian* and *Harper's*.

Selected Bibliography: Groth, Gary, "Joe Sacco, Frontline Journalist." *The Comics Journal Special Edition* (Winter 2002): 55–72; Marshall, Monica. *Joe Sacco.* Library of Graphic Novelists. New York: Rosen Publishing, 2005.

Corey K. Creekmur

SALE, TIM (1956–). Born in Ithaca, New York, Tim Sale is a prominent comics illustrator and occasional writer. He attended New York's School of Visual Arts (SVA), in addition to participating in a comics workshop led by John Buscema. Before completing his degree at SVA, Sale returned to Seattle (where he grew up), and worked a variety of odd jobs while partnering with his sister to start a small imprint called Grey Archer Press.

In 1985, Sale was hired to pencil, ink, and letter *Thieves' World*, published by Starblaze. Eventually, Sale met Matt Wagner (of ***Grendel*** fame), as well as Diana Schutz (then working for Comico), and Barbara Randall of **DC**, at the San Diego Comic-Con. Randall introduced Sale to writer **Jeph Loeb**. Sale and Loeb struck up a partnership and the long-standing collaboration has produced a large portion of Sale's body of work. Their initial collaboration was on the first eight issues of the second volume of *Challengers of the Unknown* (1991), for DC, originally created by **Jack Kirby**.

Sale and Loeb then worked together on three Halloween specials for DC's ***Batman:*** *Legends of the Dark Knight* series: *Choices* (1993), *Madness* (1994), and *Ghosts* (1995). The specials led to an influential 13-issue limited series beginning in 1996 called, *Batman: The Long Halloween*. The series takes place during Batman's second year wearing the cape and cowl as he tries to hunt down a serial killer nicknamed "Holiday." (The killer murders people once a month on holidays). The miniseries was such a success that Sale and Loeb became star creators and developed a sequel beginning in 1999 titled, *Batman: Dark Victory*.

Between *Batman: The Long Halloween* and *Batman: Dark Victory*, Sale and Loeb collaborated on a four-issue limited series called ***Superman*** *For All Seasons*. Similar to the holiday device used in the two aforementioned Batman miniseries, this story involved a theme set around seasons and dealt with aspects of Superman's origins.

Eventually, Sale and Loeb would try to replicate their success with DC's most popular **superheroes** for DC's main competitor, **Marvel**. They collaborated on such titles as, ***Daredevil:*** *Yellow,* ***Spider-Man:*** *Blue,* ***Hulk:*** *Gray,* and ***Captain America:*** *White*. In 2006, Sale collaborated with writer/illustrator Darwyn Cook on *Superman Confidential*. Like Sale's collaborations with Loeb, this series concentrated on the character's early years and revealed Superman's first exposure to his Achilles' heel, Kryptonite.

Sale's line work can be best described as expressionistic and subtle. It is not cartoony in the most obvious sense, yet does not subscribe to the realm of realism either. He is influenced by many of the great American comic book illustrators, including Kirby, **Jim Steranko**, and **Neal Adams**. However, he has spent his time studying European cartoonists too, including Juanjo Guarnido and Ruben Pellejero, which gives his fat/skinny line brushwork a refreshing edge in the world of mainstream American comic book artists.

Recently, Sale has been creating artwork for the U.S. television series, *Heroes*, of which his frequent partner Loeb is a writer and producer. In addition to illustrating work for the show that is attributed to characters in the story, he also serves as an artistic consultant and even provides illustrations for the comics that are released between the show's seasons.

Jared L. Olmsted

SANDMAN, THE (GAIMAN). A 75-issue **DC**/Vertigo comics series, *The Sandman* (1989–96) was written by **Neil Gaiman** and illustrated by a number of artists, including Charles Vess, **Craig Russell**, **Steve Leialoha**, and Jill Thompson, with covers by **Dave**

McKean. The series was initially conceived as a **horror** comic, existing on the more magical end of the DC Comics mainstream. Over time, this gave way to a more mythological and meta-textual story, as well as a decreased interaction with the main DC universe. While there is an overall story arc, described by Gaiman as "the king of dreams must learn to change or die," a number of side stories lend a mythic depth to the series. All in all, however, the plot may be less important than are the quirky characters, bizarre twists, and occasional chilling or surprising moments that punctuate the series.

The main plot arc of *The Sandman* focuses on the character of Dream, also called Morpheus, who is one of the seven "Endless." These are personifications of fundamental forces in the universe: Destiny, a representation of historical process, is the eldest; Death is next, followed by Dream; then comes Destruction; the twins Desire and Despair; and, finally, the youngest, Delirium, who eons ago was Delight. These forces are behind all that sentient life experiences in the universe. As the story begins, Dream, returning to his kingdom after a long journey, is captured, in 1916, by the magician Roderick Burgess, who was hoping instead to capture Death and so gain immortality. The imprisonment of Dream has a number of immediate consequences for the 20th century: some people fall into a deep sleep while others remain awake; the land of dreams dissolves; and several people try to fill the "vacuum" left by Dream. Eventually, in 1987, Dream escapes, recovering his power and restoring his kingdom. He faces many challenges at first. Some nightmares escaped from Dream and he must regain control of them; in the process of doing so, Dream angers Hyppolita Hall, and sets in motion the seeds of his own destruction. Shortly afterward, Lucifer abandons Hell, turning out the demons and giving the Key of Hell to Dream, who must decide who among several competing divinities and powers may rightfully receive it. Later, Dream, at Delirium's request, sets out to find their brother Destruction, who abandoned his duties in the late 17th century; to succeed, he must kill his son Orpheus. For this action, and because of the threat that Hyppolita Hall feels he represents, Dream must face the Furies, and eventually choose between the complete dissolution of dreams and his own passing; he chooses the latter, and a new Dream—Hall's son Daniel, a child gestated in dreams—arises to take his place.

Alongside this main story arc are a number of tangential stories, many of which weave in and out of the main arc. A retelling of the Orpheus myth sets the stage for Dream's death, for example, while the story "A Game of You" expands the universe of dreams while commenting on the lack of female voices in comics storytelling. Some tales, such as his pursuit of the ancient queen Nada, elaborate on Dream's personality. Other stories illustrate the importance of dreams: they are the only thing to sustain the life of "Emperor" Joshua Norton of San Francisco, while their careful cultivation can end the Roman Empire or prolong its life by a thousand years. Some of these stories involve Dream as a primary character, while others relegate him to the background. Taken together with the main plotline, the overall point of the series seems to be that dreams, as a metaphor for the imagination or hope, are fundamental to human existence. Alisa Kwitney commented on the tale's multiple layers including "themes

of sibling rivalry and passion turned to revenge, themes on the dangerous nature of gifts, particularly the gift of creativity, as well as recurrent meditations on the power of women, the nature of vision, and the distinction between Dream and Death."

Outside of the original, 75-issue run of *Sandman*, there have been numerous spin-off works. Gaiman himself wrote *The Dream Hunters* (1999), an illustrated novel taking place in Japan. The three-issue miniseries *Death: The High Cost of Living* (1993) and *Death: The Time of Your Life* (1996) both feature Dream's older sister, while *Endless Nights* (2003) contains seven separate tales about each of the Endless, some of which were set after the main series' end. DC also launched a number of titles connected with the world of Sandman, including Mike Carey's *Lucifer* (2001–6), which followed the title character after his abandoning of Hell; *The Dreaming* (1996–2001), a monthly series by several artists and writers that focused on the supporting characters (mostly Cain and Abel) within Dream's realm; and *The Sandman Presents* (1999–2004), another multi-author series that followed the large number of supporting characters from the main series.

The effect of *The Sandman* on comics in general has been to promote a sense of literary development in comics. In the early 1990s, *The Sandman* was the center of DC's new "mature" imprint, Vertigo. The success of *The Sandman* led to a boom in new titles that not only addressed adult themes—including more graphic violence and open discussions of sex—but also seemed to raise the perceived quality of the stories. Indeed, along with the work of **Alan Moore**, *The Sandman* is credited with adding depth to a medium often condemned as juvenile and sub-literary.

Curiously for a series that began as a horror comic, *The Sandman* also comments on the theme of hope in literature. More than just a story about "the shaper of dreams," Gaiman's stories touch on the importance of dreaming and hope in everyday lives, from African tribesmen to desperate writers to the Emperor Joshua Norton. As Death notes in *The Wake*, the passing of "Dream" is really the passing of a "point of view." The implication is that dreams will no longer be directly shaped by some higher power, but will be more open and free. The release of dreams back to the dreamers plays into that theme of hope.

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Jacob Lewis

SANDMAN, THE (GOLDEN AGE). DC's original Sandman was a transitional figure between pulp heroes and the emerging **Superman**-style heroes that would soon dominate comics. Wesley Dodds (sometimes Dodd) wore a suit under his cape and a fedora over the gas mask that protected him from the effects of his sleeping gas gun. Like many pulp heroes, he left a sign at the scene of his activities—a few grains of sand. He first appeared in the 1939 *New York World's Fair Comics*, but the story in

Adventure Comics #40 is believed to have been written first. As World War II started, the Sandman was reworked into a traditionally costumed **superhero** with a matching sidekick, but as created by artist/writer Bert Christman with probable assistance from writer Gardner Fox, he stuck to battling ordinary gangsters and thieves. After a few adventures, he was joined by Dian Belmont, who became his girlfriend. Unlike many comic book love interests (but like many from the pulps) she was no damsel in distress but rather the Sandman's confidante and partner.

Dodds' superhero makeover was done by artist Paul Norris and writer Mort Weisinger, but it was **Joe Simon** and **Jack Kirby**'s slightly tweaked version soon afterwards that is most famous. Simon and Kirby gave the Sandman and his new ward, Sandy the Golden Boy (later recast as the orphaned nephew of the now-absent Dian), a series of creative adventures involving sleep and dreams. They produced most of his stories through his last original appearance in *Adventure Comics* #102. Along the way Dodds had been a co-founder and member of the **Justice Society of America** through most of the war, and made a few appearances in ***World's Finest Comics.***

The Sandman returned in the **Silver Age's Justice League**/Justice Society team-ups, wearing his original costume. However, he had only minor appearances in JSA revivals throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Simon and Kirby created a completely different Sandman in the 1970s who never became very popular, but the most important new Sandman was **Neil Gaiman**'s incarnation of the character as the embodiment of "Dream," beginning in 1989. Gaiman acknowledged the first DC Sandman in his first issue, and also tied him in with the later Simon/Kirby character. More importantly, Gaiman's success led to a revival of the Sandman's original incarnation in *Sandman Mystery Theater*, a critically and commercially successful series set in the late 1930's that ran for 70 issues. In addition to the expected crime fighting, this series further explored the relationship between Dodds and Belmont, and the former's ties to dreams. Silver Age and later stories revealed that Sandy had been accidentally transformed into a "silicoid monster," although his human appearance was later restored. Wesley Dodds and Dian Belmont had long lives together although they never married. After Dian's death, Wesley sacrificed himself protecting the newly reincarnated Dr. Fate, transferring his prophetic dreams to Sandy and leading to the revival of the Justice Society. As Sand, Sandy became the first chairman of the revived JSA. More recently he has adopted the name Sandman (no longer exclusively associated with Gaiman's character) and the original costume of his mentor, restoring the pulp-influenced Sandman to an active place in the DC universe.

See also: Sandman, The (Gaiman)

Henry Andrews

SATIRE. Satire is the use of humor, irony, exaggeration or ridicule to expose human vice and fallibility, particularly in a political or social context. Satire has intertwined

with the comic art form since the inception of comics. The most prevalent example of satiric cartooning in the popular consciousness is the political cartoon, which had its gestation in the grotesques of Leonardo da Vinci and the work of pamphleteers advocating the positions of Martin Luther. In early American newspapers, Ben Franklin used symbolism in cartoons to show the unyielding attitudes of American Revolutionary forces. This evolved into caricatures of political figures in the Civil War, and grotesques inspired by photographic representation in the same era. The contemporary political cartoon is an evolution of these works.

Bill Mauldin's body of work during World War II is one effort that must be noted in this area. Popularly known as the "Willie and Joe" cartoons, these single-panel gags showed the war from the viewpoint of the foot soldier. These cartoons included profanity and scathing attacks on the pompousness of ranking officers, made all the more biting by the cartoons being run in an official Army publication, *Stars and Stripes*. Many of these cartoons were later anthologized with added text as the very popular book *Up Front*.

As the comic art form evolved, its satiric elements followed suit. Social commentary on class issues appears in *Hogan's Alley* and *Bringing Up Father*. Even McCay's *Little Nemo in Slumberland* can be inferred to have a satiric element in its "Shantytown" storyline. The Tijuana Bible is one of the most neglected forms of satire in the comics. Within the framework of these 8 to 16-page pornographic comic books lurked scathing commentary on actors, politicians, and comic characters. Sexual performance and inhibition proved viable vehicles for taking the mighty down to size. In one early Bible, Al Capone is shown as impotent, while another portrays Cary Grant as gay. Tijuana Bibles were produced in the United States from the early 1930s until the early 1960s and satirized everything from Charlie Chaplin to the burgeoning feminist movement.

The advent of the comic book as an independent industry and as a burgeoning art form did not lack satiric content and intent. Though driven by the **superhero** model, comic books included parodic elements in the art (such as the grotesques of **Batman** villains, echoing those in the *Dick Tracy* strip) and the writing. The latter is evident in small moments in early **Superman** stories, in which Clark Kent slips sardonic one-liners in at the expense of cheap hoods, a minor recurring event throughout the first 10 appearances of the character.

In 1941, Jack Cole created **Plastic Man**. Cole's work on this series, which ran until 1956, was the best of all worlds in terms of satire. The central character, portrayed as the only sane man in an insane world, has the most ludicrous appearance, and serves as a foil for his own observations. Similarly, the early 1960s ACG Comics character "Herbie" used the perceptions of its central character and supporting cast as a satiric trope. Herbie Popnecker, an obese grade-schooler who eats lollipops and sleeps too much, is known to all the world as a superhero of the highest order—all except Herbie's parents. Herbie's incredible strength, abilities to fly, travel through time and the supernatural realms, talk to animals, and hypnotize anyone, all serve as devices for topical humor. Herbie interacts with world leaders and major figures, including Muhammad Ali, John

Kennedy, and Fidel Castro. Their ineptitude in contrast to Herbie's capability, itself contrasted with Herbie's ludicrous appearance, gives the stories a satiric bite.

Another significant comic character using wit and satire as ongoing weapons, debuting in the same time frame, is **The Spirit.** This aspect of the character, created by **Will Eisner**, evolved over the course of his 17-year run in a comic book that was distributed as a Sunday newspaper supplement. The character's origin story, dated June 1940, is rather straightforward; but within two months of beginning his weekly adventures, *The Spirit* ventured into the realm of parody with "The Kidnapping of Daisy Kay," a story that parodied *Li'l Abner*.

The latter strip was itself a continuous vehicle for satire and made a significant impact in the United States in the 1940s, contributing phraseology and social conventions to the public consciousness. Its creator, Al Capp, routinely used his characters as vehicles to show scorn and ridicule for greedy corporations and arrogant politicians, often with specific real-life models. Capp appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine on November 6, 1950.

Walt Kelly's *Pogo* is another overt example of comics satire from the same era. From its comic-book origins to its transition to the daily and Sunday funnies, *Pogo* was, like *Li'l Abner*, a vehicle for political commentary within the framework of an ongoing comic strip. *Pogo* hit its satiric peak with *The Jack Acid Society*, a storyline that ridiculed the McCarthy hearings. Within this narrative, Pogo uttered the phrase "we have met the enemy and he is us." This resonated in the public mind, and was resurrected as part of Kelly's work dealing with the burgeoning environmental crisis of the early 1970s.

The line between parody and satire is perhaps finer in comics than in other art forms. Parody deals largely in stylistic imitation, while satire is concerned with themes. Obviously, when dealing in an art form that incorporates word and image, the overlap is inevitable. The best satirists in comics are also often necessarily dealing in parody. For example, *Supersnipe* must be mentioned in the context of satire. Appearing a mere three years after Superman, this character existed primarily in the imagination of another fictional character. Koopy McFad, a prepubescent boy who "owns the most comic books in America," dresses in red long johns and a domino mask and imagines he is a superhero. His misadventures, which run from 1942–49, involve slapstick crime busting coupled with flights of super-powered fantasy. This motif is revisited in the **Marvel** character Forbush-Man from the 1960s parody title *Not Brand Ecch*, and in Don Martin's creation *Captain Klutz*. A later **DC** character, '*Mazing Man*, is a melding of the superhero-fantasy parody character and the more gentle populist tone of *The Spirit*.

Similarly, the 1960s superhero team *The Inferior Five* was a satiric vehicle for DC. Not only did the title afford the opportunity to satirize the concept of generational heroes (the five are less successful offspring of **Golden Age** heroes), as well as heroic teams, but the storylines served as vehicles to poke fun at Marvel heroes and television. One issue parodied Marvel's **Thor**, another the **X-Men**, still another **The Fantastic Four.** Satiric reference to *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, a popular spy show of the mid-1960s and a comic from Dell, also appeared.

In fact, parodies of superhero comics have provided a major vehicle for satire in comics—with varying attitudes toward the superheroes being parodied. For all their idiosyncrasies, at the heart of Supersnipe, Captain Klutz, Forbush-Man and 'Mazing Man lay an appreciation, a reverence and love for the superhero form and for the ideals that form represented at its best. Jim Valentino's *Normalman*, created in 1983, is the only normal person on a planet of superheroes. As such, *Normalman* is a satiric vehicle for the celebration of the ordinary as special, but one that still treats the superhero genre respectfully. Other superhero satires lacked the same reverence for their inspirations. In the latter categories are The Badger, Ambush Bug, or Lobo. All three were mentally ill caricatures of the notion of hero. The Badger and Lobo were psychopathic and excessively violent. Ambush Bug was also criminally insane, but became a hero, albeit an unpredictable one. In fairness, all three can be seen partially as responses to the grittiness of some of the 1970s and 1980s dark heroes, including **The Punisher**, The Butcher, **Alan Moore's *Watchmen***, and **Frank Miller's Batman** in ***The Dark Knight Returns***, and, all of which recast the role of the superhero into one of aggression, amorality, and cynicism. Thus, the satire of this trend took its subject to ludicrous extremes.

Moore and Miller, in revamping the superhero narrative, also themselves parodied it and infused it with satirical elements. Moore's *Top 10: The Forty-Niners* serves as parody of numerous superhero conventions and characters, as does Rick Veitch's 1990 *Brat Pack*, a scathing commentary on the nature of the superhero and the pathos of the kid sidekick. Both works use the often cited gay subtext of the superhero/sidekick relationship as an element of parody. Miller's *Dark Knight* books contain numerous characters intended to offend or provoke, but who also serve as satiric devices on social trends and human weaknesses. The character of Bruno from *The Dark Knight Returns* and the anime-inspired vacuous newsgirls in *Dark Knight Strikes Back* serve as prime examples. *Dark Knight Strikes Back* is notorious in this regard, as almost every character, major or minor, is an example of self-parody. However, Miller achieves a measure of balance with the effective use of *Plastic Man* as a vehicle to siphon attention from the antics of the other characters.

Another example of the insane superhero is gentler in its approach: Ben Edlund's *The Tick*, debuting in 1988, portrays an immensely powerful, slightly disturbed (issue #1 opens with *The Tick* in an asylum), very aggressive, but still lovable hero. Another dim-witted heroic parodic superhero character, Don Simpson's Megaton Man, appeared the same year. Megaton Man's primary satire related to the structure of superhero narrative and the extended superhero family.

Another variation of this form of parodic satire appears in the context of **Dave Sim's *Cerebus the Aardvark***. Originally a parody of the Barry Smith/Roy Thomas ***Conan the Barbarian*** run, the series quickly became a vehicle for the creator's views on politics, religion, comics, popular culture, and women. Using his central character Cerebus the Aardvark as a foil, Sim expanded the scope of the narrative into parody of any social or cultural issue that vexed him. The primary results of this were twofold. First, his peers questioned his mental health, often in print. Second, **Marvel Comics** threatened suit

over the character Wolverroach, which they contended bore too close a resemblance to Wolverine. Sim relented, but his satire remained biting.

Another superhero satire related to a lawsuit appeared 33 years earlier. DC sued Fawcett Comics over perceived similarities between Superman and **Captain Marvel**. The suit, filed in 1941, was ruled in favor of Fawcett in 1949, but a 1951 appeals court favored DC. This provided the framework for another satire-related legal matter. A satiric story, Superduperman, which ran in *Mad* #4 (1953) was an apparent satire of the lawsuit itself, as Superduperman defeats Captain Marbles. DC threatened to sue publisher **EC** over this parody prior to its publication. EC's **Harvey Kurtzman** and **William Gaines** consulted two attorneys, got different opinions, and decided to publish nonetheless. Five issues later, *Mad* ran a satire titled Batboy and Rubin. This story was riddled with warning signs like "to lampoon is human, to forgive divine" and "note: any similarity between this and any other lampoon is strictly a lampoon." As much as a parody of Batman and Robin, this story was a satire of the proposed legal action.

Mad itself is a study in parody. Originally conceived as a vehicle for mocking other comic book work, *Mad* quickly evolved into a far-reaching venue for commentary on film, literature, and television. Under Kurtzman's editorial hand, the work in *Mad* was infused with a manic energy and irreverence. There had certainly been humor comics before *Mad*, but most had been modeled in the **funny animal** or ***Archie*** mode. *Mad* painted with a broader brush, and opened the doors for direct satirical assault. *Mad* also revisited the grotesque, using the work of **Basil Wolverton** for the cover of issue #11, as well as an interior story called "the *Mad* Reader." The cover in question was, by Kurtzman's admission, a deliberate and rather obvious parody of *Life* magazine. As the title ran on, its focus expanded. Issue #22, the Art Issue, had a *faux* Picasso cover. The first three stories were done with altered photographs, a subversive variation on Italian *fumetti*. In the last issue of its 23-issue comic run, *Mad* took on the McCarthy hearings directly. The story, Gopo Gossum, was a take on *Pogo*, remarking overtly on the dangers and inevitability of infusing politics into the funnies.

The commercial success of *Mad* led other comic companies to begin publishing imitations. Meanwhile, *PANIC* was issued by EC itself in response to the imitations of *Mad*, billing itself as "the only authorized *Mad* imitation." Issue #1 was banned in Holyoke, Massachusetts over its depictions of male and female cross-dressing in a Mickey Spillane parody, and over its interpretation of Clement Clark Moore's *The Night Before Christmas*. In response to these stories, the New York police raided EC's offices and sought to arrest whomever was in charge. Lyle Stuart, publisher of *Exposé* magazine (funded by EC publisher William Gaines) volunteered to be arrested. In response to the arrest, radio commentator Walter Winchell (who had previously been attacked in articles published by Stuart) called for a ban on all "the magazines Stuart publishes. The last four issues of *PANIC*'s 12-issue run were approved by the Comics Code Authority, and carried its seal on their covers, though code approval for this book was not easily obtained. Art was retouched to eliminate visible cleavage, references to alcohol were removed, and the gag name "Roughandtough" was inexplicably altered to "gunmen." Paradoxically, as

PANIC wound down, *Mad* became the sole survivor of the EC line by bypassing the code entirely and shifting to a magazine format, which it maintains to this day.

In the tradition of *Mad*, *PANIC*, and the Bibles, satiric comics continued to appear sporadically, albeit watered down by code limitations. Archie Comics' *Madhouse* was one of the better of the bunch, but still more driven by a sense of forced "wackiness" than by any real satiric zeal. However, satire magazines endured. After a falling out with Gaines over the editorial focus of *Mad*, Kurtzman left and started the short-lived *Trump*, published by Hugh Hefner. The 1957 *Trump* ran only two issues, and employed former *Mad* Comics staffers Al Jaffee, **Wally Wood**, and Jack Davis, along with a young Mel Brooks and Max Shulman.

Following *Trump*, Kurtzman, though completely broke, started another humor magazine, *Humbug*. Once again recruiting *Mad* alumni, Kurtzman added writer Larry Seigel, whose literary parodies echoed the presumed sophistication of the *Playboy* motif. In its 11 issues, *Humbug* managed to meld lowbrow schoolboy laughs with sophisticated literary wit. However, *Humbug* and *Trump* both fell prey to a trap inherent in satire; the work was topical, to the point of losing its edge if taken out of its time and context.

Kurtzman's following endeavor had some of the same problems, but overcame them with blatant audaciousness that transcended topicality. *Help!* Magazine, running 26 issues, recruited top writers, including Ernie Kovacs, Jerry Lewis, Mort Sahl, Dave Garroway, Jonathan Winters, Tom Poston, Hugh Downs, and Jackie Gleason, at meager rates. With editorial assists from a young Gloria Steinem and Terry Gilliam, Kurtzman produced some brilliant satire in *Help!* However, he neglected the comic form greatly in this endeavor, using few artists (including comrades from the *Mad* stable) and heavily favoring *fumetti*. *Help! Magazine* was, however, a vehicle for aspiring artists, who were paid $5 per appearance. Several luminaries of the comic world started in *Help!*, including **Robert Crumb** and Gilbert Shelton, whose first Wonder Warthog strips appear there.

Shelton's work, a scathing strip about a giant, super-powered, motorcycle-riding warthog, was a bridge between Kurtzman's work and car, biker, and drag racing cartoon magazines. These magazines, *Hot Rod Cartoons*, *Drag Cartoons*, *Cycle Cartoons*, *CARToons*, and the short-lived *Big Daddy Roth* and *Wonder Warthog* magazines, were brash and defiant. While their energy cannot be denied, they were aimed at a very select audience and mindset. Yet, like the best satire, they made those in authority quite nervous. They represented a repudiation of sanctioned cultural norms in favor of an anarchic reverie, albeit a reverie limited to drag racing and motorcycles, and their attendant way of life.

Shelton's crowning satiric achievement, the 50-page *Wonder Warthog and the Nurds of November*, appeared in 1980. Many of the events in this story have come to pass in the eyes of some, but were seen as ludicrous at the time: the corruption of a presidential election, corporate rule of the United States, pre-emptive war, wholesale financial ruin, and large-scale social apathy.

In addition to Shelton's work, just about all work from the early **underground and adult comics** movement can be construed as a work of satire. The most significant works in this arena are **Jaxon**'s *God Nose*, Foolbert Sturgeon's (Frank Stack) *New Adventures of Jesus*, Dan O'Neill's *Odd Bodkins*, and Crumb's early work in ***Zap!*** *Comics*. Crumb's work summed up the mantra of the undergrounds: violate taboos. Underground comics (often referred to as "**comix**") blithely ignored the Comics Code, as did Kurtzman's post-*Mad* efforts, the hot rod magazines, the Tijuana Bibles (dying out at this point), and the principal imitators of *Mad*, *Cracked* and *Sick*. However, the undergrounds, like the bibles, also thumbed their noses at conventional business models by not going through conventional magazine distribution channels.

In addition to the violation of societal taboos (primarily **race**, **religion**, violence, alcohol use, drug use, sex and sexuality), undergrounds excelled at the most potent satire, that which ridicules its own audience. Ostensibly about revolutionary concepts associated with the 1960s protest movements and hippies, sexual activity and drug use, many comix also pointed out the foibles of the counterculture they claimed to embrace and represent. Crumb's Mr. Natural can easily be seen as an archetype of the guru figure, but never does anything but exploit his pupils, much like Vaughn Bode's Cheech Wizard. The Freak Brothers were usually a vehicle for commentary on the asininity, stupidity, and treachery of both the so-called "establishment" and the fledgling counterculture.

Dan O'Neill's *Mickey Mouse Meets the Air Pirates* was the subject of a lawsuit by Disney, who claimed its characters were used illegally and that the image of the characters was denigrated by their portrayal engaging in drug use and sex acts. The suit was exacerbated by the specific use of the names of the Disney characters in the stories. O'Neill's response was that the character of Mickey was so widely visible in the public eye as to be deemed fair use. Details remain obscure, but it appears that, after eight years and three court victories, forcing O'Neill to incur legal fees that crippled him financially, Disney dropped its contempt charges and waived the $190,000 in damages and over $2 million in legal fees, on the sole condition that the *Air Pirates*, also the collective name given O'Neill and his fellow cartoonists on the two books, never violate Disney's copyright again. O'Neill is rumored to have celebrated by smoking a joint in Disney's office.

The *National Lampoon*, a rabidly irreverent if sophomoric humor magazine that ran from 1970 to 1988, succeeded the underground. The Lampoon's Comics section was a haven for underground cartoonists. Additionally, the magazine employed mainstream comics artists for comic book satires that served a dual function as social and political commentary. A prime example, Barry Smith's art on Sean Kelly's *Norman the Barbarian*, a parody of the *Conan* comic Smith was drawing at the time, appeared in the May 1972 issue. The story used Norman Mailer as the Conan figure, and staged him fighting a hydra with the heads of Mailer's "enemies," including Dick Cavett.

Bobby London, also an Air Pirate, was an artist whose strip *Dirty Duck* appeared in both comix and the Lampoon, and is currently running in *Playboy*. *Dirty Duck*'s style

was overtly influenced by E. C. Segar, as was most of London's work. As London's career evolved, he landed his dream job in 1982, writing and drawing ***Popeye*** for King Features Syndicate. In 1992 he was fired. No specific reason was given. Speculation abounded that the firing was a direct result of his final unprinted storyline, involving Olive Oyl's addiction to the Home Shopping Club. She accidentally orders a baby Bluto. Deciding she does not want the artificial and evil child, she and Popeye resolve to "get rid of it." A priest takes action to stop them. Ironically, the editor who fired London over the abortion satire storyline was Jay Kennedy, editor of the Underground and New Wave Comix Price Guide. The irony was not lost on London.

While few undergrounds endured past 1975, Crumb's work continued to appear in a variety of venues, and new creators built on the legacy of the undergrounds. Crumb started the ***Weirdo*** anthology magazine in 1981. In addition to serving as an outlet for his most outrageous work, the magazine was a vehicle of artistic exploration for veteran cartoonists like the underground's Kim Deitch and Ed "Big Daddy" Roth, as well as new talents including Dori Seda. Dori's blunt, harsh, and hilarious autobiographical strips served to satirize the role of the artist in society, and the foibles of her own life.

In 1986, along with ***"Omaha" the Cat Dancer***, *Bizarre Sex*, and *The Bodyssey*, copies of *Weirdo* were seized from Friendly Frank's, a Lansing, Illinois comic book shop. The owner of the store was charged with dealing in obscene materials. Publisher Denis Kitchen organized a defense fund. The case was won on appeal, and Kitchen used the funds remaining from the defense to organize the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund.

The most challenging case the CBLDF accepted came in 1993, when Mike Diana was charged with obscenity by Florida District Attorney Stuart Baggish. The work in question, Diana's comic *Boiled Angel 8*, depicted a man decapitating a woman for sexual pleasure (a visual device used by Crumb 25 years earlier). While most of Diana's work deals with dismemberment, mutilation, and children in a sexual context, he contended that the work was satirical in nature. The CBLDF lost the case. Diana was sentenced to an elaborate batch of punishments, including but not limited to having no contact with minors and attending journalism ethics school at his own expense. However, Diana moved to New York and is serving out his community service working for the CBLDF.

Other notable examples of recent comics satire include Charles Burns's work, especially the Big Baby stories, which combine horrific elements and adolescent sexual tension in an odd and effective satire of 1950s horror films. Devil's Due Publishing is publishing a political/barbarian parody along the lines of the *Lampoon* Conan/Norman Mailer piece of 36 years prior. This time the focus is on President Obama. The title, *Barack the Barbarian: Quest for the Treasure of Stimuli*, includes villains George the Dim and Red Sarah. Finally, the recent series *Battle Pope*, written by **Robert Kirkman**, echoes the religious satire of the recurring Lampoon comic feature *Son-O-God*, drawn by **Neal Adams**.

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Diana Green

SCIENCE FICTION. Science fiction has been a popular and durable genre of comics, which have sometimes been able to convey a sense of awe and wonder lacking in other forms of popular science fiction. The history of science fiction (sf) in modern comics can be traced back to January 7, 1929, with the debut appearance of *Buck Rogers in the Year 2429 A.D.*, America's first science-fiction newspaper comic strip. Buck Rogers is a U.S. Air Force lieutenant who finds himself waking in the 25th century, some 500 years in his own future. This is due to fumes inhaled during a mine cave-in, which engendered the effect of suspended animation. He is joined by Wilma Deering and Dr. Huer, citizens of this future, with Buck becoming its champion by defeating invaders and enemies including the Mongols, the tiger-men of Mars, the pirates from outer space, and Buck's nemesis, Killer Kane, accompanied by Ardala Valmar, his female companion.

The title of the strip would later change to *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*, and finally *Buck Rogers*. It was initially drawn by Richard 'Dick' Calkins and scripted by Philip Francis Nowlan, and was distributed by John Flint Dille of the National Newspaper Service syndicate. Nowlan adapted his prose story *Armageddon 2419 A.D.*, which had originally appeared in *Amazing Stories*, a noted pulp science-fiction magazine, in August 1928. In this initial prose incarnation the protagonist was called Anthony Rogers, with "Buck" being a nickname. Nowlan also wrote a prose sequel, *The Airlords of Han*, which appeared in the March 1929 edition of *Amazing Stories*.

Later artists for the strip were Murphy Anderson (1947–49), Leon Dworkins (1949–51), Anderson again (1958–59), and George Tuska (1959–67). Calkins took over scripting duties after Nowlan (1940–47), followed by Bob Barton (1947–51), Rick Yager (1951–58) and others, including Fritz Leiber, the noted sf author.

A Sunday strip began on March 30, 1930. It initially focused on two supporting characters, Bud Deering (Wilma's younger brother) and Princess Alura from Mars. Buck Rogers later assumed the role of protagonist for this Sunday strip until it ended in 1965. Art duties on the strip were undertaken by Russell Keaton (1930–33), Yager (1933–58), Anderson (1958–59), and Tuska (1959–65). Script duties were assumed by writers including Nowlan (1930–40) and Yager (1940–58).

The strip was revived under the title *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* in 1979 by Gray Morrow and Jim Lawrence. Cary Bates took over scripting duties in 1981, with Jack Sparling taking over art duties in 1982. The strip lasted until 1983. A brief comic

book incarnation was published by TSR during 1990–91, co-written by Flint Dille (grandson of John Flint Dille) and Steven Grant (from a graphic novel by Grant), and later Buzz Dixon. It lasted for 10 issues.

The next significant work of science fiction to appear in the comics was *Flash Gordon*, which first appeared on January 7, 1934, as a Sunday strip. It was conceived as a means of competing with the popular *Buck Rogers* strip. It was created by Alex Raymond for King Features Syndicate, with scripting duties taken up by Don Moore soon after, which he continued with until the late 1940s. Moore was succeeded by a number of writers, including Fred Dickenson. The strip gained a reputation exceeding that of *Buck Rogers*, due in no small part to the seminal artwork created by Raymond, whose reputation holds strong to this day.

The Sunday strip was followed by a daily strip that first appeared on May 27, 1940, illustrated by Austin Briggs, who was previously Raymond's assistant. Briggs later took over from Raymond on the Sunday strip, finishing his run July 1948, to be followed by Mac Raboy (1948–67), and then Dan Barry, assisted by artists including **Frank Frazetta** and **Al Williamson**. However, the daily strip finished in June 1944, but was a revived in November 1951 by Barry and Ric Estrada.

Flash Gordon, "a Yale graduate and world-renowned polo player," and Dale Arden, his female companion, are taken on a journey to the planet Mongo on Dr. Zarkov's spaceship, after their plane crashes near Zarkov's observatory. On Mongo, they battle against the emperor of the planet, Ming the Merciless. They are helped in their struggle by Barin, King of Arboria, and his wife Aura, who is also Ming's daughter.

The visual appeal of *Flash Gordon* lay in the exotic alien scenery of locations including the undersea kingdom and the ice kingdom, and the equally exotic supporting cast: Tygrons, Wolvrons, and the Cerberus-inspired "Tsak, the Two-Headed Guardian of the Tunnel of Terror." Other visually interesting supporting characters in the cast were hawk men, lion men, and monkey men. This strip also shows evidence of formal experimentation, gradually leaving behind standardized frames and speech balloons and embracing a less defined, more consciously artistic style, in addition to replacing balloons with narrative captioning.

A central motif in the strip has Flash and Dale representing a moral humanism acceptable to its audience, with Ming epitomizing an amoral, inhuman, anti-human stance, an uncomfortable echo of the ideas propagated by Adolf Hitler, who became the Head of State in Germany in 1934, as well as the perceived threat of the "yellow peril" or Asian immigration. Like much sf, *Flash Gordon* would provide a reflection of the times in which it was created.

Science fiction proved to be an influential comics genre not only in the United States but in Great Britain as well. *Dan Dare—Pilot of the Future*, appeared as the lead feature in the very first issue of *The Eagle*, a seminal British comic, published on April 14, 1950. This feature occupied both the front and back page of this anthology publication. The strip was created by artist Frank Hampson and produced by a team of artists under his supervision. They employed photographic references in the form

of specially constructed models (for such things as spaceships) and real people to pose as characters. The sequence's science fiction credentials were enhanced by the fact that noted author Arthur C. Clarke acted as an advisor for the first story. Other writers following Hampson included Alan Stranks, David Motton, and Eric Eden. Other artists working on the strip were Harold Johns, Donald Harley, Bruce Cornwell, Desmond Walduck, Frank Bellamy, and Keith Watson.

Dan Dare was initially devised by a clergyman, the Rev. Marcus Morris, as a reaction to the perceived threat posed to British morality by the U.S. **horror comics** that were being imported into the U.K. Dare himself was initially conceived as a chaplain until it was decided to make him a pilot, and he became Daniel MacGregor Dare, Colonel O.U.N. Interplanetary Space Fleet. This probably happened as a result of the fact that the potential of the comic outgrew its initial conception, that of a small Christian publication, instead aiming to become a national children's periodical, and it succeeded in this with the help of publisher Hulton Press.

Dare's nemesis was the Mekon, a green skinned alien with a huge, bulbous head, offset by a small torso and limbs. The Mekon ruled the Treens, the inhabitants of Venus, and Dan was aided in his fight against the Mekon by a strong supporting cast: Albert Fitzwilliam Digby, Dan's batman; Professor Jocelyn Mabel Peabody, nutrition expert; Henry Brennan Hogan, a pilot better known as 'Hank'; Pierre August Lafayette, another pilot; and Sir Hubert Gascoine Guest, Controller of Space Fleet.

Dan Dare was reinvented in 1977 for the first issue of the anthology *2000 AD*, which featured artwork by Massimo Bellardinelli and, later, **Dave Gibbons**. *The Eagle* was re-launched in 1982 and featured a protagonist who was the great-great-great grandson of the original Dare, with scripts by Pat Mills and John Wagner, and art by Gerry Embleton, followed by Ian Kennedy. In 1990, **Grant Morrison** and Rian Hughes produced *Dare*, a version of the original characters and strip but in the form of a political satire. **Garth Ennis** and Gary Erskine have also recently produced a new version (2008) for Virgin comics.

During this time **EC Comics**, infamous for its horror comics, also produced a number of significant science fiction comics. Both *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy* ran from May 1950 to December 1953 as bi-monthly publications. **William Gaines** started these sf titles by effectively discontinuing *Saddle Romances* at #11 (allowing issue #12 to become retitled as *Weird Science*) and *Moon Girl* at #12 (so issue #13 could become *Weird Fantasy*)—these became a part of what is referred to as EC's new trend publications, along with their **crime,** horror, humor and **military/war** titles. In line with Gaines's practice of saving money, he changed the titles of some of his existing comics, but retained the numbering, allowing him to avoid second class postage charges. This was a shrewd technique that he had employed when he began EC's horror titles, but he was soon discovered by the post office and, as of the January 1951 issue, *Weird Science* changed to issue #5 proper, with *Weird Fantasy* following suit with #6 in March 1951.

Both titles were later amalgamated as *Weird Science-Fantasy* in March 1954 (with issue #23 on the cover), as a quarterly title, due to comparatively lower sales than

the horror titles. This would later be renamed as *Incredible Science Fiction* (issue #30), published at a bi-monthly rate until #33, when EC ceased publication of sf material.

Gaines's titles became noted for their **adaptations** of noted sf author Ray Bradbury's short stories. Their first adaptation was unauthorized, and combined elements of two stories in one strip. Bradbury praised the adaptation in a note to Gaines, and also wryly requested a payment for the use of his material. This led to further, authorized adaptations from EC of Bradbury's work, by Gaines and head writer **Al Feldstein**.

Advertisements for the sf titles proclaimed that EC were "proudest of our science fiction titles," and many of the stories published in those comics were political in nature. This led to friction between EC and the newly formed **Comics Code** Authority, who constantly pressured EC to change content, and outlawed the use of specific words in comic titles, predominantly those used by EC itself.

Matters reached a breaking point when EC was instructed to change the protagonists skin color from black to white in "Judgment Day," which would have undermined the point and effectiveness of the story itself—an exploration of the issue of skin color. Gaines would ultimately run the story, unchanged and without code approval, in their last comic, *Incredible Science Fiction* #33. Disillusioned with the politics of comics, Gaines and EC would go on to produce magazines that were exempt from the code, notably the humor magazine *Mad*.

Much of the success of **DC Comics** is an indirect result of the influence of science fiction, and is rooted in their most famous character, **Superman**. Writer **Jerry Siegel** and artist **Joe Shuster**, creators of Superman, were ultimately responsible for the growth of DC and superhero comics in general. Siegel's love of science fiction led him to create early fanzines, such as *Cosmic Stories* (1929), and it was in an issue of a fanzine, *Science Fiction* #3 (1933), that an early, villainous, telepathic version of Superman first appeared. For the version of Superman that gained success in comics they took much inspiration from science fiction, notably Philip Wylie's novel *Gladiator* (1930), where the protagonist Hugo Danner is born with enhanced strength, speed, and bulletproof skin as a result of a serum injected into his mother by his father, while pregnant with Hugo.

Another link with sf was provided by editor Julius Schwartz, who began his work in the genre by publishing another early fanzine, entitled *Time Traveller*, became an agent for sf writers including, Stanley G. Weinbaum and Ray Bradbury, and finally became an editor at DC. He hired Alfred Bester, a notable sf writer, to provide scripts, and was instrumental in DC's success with its **Silver Age** comics, editing sf-influenced revisions of older characters including the **Flash**, **Green Lantern**, and the Atom.

In terms of sf proper, DC Comics drew inspiration from EC comics. August 1950 saw the publication of *Strange Adventures* issue #1, an anthology that featured recurring characters. These included Chris KL-99 (Earth's first space-born human and genius), Star Hawkins (a sf detective), the Atomic Knights (heroes from the future), and Captain Comet and Animal Man (superheroes). It totaled 244 issues and ran from 1950 to 1973, and became best known for introducing Deadman to the world

(#205–16), following a transition to more supernatural, fantastic themes with #202. DC Comics' Vertigo imprint would later revive the title as a four-issue anthology series in 1999.

In April of 1951 DC published the first issue of *Mystery in Space*, its second sf title. This title followed the pattern established by *Strange Adventures*, utilizing an anthology structure, in addition to using recurring characters such as Knight of the Galaxy (from the 30th century) and Adam Strange. It totaled 110 issues, running from 1951 to 1966, resuming publication with #111–17 in 1980 and 1981, and finishing with an eight-issue miniseries revival in 2006, featuring a revived Captain Comet (originally from *Strange Adventures*) by Jim Starlin and Shane Davis.

Marvel Comics' success is also rooted in elements of science fiction. October 1939 saw the publication of *Marvel Comics* #1, the first comic published by **Timely Comics** (later Atlas, then finally Marvel), notable not only for the first appearance of the Sub-Mariner by Bill Everett, but for an early science fiction-influenced superhero character, the Human Torch. Unlike the later version of the character it inspired (Johnny Storm of the **Fantastic Four**), Carl Burgos's original was an android created by Phineas Horton, a scientist. However, Marvel's major contribution to science fiction in comics was the sf-inspired work of the 1960s.

Much of the company's self-proclaimed "Marvel **Age of Comics**" was developed from sf-inspired scenarios and pseudo-scientific causes, usually a result of the fears raised by atomic energy in this period. The Fantastic Four gained their powers through their spaceship's exposure to a cosmic ray storm; Bruce Banner attempts to save a man who has wandered onto the test site of a gamma ray bomb, but is victim of the explosion which causes periodic transformations into the monstrous **Hulk** (inspired by *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, a work of proto-sf by Robert Louis Stevenson, published in 1886); Peter Parker's exposure to an irradiated spider causes him to develop the proportional abilities of a spider as **Spider-Man**. Such early scenarios are now attributed to writer/editor **Stan Lee** and the relevant artist on a given title, such as **Jack Kirby** and **Steve Ditko**. However, the true nature of such collaborations is shrouded in decades-long speculation and rumor.

Lee and Kirby's work on the *Fantastic Four* title (issues #1–102), contains amazing displays of sf-inspired design work, landscapes, ideas and characters, and is arguably the most influential sf run in comics. The members of the team are not standard superheroes: team leader Reed Richards is the world's most intelligent scientist, and creator of scores of inventions which would not be out of place in other genres of sf, like the Fantasticar and the portal to the Negative Zone. Kirby's design work portrays space and the negative zone as visually exciting, awe-inspiring environments rooted in a grounded sense of sf reality (as opposed to whimsical fantasy), and are examples of sf at its most wonderful and inspiring. Characters such as Galactus, the devourer of worlds, and his herald the **Silver Surfer** are born of an increasingly complex combination of science and mysticism that reflects popular interests in the period of the 1960s.

Science fiction has also held an important place in Japanese comics, known as **manga**. The most famous series is *Tetsuwan Atomu* (*Astro Boy* in the English translations), an important example of science fiction manga which first appeared in 1952, running until 1968. It was created and produced by **Osamu Tezuka**, popularly referred to as the God of Manga; Tezuka holds a place in Japanese culture, manga, and anime comparable to that of Walt Disney in the West; indeed, Disney was a major inspiration to Tezuka. He originally trained in medicine, becoming a doctor, although he never practiced. Instead, he became a key innovator in both manga and anime, creating work in a variety of genres, including science fiction, with *Astro Boy* arguably becoming his most successful creation.

Astro Boy is a robot that was created by Doctor Tenma, the head of the ministry of science. Tenma built him as a replacement for his own dead son, but soon came to realize that this would not work, and sold the robot to the circus. Astro is rescued by Tenma's successor, Professor Ochanomizu, and uses his powers to fight evil and further the cause of good. The stories were translated into English by Frederik L. Schodt. Meanwhile, Tezuka's growing recognition in the West can be seen in the fact that he was asked to become art director for *2001: A Space Odyssey* by Stanley Kubrick, but financial commitments forced Tezuka to decline the offer. Translations of his work have increased in recent years.

Another key manga series to make its mark in the West is *Akira*, by Katsuhiro Otomo, which is best described as fitting the cyberpunk sub-genre of science fiction. Set in a **post-apocalyptic** New-Toyko in 2019, the story concerns super-powered children involved in a government research program. It was originally serialized in Japan in *Young Magazine* between 1982 and 1990, and first translated and reprinted by Marvel's Epic imprint. More recently, it has been published in six English language volumes by **Dark Horse**. Another popular science fiction manga series to debut in *Young Magazine* was *Ghost in the Shell* (1989), by Masamune Shirow. This series is a thriller set in the future in which Public Security Section 9 agents are trying to capture the Puppeteer, who can gain control of human's minds, yet the puppeteer is revealed to be something more than was originally expected. Shirow's work is noted for the inclusion of footnotes and commentaries, and the original series has spawned two sequels—*Ghost in the Shell 2: Man/Machine Interface*, and *Ghost in the Shell 1.5: Human Error Processor.*

A major science fiction comic, *2000 AD*, debuted in England on February 26, 1977 and is still being published at the time of this writing. It is a weekly British anthology comic which was first published by IPC magazines. Initially printed on cheap newsprint paper, the genesis of the anthology came about as the result of a backlash against a predecessor comic, *Action*, which had to be cancelled following an outcry against violent and anti-establishment tendencies evident in the comic. Kevin Gosnell, an IPC magazines sub-editor, noticing the slew of upcoming science-fiction films, decided that an sf comic would be a good business opportunity, and asked Pat Mills to develop one. Mills, a writer and editor of some note in British comics, and the editor of *Action*, came to the realization that similar anti-authoritarian themes could be

explored more safely through the veneer of a science fiction metaphor, and began to conceptualize what became *2000 AD*. The comic has transformed from a newsprint paper to a glossy format, in addition to embracing current technologies; it is available for downloading through the Internet, and can be viewed through iPhone and iPod touch versions.

Editors have assumed the role of Tharg the Mighty, a green-skinned alien, who says that the strips are produced by a group of robots; they intentionally resemble the actual comic creators employed by *2000 AD*. While its initial point of interest was a revamped Dan Dare, the comic soon became best known for the character of Judge Dredd, a future law-enforcement officer who performed the role of judge, jury, and executioner in Mega City One, the future eastern United States. The character gained his own monthly U.K. title in 1990, the *Judge Dredd Megazine*, still published at the time of this writing. Other science fiction strips for which *2000 AD* has become known include: "Rogue Trooper," a GI (genetic infantryman) with blue skin and three partners, Gunnar, Bagman, and Helm, which have been downloaded onto biochips located on his rifle, backpack and helmet respectively; "Robo Hunter," a series about Sam Slade, a bounty hunter who hunts robots; and "The Ballad of Halo Jones," an atypical sf story that eschewed *2000 AD's* characteristic violence by focusing on the life of a young woman in the 50th century. The anthology has also had a significant impact in providing U.K.-based comics creators with a training ground to hone their talents for the American and international markets, including **Alan Moore**, Dave Gibbons, Brian Bolland, Grant Morrison and others. The downside of this trend is that once American and international markets open up to creators, the majority tend not to return to the magazine, although this has also been beneficial in allowing new creative opportunities for rising stars in the field to gain a public platform for their work.

Another significant work of science fiction in U.S. comics was ***American Flagg***, a dystopian science fiction series published by First Comics (cover date October 1983). The year is 2031 and Reuben Flagg is an actor who has been sent from Mars to take on the responsibility of enforcing government law in Chicago, accompanied by a talking cat called Raul. His visual appearance is very much a modern, 1980's twist on previous patriot-heroes, such as **Captain America** and The Shield, in that all take the American Flag as inspiration, but Flagg is not a typical hero of this type and the series is very much a science fiction work of social **satire**.

American Flagg was created by **Howard Chaykin**, its principal artist and writer. It has also been scripted by Alan Moore and J. M. DeMatteis, and it has been penciled by Mike Vosburg and inked by Richard Ory. Distinctive lettering by Ken Bruzenak added to the effectiveness of the comic in creating and reflecting the future society in which the series is set. The series is an early example of work that dealt with more **adult** concerns and themes in comics, a rarity in 1983, but an approach that would bloom more fully as the decade progressed. Along these lines, it is notable that **post-apocalyptic narratives** (such as ***Y: The Last Man, Ex Machina, V for Vendetta***, and *Tank Girl*) have been among the most popular science fiction comics in recent years.

This shift toward more adult audiences is often located in two major works, **Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*** (1986) and Moore's ***Watchmen*** (1986–87). Both of these deal with science fiction tropes. In *Dark Knight*, Frank Miller creates an older version of Bruce Wayne, retired for 10 years at the start of the story, who feels compelled to resume the mantle of **Batman**. Set in the near future, Gotham City is a media-saturated, violent nightmare version of a decaying urban landscape, and Miller offers the reader an uncompromising version of an iconic character. In *Watchmen*, Alan Moore and artist Dave Gibbons set their story of superheroes within a distinctive alternative Earth of 1985, where Richard Nixon remains president and where atomic science has created the ultimate superhuman. Essentially a murder mystery, this structural tour de force shows the potential of the medium while also making use of science fiction concepts familiar in other source materials, such as **Charlton** superhero comics and an episode of the science fiction TV series *The Outer Limits*.

In 1996, DC Comics launched Helix, an imprint devoted to science fiction; it featured work by noted creators including Michael Moorcock, Chaykin, and Garth Ennis. The imprint was short-lived, lasting until 1998, and its only major success was ***Transmetropolitan*** by **Warren Ellis** and Darick Robertson, which switched to publication under DC's Vertigo imprint with issue #13. The series follows the experiences of Spider Jerusalem, a journalist of the future inspired by Hunter S. Thompson's style of gonzo journalism (as featured in the novel *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and other works). Jerusalem is a drug-taking, chain-smoking, hard-drinking, foul-mouthed crusading journalist of the future, who operates in an unnamed city (although clues point to it being New York). The series, which uses its dystopian setting to comment satirically on a variety of issues, ran for 60 issues, and is collected in a series of 10 trade paperbacks. Ellis has produced other sf and sf-influenced titles as well, and remains one of the writers most productive in the field.

Andrew Edwards

SEAGUY. *Seaguy*, created by writer **Grant Morrison** and artist Cameron Stewart, is a three-volume series of comic books, with each volume containing three issues. It is published by **DC Comics**' Vertigo imprint. Two volumes have appeared at the time of this writing, *Seaguy* (2004) and *Seaguy: The Slaves of Mickey Eye* (2009), with the final volume entitled *Seaguy Eternal* being still being planned for the future. The series uses a colorful, whimsical sense of visual design, which is tempered by a darker mood as it progresses.

The delay of five years between volumes one and two seems to have been the result of poor sales for the first series. It has been alleged that publication of the second volume was finally agreed to by DC as a result of a deal struck with them by Morrison, in which he offered his services to join other writers on DC's weekly series 52 in exchange for being allowed to continue with *Seaguy*. Despite these problems the series has become a critical success, with some critics declaring volume two to be some of Morrison's best work.

Seaguy is a non-powered **superhero** who wears a scuba suit. He is accompanied by his sidekick Chubby Da Choona, a talking, floating, cigar-smoking fish who wears a sailor's hat. They both live in New Venice, a Florida-style location set in the near future (some 50 to 70 years into the future, according to Morrison), full of color and energy. Seaguy and Chubby spend their days watching TV, specifically Mickey Eye, a character who has a television show and seems to be a twisted, panoptic version of a Mickey Mouse type icon, and is a disturbing looking eyeball with two legs and one arm. They also visit Mickey Eye's theme park on a daily basis. Seaguy also plays chess with Death, who is depicted in this series as a skeletal gondolier. Other characters include Old Seadog, Seaguy's mentor, and Doc Hero, a former superhero who is now compelled to continuously ride a Mickey Eye tilt-a-whirl, having lost the power of flight.

At the start of the first volume, Seaguy is consumed with the desire to have adventures and to be noticed by She-Beard, a warrior woman with facial hair who desires a mate but requires him to beat her in combat. However, the age of superheroes is over and Seaguy is finding it impossible to even get noticed by her. His boring existence changes when he discovers that a popular new food called Xoo has achieved sentience, and he feels compelled to protect it from forces who are after it. He also hopes to be finally noticed by She-Beard as a result of this. In addition, Moon rocks are falling to Earth in the form of small meteorites, which is made even more strange due to the fact that they are covered in hieroglyphics, with one such rock having the American flag embedded in it (as planted by astronaut Buzz Aldrin). All of this occurs in a world where, at some point in the past, the superheroes have triumphed over evil and have retired, after beating a supervillain called the Anti-Dad.

Series two, *Seaguy: The Slaves of Mickey Eye*, built upon the cult reputation of its predecessor, and was critically acclaimed in the comics press. It opens with Seaguy, who has retained no knowledge of what happened to him in series one due to the psychological manipulation he was subjected to at the end of series one; this is reminiscent of what occurs to the protagonists in the novels *1984* and *A Clockwork Orange*, by George Orwell and Anthony Burgess respectively. The second series is darker in tone than the first, a more somber echo of the predominantly joyful tone of its predecessor. Chubby has been replaced by Lucky the parrot, and Seaguy has no initial memories of his friend, although Chubby seems to invade his consciousness throughout the series.

Mickey Eye now dominates the landscape and Seaguy struggles to cope with life. Seaguy escapes from an institution where he has been incarcerated due to the intervention of Tree Guy, Pea Guy and Three Guy, three super-powered heroes who have been inspired by Seaguy. He is then given a new identity, that of El Macho, a "bull-dresser" who has to dress bulls, not kill them like a matador. He also has to deal with the impending marriage of Seadog and She-Beard and the growing power of Mickey Eye during the course if this second series.

Morrison has called *Seaguy* his attempt at a ***Watchmen***-style series in conceptual terms, not in plot or characterization. He is laying down his core beliefs regarding the superhero concept, and he has noted that the third volume will bring these

concerns to the fore. He has declared it to be a new type of superhero comic, one which consciously avoids current trends that have elevated a violent type of coolness to the fore in the medium, a trend that he dislikes intensely. He sees *Seaguy* as a move to a more new-wave, **Silver Age**-inspired aesthetic combined with a modern literary sensibility. This idea, and the work on *Seaguy* that has occurred as a result of it, is perhaps similar in tone and execution to some of the work created by **Alan Moore** in his America's Best Comics (ABC) line.

Morrison and Stewart have generated a sense of surreal, weird mysteriousness that has its roots in work like *The Prisoner* TV series from the 1960s, which Morrison has stated as being a specific influence on *Seaguy*. Morrison gives full vent to his surreal and bizarre interests in this series, and while much can feel illogical or disconnected at times, he ultimately begins to draw the seemingly disparate threads together as each issue of both series progresses. Morrison has stated that *Seaguy Eternal*, the proposed final series of the trilogy, will form the ending to his ultimate statement on comic superheroes, and at the time of this writing is set for publication in the near future.

Andrew Edwards

SETH (born Gregory Gallant, 1962–) is a Canadian artist and illustrator living in Ontario. Educated at the Ontario College of Art, Seth first gained attention for his comics work with his autobiographical series *Palooka-Ville*, first published in 1991 by Montreal's Drawn & Quarterly, and re-issued in a 10th anniversary edition in 2001. In earlier issues of the series, he recounts daily events, ranging from an episode from 1984 where he was beaten up on the subway, to simply hanging out and talking with other characters. Most frequently, these people are the other two members of the "Toronto Three"—Seth, **Chester Brown**, and **Joe Matt**, who became the collective public face of mid-1990s autobiographical comics. All three were published by Drawn & Quarterly, worked at that time on largely autobiographical comics, and appeared in one another's works.

Where early *Palooka-Ville* issues were autobiographical and narrative-driven, later issues are more concerned with the small details of careful, slow story telling and beautifully rendered panels. Seth's work is elegant and demands that the reader both pay attention to the characters' facial expressions and notice the backgrounds suffused with nostalgia. For example, *Palooka-Ville* became a way for Seth to start crafting longer stories, such as 2004's *Clyde Fans* in which two brothers' fan business is driven to ruin by the rise of air conditioning. Overall, Seth's comics work displays a fascination with lost history and the past, be that traveling salesmen in small-town Canada, mystery *New Yorker* cartoonists, or collecting various artifacts—Pez dispensers, View-Master reels, or comic books (such as in 2005's *Wimbledon Green*).

Between *Palooka-Ville* and *Clyde Fans* rests what is Seth's most critically acclaimed work. In 1997, he won Ignatz Awards for Outstanding Artist as well as Outstanding Graphic Novel or Collection for ***It's A Good Life, If You Don't Weaken*** (Drawn and Quarterly, 1996, *Palooka-Ville* issues #4–9). On first pass, this work seems to interweave

autobiography and history in Seth's search for a *New Yorker* cartoonist named Jack "Kalo" Kalloway, meant perhaps to evoke thoughts of Charles M. Schultz—something that makes sense, given Seth's current work as designer for **Fantagraphics**' 25-volume edition of *Peanuts* (winning both an **Eisner** and a **Harvey Award** in 2005). In time, astute readers deduced that Kalo never existed, that Seth created the drawings himself, and that much of the main story was elaborate fiction presented as autobiography.

Like other commercial illustrators, such as Adrian Tomine, Seth has done the cover art for magazine and CDs, including a 2001 Aimee Mann album (*Lost in Space*). Seth is also the designer responsible for the April 2006 Penguin Classics revised *Portable Dorothy Parker*. Seth spent a half-year, starting in September 2006 serializing *George Sprott (1894–1975)* for *The New York Times Magazine*, with a revised edition to follow. Other publications include *Bannock, Beans, and Black Tea* (2004), in which he illustrates some of his father's stories, and one volume of his sketchbooks, titled *Vernacular Drawings* (2001). His most recent work includes solo and touring shows of his fictional city of Dominion, and its sister city of Beaver, models created as reference for the buildings in his work. Both have been exhibited in small-scale model form, though Dominion was reworked to include a life-size working movie theater.

Anne Thalheimer

SEVEN SOLDIERS OF VICTORY. A large-scale series written by **Grant Morrison**, the umbrella title *Seven Soldiers of Victory* encompasses eight interlocking comic book series, totaling thirty issues, published by **DC Comics** between April 2005 and December 2006. Morrison's project comprises the bookends *Seven Soldiers of Victory* #0 and #1, with art by J. H. Williams III, and seven intervening four-issue miniseries that spotlight the individual "soldiers." The seven miniseries are: *Shining Knight*, with art by Simone Bianchi; *The Manhattan Guardian*, with art by Cameron Stewart; *Zatanna*, with art by Ryan Sook; *Klarion*, with art by Frazer Irving; *Mister Miracle*, with art by Pasqual Ferry and Freddie E. Williams II; *Bulleteer*, with art by Yanick Paquette; and *Frankenstein*, with art by Doug Mahnke. The miniseries were designed to be released on progressive monthly schedules, so that each week a different title under the *Seven Soldiers* banner would be on sale. Although missed deadlines curtailed this intended schedule, the unusual format of the series and Morrison's structuring of the narrative still contribute to a compelling—if somewhat disorienting—reading experience. The basic premise of Morrison's *Seven Soldiers* is to re-imagine the **superhero** team concept, most conspicuously by featuring revised versions of obscure or minor characters from the DC stable unwittingly cooperating together in order to stop an impending menace.

As with much of Morrison's work for DC, *Seven Soldiers* draws heavily upon the writer's extensive knowledge of the company's publishing history and lore. The *Seven Soldiers of Victory* first appeared in *Leading Comics* #1 (Winter 1941–42), but the team's continuity within the DC universe is convoluted and obscure. The original team, also known as "Law's Legionnaires," was created by Mort Weisinger and Mort Meskin in an attempt to capitalize on the success of the superhero team format

utilized in the popular **Justice Society of America**, and ran for the first 14 issues of *Leading Comics*. The team's members were drawn from anthology books, and included **Green Arrow** and his sidekick Speedy, the Crimson Avenger, the Shining Knight, the Vigilante, and the duo Star-Spangled Kid and Stripesy, as well as an unofficial "eighth member," the Crimson Avenger's sidekick, Wing. This version of the team was reintroduced in ***Justice League of America*** #100 (1972), in a story where the Justice League is contacted by their Earth-2 counterparts, the Justice Society. The society is seeking assistance from the Justice League in locating the lost members of the legendary Seven Soldiers, who were scattered across time and space—and seemingly erased from collective memory—as an unfortunate consequence of their final victory against the threat known as the Nebula Man.

After this revival in *Justice League of America*, the Seven Soldiers franchise would remain effectively dormant until DC's company-wide retroactive continuity revamp in the wake of ***Crisis on Infinite Earths*** (1986). In the initial reworking of the Seven Soldiers, Wing was promoted to full membership and the Vigilante's sidekick, Stuff, was made an active member in order to replace Green Arrow and Speedy, who no longer had **Golden Age** counterparts. Even this revised version would be subsequently changed in the late 1990s, with Wing's spot as a soldier now filled by the archer known as The Spider, who had previously appeared in the *Crack Comics* feature, "Alias the Spider," published by defunct **Quality Comics**. This current version of the *Seven Soldiers* parallels the scenario presented in *Justice League of America* #100: the forgotten team is dispersed and lost throughout time after a battle with the Nebula Man. The major differences are that newly added member, the Spider, is actually a villain who sabotaged the team's final mission, and that the Vigilante spends 20 years fighting crime in the Old West before being rescued by the Justice League and Justice Society. This version of the team and its continuity is used as the starting point for Morrison's *Seven Soldiers of Victory*.

The plot of Morrison's *Seven Soldiers* centers around an invasion from a fairy-like race of beings from the future called the Sheeda. The Sheeda attack Earth periodically throughout history, devastating the planet through a process called the Harrowing, which leaves Earth and humanity with just enough resources to survive and rebuild in order to be conquered again. Prophesy states that a band of "seven soldiers" will eventually stop the Sheeda, so the army targets teams of seven during their invasions. To counteract this strategy, the mysterious Seven Unknown Men of Slaughter Swamp subtly orchestrate events that prod the current, individual soldiers into battling the Sheeda without ever realizing that they are cooperating with the others. Throughout the separate miniseries, the characters occasionally cross paths in their struggles against the Sheeda, and their respective journeys converge in the second bookend issue that concludes the story, but they generally remain unaware of each other and the ways their efforts coincide. Ultimately, the Sheeda are defeated and Klarion usurps the leadership of the assassinated Sheeda Queen, returning with them to their future as king, thereby fulfilling the prophesy that a soldier will turn

traitor. Another prophesy states that one soldier will die, which seemingly comes to pass when Shilo Norman, Mister Miracle, sacrifices himself to defeat the villain who unleashed the Sheeda on humanity, Darkside. The series' final image, however, is of Norman's hands bursting from his grave, indicating that the world's greatest escape artist found a way to cheat death.

Despite complaints of lateness in the publication of individual issues, *Seven Soldiers* was a commercial success, due in part to Morrison's popularity and the consistently high quality of art. The maxi-series was also critically well-received, winning the **Eisner Award** for Best Finite/Limited Series in 2006. Although not Morrison's strongest or most incisive work, *Seven Soldiers* is nevertheless a considerable accomplishment, especially as an experiment in the possibilities of comic book storytelling. For example, the mosaic structure and unusual publication format allow for a variety of reading experiences. Moreover, the patterned structure highlights Morrison's desire to move away from cinematic comics and the increasingly popular screenplay style of comics writing. *Seven Soldiers* expands the borders of the superhero genre by incorporating disparate influences, such as speculative architecture, Celtic mythology, "Goth" subcultures, DC continuity, the occult, and hip-hop, among others.

As with much of Morrison's work, some critics have charged that—at least occasionally—*Seven Soldiers* borders on incomprehensibility, yet much of the appeal of the series lies in its zaniness and frenetic energy. In fact, the inevitable confusion one encounters when reading *Seven Soldiers* is one of its charms, as it replicates the disorientation a new comics reader faces when confronted with decades of complicated continuity. Unlike many writers of mainstream superhero comics, whose inclinations are to sieve and streamline continuity in order to make it as accessible and continuous as possible, Morrison (as exemplified by *Seven Soldiers*) embraces convolution and outlandishness as sources of unique storytelling opportunities.

Jackson Ayres

SEVERIN, JOHN (1922–). In a career that has spanned over 60 years, John Severin has demonstrated that he is one of the very best artists to ever work in **war**/military and **Western** comic books. He has always had a tremendous passion for his subject matter and has illustrated countless stories in an exquisite, fine lined, realistic style. Not only is Severin an accomplished penciller and inker, but he is a talented humorist and caricaturist as well.

Though he began drawing cartoons professionally at the age of 10, Severin was not a fan of comic books and had only purchased a single comic as a boy. After graduating from New York's High School of Music and Art, he began to work with **Harvey Kurtzman** and Will Elder. After learning how much Kurtzman got paid for such work, he entered the field and published his first comic book story in 1947. The job was for **Joe Simon** and **Jack Kirby** and the story was published in Crestwood's *American Eagle*. Severin penciled it and Will Elder inked it. The two would collaborate for many years and become one of the great teams in comic book history.

In 1950, Severin and Elder followed Kurtzman over to **EC Comics** to work on *Two-Fisted Tales* and *Frontline Combat*. Kurtzman felt that both artists complemented each other wonderfully and created some of the finest work ever done in the genre of war books. Eventually this partnership did break up. Severin stated it was on friendly terms and that both were just "set to go on our own." Severin continued to work at EC and was an important contributor to Kurtzman's *MAD Magazine*, his work appearing in 9 of the first 10 issues. Severin never worked on any of the EC **horror comics** simply because, he claimed, working on such subject matter made him sick. Severin was editing *Two-Fisted Tales* at the time of EC's collapse in the mid-1950s.

In 1956 Severin accepted a staff position with **Stan Lee** at Atlas, working primarily on Westerns. When Atlas became **Marvel** in the early 1960s, Severin worked on a variety of material including *The **Hulk***, and a long run inking ***Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos*** for which he won the Alley Cat Award for Best War Title of 1967 and 1968. Also, Severin was the main artist for *Cracked* from the first issue in 1958 until very recently and he freelanced for **Warren Publications** (*Creepy* and *Blazing Combat*) and **DC** (*Sgt. Rock*).

In the 1970s he teamed up with his younger sister and longtime EC colorist, **Marie Severin**, to work on Marvel's Kull the Conqueror. In 2003, Severin worked on Marvel's highly publicized and controversial gay interpretation of Rawhide Kid. When asked what his favorite work had been, Severin replied that it had been "at EC, Warren, and *Cracked* because he had the most free expression with them." In 2003, John Severin was inducted into the **Will Eisner** Hall of Fame.

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John F. Weinzierl

SEVERIN, MARIE (1929–). Marie Severin is an award-winning, pioneering woman cartoonist. In the 1960s she was the only woman drawing for mainstream comic books. In the 1970s, she was one of two women drawing for the mainstream, the other being **Ramona Fradon**. It is symbolic that **Stan Lee**, who liked to give rhyming or alliterative names to the **Marvel** creators (Sturdy **Steve Ditko**, Jolly **Jack Kirby**, Genial **Gene Colan**) refereed to Marie Severin as "Marie the She," for indeed, she was the only "she" drawing for Marvel at the time.

Severin attended Pratt Institute for exactly one day before deciding that what they were teaching was not what she was interested in learning. Subsequently she attended and graduated from the Cartoonists and Illustrators school in the early 1950s. In 1952, at the suggestion of her brother **John Severin**, who was one of the **EC** artists, Severin went to work for EC Comics. She started as a Girl Friday, but soon progressed to doing full-time production, coloring, and researching as **Harvey Kurtzman**'s assistant. The first book she worked on was "A Moon, A Girl . . . Romance," which had formerly been Moon Girl comics, but she worked on all the EC books, finally leaving when, as

a result of the 1954 Kefauver hearings, EC canceled all their comic book titles and turned *Mad* Comics into a magazine.

Severin was hired by Atlas comics in 1956, doing touch-up, paste-up, lettering, and other production work until the comic book implosion of the late 1950s, when Atlas, like most of the comic book publishers in the last 1950s, severely reduced their staffs to keep from going under. In 1958 she went to work as a staff artist for the Federal Reserve Bank, where she produced, among other things, a 20 page comic book called "The Story of Checks." During this period, she was also freelancing, and drew a story for **DC's** *Challengers of the Unknown* #4, in 1958.

She returned to **Timely**, now called Marvel Comics, on a freelance basis in 1964 and joined the staff in 1965. She continued doing production work until 1966, when she drew her first comic book for Marvel, an issue of ***Doctor Strange.*** Among the many titles Severin has worked on for Marvel over the ensuing years are *Sub-Mariner*, *Crazy*, *The* ***Hulk, Iron Man***, *FOOM* (the Marvel in-house magazine), The first issue of *The Cat* (inks) and the first issue of *Star Wars* (colors), and a special one-shot, "The Life of Pope John Paul," in 1982. She also worked on Marvel's Star line during the 1980s, drawing the *Muppet Babies* and eight issues of *Fraggle Rock*, and has said in interviews that her favorite work has been light, humorous stories like the ones she drew for the Star line.

Marie Severin received the Inkpot Award at the San Diego Comicon in 1988, and in 1997 she was inducted into the Women Cartoonists Hall of Fame by Friends of Lulu, an organization that promotes participation in comics by women. She was inducted into the **Will Eisner** Hall of Fame in 2001.

Trina Robbins

SGT. FURY AND HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS. Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos were a heroic group of seven highly capable misfits led by Sgt. Nick Fury, whose cigar chomping, take-no-prisoners attitude informed their commando raids during World War II throughout all of Europe, and on occasion Japan. In the early 1960s, **Marvel** wanted to work off the formula that brought **DC** success with their army comic book *Our Army at War*, specifically the character Sgt. Rock. In response, **Stan Lee**, **Jack Kirby**, and Dick Ayers combined their efforts and created Sgt. Fury and his Howling Commandos, who first appeared in their own self-titled comic in 1963. The group was composed of fairly standard formulaic types, including the second in command "Dum Dum" Dugan, who was a former circus performer (and requisite Irishman, complete with bowler); Dino Manelli, a handsome man/movie star who joined the war to do his duty; Izzy Cohen, the jaunty Brooklynite who could fix anything; "Junior" Juniper, the Ivy League college graduate who met an untimely end early on in the series; "Rebel" Ralston, a southern Jockey who was wiry and a sure shot; and Gabriel Jones, an African American who liked to play his bugle while going into battle. This last member of the team is of interest, as regular units of the American Army in World War II were segregated until near the end of the war. The timing of

the comic book coincided with the height of the Civil Rights movement in the United States as well.

The commandos were often used for behind the lines missions, similar to the true-life exploits of British commandos during World War II. The unit would often end up managing to get out of some close call that put them against the Germans in France. Eventually the Germans countered with their own unit, The Blitzkrieg Squad, led by a Colonel Baron von Strucker. The Germans were continually defeated, after which the Howling Commandos would return to England to be re-assigned by Captain "Happy Sam" Sawyer.

Even the death of "Junior" Juniper did not hamper the team. He was replaced with a British soldier, Percival Pinkerton. While affecting typical British manners and providing comic relief, Pinkerton proved himself to be an outstanding soldier. As with many of the comic books that centered on war themes, the Howling Commandos were always in the thick of the fighting, or training for action.

The story lines, while discussing combat in World War II, also took on concepts of bigotry, competition within services, vaudeville (through Dum-Dum's continual comments on his mother-in-law), and even some romance. Fury at one point was involved with a British countess, whose brother was a **Nazi** sympathizer. It was on a rescue mission to bring back the brother (Lord Haha) that Junior Juniper was killed. As always, the war interfered with the sergeant's love life. The countess Pamela Hawley was killed later in the series, and this further doomed Fury to be alone.

In keeping with their general policy of allowing popular characters to cross over from one comic to another, Marvel often had characters from other comics temporarily join the Howling Commandos. For instance, Reed Richards (Mr. Fantastic of the **Fantastic Four**) was an OSS officer in the famous Lord Haha episode, while **Captain America** sometimes fought alongside the Howlers. Many of the characters introduced in the *Sgt. Fury* series went on to be featured in the continuation series, *Nick Fury: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, in which Fury headed up an agency of super spies.

While *Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos* served as a counter to DC's *Sgt. Rock*, the two did have their differences. The Howlers were constantly involved with combat as first squad of Able Company, First Attack Division. DC's **war comics** were more serious in tone, as opposed to the Sgt. Fury comics, which used humor, **romance**, and slapstick in telling their stories. That humor also included a number of inside jokes. For example, Dick Ayers (artist) and Stan Lee (writer) made cameo appearances in *Sgt. Fury* #22, and the creators of the comic often identified themselves by their former service branch.

Often Fury showed a disobedience that would only be set off by outstanding results as a soldier. However, the Howlers were anything but realistic professional commandos. They fought with their fists rather than with weapons, and often exposed themselves unnecessarily to enemy fire or possible harm. While the concepts of honor and redemption were clearly used in the comic book story lines, the action was far different than the cold reality of combat, where people die, suddenly

and violently. The stories also often addressed current events, as in several issues that dealt with racism.

The series was immensely popular, and soon *Nick Fury: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* was created. Both series ran simultaneously for several years. The characters Fury, Dum Dum and Gabe continued on in the S.H.I.E.L.D. series. Fury has been re-imagined again and again over the years, and remains a popular character. He figured into the ***Civil War*** series as a man who no longer ran S.H.I.E.L.D. and whose stance on the question of superhero registration was generally unclear. Fury was also brought back to his World War II roots with the miniseries *Fury: Peacemaker*, created by **Garth Ennis** and Darick Robertson. Here, Fury was a far more realistic soldier, as well as a far more ruthless one. The new series showed his character flaws, and yet gave him believability as a man who had a drive to do "the right thing." In the end, Fury still served as a long lasting and popular character within the Marvel Comics stable.

Cord Scott

SHADOW, THE. "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows!" Those chilling words were uttered by the mysterious vigilante known as The Shadow, first on radio and later through a series of adventures in pulp magazines, comic strips, comic books, and motion pictures. The Shadow was an ominous avenger who helped popularize the concept of a crimefighter operating under a secret identity. He terrified his adversaries with both his maniacal laughter and willingness to use deadly force. It was not uncommon for him to act as judge, jury, and executioner as he gunned down criminals with his two blazing .45s.

The Shadow debuted as the narrator of radio's *Detective Story Hour* in 1930. The program was sponsored by Street and Smith Publications in order to promote their weekly *Detective Story Magazine*. The character, which was originally voiced by James LaCurto, was intended to only introduce dramatizations of the magazine's stories. However, listeners soon became fascinated by the mysterious storyteller with the sinister voice and demanded to learn more of his exploits. To capitalize on The Shadow's unanticipated popularity and to protect their copyright interests, Street and Smith created a new pulp magazine, *The Shadow, a Detective Magazine*. Journalist Walter Gibson, an amateur magician who had ghostwritten for Houdini, was commissioned to develop the character. Gibson's first novel-length story, *The Living Shadow*, was published in 1931. He wrote 282 of the 325 Shadow adventures that appeared in the magazine over the next 18 years. Gibson, who wrote under the pseudonym Maxwell Grant, is credited with establishing many of The Shadow's most recognizable trademarks, gimmicks, and supporting cast.

The Shadow was depicted as a thin man with a hawk-like nose and piercing black eyes. He wore a long, black, crimson-lined coat, a broad-brimmed slouch hat, and later sported a red scarf to conceal the lower portion of his face. In print, The Shadow employed numerous identities in his war on crime, such as businessman Henry Arnaud, elderly gentleman Isaac Twambley, and Fritz, an old janitor who worked at police



Alec Baldwin as Lamont Cranston, a.k.a. the Shadow, in the 1994 film *The Shadow*, directed by Russell Mulcahy. Universal/Photofest

headquarters. His most prominent alias was that of Lamont Cranston, a millionaire playboy. In 1937, *The Shadow Unmasks* revealed the hero's true identity to be Kent Allard, a famed World War I aviator and spy. Seeking new challenges after the war, he faked his death in a South American jungle and returned to the United States to fight crime. Later adventures created more ambiguity as they raised questions regarding the validity of this origin. On radio and other media, this complicated back-story was discarded as Lamont Cranston was The Shadow's true self. While the hero possessed no true superpowers, he was said to have acquired "the mysterious power to cloud men's minds, so that they could not see him" while he was traveling throughout Asia.

The Shadow was often assisted by a network of agents who joined in his crusade against crime. The most notable were his right-hand man Harry Vincent, cabdriver Moe "Shrevy" Shrevnitz, radio operator Burbank, gangster Cliff Marsland, and Margo Lane, a wealthy socialite and potential love interest. He also gained numerous enemies, such as international spies, mad scientists, gangland kingpins, and various supervillains. The Shadow's most frequently recurring foes included The Voodoo Master, The Cobra, and The Wasp; Shiwan Khan, The Shadow's archenemy, first appeared in 1939. This descendant of Genghis Khan repeatedly fought the hero in his attempts to conquer the world.

The Shadow's popularity in the pulp magazines led to a wave of merchandise that included coloring books, wrist watches, sheet music, disguise and fingerprint kits, and comics. In 1937, the character returned to radio, but not as merely a narrator. Orson Welles starred as Lamont Cranston and Agnes Moorehead portrayed Margo Lane in

the adventure series. Welles's Shadow was less deadly than the version seen routinely in the pulps. Although Welles left the show after only a year, the program remained a radio favorite until its cancellation in 1954. In newspapers, *The Shadow* comic strip, which ran from 1939 until 1942, was written by Walter Gibson and illustrated by Vernon Greene. The Shadow has also been seen many times in motion pictures. His first film appearance came in 1937's *The Shadow Strikes*, starring Rod LaRocque. A sequel, *International Crime*, was released in 1938. Victor Jory played the hero in a 1940 serial. Kane Richmond then took over the role in the low-budget *The Shadow Returns* in 1946. It was followed by two forgettable sequels. In 1994, Alec Baldwin took on the role of The Shadow/Lamont Cranston in *The Shadow*. This film combined both the pulp novel and radio versions of the character. In 2006, Hollywood director Sam Raimi expressed interest in producing a new film that would introduce The Shadow to another generation of fans.

The Shadow has routinely appeared in comic books over the decades. From 1940 to 1949, 101 issues of *Shadow Comics* were published. Beginning in 1964, **Archie** Comics published an eight issue series titled *The Shadow*. This is the most bizarre interpretation of the pulp hero, in which The Shadow is seen as a muscular blonde man wearing green and blue **superhero** costume. A more faithful and critically praised version of the character came in a12-issue series produced by **DC Comics** from 1973 to 1975. Written by **Dennis O'Neil** and drawn by Mike Kaluta, this series was highly influenced by Gibson's novels. The Caped Crusader even encounters The Shadow during this period in ***Batman*** #253 and #259. DC revived The Shadow again in the 1980s, but placed him in modern-day New York, a move that proved unsuccessful. **Marvel Comics** then published *Hitler's Astrologer* (1988), a Shadow graphic novel. From 1989 to 1992 DC published *The Shadow Strikes*. This series was set in the 1930s and is notable for featuring The Shadow's first team-up with **Doc Savage**, another pulp hero. **Dark Horse Comics** next took on The Shadow in two miniseries, *In the Coils of the Leviathan* (1993) and *Hell's Heat Wave* (1995). Dark Horse also published *The Shadow and Doc Savage* (1995), a miniseries that pitted the heroes against **Nazi** kidnappers. The Shadow is one of the most notable pulp heroes. His menacing vigilantism inspired later comic book heroes and taught generations of fans that "the weed of crime bears bitter fruit."

Charles Coletta

SHOOTING WAR. A web-comic and graphic novel written by Anthony Lappé and illustrated by Dan Goldman, *Shooting War* is a **satire** of contemporary journalism, war, and politics. The book is unique in that it integrates contemporary people and places with dramatic artistic styling and actual location photography. *Shooting War* is a modern fable about the power of media and celebrity, and what happens when one's ethics contradict one's career.

The central character of *Shooting War* is Jimmy Burns, a 20-something independent video blogger from Brooklyn who is determined to uncover corporate greed with his live independent vod-casts. While he is uploading a program to his Web site in a

Starbucks coffee shop, the shop explodes. The explosion, a result of a terrorist attack, has Burns in the right place at the right time, capturing it on video. Global News, a world-wide media conglomerate, gets the feed from his site and broadcasts it, making Burns an instant celebrity hounded by other media.

After the typical rounds of interviews with print and television personalities, Burns agrees to work for Global News, the epitome of the media entities critiqued by his anticapitalistic blogs. However, working from the inside to expose the gritty underbelly of life appeals to Jimmy, so he accepts. He is hooked on the adrenaline rush that comes with war reporting.

In pursuit of the ultimate war story, Jimmy Burns and a military crew head to Baghdad but get shot down and captured by the terrorist group, The Sword of Mohammed. Convincing the group to let him live by broadcasting their message live, Burns becomes the media outlet for the group. With this new role, Burns is released and finds himself back in his hotel awaiting contact with a new producer but is given an ultimatum—broadcast the group's messages or face the consequences.

As *Shooting War* continues, the plot has Burns encountering a variety of attacks, all controlled by the Sword of Mohammed. Torn between doing what is right and reporting the news, he realizes that he has become the media pawn for the group. This troubles Burns, but also intrigues him as a journalist. Another prominent journalist, Dan Rather (now reporting for the Dallas Mavericks), works with Burns to help him realize that reporting is more than just uncovering the facts, but being able to do the right thing for the good of society. Rather, in a tense battle scene, ends up saving Jimmy in a heroic turn of events that could have ended both of their lives. At the end of the book, Burns stands on his own and becomes an independent journalist in order to report breaking stories throughout the world.

The book satirizes media exploitation, truth, politics, and corruption of power. It also shows the power of public journalism and its responsibility to both society and the citizens who watch it. As Marshall McLuhan famously said, "the medium is the message." In this case, the message in *Shooting War* is one of caution because things are not always as they appear to be.

Selected Bibliography: For more information on *Shooting War*, go to, www.shootingwar.com.

Alec R. Hosterman

SHUSTER, JOE (1914–92). Joe Shuster is the co-creator (with **Jerry Siegel**) of **Superman.** Shuster was born in Toronto, Canada, and moved to Cleveland, Ohio. Growing up, Shuster was a fan of the *Wash Tubbs* comic strip and the pulp illustrations of Frank Paul. Shuster would draw on his mother's breadboard on old wallpaper, packages, and anything else he could find. At Alexander Hamilton Junior High School, Joe drew comics for the school newspaper, *The Federalist*. At Glenville High School, Shuster was involved with set design for the drama club and won a cartoon contest about Thanksgiving.

He also won a citywide poster contest for a football game. Shuster agreed to illustrate and design a five-issue fanzine named *Science Fiction* written by Siegel. Unable to get a scholarship to the prestigious Cleveland School of Art (he received Honorable Mention), Shuster continued to draw from magazines and took night classes at the Huntington School of Art. Driven by Siegel's relentless drive to publish, Shuster was soon drawing many Siegel cartoon scripts including "Bruce Verne, G-man of the Future" and "Snoopy and Smiley," among others. Yet it was Shuster's ability to draw strongman heroes and gorgeous damsels that helped the duo get published starting in 1935 with several serials in ***More Fun Comics***, *New Comics*, ***Adventure Comics***, and ***Detective Comics***. In these comics, Shuster used film techniques to provide emotional close-ups and stunning full-page action sequences, often elevated by Shuster's creative use of Craftint paper. At the same time, they worked on another character: Superman. Shuster designed the famous costume using elements of physical fitness culture, of which he was a strong follower. Superman was finally bought for $130 (including the rights) and the character debuted in ***Action Comics*** #1 (1938). Shuster (who was born with poor eyesight) opened his own Cleveland studio—with young artists such as Wayne Boring, Leo Nowak, and John Sikela—to help with the workload. Early stories were also lettered by Shuster's brother, Frank. After World War II, Siegel and Shuster began proceedings to sue their employer, National Allied Publications (the primary direct forerunner of **DC Comics**) for the rights to Superman and were consequently fired.

Shuster teamed up with Siegel again on the comic *Funnyman* (1947), taught, and contributed pencils and covers to **horror** and racing comics. In the late 1950s and in need of money, he did anonymous work on the *Nights of Horror* magazines, which depicted his famous archetypal characters in outlandish fetish fantasies. Shuster tried to launch an art show and created a cartoon called "Kosmo," but neither worked out. He moved to California and was married briefly to Judy Calpini in 1975, the same year that he and Siegel were granted a pension by DC and were returned to the byline of *Superman*.



Artist Joe Shuster, who co-created Superman (ca. 1980s). DC Comics/Photofest

Selected Bibliography: Benton, Mike. *Masters of Imagination: The Comic Book Artists Hall of Fame*. New York: National, 1994; Jones, Gerard. *Men of Tomorrow*. New York: Basic, 2004; Yoe, Craig. *Secret Identity: The Fetish Art of Superman's Co-Creator Joe Shuster*. New York: Abrams ComicArts, 2009.

Brad J. Ricca

SIEGEL, JERRY (1914–96). Jerry Siegel was born in Cleveland, Ohio, to Lithuanian Jewish immigrants and is the famous co-creator (with **Joe Shuster**) of **Superman**. When his father died of a heart attack during a hold-up in 1932, Siegel turned to reading and writing as a means of escape and expression. In high school, he wrote prodigiously for the school newspaper, *The Glenville Torch*. Siegel also self-published five issues of an early fanzine called *Science Fiction* which included the story "The Reign of the Superman," a pulp homage illustrated by Shuster about a bald scientist who creates an evil mental marvel. Inspired by early comic books such as *Detective Dan*, Siegel and Shuster sent pitches for comics to early publishers (Consolidated Publishing) and local newspapers (*The Cleveland Shopping News*) but to no avail. They finally sold a series of short comics to ***More Fun Comics***, *New Comics, and Adventure Comics* starting in 1935 with "Henri Duval," which was followed by "Spy," "Radio Squad," "Doctor Occult," and "Slam Bradley" which Siegel wrote for ***Detective Comics*** from 1937 to 1941. Siegel's narratives are heavily pulp in tone but also humorous as well, drawing from a variety of print, radio, and film sources. In the mid-1930s, Siegel and Shuster also worked up a new character called Superman who was a combination strongman and civic hero. The character went through a variety of incarnations, artists, and formats. Finally rescued from the slush pile, National Allied Publications (a forerunner of **DC Comics**) bought Superman's initial 13-page manuscript (and all subsequent rights) for $10 a page. Superman debuted in 1938's ***Action Comics*** #1. A new comic, *Superman* (1939), and a syndicated newspaper strip quickly followed, both written by Siegel.



Writer Jerry Siegel, who co-created Superman (ca. 1980s). DC Comics/Photofest

Siegel was drafted in 1943 and, upon his return from World

War II, instigated a complicated set of lawsuits in 1946 to regain control over Superman and the new character Superboy. Siegel and Shuster settled with their employer, National Allied Publications, the primary direct forerunner of DC, over Superboy, but were also summarily fired. Their last comics collaboration, "Funnyman" (1947) did not catch on. Siegel returned to write a host of un-credited Superman stories for DC during the late 1950s and 1960s. He also did limited work for **Marvel Comics**. Siegel worked in children's television, was the comic director for Ziff-Davis, and created (with Paul Reinman) The Mighty Crusaders for **Archie** Comics. He also worked on the Disney Duck comics, mostly for the Italian comic, *Mondadori Editore*. In 1975, after a long national campaign by fellow comics creators to coincide with the first Superman movie, Siegel and Shuster were given a pension settlement that also returned their names to the masthead of every incarnation of Superman.

Siegel was married twice: first, to Bella Lifshitz, with whom he had a son, Michael. He later married Joanne Carter, the original model for Lois Lane, and had a daughter, Laura.

Selected Bibliography: Daniels, Les. *The Complete History of Superman*. San Francisco: Chronicle, 1998; Jones, Gerard. *Men of Tomorrow*. New York: Basic, 2004.

Brad J. Ricca

SIENKIEWICZ, BILL (1958–). Born Boleslav Felix Robert Sienkiewicz in Blakely, Pennsylvania, and growing up in New Jersey, Bill Sienkiewicz is an innovative graphic novel artist and writer. Descended from the Nobel Prize-winning Polish novelist Henryk Sienkiewicz (*Quo Vadis*), he started drawing when he was about four or five and has stated that he was influenced by **Curt Swan** and **Jack Kirby**. As an adult, Sienkiewicz worked at construction sites in order to afford attending the Newark School of Fine and Industrial Arts in Newark, New Jersey.

Sienkiewicz started his comic book career doing the art for **Marvel**'s "Moon Knight," which was the back-up story in the ***Hulk*** *Magazine*, starting with issue #13 in 1978. Moon Knight received its own series in November 1980, and Sienkiewicz did the majority of the inside art and covers for the 30-issue run. From 1984 to 1986, Sienkiewicz established himself as a masterful cover artist when he was the primary artist on Marvel's ***New Mutants*** written by **Chris Claremont**. Sienkiewicz's impressionistic covers stood out among other **superhero** titles of the time, which classically depicted an action from inside the book. Instead, he simplified his figures to their iconic traits—the heroes were shadowy figures with identifiable characteristics. On many of his covers and in his interior pages, lines, often white, radiated from the center, conveying frenetic action as well as psychological turmoil, a trademark of his style throughout his career.

In January 1986, he teamed up with writer **Frank Miller** to produce *Marvel Graphic Novel* issue #24 titled ***Daredevil:*** *Love and War*. Miller, after having produced the seminal ***Dark Knight Returns,*** was a great fit for Sienkiewicz's experimental art; they produced the eight-issue *Elektra: Assassin* (August 1986–June 1987), which pushed

the boundaries of superhero comics even further with its **adult** themes and political commentary. For his work on these issues, Sienkiewicz won international acclaim, receiving the 1986 Yellow Kid Award (Italy) and the 1987 **Jack Kirby** Award, presented by *Amazing Heroes* magazine. He also worked on the graphic novel, *Shadowplay: The Secret Team*, published in *Brought to Light*, with writer **Alan Moore** (Eclipse Comics 1988), about the history of the CIA. Sienkiewicz teamed up with Moore again in 1991 with the ambitious, but unfinished, series, *Big Numbers*; he produced art for only the first two issues before dropping out of the project.

From January 1988 to April 1989, Sienkiewicz became a writer and artist for his four-issue series, *Stray Toasters* (Epic Comics), which featured a detective hunting down a serial killer. Freed from the restrictions of the superhero genre, Sienkiewicz produced innovative text work and images that depicted the insanity of the killer and the world of his disturbed characters in his nonlinear narrative. Alternating splash pages with 9 and 12-panel pages, Sienkiewicz used a variety of media—from pen and ink drawings to mixed-media collages, to lush oil paintings—in order to evoke the inner chaos of his characters.

Since then, Sienkiewicz has worked on a variety of titles for **DC** and Marvel, notably winning the 2004 **Eisner Award** for his contribution to ***Sandman:*** *Endless Nights*, written by **Neil Gaiman** (DC-Vertigo 2003). Sienkiewicz's chapter, covering the character Delirium, is a cornucopia of techniques, from washes, to pen drawings, overlays, photographic images, and the combination serves the storyline admirably, blending the chaos of Delirium's mind with a pictorial delight in excess. Other notable illustration projects include the 1995 *Voodoo Child: The Illustrated Legend of Jimi Hendrix* (**Kitchen Sink Press**) and, in 1998, the children's book, *Santa, My Life and Times* (Avon Books). He also took his talent to other media, producing CD covers, movie promotional art, and trading cards. Further, Sienkiewicz has been an active character designer for television, earning two Emmy Award nominations in 1995 and 1996 for his work on *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?*

Selected Bibliography: Lerer, Mark. "The Marvel Age Interview: Bill Sienkiewicz." *Marvel Age* 28 (July 1985): 20–22.

Wendy Goldberg

SILVER AGE. *See* ***Ages of Comics***

SILVER SURFER, THE. The Silver Surfer is a **Marvel Comics** character created by **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby**. He falls under the category of a "cosmic" **superhero**. The character has powers on a vast scale and has been criticized as difficult to write for a monthly title. Generally, the character serves the genre convention of the "other" (or an outsider) used to provide an introspective perspective on a litany of human ills and social injustices.



Doug Jones as the Silver Surfer, in the 2007 film *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer*, directed by Tim Story. Actor Laurence Fishburne provided the voice of the Silver Surfer. 20th Century Fox/WETA/Photofest

The Silver Surfer first appears in a three-issue sequence of ***Fantastic Four*** (known today as the "The Galactus Trilogy") beginning with issue #48 in March 1966. Here the Silver Surfer comes to Earth, heralding the coming of Galactus, the devourer of worlds. While interacting with several characters, notably Alicia Masters, the Silver Surfer begins to feel conflicted between protecting what he deems as a worthy planet and his duties to Galactus. His outlook on the goodness and unlimited potential of humanity reflects similar humanistic progressive themes in much **science fiction** writing of the time, most notably in Gene Roddenberry's original *Star Trek*.

The Silver Surfer's defiance of Galactus echoes Lucifer's rebellion and subsequent exile from Heaven. Although Earth is spared, as a punishment for his transgression the Silver Surfer is exiled from the cosmos (i.e., Heaven). This exile is explored in the first series, running from August 1968 to #18 in September 1970. In this series, the Silver Surfer undergoes trials and temptations while continuing to reflect on the nobility of humanity despite the day-to-day bigotry and ignorance he sees. To further his Odysseus-like journey, the Surfer is feared and rejected by the majority of humans with whom he comes into contact, making his self-sacrifice and exile all the more bittersweet. This series is among Stan Lee's most introspective work and reflects many of the cultural and critical challenges of the social and political issues raised in the late 1960s.

The Silver Surfer wanders the Earth during his exile in the first series, longing to return to his home planet of Zenn-La and his mate, Shalla Bal. Here, again echoing *The Odyssey*, as the Surfer takes on the literary and mythological conventions of exile, trials, and temptation. The Surfer stands in for the incorruptible soul, constantly tested and tempted by a gallery of villains such as Dr. Doom, Loki, and the demon Mephisto. While Doom desires the Power Cosmic from the Surfer, Loki and Mephisto are attracted to

the challenge of breaking the Surfer's will. As with many comics characters, the themes of willpower and moral clarity run deep in the narrative of *Silver Surfer*. Indeed, it is Mephisto who desperately wants to corrupt the "courage [. . .] purity [and] lack of malice" exhibited by the Surfer. Here again Mephisto stands in as a tangible representation of the baser instincts of human behavior opposed to the ideals of moral clarity.

Stan Lee's *Silver Surfer* series also includes the origin story of the Silver Surfer. Norrin Radd is an impatient scientist/astronomer from the planet Zenn-La, which has achieved such a degree of scientific advancement that all of the wants of its inhabitants are fulfilled. Such a culture frustrates young Radd as "the spirit of high adventure [and] the thrill of exploration" are lost on the contented people of Zenn-La. Anti-utopian currents run throughout the origin story, as Radd's individualism continually comes into conflict with the communal orientation of his advanced, seemingly utopian society. As was often the case in the Marvel comics written by Stan Lee, the aliens and monsters reflect aspects of human behavior, drawing obvious parallels to the social movements of the late 1960s. After the cancellation of the original series, the Silver Surfer made various appearances in other Marvel titles including *Fantastic Four* and *Defenders*. One-shots in 1978 and 1982 were followed by a continuing series in July 1987 that ran until issue #146 in November 1998, featuring the end of the Silver Surfer's Earth-bound exile. This series is oriented toward science fiction adventure, with less time given to social commentary and introspection. Various subsequent one-shot and special issues would feature the Surfer as a springboard for social commentary.

Placing the Surfer in the role of a messianic figure reaches its high point in *Silver Surfer: Parable*, a two-part sequence written by Lee with art by **Moebius**, published in 1988 and 1989. In this story, addressing wide ranging themes such as religious fanaticism; in one scene the Surfer is depicted in a crucified stance, with Lee's script quoting "They know not what they do." The depiction of the Silver Surfer in *Parable* thus takes the character away from its origins as a Lucifer deifying the destroyer God Galactus. Instead, his allegorical portrayal shifts to that of a Christlike, self-sacrificing figure defending a populace that hates him; at the same time he searches for "an oasis of sanity in this desert of [human] madness" that can reclaim his faith in humanity. Although leaving little room for ambiguity, *Parable* is among the most significant of Lee's later works commenting on the overall cultural materialism, social apathy, and religious narrow-mindedness of 1980s America.

D. R. Hammontree

SIM, DAVE (1956–). A longtime resident of Kitchener, Ontario, Dave Sim is one of the most successful self-publishers of comic books thus far. The creative work Sim is most known for is ***Cerebus the Aardvark***, a sprawling and often challenging series published on a regular basis from 1977 until 2004. Prior to *Cerebus*, Sim contributed to and published fanzines, as well as creative work, including stories for a variety of independent publishers, and even a comic strip. *Cerebus* evolved from Sim's fanzine work, beginning as a sort of parody of various popular and, for the time, cutting-edge

productions from **Marvel Comics**, particularly ***Conan the Barbarian*.** Sim, along with his then-wife, Deni Loubert, established his own publishing imprint, Aardvark-Vanaheim, as a vehicle for *Cerebus*.

Sim attracted interest in *Cerebus* for its high quality, his resistance to financial support from any outside publishers, and his vow to complete 300 regularly-issued numbers of the series. He was a tireless advocate of creator ownership, particularly through the vehicle of self-publishing, which he felt allowed the individual creator the best opportunities for financial success as well as artistic integrity. To that end, Sim published the *Cerebus Guide to Self-Publishing*, a collection of columns and written observations about creating and distributing comics independently. Together with his creative partner, Gerhard (who was responsible for the backgrounds), Sim also founded the Day Prize, named for his friend and mentor Gene Day, which was awarded yearly for outstanding achievements in self-publishing at the Small Press and Alternative Comics Expo (S.P.A.C.E.), held yearly in Columbus, Ohio. The prize gave critical recognition to independent creators from 2001 until 2007. In 2008, Sim withdrew from participation in the prize, which has been renamed the S.P.A.C.E. Prize.

For a time, Sim assisted other creators to achieve publication. With Deni Loubert as publisher, Aardvark-Vanaheim published several other titles for a time, including *Flaming Carrot Comics* by Bob Burden, *normalman* by Jim Valentino, and *Ms. Tree* by **Max Allan Collins** and Terry Beatty. Upon their divorce, Loubert would publish most of their old titles through her own company, Renegade Press, leaving *Cerebus* as the sole title published by Aardvark-Vanaheim. Subsequent titles (written and illustrated by Sim) published by Aardvark-Vanaheim include *Judenhass*, a prestige-format title about the Holocaust, and *Glamourpuss*, an unusual series that at times discusses Sim's opinions about the history of cartooning (in particular, early issues featured Sim's recreations of later illustrations by *Flash Gordon* creator Alex Raymond), and at other times lampoons fashion culture. While Sim's creative output has slowed somewhat since the end of *Cerebus*, he remains an important creative force in comics.

Robert O'Nale

SIMON, JOE (1913–). Raised in Rochester, New York, Joe Simon is one of the central figures in comic book history. After graduating high school and later working as art director for the *Syracuse Journal American*, Simon moved to New York City where he retouched publicity photos for Paramount Pictures and did illustrations for various magazines. In 1939 he did his first comics work assignment for Funnies, Inc. and then created his first comic book hero. He also did freelance stories and art for Centaur, Novelty, and Fox Publications. Working on *Blue Bolt* Simon met **Jack Kirby** and the two would soon become one of the most successful and influential teams in the comics business.

After leaving Fox, Simon found himself at publisher Martin's **Timely** (the future **Marvel**). As the company's first editor, Simon had a young **Stan Lee** as his office

assistant. At Timely, Simon and Kirby created the one of the most famous comic book superheroes, **Captain America** in late 1940. Steve Rogers was an ordinary GI who was part of a secret Army experiment to create stronger soldiers, thus becoming Captain America. Along with his sidekick Bucky, Cap would fight the **Nazis** even before the United States had entered into World War II. Although their highly patriotic issues sold out, Simon and Kirby disagreed with Goodman over royalties. Yet, instead of challenging him, they sought out Jack Liebowitz at National Comics who would be only too happy to offer them a better deal. On hearing of this, Goodman fired the team.

At National, they took over the **Sandman** character and had hit after hit including the *Boy Commandos*, *Newsboy Legion*, and ***Manhunter.*** Simon created *The Fly* for **Archie** Comics and *Stuntman*, *Boy Explorers*, and *Boys' Ranch* for Harvey Publications—this last title being his favorite collaboration with Kirby. In 1953, the Simon and Kirby team would also create what would be another one of their favorites, the **Western** comic, *Bullseye*. For Prize Publications they created an early **horror comic** *Black Magic* and are also credited with creating the entire **romance** genre of comics with *Young Romance Comics* in 1947.

As the industry fell into a sharp decline in the mid 1950's, Simon focused more on commercial art, but also helped oversee many of the kid-friendly comics put out by Harvey Comics. In 1960, the business-savvy Simon created *Sick Magazine*, which competed favorably against *Mad*. The Simon and Kirby partnership ended in 1955, but they would come together over the years to work on updating old characters or creating new ones. Their last collaboration was in 1974 when Simon wrote the first issue of a new *Sandman* for **DC**.

Sixty-six years after his co-creation of Captain America, Simon commented: "We were movie directors, script men, penciler, colorers, inkers . . . we had dirty hands." Simon did it all and in doing so his creative force directly shaped the American comic book industry almost from its inception.

Selected Bibliography: Simon, Joe, and Jim Simon. *The Comic Book Makers*. Lakewood, NJ: Vanguard, 2003.

Jeff McLaughlin

SIMONE, GAIL (1974?–). In 1999, Gail Simone, a hairdresser and comics fan in her native Oregon, compiled a list of women characters in comics who had been raped, crippled, depowered, magically impregnated (without consent and therefore a form of rape), turned evil, given a life-threatening disease, or murdered. Because of extended continuity—made necessary by the longevity of medium—these characters were often subject to a combination of these atrocities. This trend, Simone observed, became known as "Women in Refrigerators"—after the particularly gruesome demise of the **Green Lantern**'s girlfriend, Alexandra DeWitt—who was murdered and stuffed in a refrigerator. The list was sent to several comics creators, along with a letter, asking for

their thoughts. Simone went on to write a weekly column called "You'll All Be Sorry" for the Web site Comic Book Resources (1999–2003). She later began scripting *Simpsons* comics for Bongo.

Marvel Comics' Joe Quesada suggested Simone pitch for the title *Deadpool* which was later revamped as *Agent X*. Simone left Marvel over creative differences and began work at **DC Comics** where she wrote for various titles, including ***Action Comics,*** and a *Rose and Thorn* limited series (2004). Simone also wrote *Killer Princesses* for Oni Press with co-creator and artist Lea Hernandez.

In 2003, Simone took over DC's *Birds of Prey* title (formerly written by **Chuck Dixon**) with issue #56 and added Helena Bertinelli/Huntress to the line-up of Barbara Gordon/Oracle and Dinah Lance/Black Canary. Under her direction, *Birds of Prey* became one of DC's steadiest selling and most critically acclaimed books. Simone's success as a comic book writer, as well as her enjoyment of it, led her to give up hairdressing to focus on writing full-time. In 2006, she was the writer for a limited series of *The Secret Six*, a DC **superhero** team that originated in the **Silver Age**. In 2007, she took over writing duties on ***Wonder Woman*** with Issue #14. Additionally, Simone's commitment to creating diverse casts of characters led her to win a Glyph Comics Award for Best Female Character in Thomasina Lindo—one of the lead characters in *Welcome to Tranquility*—a creator-owned comic published by WildStorm. Simone has also worked on a reboot of *Gen* for WildStorm and *All-New Atom* for DC. She has also done work in scripting for television and films based on comics. She wrote an episode of *Justice League Unlimited* and early drafts of the *Wonder Woman* animated direct-to-DVD feature film that was released in 2009.

Selected Bibliography: Garrity, Shaenon. "The Gail Simone Interview." *The Comics Journal* 286 (November 2007): 68–69; Stuller, Jennifer K. *Ink-stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology*. New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010.

Jennifer K. Stuller

SIMONSON, WALTER (WALT) (1946–). Born in Knoxville, Tennessee, comic book writer and artist Walter Simonson graduated from Rhode Island School of Design in 1972. His thesis project *Star Slammers* would serve as his first portfolio and would later form the basis for a graphic novel and a miniseries. His widely recognizable signature in the shape of a brontosaurus reflects his early interest in paleontology. Although he started in the industry illustrating **war comics** for **DC Comics** and other companies, Simonson's big break actually came from writer Archie Goodwin, who invited him to draw ***Manhunter*** in 1973, which ran in the back of ***Detective Comics.*** Simonson's four-year stay with DC also included reviving the Metal Men.

At **Marvel Comics,** Simonson did a number of comic book movie **adaptations** including *Battlestar Galactica*, and *Star Wars*, and worked on *X-Factor* with his wife, writer Louise Simonson. He is best known for taking over *The Mighty* ***Thor*** in 1983 and creating story arcs that raised the level of the book to that of its earlier **Stan Lee**/

Jack Kirby days. Although Simonson injected a fine mixture of **science fiction** and mythology, fans typically remember two events during his approximately four years on the series. First, turning Thor into a frog for three issues (an homage to Simonson's favorite comic book writer and artist as a boy: **Carl Barks**) and second, the introduction of Beta Ray Bill, an alien who became only the second individual (at the time) deemed worthy enough to pick up Thor's hammer Mjolnir.

In late 1989, Simonson became writer and artist on ***The Fantastic Four.*** His year-and-a-half tenure included the memorable nonlinear presentation of a fight between Dr. Doom and Reed Richards that required the reader to read the issue twice. Simonson enjoyed working in the shared-universe concept where the various characters moved between different books, thereby creating complex back stories; thus he wrote and/or drew many characters for both Marvel and DC Comics including the **Avengers**, **The Hulk**, **Superman**, **Batman**, **Wonder Woman**, and Dr. Fate. This shared-universe concept was also part of publisher Malibu's Bravura line of creator-owned comics, which Simonson joined briefly before the company was bought out by Marvel.

As a fan of Jack Kirby's Fourth World mythos, Simonson was excited to bring back the character Orion for DC for a run that lasted 25 issues. Simonson also illustrated Michael Moorcock's miniseries *Elric: The Making of a Sorcerer*. Simonson had no preference for drawing covers or interiors as he found they offered different artistic challenges. When once asked which was more important in comics, writing or drawing, he responded that the question was like asking "Which is more important, breathing air or drinking water?"

Simonson's illustration influences include **Moebius**, Jim Holdaway, Frank Bellamy, Sergio Toppi and various **Silver Age** Marvel artists. His writing influences include J.R.R. Tolkien, numerous **science-fiction** writers, his friend Archie Goodwin, and wife Louise Simonson. A legendary talent, Simonson nevertheless remains an open-minded artist—willing and wanting to learn from anyone and anything.

Jeff McLaughlin

SIN CITY. The title refers to a variety of story arcs occurring in the same environment written and drawn by **Frank Miller**, who is renowned for his take on **Batman** in ***The Dark Knight Returns.*** The first *Sin City* story was published in ***Dark Horse Comics Presents*** *Fifth Anniversary Special* (1991) and then continued in the anthology *Dark Horse Presents* #51-62 (1991–92). These stories were later collected in graphic novel form and expanded along the years with more single issues and book collections coming along. There is no main protagonist in *Sin City*, but several characters appear regularly throughout the narrative threads (or "yarns" as they are referred to) as they weave in and out among each other. The individual yarns usually follow a central character but the stories are thoroughly intertwined and can be puzzled into a grand *Sin City* narrative chronology. Sin City is the nickname of the fictional Basin City—the setting in or around which the stories take place. The different parts of town act as the framing structure for the stories as they move from the rich neighborhood of Sacred Oaks to the

worn-down projects, and city landmarks help anchor the fast-paced plot lines in areas like the surreal Tar Pits of the closed down amusement park and the fenced evil of The Farm. Old Town is a city within the city populated by prostitutes; as long as a fragile truce is kept, the mob and police leave the women of Old Town to carry out their own justice. Basin City has a very high frequency of violence and crime and is controlled by corrupt politicians, the mob, and various crime lords using hitmen as go-betweens. The police force is part SWAT team members and part regular cops, most of whom are in the pocket of one or the other powerful criminals. Miller uses an immediately recognizable style where great emphasis is put on the effects of light and shadow, using black and white to outline bodies, light up faces and keep things hidden in the dark. Contrasts between black and white shape the characters as black patches of ink are criss-crossed by falling white rain, and silhouettes in white or black take up big parts of the page design—their bodies striped by the light coming through numerous Venetian blinds. Grey tones are not an option in the visual execution of *Sin City*, but on rare occasion Miller uses a primary color for effect: a red dress, blue eyes or the yellow body of a vile villain known as the Yellow Bastard. The only exception to this black/white scenario is a passage in the volume *Hell and Back* where the drug- overdosed mind of the protagonist is reflected in a water-colored section featuring a wide variety of monsters and intertextual references to other comics. With the exception of *Family Values*, all the *Sin City* volumes were first published as single issues.

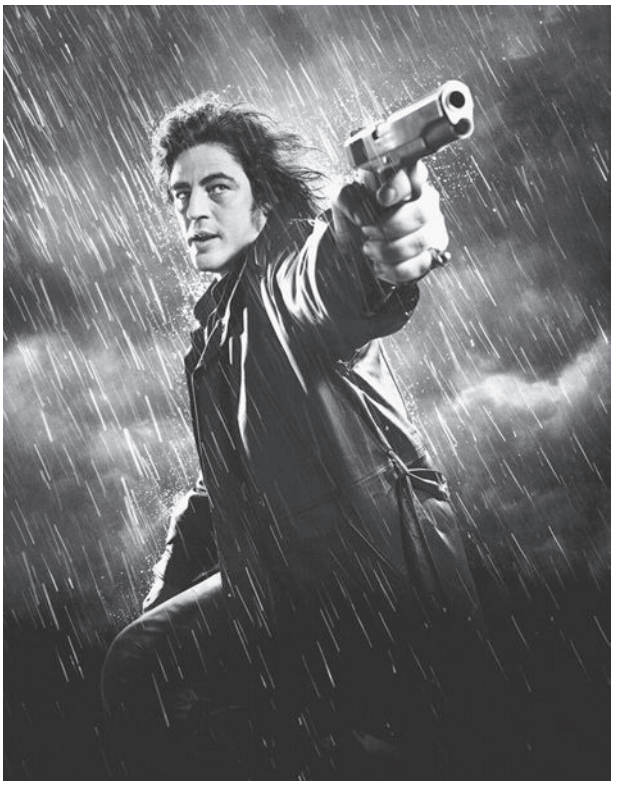
The Hard Goodbye (original title: Sin City) first collected in 1992, features Marv—a chivalrous but primitive muscle-man. After having spent a night with the beautiful Goldie just to wake and find her murdered in a way clearly intended to frame him for the crime, Marv swears revenge and starts killing his way through the people involved in her death.



Original comic panel of Nancy and Hartigan from Frank Miller's graphic novel *Sin City*. Dimension Films/Photofest

In *A Dame to Kill for* (1994) the photographer Dwight gets framed by his devious ex-girlfriend Ava Lord. Enlisting the help of Marv and the women of Old Town he is able to make Ava pay for her deeds and get his revenge. *The Big Fat Kill* (1996) finds Dwight in yet another precarious situation when he has to help cover up the murder of a crooked cop named Jack who was killed by the girls of Old Town. Both the mob and the police would love to take over Old Town and Jack's murder could be their chance. The final showdown refers to the battle of Thermopylae—a story Miller would later go on to elaborate in the graphic novel **300**. The main antagonist in *That Yellow Bastard* (1997) embodies all meanings of the word yellow. He preys on little girls and is maimed by the policeman Hartigan in an effort to save 11-year old Nancy Callahan from rape and murder. Eight years later he wants to get his hands on Nancy and Hartigan has to fight him again.

Once more Dwight is the main character in *Family Values* (1997), where he has been sent on a mission by the girls of Old Town. With him is deadly ninjette assassin Miho and their target mob family is made to understand that family can expand beyond blood relations. A collection of small stories with the characters from *Sin City* is put together in *Booze, Broads, and Bullets* (1998). Saving a girl from committing suicide takes ex-Navy Seal Wallace to *Hell and Back (A Sin City Love Story)*(2000) as he has to fight powerful moneyman Wallenquist to free the mysterious woman.



Benicio Del Toro as Jack Rafferty, in the 2005 film *Sin City*, directed by Frank Miller and Robert Rodriguez. Dimension Films/Photofest

Sin City is a revision of the classic noir **crime comics** bordering on pastiche but definitely an homage to a kind of comics the **Comics Code** helped obliterate. The setting is dark, the violence is graphic, and the heroes are men of action most often in pursuit of dangerous dames or damsels in distress. This central plot is underlined by the many close-ups of determined male faces and the repetition of silent, full-page images of scantily clad women. Sympathy is on the side of the lone avenger or the few and supposedly powerless against the many and powerful. No matter how hard the rain falls, how hopeless the situation seems or how black the night is, in *Sin City* there is always a way out for those who choose to fight.

Sin City was made into a movie in 2005 directed by Robert Rodriguez and co-directed by Miller himself. In the making are *Sin City 2* and *Sin City 3*, scheduled for release 2010 and 2011.

Rikke Platz Cortsen

SPAWN. Created by **Todd McFarlane**, Spawn made his first appearance in May, 1992, in the first issue of the comic book that bears his name. Spawn was one of the original creations from **Image Comics**, of which McFarlane was one of the co-founders. The central figure in *Spawn* is Albert "Al" Francis Simmons, a Detroit-born African American CIA agent whose boss, Jason Wynn, orders him assassinated. Simmons is sent to Hell because of his status as a mercenary. In Hell, Simmons, motivated by a desire to see his wife Wanda once more, unwisely strikes a deal with Malebolgia, a powerful lord, and returns to Earth as a Hellspawn, an officer in Hell's army.

His memory in tatters and his body misshapen beyond recognition, Spawn re-enters the world in a state of stupefaction. Once on Earth, he soon discovers that five years have passed since his death, and that his wife Wanda Blake has since married his friend Terry Fitzgerald, their union yielding a daughter named Cyan. Spawn was represented as a rather conventional crime-fighting anti-hero in the initial issues. His most significant encounters are with Anti-Spawn, or the Redeemer, who is later revealed to be Jason Wynn, and Angela, who was, like Cogliostro, created by **Neil Gaiman** in issue #9 of *Spawn*. Both the Redeemer and Angela were heavenly agents meant to counter Spawn, although Angela eventually comes to assist Spawn several times.

Following Spawn's encounter with the Redeemer, his suit, a crucial source of his power, undergoes a significant change (the first of many), becoming more powerful in the process. The suit is symbiotic and connected to his body and its nervous system; it is nourished by necroplasm, the hellish substance out of which Spawn was created. Spawn's necroplasmic power is limited, and its complete exhaustion would lead to eternal suffering in Hell.

Spawn, given his origins, functions within a good-evil dichotomy, represented in the early issues by, respectively, an old man named Cagliostro and the clown-like Violator, Malebolgia's earthly agent. That initial dichotomy is complicated by the introduction of an alternative realm to Hell and Heaven through the Heap. The Heap is a monstrous figure that formed when a man named Eddie Beckett inadvertently came into contact with necroplasm, leading to a merging of his body with the surrounding garbage. Spawn's battles with the Heap result in the latter swallowing the former, transporting Spawn to Greenworld, a kind of natural Purgatory independent of Hell and Heaven.

Spawn employs the powers accorded to him by the forces of that realm to defeat Urizen, a god released by Malebolgia in a failed attempt to assume control of all of Hell. Spawn, accompanied by Angela, enters Hell and destroys the weakened Malebolgia. He is then offered Malebolgia's place by Mammon, and after initially refusing it, decides to accept it in order to transform Hell into a paradisiacal realm. His plans are, however, thwarted by Cagliostro, who betrays Spawn, assumes control of Hell for



Michael Jai White as Spawn, in the 1997 film by the same name, directed by Mark A. Z. Dippé. Photofest/New Line Cinema

himself, and reveals himself as the Biblical Cain. Cagliostro returns Spawn to Earth seemingly transformed back to his original form as Al Simmons.

Simmons does not remain in that state for long, however, and is able to transform himself into Spawn again with the help of a witch named Nyx. He assumes a position strikingly similar to his original one, with Mammon replacing Malebolgia as the chief adversary. Spawn later finds himself at the center of Armageddon, where he rises to become as powerful as God and Satan (re-imagined as warring children of a more powerful figure named the Mother). Spawn destroys the armies of Hell and Heaven as well as all of humanity, and subsequently creates a new Earth with the sanction of the Mother. He asks the Mother to return him to Earth as Al Simmons thereafter.

Subsequent episodes in the Spawn narrative take a decidedly domestic turn, with Spawn's family relations and Mammon's long-time involvement in his life since early childhood taking precedence. The convoluted family history essentially centers on Mammon's intentions to create the ultimate Hellspawn, originally meant to be Al Simmons but afterwards his child Morana, whom Wanda miscarried after she was beaten by Simmons just prior to his death. Mammon's plans are foiled by the clairvoyant Cyan, who in cooperation with Nyx destroys Morana.

From the very beginning, the sense of uncertainty regarding Spawn's identity and past forms a central theme in the comic. In issue #2 of *Spawn*, for example, Spawn attempts to use his powers to assume a human shape, only to find that he has assumed the body of a blonde, white man. The issue of Simmons/Spawn's **race** is of striking interest given the dearth of main characters in comics that are African American. The matter has been addressed directly in the comic several times, nowhere as visibly as in *Spawn* #30, where Spawn, returning to the world after a sojourn in Heaven, finds himself in the U.S. South confronting the KKK while trying to protect an African

American family. He is shot in the head by the Klan members and then hanged, though he lives to exact revenge on them.

Religion forms another significant and consistent element in the comic, with Judeo-Christian mythology forming the basis for the comic's worldview. The resurrected Spawn, for example, has clear if somewhat antithetical predecessors in Lazarus and Christ. As well, the apocalyptic elements in the comic owe a great deal to *The Book of Revelation*, while the geography of Hell was clearly inspired by Dante's *Inferno*.

Spawn remained popular for much of the 1990s, and even starred in a feature film in 1997. Although his popularity has waned considerably since then, Spawn still remains a notable figure in comics. There have been several spin-offs, among them *Curse of the Spawn*, *Angela, Sam & Twitch*, a special featuring Spawn alongside **Batman**, and a **manga** titled *Shadows of Spawn*. The character's main narrative, however, is still found in the *Spawn* comic book, whose issues trace the myriad transformations that the character has undergone and continues to undergo.

Denis Yarow

SPEEDING BULLETS. A 52-page graphic novel written by J. M. DeMatteis and illustrated by Eduardo Barreto that was published in 1993 by **DC Comics** as part of its prestige ***Elseworlds*** line, *Speeding Bullets* won the Comic Buyer's Guide Fan Award for "Favorite Original Graphic Novel or Album of 1993." The premise of the story is based upon an amalgamation of the **Superman** and **Batman** myths: What would happen if the Kryptonian rocket ship that carried baby Kal-El to Earth had been discovered not by Jonathan and Martha Kent of Smallville, Kansas, but rather by Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Wayne of Gotham City?

Superman and Batman have had a long history of joining forces ever since the pair first discovered each other's secret identities and teamed-up in *Superman* #76 (May–June 1952). Beginning in 1954 with ***World's Finest Comics*** #71, the heroes regularly worked together in that title until its cancellation in 1986. The **Man of Steel** and the Caped Crusader were also seen together in a number of "Imaginary Stories" published by DC Comics over the years. As with the *Elseworlds* tales, the "Imaginary Stories" were not restricted by DC Comics canon. There are several notable Imaginary Stories from both the **Silver Age** and Bronze Age of comics history that combined Superman and Batman's supporting casts, villains, settings, and plotlines. *World's Finest* #136 (September 1963) contained a story titled "The Batman Nobody Remembered" which showcased a parallel universe where Superman is secretly Bruce Wayne and Batman never existed. *World's Finest* #167 (June 1967) presented "The New Superman-Batman Team!" in which baby Kal-El grows up powerless after his exposure to a gold Kryptonite meteor. Instead, Lex Luthor uses science to gain superpowers so he can become Superman. Batman is later revealed to be Clark's wealthy uncle Kendall, who is unaware of his Kryptonian heritage. A third interesting story is titled "Superman and Batman—Brothers!" and it appeared in *World's Finest* #172 (December 1967). In that tale, Bruce Wayne is adopted by the Kents after his parents

are murdered. The kindly farm couple takes the sullen boy into their home so that their son Clark can have a brother. Together the boys fight crime in Smallville. By the end of this imaginary adventure, Batman joins the Legion of Super-Heroes in the 30th century, while Superman continues his never-ending battle against evil in the 20th century. In *Superman* #353 (November 1980) DC Comics began a short-lived backup series featuring the exploits of "Bruce (Superman) Wayne." In this alternative reality, baby Kal-El is discovered by James Gordon, who gives him to the Waynes. Bruce Wayne grows up to become Superman and later marries Barbara Gordon (Batwoman). One of the most unique amalgamations of the characters debuted in *World's Finest* #142 (June 1964); the composite Superman was a grotesque shapeshifting villain with green skin who formed a costume that was half Superman's and half Batman's. This rogue returned several times but was always soon defeated by the heroes.

Speeding Bullets continues the tradition of recreating the Superman legend by infusing it with elements from Batman's history. The graphic novel begins with the destruction of Krypton and the arrival of Kal-El's rocket on Earth. Instead of the Kents arriving at the crash site in their old pickup truck, the alien child is discovered by the Waynes who are being chauffeured by their butler Alfred. They name the boy Bruce and raise him to be cultured, respectful, and intelligent. As in DC Comics' established history, tragedy strikes years later as the Wayne family emerges from a theater when they encounter a hoodlum named Joe Chill. The thief brutally murders the elder Waynes during a robbery attempt. As young Bruce Wayne tearfully stares at his parents' killer, heat beams suddenly blast from his eyes and incinerate the murderer. The trauma of that night's events causes him to forget his unearthly abilities until years later when Alfred is threatened by a burglar. Bruce saves his faithful butler and begins to fully remember the facts surrounding his parents deaths. He soon discovers Thomas Wayne's journals relating how they found their son in the rocket ship. Again, as in the long-established DC canon, Bruce Wayne becomes the crimefighter Batman, although this Dark Knight is super-strong and can fly.

Other elements of the Superman and Batman histories are incorporated into *Speeding Bullets* as Bruce Wayne purchases the *Gotham Gazette* newspaper and hires editor Perry White and journalist Lois Lane. To protect his secret identity from Lois he pretends to be a shy, stuttering, klutz. Like the story's hero, the villain is a combination of Superman and Batman adversaries. Lex Luthor is presented as a ruthless billionaire, as had been established by **John Byrne**'s continuity revamp of the character during the 1980s. However, this Luthor harbors a dark secret. An earlier accident in a chemical plant had transformed him into the Joker. He also employs a lethal umbrella in the manner of the Penguin, another traditional Batman nemesis. Batman defeats the Joker in a violent encounter. Eventually, Lois convinces Batman that he could be an even greater hero if he abandoned Batman's darkness and instead became a symbol of hope. The story concludes with Bruce Wayne adopting a new costumed identity—Superman.

Speeding Bullets was one of several *Elseworlds* graphic novels that either combined the Superman and Batman legends in unique ways or placed the Man of Steel in

new settings, such as medieval England, Soviet Russia, or Hollywood in the 1920s. *Elseworlds* stories provided interesting new perspectives on popular heroes and *Speeding Bullets* showcases the elements that have allowed both Superman and Batman to become enduring comic book icons.

Charles Coletta

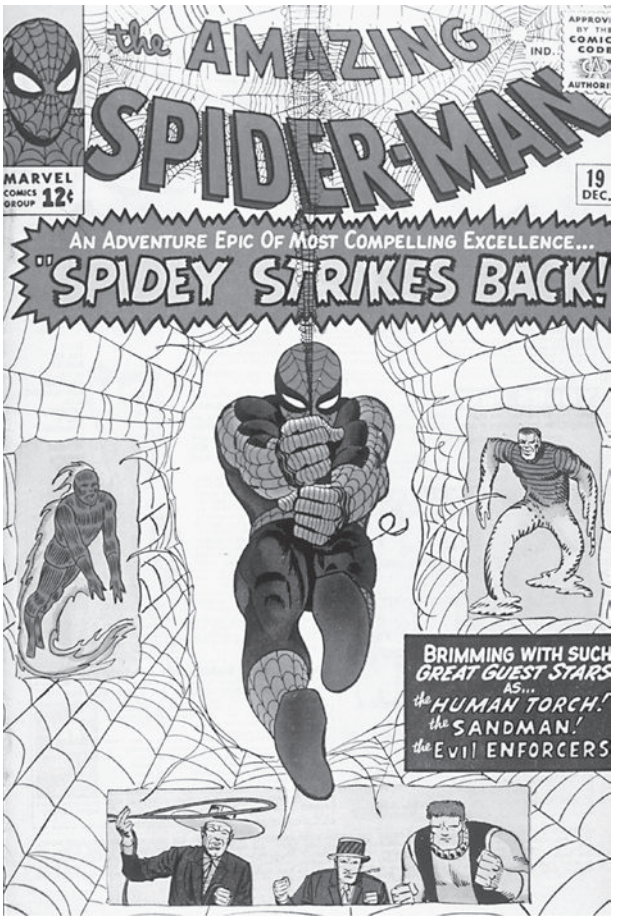
SPIDER-MAN. Created in 1962 by illustrator/plotter **Steve Ditko** and writer **Stan Lee** with input from **Jack Kirby**, Spider-Man is arguably the most popular comic book **superhero** and certainly the most popular character of **Marvel Comics**. First appearing in the final issue of the **science fiction** and **fantasy** anthology comic book series, ***Amazing Fantasy*** #15, Spider-Man has appeared in several eponymous (and non-eponymous) comic book titles over 45 years, most centrally in *The Amazing Spider-Man*—first published in March 1963 and in continuous publication since. In addition to the issues produced by the initial creators, a particularly successful run of this title began in 1988, when artist **Todd McFarlane** joined writer David Michelinie beginning with issue #298. McFarlane also helped create the wildly popular villain Venom, an alien symbiote that can take over the bodies of humans, including, at one point, Spider-Man himself. In 2000, Marvel introduced *Ultimate Spider-Man*, written by **Brian Michael Bendis** and illustrated by Mark Bagley, to reboot the Spider-Man story for a newer audience. Spider-Man has appeared in several other media, such as animated and live-action television programs, toys, electronic games and live-action blockbuster films. Indeed, the films, *Spider-Man* (2002), *Spider-Man 2* (2004), *Spider-Man 3* (2007), and *Spider-Man 4* (due in 2011), directed by Sam Raimi and starring Tobey Maguire and Kirsten Dunst, constitute one of the most commercially successful franchises in movie history.

Peter Parker is an orphan being raised by his loving Uncle Ben and Aunt May. Upon being bitten by an irradiated spider at a science demonstration, the unpopular high school student finds himself acquiring spider-like powers: the proportionate strength, speed, and agility of a spider, the ability to stick to nearly any surface, and an uncanny "spider-sense" that senses impending danger. The bright science student invents a "web fluid" that mimics the strength and stickiness of spider webbing, as well as wrist-mounted web-shooters. Designing the now-iconic blue and red costume with superimposed web patterns, and a mask with large white eyepieces, Peter is ready to face the world as Spider-Man. Rather than using his powers for the greater good, Spider-Man at first appears on television variety shows to earn money. After one such appearance at a studio, Spider-Man fails to stop an escaping burglar, who kills Peter's beloved Uncle Ben later that day. Realizing that his self-interested inaction resulted in the death of his uncle, Peter realizes that "with great power there must also come—great responsibility!"

Spider-Man's debut story repeated many of the themes common in *Amazing Fantasy* and other comic books of the early 1960s, most notably the moralizing twist-ending and the anxiety over nuclear technology. Whereas in other stories the person

who made the mistake would be held accountable for it, in this story the martyrdom of Uncle Ben establishes the moral. Moreover, the changes brought about by the irradiated spider and Peter's realization of responsibility can also be seen to stand in for puberty and the ways in which a teenager transitions to adulthood. Indeed, the interaction between Spider-Man using his powers responsibly and Peter Parker attempting to adapt to his often rapidly changing personal circumstances—and the ways in which one aspect of his life influences or interferes with the other—has come to characterize the essence of Spider-Man comics. For instance, a blood transfusion from Peter to Aunt May results in her becoming ill from radiation. The serum necessary for the cure is hijacked by the nefarious Doctor Octopus, and it is up to Spider-Man to find it. In one of the most iconic sequences of Ditko's art, a trapped Spider-Man frees himself from under tremendously heavy wreckage to reach the serum and save his aunt—all of this just before Peter is set to begin college.

As if the death of Uncle Ben was not enough, Spider-Man is often involved in the deaths of many others close to Peter Parker, and many of Spider-Man's most trenchant villains are linked to his private identity. Retired police captain George Stacy is killed when he saves the life of a child standing under falling debris from Spider-Man's battle against Doctor Octopus. Stacy's daughter, Gwen, Peter's girlfriend, is later killed during Spider-Man's battle with the Green Goblin. Meanwhile, the Goblin is actually Norman Osborn, the father of Peter's best friend, Harry. Although Norman Osborn had already been a manipulative tycoon, a chemical accident turns him into a super-powered villain and contributes to his mental degeneration. Osborn never tires of torturing Peter/Spider-Man, for instance kidnapping his and wife Mary Jane Watson's baby, presumably murdering her.



The Amazing Spider-Man issue #19, published in December 1964. Marvel Comics Group/Photofest

Being situated in contemporary contexts, Spider-Man comics have always dealt with social issues. Spider-Man comics in the 1960s and 1970s depict college protests

and city politics, in which Peter is loath to get involved. A story arc in 1971 features Harry Osborn's addiction to drugs, whereas a 1982 single-issue questions the prevalence of guns in America. In 1974, Spider-Man teams up with **The Punisher** to fight the Tarantula, an operative of a repressive government in Latin America. While beating on the villain, Spidey delivers a speech in which he effectively aligns himself with revolutionaries fighting tyranny. The most sustained examination of Spider-Man's role in social realities comes during writer **J. Michael Straczynski**'s tenure in the 2000s. Separated from his wife, Peter returns to his high school to realize that the neighborhood has changed for the worse. He becomes a teacher and attempts to counsel students who might otherwise get into trouble. Spider-Man recognizes that he has never paid attention to the problems of street youth and the homeless, and a reformed thug questions why he only deals with things after they go wrong rather than trying to prevent them from going wrong.

Peter Parker's private life also becomes more complex as Aunt May learns of his secret identity and he restarts his relationship with Mary Jane, while joining the New **Avengers**. In the ***Civil War*** storyline (2006), Spider-Man unmasks to the world as Peter Parker in support of superhero registration, which he later realizes is a mistake. As a result, May is shot by a sniper sent by a villain and, in a coma, is on the verge of dying. Peter and Mary Jane make a deal with the devil (Mephisto) to keep May alive. The resultant resetting of the Spider-Man storyline means that Peter and Mary Jane had never married in the first place and Harry Osborn, long dead, somehow comes back to life, while Spider-Man's unmasking has been erased from collective memory. Peter is once again a bachelor, with a doting aunt, far removed from introspection about his role in society—other than knocking heads together in a superficial fulfillment of the dictum that great power entails great responsibility.

Noaman G. Ali

SPIEGELMAN, ART (1948–). An artist and writer whose work has done much to bring critical respect to comics and graphic novels, Spiegelman was born in Stockholm, Sweden. He emigrated with his parents, Vladek and Anya (Zylberberg) Spiegelman, to Norristown, Pennsylvania before settling in the Rego Park neighborhood of Queens, New York. Geographical transience and the importance of place in establishing one's identity have remained consistent themes in his work, particularly ***Maus: A Survivor's Tale*** (1986, 1991) and *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004). He began drawing comics at an early age, publishing his first drawing at age 13 before becoming a student at Manhattan's High School of Art and Design. While doing freelance work for a small newspaper in Queens, he met Woody Gelman, art director of the Topps Chewing Gum Company, who would become a life-long mentor and friend. After graduation from the School of Art and Design, he attended Harpur College (now SUNY-Binghamton), where he worked as a cartoonist for the college newspaper and edited a humor magazine. In the summer of 1966, he became a creative consultant for Topps and began publishing his own **underground comics** work in such venues as the *East Village Other*.



Art Spiegelman with wife and collaborator Françoise Mouly (2000). Photofest

Tensions between independent artistry and the demands of commercial fame characterized Spiegelman's professional life, even as he drew upon such precedents as **Harvey Kurtzman**'s *MAD* magazine and **Robert Crumb**. A hospitalization for mental illness and his mother's suicide ended Spiegelman's time at Harpur in 1968. After a few years spent cartooning for men's magazines, he moved to San Francisco, where he published in *Gothic Blimp Works*, *Funny Animals*, and *Young Lust*, and co-edited *Short Order Comix* and *Whole Grains*. In 1975, he moved back to New York City, where he began co-editing *Arcade* magazine, married Françoise Mouly, and published a collection of his experimental comics in *Breakdowns* (1977; republished 2008). He and Mouly began the groundbreaking magazine ***RAW***, which assembled a variety of graphic projects. At the same time, however, Spiegelman continued to work for Topps and began teaching at New York's School of Visual Arts. *RAW* serialized *Maus*, an exploration of his parents' Holocaust experiences and his own life as a second-generation survivor, for several issues before its two volumes, *My Father Bleeds History* and *And Here My Troubles Began*, were published. He ended his career with Topps in 1989, as the second volume of *Maus* was underway.

The publication of *Maus* marked both Spiegelman's emergence as a critically recognized artist and a widespread acceptance of graphic novels as serious literature. Particularly after receiving a special Pulitzer Prize in 1992 for the two volumes, he found himself at the center of a maelstrom of media attention and scholarly analysis. The book's success helped him to promote comics' visibility, a long-term goal, and garnered him significant acclaim. His black-on-black portrait of the missing Twin Towers for the *New Yorker*'s 9/11 cover was included in the American Society of Magazine Editors' 2005 list of "Top 40 Magazine Covers;" the image also appeared on the cover of *In the Shadow of No Towers*, his autobiographical study of both the devastation of New York City and its history in comics. His public commentaries on world events continue to generate controversy and esteem.

Selected Bibliography: Spiegelman, Art. *Breakdowns: Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@&*!* New York: Pantheon Books, 2008; Witek, Joseph, ed. *Art Spiegelman: Conversations*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007.

Jennifer D. Ryan

SPIRIT, THE. A comic book feature regularly produced by **Will Eisner** and his studio between 1940 and 1952, *The Spirit* was the lead feature in a comic book supplement licensed to newspapers by the Des Moines *Register and Tribune* syndicate. During its best periods, before and for several years after the artist's military service in World War II, Eisner was primarily responsible for the feature, writing and drawing, and closely collaborating with assistants to create the book. The eponymous hero of the series is a detective hero, Denny Colt, who is declared dead after a gas attack by criminal mastermind the Cobra. Colt is buried at Wildwood Cemetery, which subsequently becomes the Spirit's headquarters.

The Spirit section, usually titled The Comic Book Supplement, was created for newspaper editors worried about the competition from the new medium of the comic book, particularly after the success of **Superman**. Eisner never liked **superheroes**; when he got the chance to do his own comic book, he gave the Spirit a mask and gloves, but no secret identity (Denny Colt was dead) and, feeling that he had an adult, literate audience, not the children and lower literacy readers of comic books, he created mature and emotionally resonant stories. (The Spirit section included backup features, most notably those featuring the female detective Lady Luck, created by Eisner and drawn by Klaus Nordling, which were rather ordinary action and comedy stories.) Continuing characters included Police Commissioner Dolan, who brought the Spirit in on various cases; Dolan's daughter Ellen, romantically involved with the Spirit; and the detective's sidekick, an African American boy named Ebony White. After World War II, Eisner realized that this stereotyped character was offensive and, after several attempts to alter the character, including various professional roles, he was dropped from the series.



The Spirit, issue #1, published in 1974. Warren Publishing/ Photofest

The Spirit included lovingly depicted femmes fatales, notably P'Gelle, a dark-haired international adventuress; Dr. Silken Floss, a medical doctor and humanitarian; and Sand Saref, a blonde criminal mastermind. Villains included the Cobra, and the Octopus, a vicious gang lord who combined with former **Nazis** in violent criminal enterprises in Europe and America. The Spirit was set in Central City, which was clearly a version of New York, with subways, skyscrapers, and identifiable neighborhoods including the Lower East Side. Eisner told urban stories in the Spirit, exploring the world of machine politics and ward heelers, corrupt contractors building schools, and petty criminals captured through police work. The Spirit had no superpowers, and often took the kind of beatings more characteristic of a Philip Marlowe novel than the comics.

Eisner also incorporated **fantasy** and the supernatural in *The Spirit*, from Mr. Carrion and his love, the buzzard Julia; to eerie ghost ships; and even a refugee from Salem, Witch Hazel, featured in Halloween stories. Eisner felt that the circulation of the supplement in newspapers meant he had to do seasonal stories, including a series of Christmas Spirit stories that combined comedy with seasonal sentiment. In addition to villains and beauties, Eisner's recurring characters included the spoiled rich girl, Darling, whose stories were both humorous and reflected on the transience of wealth; Sgt. Grey, a competent, articulate, and professional African American police detective; the silent, baseball-capped P. S. Smith, who embodied anarchy and disruption; and several attempts at replacements for Ebony, including Binky and Bunky.

The stories Eisner created before he was drafted in 1941 were enjoyable and engaging, but when he returned from military service in 1944, he began to experiment with narrative and artistic effects in ways that are generally credited with expanding the aesthetic horizons of the comic art medium. Deeply shadowed narratives, which Eisner called "two bottles of ink" stories, jarring viewpoints and striking angles resonated with the effects of movies like Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941). Among Eisner's narrative experiments were the story "Ten Minutes" (September 11, 1949), multilayered storytelling that elapsed in the time it took to read it, and, most famous of all, "The Story Gerhard Shnobble" (September 5, 1948), the ironic story of a man who could fly, and dies aloft and unnoticed in the crossfire as the Spirit apprehends some small-time crooks. Eisner also experimented with longer continuities, including a six-part story in which the Spirit goes blind and has his sight restored by Dr. Floss. Eisner's women characters were beautiful, some based on movie stars, such as Skinny Bones, drawn from Lauren Bacall. However, unlike most popular culture beauties, all were professionally accomplished. P'Gell was a business woman and professional, including serving as headmistress of a girl's school. Ellen Dolan was an outspoken and strong female character, as often saving the Spirit or herself as being rescued. She successfully ran for mayor of Central City, over the opposition of the Spirit, in a series of linked stories that can only be described as proto-feminist. Eisner had a variety of talented and accomplished assistants on the Spirit. The polished superhero artist Lou Fine and the fantasy writer who would later become a noted regionalist, Manley Wade Wellman, produced *The Spirit* during Eisner's World War II service, but unfortunately

produced mostly unremarkable stories. Political cartoonist, playwright, and children's book author Jules Feiffer began his career in Eisner's studio, producing memorable stories including one featuring his own strip character, Clifford. As *The Spirit* wound down, the excellent **science fiction** comics artist **Wally Wood** created a series in which the Spirit traveled to the Moon. By the last years of the feature, Eisner was really no longer involved. He had turned his attention to **educational comics**, particularly the magazine he had created for the U.S. Army, based on his World War II work, *P*S, the Preventive Maintenance Monthly*. The economics of the section became more difficult, particularly as the price of newsprint rose, and Eisner ended the series in 1952. The growing attack on comic books in the media probably also helped motivate Eisner's decision. Interest in the Spirit was revived when Feiffer published his book, *The Great Comic Book Heroes*, in 1965, giving a prominent place to Eisner's creation alongside Superman, **Batman**, and **Captain Marvel**. Ironically, nostalgic interest in superheroes helped restore Eisner's anti-superhero to prominence. In addition to reprints by **Kitchen Sink Press** of the original comics, the character was resurrected in new stories published by Kitchen Sink in the mid-1990s, by such writers as **Alan Moore** and **Neil Gaiman**. In 2007, **DC** picked up the character, first in **Jeph Loeb**'s one-shot *Batman/The Spirit*, then in his own ongoing self-titled series. A 2008 film adaptation, directed by comics writer and artist **Frank Miller**, was not well received.

Christopher Couch

STAGGER LEE. Writer Derek McCulloch and artist Shepherd Hendrix explore the folk legend surrounding the infamous African American "bad man" known as Stagger Lee in this critically-acclaimed graphic novel published by **Image Comics** in 2006. The comic demystifies the details behind "Stag" Lee Shelton's deadly quarrel with Billy Lyons in a St. Louis saloon on Christmas Eve in 1895 against a turbulent backdrop of racial segregation and political corruption. Hendrix's artistic style evokes a distant past fixed in sepia-tone panels, the old-fashioned typeface of **Western comics**, and deep, shadowy images of violence and racial terror. The graphic novel's primary concern, however, is the evolution of Stagger Lee's image through a century of song from every American era and musical genre. Richly supported by historical and cultural research, *Stagger Lee* intertwines the realities of **race**, nation, and manhood with the portrait of a villain in a Stetson hat who was born out of the blues.

In moments of subversive levity, Stagger Lee speaks to the reader from the gallows, laughs about the way singers and songwriters have portrayed him, and acknowledges the irony of his rebirth as a hippie folk hero, a 1970s pimp, or a gangster thug. Lee Shelton, however, rarely smiles and is often drawn with sober and reflective expression. In more poignant scenes, he offers advice and hard-won wisdom to his own lawyers. This dialogic strategy poses a kind of cultural and ethical challenge to readers as they confront not only the tragedy of Billy Lyons's death, but also other calamities in the context of black folk life from the late 19th and early 20th century. In addition, *Stagger Lee*'s multiple plots fictionalize Shelton's attorney's tragic struggle with morphine

addiction, a blues musician who was among the first to tell Stagger Lee's story through song, a woman who struggles to break out of a life of prostitution, and even a glimpse into the title character's childhood.

It is not the aim of McCulloch and Hendrix to exonerate Shelton, but rather to offer a fuller, more complex frame of reference from which to evaluate his actions. The man immortalized as Stagger Lee committed cold-blooded murder, but the graphic novel makes clear that he is also caught up in a network of racial politics that make it difficult to demonize him. Three of the most memorable symbols of the legend—the hat, the gun, and the ghost—are used to epitomize Shelton's existential struggle in the graphic novel. A secondary story line, for instance, depicts the title character as a child in Texas on a fishing trip with a respected elder named Zell Baxley. When Baxley uses an outhouse that is off-limits to blacks, young Lee Shelton watches in horror as the older man is forced by two white officers to pick up his own feces and place it his hat. The scene not only insinuates a motive for Shelton's well-known outrage over his own Stetson, but also provides a deeper view into daily humiliations of racism for black men. In a later scene, Shelton's attorney recounts a West African folktale to his law clerk as a way of generating a more empathetic view of their client. He invites the Yoruba deity, Obatala, into his office as a reminder of how often and how flagrantly due process has been denied to the descendants of Africans in America. In seeking justice for a "bad man" like Lee Shelton then, the story also affirms the rights of humanity in a broader sense. The fact that the title character is ultimately sentenced to 25 years in prison instead of being dragged out of the jail by a lynch mob is, ironically enough, considered a step in the right direction.

It is for this reason, perhaps, that McCulloch and Hendrix push their story beyond the criminal court to the blues guitars and piano juke joints across the country. They leave the reader with a tortured and helpless Lee Shelton who has been systematically erased in his last years, unwritten as the blues songs proliferate and a fictional stranger named Stagger Lee (and Stack o' Lee, Stackalee, or Stagolee) takes his place. Lost, too, in the larger-than-life image of Lee slugging it out with the Devil in Hell is the fact that Shelton actually died of tuberculosis in prison in 1912. The reader is left to determine the extent to which the 12 bars of a Stagger Lee blues song also serve as the psychosocial manifestation of a prison from which Shelton will never escape.

In addition to earning nominations for the **Eisner Award** and Eagle Comics Award, *Stagger Lee* won four Glyph Comics Awards for Best Writer, Story of the Year, Best Male Character, and Best Cover (2007).

Qiana J. Whitted

STAR SPANGLED COMICS was the second to last of **DC**'s eight main **Golden Age** anthologies to debut. It is notable for its patriotic theme and for shifting focus several times, going through adventure and occult periods before changing its title to Star Spangled War Stories. Coming roughly half a year after the appearance of **Timely**'s successful **Captain America** comics, *Star Spangled* can be seen as an attempt to cash in

on the patriotic hero market. Like Timely's new flagship, the first six issues featured its **Jerry Siegel**-created title character both on the cover and in multiple stories. Despite this heavy promotion, plus appearances in ***World's Finest Comics*** and with the original **Seven Soldiers of Victory**, the Star Spangled Kid and his adult sidekick Stripesy did not take off. They remained in the anthology for most of its run, but issue #7 saw numerous changes. The military-themed characters Captain X and Armstrong of the Army were dropped, while the **superhero** Tarantula remained for just another year. Taking over the cover was the Newsboy Legion, a **Joe Simon** and **Jack Kirby** kid gang who had a superhero-ish protector called the Guardian. Superheroes Robotman (another Siegel creation) and TNT, along with comedy feature Penniless Palmer, rounded out the new lineup. TNT was dropped soon after patriotic superheroine Liberty Belle replaced Tarantula, but after that *Star Spangled*'s contents remained stable through late 1946.

In 1947 **Batman**'s sidekick Robin graduated to a solo spot in *Star Spangled* and took the cover as well. Frontier hero Tomahawk, a white Revolutionary War hero friendly with "Indians," was added shortly after, with the nautical adventure strip Captain Compass beginning a year later. Tomahawk replaced Robin on the cover in 1949 and began appearing in *World's Finest Comics*. He then became the only *Star Spangled* feature to gain his own series which lasted until 1972. The Star Spangled Kid was edged out of his own strip by his then-new Otto Binder-created sidekick, Merry, The Girl of 1000 Gimmicks, but her solo feature was short-lived. After a few fillers, *Manhunters Around the World* solidified the adventure-oriented lineup, with Robin the only remaining superhero, although Robotman found a home in ***Detective Comics***. The Manhunters feature would itself be edged out by the Ghost Breaker, Dr. Thirteen, who became the series' last cover feature. This occult strip was an attempt to capitalize on the trend towards **horror** stories, but with much tamer fare than many of DC's competitors. The experiment was short-lived, and after July of 1952's issue #130, the title switched to *Star Spangled War Stories* and reset its numbering soon after, becoming the last of DC's Golden Age anthologies to be canceled or retitled due to shifting post-war tastes. All of Star Spangled's early superheroes, as well as Dr. Thirteen, would appear again in the 1970's and 1980's, with Liberty Belle becoming chairwoman of the All-Star Squadron (featuring Robotman, Tarantula and later TNT's sidekick Dan). The Star-Spangled Kid joined the **Justice Society** and formed Infinity, Inc., before his death. Additionally, Jack Kirby brought back the Newsboy Legion and the Guardian in his Fourth World saga. Before all of that, Robotman had even inspired a new hero with the same concept in the **Silver Age** Doom Patrol. So while Star Spangled never produced a hero as high-profile as some other anthologies, its characters and their children and successors continue to influence the DC universe.

Henry Andrews

STERANKO, JAMES (JIM) (1938–). Challenging the **Comics Code** Authority with cinema-style action sequences and sexy, skin-tight outfits on females in his seminal

series *Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, Pennsylvania-born visionary artist Jim Steranko has worked in many media outlets. He was the concept artist for such films as Francis Ford Coppola's *Dracula* (1992) and Steven Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), for which he designed Indiana Jones's iconic look. His performances as a magician and escape artist provided a living model for **Jack Kirby**'s Mr. Miracle and Michael Chabon's The Escapist (from the Pulitzer Prize–winning novel *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*). While in his teens, Steranko was also one of the top card-magic specialists in America.

Just out of high school, Steranko worked as a sign painter and printer, and eventually became Art Director for a major ad agency. In 1965, he broke into comics, creating Spyman, Magicmaster, and the Gladiator for editor **Joe Simon** at Harvey Comics. Migrating to **Marvel Comics**, Steranko tightened and inked Kirby's layouts for ***Strange Tales*** 151, and soon took over penciling, writing, and coloring duties for *S.H.I.E.L.D.* During his brief run on the ***X-Men,*** he redesigned the title logo; some consider his work on ***Captain America*** #113 the peak of artistic quality. The Steranko thriller "At the Stroke of Midnight," in the first issue of *Tower of Shadows*, won a 1969 Alley Award for Best Feature Story. The same year, he started his own publishing company, Supergraphics, generating the entertainment magazine *Mediascene* (later retitled *Prevue*) and the acclaimed two-volume *History of Comics*. Moving on again, Steranko went on to paint hundreds of book covers, including 30 *The Shadow* pulp reprints for Pyramid Books.

No other artist has had such a revolutionary effect on comics with such a relatively limited body of work. Steranko had the popularity of a rock star during the late 1960s and early 1970s. His combination of extreme cinematic flare with pop-art styling supports the argument that comic books provide readers with an inexpensive way to hold a work of art in their hands every month. Steranko has had his works exhibited around the world, from the Winnipeg Art Gallery to the Louvre in Paris. He was inducted into the Comic Book Hall of Fame in 2006.

Selected Bibliography: Steranko, James. *History of Comics*. 2 vols. New York: Crown Publishing, 1972.

Jeff McLaughlin

STEVENS, DAVE (1955–2008). Dave Stevens was an award-winning illustrator, and is most prominently remembered as the creator of ***The Rocketeer***, his association with legendary pin-up model Bettie Page, and his participation in fan culture, particularly the early years of San Diego Comic-Con (now Comic-Con International).

Stevens was born in Lynwood, California, and although he was raised in Portland, Oregon, spent much of his life from high school onward in San Diego, California. Among Stevens's earliest work as an artist was working as an assistant to the illustrator Russ Manning on the newspaper comic strips for ***Tarzan*** and *Star Wars*. His work in comics fanzines would lead to an association with **Jack Kirby**, who was a fellow San

Diego resident late in his life. Stevens was also employed as a storyboard illustrator for Steven Spielberg's film *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and the video for Michael Jackson's song *Thriller*, directed by John Landis.

Stevens's high-profile work on *The Rocketeer* began in 1982, initially as a backup story, then as a solo title that was compiled into graphic novel collections from Eclipse Comics and **Dark Horse Comics**. *The Rocketeer* gained notoriety primarily for its adaptation into a 1991 film by Joe Johnson, released by Disney. Stevens also borrowed the likeness of Bettie Page for his title character Cliff Secord's girlfriend Betty. Stevens's use of Page's image is frequently cited as a reason for Bettie Page's resurgence in popularity as a sex symbol. Fans of *The Rocketeer* became interested in Page's work, and likewise new fans of Bettie Page discovered Stevens's work through *The Rocketeer*. Stevens became personally associated with Page, and often assisted her with personal business matters, including the licensing of her likeness.

Stevens is associated with a group of artists who revered the older techniques of comic book and strip illustration. Among Stevens's influences are **Frank Frazetta**, Hal Foster, and **Will Eisner**. Much of Stevens's work is set in the 1930s, and Stevens's art nostalgically evokes the aesthetics of the time, including references to the Art Deco style. After working on *The Rocketeer*, both in comic book and film form, Stevens focused more exclusively on illustration work, such as cover art, supported by an enthusiastic fan base.

Later in his life, Stevens fought against leukemia, which in 2008 ultimately took his life. Stevens is fondly remembered by his fellow artists as well as his fans, who keep his artistic legacy alive.

Robert O'Nale

STRACZYNSKI, J. MICHAEL (1954–). Born in New Jersey, Joseph Michael Straczynski, popularly known as JMS, is a writer and producer perhaps best known as creator, writer and executive producer of the **science fiction** television series *Babylon 5*. In addition to several television programs, Straczynski has written plays, short stories, novels, news articles and films, such as the Clint Eastwood–directed *Changeling* (2008). Straczynski has also written several comic books, beginning in the 1980s, and more prolifically in the late 1990s and 2000s.

In the 1990s, Straczynski wrote comic books based on *Babylon 5* for **DC Comics**, and in 1999, he created and wrote *Rising Stars* (1999–2005), a story about a group of super-powered individuals born in the aftermath of a cosmic event in an American town, for Top Cow/**Image Comics**. *Rising Stars* was soon published under Straczynski's own imprint, Joe's Comics, along with *Midnight Nation* (2000–2), a story about lost and forgotten souls caught in the battle between (presumably) God and the Devil. In the 2000s, Straczynski wrote several **Marvel Comics** titles, most notably *The Amazing* ***Spider-Man*** (2001–7), *Supreme Power* (2003–5), a reboot of Squadron Supreme, Marvel's pastiche of the **Justice League of America**, and ***Thor*** (2007–9). In 2008, Straczynski also resumed writing for DC Comics.

Straczynski's writings often explore broad social, political, and philosophical issues, but through the choices that individuals make due to or despite their social circumstances and backgrounds, and through the responsibility of people of conscience (and power) to help others make the correct choices. In *Rising Stars*, the group of **superheroes** created from a cosmic event realize after tremendous infighting and loss that they have the power and responsibility to change the world for the better. Indeed, the fundamental contradiction of a superhero like Spider-Man is, as a reformed thug says to him, "You stop things as they go wrong, but you don't do anything to keep them from going wrong in the first place." In other words, with great power comes truly great responsibility. However, while the powerful can bring about tremendous change and offer glimpses perfection, the true change has to come from the vast masses working collectively to make a better world. The lives of more normal people put in extraordinary circumstances are what Straczynski focuses on in *Midnight Nation*. A police officer near death finds himself in the realm of those lost and forgotten by society—the homeless, the friendless—and must make a decision between keeping his own soul and becoming a minion of the Devil, or giving his soul to an angel and thus becoming forever transient. While he is guided throughout his difficult journey by the angel, the final choice is his to make. Similarly, in *The Book of Lost Souls* (2005–6, Icon Comics), a character who commits suicide must help the lost and forgotten make correct choices about breaking out of the ruts they find themselves in. Straczynski's overall message is that the social systems we inhabit are not fair, and all people can use help in making choices, but choices are ultimately only an individual's to make.

Noaman G. Ali

STRANGE TALES. To read the history of this **Marvel** comic book anthology is to read the history of comics from **crime** and **horror** comics of the 1950s to the **Silver Age superhero**, **Cold War espionage** stories, and psychedelic images of the 1960s. Included in the series is the work of many noted comic book artists and writers, as well as the prototypes and first appearances of lasting characters in the Marvel universe. Like other Marvel anthologies, *Tales of Suspense* (which would become the Silver Age ***Captain America*** series) and *Tales to Astonish* (which would become ***The Incredible Hulk***), this series launched individual characters in their own books: *Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* and ***Doctor Strange.***

Strange Tales was started by Atlas comics (later Marvel comics) in June 1951 and continued with some disruptions until issue #188 on November 1976. The first 34 issues were pre–**Comics Code** and were modeled after the very successful **EC** books, which featured tales of horror and crime. The magazine was subtitled "Strange Tales of Startling Suspense!" Because of growing sentiment against comic books, partly inspired by **Fredric Wertham**'s book, *The Seduction of the Innocent*, the U.S. Senate Investigation on Juvenile Delinquency in 1954 used a *Strange Tales* story, "With Knife in Hand!" issue #28 (May 1954) by Jack Katz, as an example of the depravity they were fighting against. The lead character, a surgeon, is asked to save a mobster's girlfriend, who has

been shot. However, he discovers that the woman is his cheating wife whose greed had encouraged him to work for the criminals in the first place. The doctor then commits suicide by stabbing a scalpel into his stomach, leaving his unfaithful spouse to expire on the operating table. As a result of the senate investigation, starting with issue #35, *Strange Tales* prominently displayed the Comics Code seal; the series also had a new subtitle: "Strange Tales of Suspense!"

Starting with issue #67, *Strange Tales* turned to a **science fiction** theme, depicting monsters such as those favored in drive-in movies—the "creature features." Some examples included Grottu, "King of the Insects" (issue #73), Taboo, "The Thing from the Swamp" (issues #75 and #77) and the first appearance of Fin Fang Foom (issue #89)—the last of which became a recurring villain in the **Iron Man** comics. From here until near the end of its run, the series featured scripts by **Stan Lee** and art by **Steve Ditko** and **Jack Kirby** among many other luminaries.

Alongside these monster comics, Lee, Ditko, and Kirby introduced prototypes of characters that would later become **Ant-Man**, Iron Man, and the Human Torch, to name a few. Issue #84 (May 1961) featured a villain with Magneto-like powers two years before Magneto would make his first appearance in ***X-Men*** #1 (1963). Likewise, Aunt May and Uncle Ben from ***Spider-Man*** appeared in issue #97 (June 1962), two months before ***Amazing Fantasy*** #15 (August 1962). These Silver Age characters would come to dominate the pages of *Strange Tales* along with appearances by **The Fantastic Four**, among others.

In July 1963, with issue #110, Ditko introduced Doctor Strange who would become the character most associated with this anthology, along with Nick Fury (formerly of ***Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos***) in issue #135 (August 1965) by Kirby. From issues #145–#68, *Strange Tales* alternated between Nick Fury and Doctor Strange. Starting with issue #150, the names of these characters shared the masthead, while the title, "Strange Tales," was reduced in size. After issue #168 (May 1968), both Nick Fury and Doctor Strange were featured in their own books.

After May, 1968, *Strange Tales* was put on hold until September 1973 when it was revived at issue #169 with the first appearance of Brother Voodoo, whose run lasted only until issue #173 (April 1974). In issues #178–#81, Jim Starlin revitalized the character of Warlock, whose self-titled book had been canceled, with a new origin in the "Magus Saga." In the 1980s, Marvel briefly revived the *Strange Tales* series with 19 issues from April 1987 to October 1988, featuring Doctor Strange and Cloak and Dagger stories. There was a one-shot Volume 3 in November 1994; a two-issue series that was never completed in 1998; and *Strange Tales: Dark Corners* in May 1998, a one-shot anthology, featuring a variety of writers and artists.

Wendy Goldberg

STRANGERS IN PARADISE (SiP) is a 90-issue series written and drawn by Terry Moore. It ran from 1993 to 2007 and has been compiled in 6 pocket books and 19 trade paperbacks. The comic book was first self-published by Moore with Antarctic

Press; for eight issues of the third volume, SiP moved to Homage, an **Image Comics** imprint. The remaining issues were self-published by Moore and his wife, Robyn, by their own imprint, Abstract Studio. The birth and success of *Strangers in Paradise* are connected to the self-publishing movement represented by works such as ***Bone*** and ***Cerebus*.** In 1996, the series received the **Eisner Award** for Best Serialized Story for *I Dream of You*; in 1997, SiP received the National Cartoonists Society Reuben Award for Best Comic Book, and in 2001 the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) named the series Best Comic Book.

SiP follows a love story among the three protagonists of the series: Katina Choovanoski (aka Katchoo), Francine Peters, and David Qin (aka Yousaka Takahashi). Katchoo is a character with sharp edges. She was sexually abused by her stepfather and ran away from home; once on the streets, she joined a criminal organization and became an agent, an escort, and the lover of the organization's leader, Darcy Parker. In contrast, Francine's personality was defined by a conservative and religious family that expected her to have a conventional life. She is a sweet and contained woman who loves Katchoo but has difficulties defining the nature of her feelings. David is a sensitive and artistic boy who is deeply in love with Katchoo. His past is almost as complicated as Katchoo's; he is Darcy Parker's brother and was part of the criminal organization run by his family. He becomes a Christian and adopts the name David Qin after killing a 15-year-old boy. The role of David in this triangle is complex, since he brings both stability and challenges to the relationship between Francine and Katchoo. The supporting characters are more than mere extras for this love triangle. They develop very distinctive personalities and roles during the development of the series.

This comic book blends together elements of different genres: **romance**, comedy, intrigue, and drama. The romance and intrigue components help to define three distinctive moments in the series. The first one corresponds with the first volume, a three-issue miniseries. Here, Moore introduces and defines the main characters and their relationships. Although these issues present a balanced and self-contained story, Moore provides some clues about the possible future of the series' plot. The tone of the story is light and comical, especially in comparison with the emotional weight of the rest of the series.

The second volume runs for 14 issues and represents a shift in tone and storyline. David and Katchoo's pasts introduce a certain darkness and heaviness into the plot. The past is represented by the character of Darcy Parker, David's sister and leader of a global crime organization. Katchoo has stolen a considerable amount of money from Darcy before disappearing, and Darcy is looking for revenge. In the process, David's blood relationship with Darcy is revealed, and Francine becomes aware of Katchoo's complicated past. This volume also introduces some pivotal supporting characters who help move the story and the protagonists forward. Two examples are Casey and Emma. Casey brings a happy tone and directness to the comic book; on the other hand, Emma, who dies of AIDS, is a character from Katchoo's past who adds softness and fragility to Katchoo's usual toughness.

The third and final volume of the series is the longest of the three, running from issues 17 to 90. Moore intertwines the romantic and noir plots to keep the reader wondering about the future of the love triangle and the influence of the crime syndicate in the characters' lives. For different reasons, David and Katchoo become the main players in the future of the criminal organization; at the same time, Francine falls in love with a doctor and gets married. She seems destined to have the life her mother always dreamed of for her; however, Francine's miscarriage and David's terminal tumor bring the trio together again. Ultimately, David's death pushes Francine and Katchoo to be together. During this lengthy third volume, Moore pauses the main story line to tell three other stories: the beginning of Katchoo and Francine's friendship in high school; David's youth and the context of the crime he committed; and the story of Molly Lane, a crime narrative that combines elements of terror, suspense, and some romance.

Strangers in Paradise is often described as a comic book to recommend to female readers and non-comic-book readers. The reasons for this are that SiP features strong and genuine female characters and develops a story line focused on the characters' lives and feelings. The presence of two main female protagonists has also drawn comparisons to the *Locas* subnarrative of ***Love and Rockets.*** The artwork is presented in black and white with the exception of the five issues published by Homage. Currently, the only pages available in color in the paperback editions are the ones drawn by **Jim Lee** for the beginning of volume three. The length of SiP allows the reader to appreciate the development of Moore's art. From the first issues, the reader sees his past efforts to become a newspaper strip cartoonist. This past reveals itself in the many comical pages where Charles Schulz or Bill Watterson seem to have taken over Moore's pencil. His drawing style is realistic, clean, and highly effective at connecting the reader and the story. The construction of the page is not fixed, varying from a fairly regular six-panel grid to other pages where Moore explores different designs to evoke moods and express intense feelings. A distinctive characteristic of SiP is Moore's artistic use of long portions of text, poetry, songs, and music notations to convey complex emotions and create a complete experience.

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Lucia Cedeira Serantes

STUCK RUBBER BABY. First published under **DC**'s short-lived Paradox imprint, *Stuck Rubber Baby* (1995) presents the story of Toland Polk, a southern white male coming of age in the 1950s and 1960s. Written and illustrated by the **underground** cartoonist Howard Cruse (1944–), the book offers a multilayered account of **race**, class, and homosexuality in the era of Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson. *Stuck Rubber Baby* was nominated for the American Library Association's Gay and Lesbian Book Award as well as the Lambda Literary Award, and was named Best Graphic Novel by the

U.K. Comic Art Awards. The book received the *Prix de la critique* in France, and the *Luche* award in Germany, and has been translated into several European languages. While *Stuck Rubber Baby* appeared a few years before the graphic novel went mainstream as a form, it remains a noteworthy example of ambitious, historically focused comics storytelling.

Howard Cruse reportedly spent four years creating this stand-alone, 210-page work of graphic historical fiction. Set in the Deep South of the United States during the Civil Rights movement, it combines an intimate portrayal of one man's struggle to come to terms with his place in the world, with a larger perspective on the sociocultural fallout of mid-century protest. While the lens remains resolutely focused on the main character, the story encompasses a full gamut of **Cold War** personality types, from hot-headed folk singers and enraged Klansmen to anxious administrators and fearful parents. As such, *Stuck Rubber Baby* offers a rare example of a comic book that could plausibly be assigned in undergraduate courses on memoir, historical fiction, the 1960s, and 20th-century social movements. While many of the story's plot elements are fictional, the narrative draws heavily on Cruse's experiences growing up on the outskirts of Birmingham, Alabama, as the son of a Baptist preacher and homemaker. The author somehow manages to convey the impact of large-scale cultural upheaval within the delicate framework of a *roman à clef*. Unlike many would-be contenders to the title, *Stuck Rubber Baby* actually is a graphic novel.

Cruse's earliest published cartoons appeared in *The Baptist Student* when he was still in high school. He studied drama at Birmingham-Southern College in the late 1960s and moved to New York City in 1977. By the mid-1970s he had already made a name for himself in cartooning and activist circles for his exuberant graphic stories featuring carefree hippie characters. He found particular success with the characters Barefootz and Wendel, both of whom were amiable young men finding their way in the big city. Headrack, a character in these comics, is arguably the first openly gay character in comics. The underground comics publisher Denis Kitchen helped bring Cruse's artwork to the national stage by featuring his work in such titles as *Snarf*, *Dope Comix*, *Commies from Mars*, and *Comix Book* from **Kitchen Sink Press**. In addition, Kitchen published three stand-alone issues of *Barefootz Funnies* in the early 1970s and invited Cruse to edit the groundbreaking anthology series *Gay Comix* at the end of the decade. Some of Cruse's work from this period is still in print, thanks to Olmstead Press and **Fantagraphics**. His most recent project, an illustrated children's book called *The Swimmer with Rope in His Teeth*, produced in collaboration with Jeanne E. Shaffer, was issued by Prometheus Books in 2004. While Cruse has generated dozens of comic book stories over the years, *Stuck Rubber Baby* is by far the most complex project that he has undertaken to date.

When readers first meet Toland Polk he is grieving for his late parents, who were killed by a drunk driver, and puzzling over some advice he received from his late father. Toland comes from a modest background, works in a gas station, and would easily blend into the crowd except for the fact that he tends to ask a lot of questions. He is uneasy about the separation of the races under Jim Crow, and anxious about his own

sexual orientation. His inner conflicts mirror those reshaping the wider society, and the likelihood that Toland Polk will eventually shed his political innocence and racial prejudices, and embrace his same-sex desires, is pretty much a given. Yet the hero's journey toward enlightenment is both engrossing and believable. Toland is an everyman type who happens to be gay; over the course of the narrative he inadvertently gets swept up in a tsunami of counter-cultural protest. He is neither a rabble-rousing militant nor a hide-bound traditionalist, and his transformation from small town naïf to open gay artist unfolds gradually. A little gullible perhaps, but at the same time an honest soul, Toland Polk is an appealing stand-in even for readers who were not yet born in the 1960s.

Historical graphic fiction is sometimes rendered in stark, declaratory lines that seem to convey a certain seriousness of purpose. Much of the pleasure of *Stuck Rubber Baby* can be found in Cruse's sensuous linework, which favors sloping curves and fragile shadows over sharp rectangles and brightly lit pages. *Stuck Rubber Baby* is fun to look at quite apart from the appeal of the story. As a work of visual imagination and recreation, it is obviously the product of a lot of thought and hard work. Densely illustrated and crammed with visual information, Cruse's pages are sometimes almost pointillist in their commitment to molecular detail. Like **Robert Crumb**, Cruse here makes extensive use of cross-hatching (a stylistic departure from his trademark stippling technique), takes advantage of the expressive possibilities of black-and-white, and composes whole pages rather than sequences of panels. Unlike Crumb, however, Cruse does not make fun of his characters or his readers. Cruse is not a cynic, or even a skeptic. Rather, he is one of the most hopeful and life-affirming cartoonists to have emerged out of the underground comics movement.

Kent Worcester

SUMMER OF LOVE, THE. A comics series republished under this title by Drawn & Quarterly in 2002, *The Summer of Love* was originally created by Debbie Drechsler for her five-issue (1996–99) Drawn & Quarterly series *Nowhere*. The feminist undergrounds of the 1970s and 1980s, especially *Wimmen's Comix*, inspired Drechsler, as did Peanuts and *MAD Magazine*. Her largest influences in stylistic terms are **Lynda Barry** and Richard Sala, though her visual style does not overtly resemble either. The correlation to Barry's work is most evident in subject matter. Both creators deal with adolescent pain and young girls' coming to terms with difficult situations with little or no help.

Drechsler's background in commercial art is evident in the visual look of the book. *The Summer of Love* is printed in two ink colors, a forest green and an earth brown. No black is used, even in the lettering. James Vance used a similar duo-tone effect in the **Kitchen Sink Press** series *Owlhoots* (1991). This color scheme gives the art a sort of coloring book effect. It also mutes the darks, using color to reinforce the sense of nuance and uncertainty experienced by the characters. Though the use of art tools (straightedge, triangle, templates, etc.) in the preliminary stages is evident, all aspects

of the final printed art appear to be hand rendered. This is significant in that Drechsler began using a precision tool, the computer, with her subsequent commercial artwork.

The appearance of handwork also reinforces the childlike (though not childish) nature of the art, reinforcing the intimacy of the narrative. As is the case in Barry's work, the story is concerned with the emotional state of its protagonist, and told in omniscient first person and past tense. The narrative parts company with Barry's work in its addressing of teenage concerns, where Barry's characters were slightly younger for the majority of her primary work, *Ernie Pook's Comeek*. Drechsler has cited Barry as her primary influence in comics (*Comics Journal* 249). The tone of *The Summer of Love* is also reminiscent of the 1995 film *Welcome to the Dollhouse*, in that both works are unrelenting in their depiction of the traumas of female adolescence.

The title of *The Summer of Love* has two significant references. It refers to a teenage girl's first exposure to the myriad forms of physical love and sexuality. It also refers to its setting in the year 1967. In *The Summer of Love*, ninth-grader Lily is confronted with moving, the need for isolation, her own sexual awakenings, and her sister Pearl's experimentation with lesbianism. This confrontation is presented externally more than internally. While readers are privy to Lily's thoughts, the story is driven more by actions than reactions. Several introspective moments, such as the final two panels of Book Three, are wordless. The reader is left to infer Lily's thoughts in these situations rather than being told those thoughts outright. This increases the level of involvement with Lily, requiring the reader to sort through the character's feelings in the complex situation along with the character.

Era-specific icons permeate the narrative. The boys in the neighborhood have a garage band that plays ersatz psychedelic rock. The eponymous Jefferson Airplane album is new, and a topic of conversation. The girls wear granny dresses, miniskirts, beehive hairdos, and cutoffs. The boys sport short hair, but there are hints of the length changing. These trappings have an air of authenticity, consistent with Drechsler's age. She was 14 in 1967, so it is clear that she is versed through personal experience in the motif of the era, though she has never claimed *The Summer of Love* as autobiography or **memoir**; but her age does speak directly to the authenticity of her depiction of the period.

However, this is not a simple period piece. The period trappings are just that, and no more: the real focus is on Lily's personal experience, not her historical context. While this work can be distinguished from Drechsler's previous graphic novel *Daddy's Girl* by its calmer demeanor and subject matter (*Daddy's Girl* was a story of incest), it maintains the sense of urgency of its predecessor, despite the comparatively tame subject matter. The placidity of the subject matter is deceptive. The reader is taken with Lily on her missteps through the treacherous path of ninth grade and its betrayals, nuanced, and contradictory relationships.

Lily's experiences are not ominous or threatening in the sense of suspense or terror. However, the level of empathy created by this approach is consistent with a neglected aspect of events in the comic book marketplace of the time. Self-published zines burgeoned in the early 1990s. Many of these were by young women, and were published

as a facet of the Riot Grrl movement. That movement was pervaded by the dominant themes echoed in *The Summer of Love*: alienation, frustration, betrayal, and cynicism, couched in the trappings of a specific time. Though much more complex than this list of themes might suggest, both the movement and Drechsler's work echo those themes.

Drechsler has subsequently removed herself from the intensity of the work but not from its honesty. In a 2002 interview, Drechsler remarked on both *The Summer of Love* and *Daddy's Girl*, stating, "I find it very hard to reread those stories and that makes me wonder how hard it is for other people to read (and see) and if that was the best way of presenting the material. I guess my sense of propriety drifts around, depending on where I am at any given moment. When I wrote those stories, I was much angrier at life than I am now, and much unhappier, so maybe I had less to lose? Or maybe it felt more necessary to slam people in the face with that stuff. I don't know for sure. (aka Simon)." Drechsler has done very little comics work since *The Summer of Love*, concentrating on her commercial art career.

See also: Feminism; Memoir/Slice-of-Life Themes; Underground and Adult Comics

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Diana Green

SUPERHEROES. The superhero is the protagonist of the superhero genre, which began with the appearance of **Jerry Siegel** and **Joe Shuster's Superman** in ***Action Comics*** #1 (cover date June 1938). By 1942 the term *superhero* was in use to describe comic book stories of heroic figures who wore colorful costumes and possessed superpowers. Parodies of the genre, which indicate an acceptance of the genre by both producers and consumers, emerged as early as 1940, with the Red Tornado by Sheldon Mayer, followed by Supersnipe and **Plastic Man** the next year.

The genre's immediate sources come from three adventure-narrative figures: the **science-fiction** superman, beginning with *Frankenstein* (1818); the dual-identity avenger-vigilante, beginning with *Nick of the Woods* (1835); and the pulp ubermensch, beginning with ***Tarzan*** (1912). The science-fiction superman is typically a tragic figure endowed with superior abilities by science who poses the threat of either tyranny over or evolutionary replacement of the human race. Influential science-fiction superman novels include H. G. Well's *Invisible Man* (1897) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898), and *The Food of the Gods* (1904); J. D. Beresford's *The Hampdenshire Wonder* (1911); and Olaf Stapledon's *Odd John* (1936). Edgar Rice Burroughs created one of the few heroic models of the science fiction superman with John Carter (1912). The most influential of these figures were Hugo Danner, hero of Philip Wylie's *Gladiator*

(1930), and **Doc Savage** (1933). Both Danner and Savage influenced the creation of Superman.

In America, the avenger-vigilante figure is rooted in Robert Montgomery Byrd's *Nick of the Woods*, a classic Indian-hater. The avenger-vigilante urbanized with dime-novel detectives like Nick Carter (1886). Influential dual-identity characters include the British penny-dreadful figure Spring-Heeled Jack (1837) and Baroness Orczy's Scarlet Pimpernel (1903). Frank Packard's Jimmie Dale, the Gray Seal, transferred the dual-identity character to a gritty urban setting and placed him in opposition to both the authorities and the underworld. The two most influential dual-identity avenger-vigilante figures for the superhero genre were Johnston McCulley's Zorro (1919) via Douglas Fairbanks's portrayal in *The Mark of Zorro* (1920), and the pulp vigilante **The Shadow** (1930), written primarily by Walter Gibson, both of which served as direct inspirations for the creation of **Batman**.

The pulp ubermensch refers to the practice of referring to heroes of pulp fiction adventure stories as supermen. The figure is rooted in the adaptation of Friedrich Nietzsche's Übermensch by Jack London in works like *The Sea Wolf* (1904) and *The Iron Heel* (1908), and Edgar Rice Burroughs's use of London's work as an inspiration in the character of Tarzan, who is referred to as a superman in *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912). Tarzan imitators Polaris of the Snows by Charles B. Stilson and Kioga of the Wilderness by William L. Chester are similar supermen raised outside of civilization. Although a villain, Dr. Fu Manchu (1912) fits the pulp-ubermensch mold, as does Blackie DuQuesne, the villain of E. E. "Doc" Smith's Skylark series (1928), as well as its hero Richard Seaton. The term *superman* is used in the *Armageddon 2419* (1928) novelettes by Philip Francis Nowlan to refer to Anthony Rogers, inspiration for the Buck Rogers comic strip and its adaptations, and all Americans living under the rule of the Han invaders. The two most influential of these figures for the superhero are The Shadow and Doc Savage, who are presented as superior to other people physically, mentally, morally, and socially, but serve as defenders of the middle class in opposition to the revolutionary ideological meaning imputed to the Übermensch by Nietzsche.

The superhero genre also has roots in comics strips, primarily through the depiction of strongmen like Popeye (1929) and Alley Oop (1933), who helped to establish comics as a medium in which fantastic feats of incredible strength could be depicted, and enabled the ability of comics to depict the fantastic with equal levels of surface realism as the mimetic. Costumed precursors of the superhero in comics include the short-lived Phantom Magician in Mel Graff's strip *The Adventures of Patsy* (1935) and Dr. Occult (1935), an occult detective by Superman creators Siegel and Shuster, which served as a kind of trial run for elements of their later hero Superman, including a red cape in ***More Fun Comics.*** The Phantom, a costumed and masked mystery man and adventurer, debuted in his own comic strip in 1936 and laid important groundwork for the superhero because in his adventures can be found nearly all the elements of the superhero genre. Other important influences on the superhero genre include the Jewish **folklore** figure, the golem, and physical culture strongmen like Eugene Sandow and Bernarr Macfadden.

One can identify the three primary conventions of the superhero genre. The most identifiable element of the genre is that the protagonist has superpowers—extraordinary abilities, advanced technology, or highly developed physical and/or mental skills (including mystical abilities). Second, the superhero has a selfless, pro-social mission, which means that his fight against evil must fit in with the existing, professed mores of society and must not be intended to benefit or further himself. Finally, the protagonist has a specific superhero identity, which is embodied in a codename and iconic costume, which typically express the superhero's biography, inner character, powers, or origin—the transformation from ordinary person to superhero. Often superheroes have dual identities, the ordinary one of which is usually a closely guarded secret.

The identity element comprises the codename and the costume, with the secret identity being a customary counterpart to the codename. The identity convention most clearly marks the superhero as different from his predecessors. Superheroic identities externalize either their alter ego's inner character or biography. Superman is a super man who represents the best humanity can hope to achieve; his codename expresses his inner character. The Batman identity was inspired by Bruce Wayne's encounter with a bat while he was seeking a disguise that would strike terror into the hearts of criminals; his codename embodies his biography. The superhero costume iconically represents the superhero identity—Batman wears a bat costume, **Spider-Man** a spider costume, and **Captain America** an American flag costume. The superhero's chevron—the shield or emblem typically worn on the chest—specifically emphasizes the character's codename and is itself a simplified statement of that identity; Batman's bat, **Green Lantern**'s lantern, and **Captain Marvel**'s lightning bolt each indicates the source of the character's mission, powers, or identity.

These three elements—mission, powers, and identity—establish the core of the genre. Yet specific superheroes can exist who do not fully demonstrate these three elements, and heroes from other genres may exist who display all three elements to some degree but should not be regarded as superheroes. The similarities between specific instances of a genre are semantic, abstract, and thematic, and come from the constellation of conventions that are typically present in a genre offering. If a character basically fits the mission-powers-identity definition, even with significant qualifications, and cannot be easily placed into another genre because of the preponderance of superhero-genre conventions, the character is a superhero.

The **Hulk** can be said to be a superhero without a mission. During the Hulk's periods of low intelligence, his adventures do not arise from his attempts to fight crime or to improve the world. Instead he wanders the planet primarily seeking solitude while being drawn, or stumbling, into the plans of supervillains. He acts effectively as a superhero but does not have the mission or motivation to do so. He clearly has superpowers, and his superhero identity is composed of his codename—the Hulk—and his body, which effectively acts as a costume, especially given the Hulk's iconic green and purple color scheme. His tales, though, are suffused with secondary conventions of the superhero genre: supervillains—the Leader, the Abomination; superhero physics—the

transformative power of gamma rays; the limited authorities—General Thunderbolt Ross; a pal—Rick Jones; superteams—the **Avengers** and the Defenders; and so forth. These conventions keep the Hulk within the superhero genre.

Batman was originally designed as a superhero without superpowers. His mission of vengeance against criminals is clear, and his identity—represented by his codename and iconic costume—marks him as a superhero. While he has no distinctly "super" powers, his physical strength and mental abilities allow him to fight crime alongside his more powerful brethren. Batman operates in a world brimming with conventions of the superhero genre: supervillains—the Joker, the Penguin; the helpful authority figure—Police Commissioner Gordon; the sidekick—Robin; superteams—the **Justice League** and the Outsiders; and so forth.

Arnold "Arn" Munro, Roy Thomas's Superman figure in the World War II era *Young All Stars*, has no superhero identity—no costume and no codename. He typically appears in street clothing, most often white pants and a black t-shirt, only once wearing (then quickly abandoning) a costume in the *Young All-Stars* series. While he has the nickname, "Iron," based on the pronunciation of his first name, he does not use this name as an alternative identity. He has a clear mission—protecting America from **Nazi** supervillains during World War II and serving the government as an agent. He possesses superstrength and invulnerability. He fights costumed, superpowered supervillains alongside other superheroes as part of the superteams the Young All-Stars and the Freedom Fighters, and has a solid place in the **DC** universe as the husband of the **Phantom Lady**.

These three examples demonstrate how a character who lacks one of the primary conventions of the superhero genre can still be considered a superhero because of the use of a number of other supporting conventions. Characters from other genres who do good and have enhanced abilities like Buffy the Vampire Slayer (**horror**), The Shadow (pulp vigilante), Beowulf (epic), or Luke Skywalker (**science fiction**) might best be considered heroes who are super, or super heroes, rather than the protagonists of the superhero genre. Generic distinction is a useful concept for understanding and defining the boundaries of the superhero genre. It makes the superhero genre's origins, evolution, and social function easier to grasp, delineate, and trace.

The superhero genre proper began with the appearance of Superman in the first issue *Action Comics*, which already contains the major conventions of the superhero genre. This story fully employs the primary conventions of mission, powers, and identity. The very first page presents the origin, the costume, the dual identity, and the urban setting. Other conventions, such as the secret identity, the superhero code, the supporting cast, the love interest, the limited authorities, and the super/mundane split emerge in the story itself.

In the next year, a flood of superheroes appeared, firmly establishing the genre. Between *Action Comics* #1 and ***Detective Comics*** #27 (cover date May 1939) only the Crimson Avenger, the Arrow, and the **Sandman** appeared to be following the superhero model, and they were more indebted to their pulp and radio predecessors.

Batman and Wonder Man, both direct responses to Superman, appeared in May of 1939, as did the Sub-Mariner. In the first three years, from 1938 to 1941, the primary superhero archetypes were created. Superman and Batman provide the two primary superhero paradigms: the superpowered superhero and the non-super superhero. **Wonder Woman** provides the next central paradigm, the superheroine, as well as the mythical or mythology-based hero. **The Flash** is the preeminent example of the single-powered hero. Parody comes with the Red Tornado. Captain America is the patriotic superhero par excellence. Batman's partner Robin stands as the first sidekick and can also be considered the first kid superhero. The **Golden Age** Sub-Mariner's status as the first anti-hero superhero places him within the troubled-hero category, thereby rounding out the superhero archetypes.

Fans use the concept of **ages of comics** to periodize the history of superhero comics. While not a scholarly term, the concept of ages has become so embedded in the discussion and analysis of the superhero genre that it is germane to any discussion of the genre. In addition, the established ages roughly parallel the evolution of genre put forward by film scholars Christian Metz and Thomas Schatz. The names and dates for the ages have achieved a rough consensus in the fan and scholarly communities.

The Golden Age began with the appearance of Superman in *Action Comics* #1. During the Golden Age, the superhero genre narratively animated and ritualistically resolved social conflicts of the period in ways that expressed the prevailing social ideology of the times. During this period the various conventions of superhero stories were isolated from the adventure literature out of which the superhero emerged and formalized so as to make the superhero genre distinct from other related genres. At this stage the narratives worked to transmit and reinforce the genre's social message—particularly New Deal-style social reform and the patriotism of World War II—as directly as possible. The conventions were not seen as problematic or needing to be questioned. The stories tended to be straightforward confrontations between good and evil in which the superhero, society, and the audience were all presumed to be on the same side and working for the same goals.

The primary marker of the **Silver Age** is the revival of superheroes, who had largely fallen out of favor with the public in the early 1950s. There is a firm consensus that the Silver Age began with the debut of the new Flash in *Showcase* #4 (cover date October 1956). Although some superheroes—such as **Marvel**'s Captain America, the Human Torch, and the Sub-Mariner—were revived prior to the Flash, these revivals failed, unlike the revivals of these three characters a decade later. The success of the Flash revival led to similar revivals of **Green Lantern**, the Atom, Hawkman, and the **Justice Society** (as the **Justice League**). The success of the Justice League led directly to the creation of the **Fantastic Four**, which prompted the other major innovations of the Silver Age: continuity and melodrama.

In the Silver Age, creators elaborated on all the conventions developed in the Golden Age. The secret identity was broadened to include characters who maintain both their superidentities and their alter egos in a public way (Fantastic Four, the Hulk).

Superheroes dated and married (Spider-Man and his various girlfriends, the Flash and Iris Allen, and Mr. Fantastic and the Invisible Girl). **Stan Lee**'s "hero-with-a-problem" melodrama added depth to the characterization of the alter egos. Continuity expanded with DC's multiple Earths, the Marvel universe, crossovers, and extended storylines. The supervillain was complicated by turning some noble ones into superheroes (Sub-Mariner, Hawkeye, Quicksilver, Scarlet Witch). While the tales still featured contests between good and evil, these concepts are complicated slightly with virtuous villains and reluctant, selfish, or bickering heroes.

The Silver Age began with a whole-hearted acceptance of the status quo and constructed authority and ended with superheroes doubting the status quo and resisting authority. The melodrama that marked the beginning of the age at Marvel evolved into a confrontation of social issues, such as drug use and campus unrest in series like Spider-Man and the **Teen Titans**. The **Dennis O'Neil** and **Neal Adams** stories of Green Lantern and **Green Arrow** traveling the country and discovering social problems like over population, racism, pollution, and corporate greed exemplify these shifts (*Green Lantern* #76–89, April 1970–April/May 1972).

While there is no clear break between the end of the Silver Age and the start of the Bronze Age, several changes in superhero comics between 1968 and 1973 are generally recognized as marking a shift in the tone and nexus of concerns of the genre, with 1970 being the most commonly designated year for the changeover of ages. Some extratextual events of 1970 that mark the end of the Silver Age include **Jack Kirby**'s shift from Marvel to DC; the purge of veteran writers at DC that was nearly complete in that year; the fading of MLJ and **Charlton** as superhero publishers; the publication of *The Comic Book Price Guide* by Robert Overstreet, which provided a nearly complete index of comics published since 1933 and standards for grading and pricing comics, making public knowledge that had been the private preserve of specialists and institutionalizing the monetary value of old comic books; and the publication of *All in Color for a Dime*, edited by Don Thompson and Dick Lupoff, and **Jim Steranko**'s *The Steranko History of Comics*, both of which looked back with nostalgic fondness on the Golden Age of superheroes.

Within the comics themselves the deaths of Gwen Stacey and the Green Goblin (*Amazing Spider-Man* #122–123, July–August 1973); Captain America's disillusionment at discovering the President of the United States to be the head of the Secret Empire, a fictionalized depiction of Watergate, and his subsequent adoption of the Nomad identity (#175–76, July–August 1974); the end of the Teen Titans' experiment in social activism, and the series return to formula (*Teen Titans* #31–32, January–April 1971). These issues can be seen as the end of relevance for these characters.

The Bronze Age featured few innovations in the superhero genre, with the primary movement being to refine the advances of the Silver Age. Few new characters were created at either Marvel or DC during the 1970s—Nova and Firestorm seem to be new versions of Peter Parker, but neither was groundbreaking, as the troubled teen superhero soap-operatic saga had already been around for over a decade. Peter Parker

himself shifted from being a nerdy loser high school student to a handsome, successful, Pulitzer Prize–winning college graduate and professional photo-journalist. African Americans as both superheroes and supporting characters became more common. The Defenders, proclaimed as a "non-team," began in 1971, a twist on the pro-social vision of Julius Schwarz's Silver Age Justice League. Superman's powers were reduced with the creation of the Qward sand-Superman, and Kryptonite was denuded and transformed into K-iron. Other refinements included the cosmic stories (Kirby's Fourth World, Starlin's Warlock), and the growth of team books (the ***X-Men***, the ***Avengers***, the *JLA*, and the *Legion of Super-Heroes* all expanded).

The Iron Age, which began about 1980, featured a turning inward of the genre, driven by two industry trends. First, the creative staffs of the companies changed from primarily professional writers and artists who viewed their work as merely one way to make a living, to fans who specifically wanted to work in the comics industry, a trend begun in the 1960s. Second, as the traditional system of newsstand distribution and sales waned in the late 1970s, comic book publishers increasingly turned to direct distribution and comic-book specialty shops because of the higher profit margin the new system offered. The primary customers of these stores were self-identified comic-book (especially superhero) fans, and these fans became the target market for the publishers. With the producers and consumers largely coming from the same small segment of the population and sharing the same cultural and literary interests, the superhero genre turned in on itself away from the larger social concerns that had driven the genre in the Golden Age and the interest in relevance in the late Silver Age.

A primary thrust of the Iron Age was the reinvigoration of old, tired concepts. Self-conscious revivals sprouted everywhere: the Fantastic Four and Superman by **John Byrne**; **Daredevil** and Batman by **Frank Miller**; **Thor** by **Walter Simonson**; **Captain Marvel** in *Miracleman* and the **Charlton** heroes in ***Watchmen***, both by **Alan Moore**; the new Teen Titans by **Marv Wolfman** and **George Pérez**. Perhaps the greatest example of reinvigoration in the Iron Age is the ***Crisis on Infinite Earths***, which combined DC's multiple Earths into a single planet with a single unified history and necessitated a rewriting of the history of the DC multiverse.

In the Iron Age, the superhero's selflessness became problematic. Heroes either moved "up" into governance or "down" out of superhero status. In *Watchmen*, Miller's *Batman*: ***The Dark Knight Returns***, *Miracleman*, and *Squadron Supreme*, superheroes who had formerly protected society from the machinations of outside evil move into formal participation in the governance of society. On the "down" side, **Iron Man** sank into alcoholism (issues #160–82). The Justice League disbanded (issues #258–61); and in *The Sensational She-Hulk* under John Byrne, She-Hulk drifted completely away from serious superhero status into flippant postmodernism.

The Iron Age of superhero comics was marked by the deaths of numerous superheroes, perhaps most notably Marvel's Captain Marvel, whose reconfiguration in the 1970s seems a hallmark of the impetus of the Bronze Age. Batman and Rorschach, the ostensible heroes of the two central texts of the Iron Age—*The Dark Knight Returns*

and *Watchmen*, both die at the end of their series, Batman figuratively and Rorschach literally. Superman himself, who had been completely revamped in 1986, was killed in 1992. These deaths can be seen as emblematic of the exhaustion of the genre. Perhaps most emblematic of the death of the superhero is the Iron Age's self-proclaimed greatest success, **Spawn**, the corpse as superhero.

There is no consensus on the name of the current age of superhero comics or when it started. It is sometimes referred to as the Renaissance Age, but the Modern Age is the most common term, clearly serving as a placeholder until a consensus emerges. It has no firm start date because individual creators responded to the darkness of the Iron Age at different times and in different ways. An early non-comics indication of this shift was television's *Batman: The Animated Series*, begun in 1992, and the subsequent other Batman, Superman, and Justice League cartoons helmed by Paul Dini and Bruce Timm. In comics, **Kurt Busiek**'s and **Alex Ross's *Marvels*** (1994), Busiek's ***Astro City*** series (1995), James Robinson's *The Golden Age* (1993) and *Star Man* (1994–2001), and Ross's ***Kingdom Come*** (1996) all worked to rebuild the conventions of the genre that had broken down or become burdensome during the Iron Age. At Marvel, the Renaissance Age fully came in with Joe Quesada's assumption of the editor-in-chief position in 2000. Marvel came later to the Renaissance Age because during the Iron Age it was much more taken up with manipulating the speculator market through multiple, embossed, or enhanced covers, and empty formulaic stories with cluttered artwork. One sign of the shift into the Renaissance Age at Marvel is the influx of artists and writers from outside the superhero mainstream, such as **Peter Bagge** (*The Megalomaniacal Spider-Man*), **Brian Azzarello** and Richard Corben (*Banner* and *Cage*), and James Sturm (*Unstable Molecules*).

The other primary convention of the Modern Age is the event comic. An event comic is a series that tells a major story in a superhero universe, crosses over from its primary series into the majority of a company's titles, and pulls in the majority of its characters. Event comics go back to the annual summer crossovers of the Justice League with the Justice Society and other superteams (1963–85). Marvel's ***Secret Wars*** (1984–85) initiated the tradition of the company-wide crossover, which DC also used in the *Crisis on Infinite Earths* (1985). Several other events followed in the 1980s and 1990s, but gradually they became much more orchestrated campaigns, with each year's event series leading to the next year's series. At DC this integration of connected annual events has been strongest since ***Identity Crisis*** (2004), which led directly into the series of crisis events: *Countdown to Infinite Crisis* (2005), *Infinite Crisis* (2005–6), *52* (2006–7), *Countdown to Final Crisis* (2007–8) and *Final Crisis* (2008). At Marvel, the integration of event comics became most evident with ***Civil War*** (2006–7) and the subsequent event series *Secret Invasion* (2008) and *Dark Reign* (2008–9), though *Civil War* was itself tied to the previous event series *Secret War* (2004–5), *Avengers Disassembled* (2004–5), *House of M* (2005), and *Decimation* (2005). The main difference between Modern Age event comics and those of the past is the way the effects of the events series linger in the storytelling at both companies. Previously with series

such as *Final Night* (1996) or *Infinity Gauntlet* (1991), the event would absorb the respective universe but pass and leave few long-term traces. The current series of event comics lead into each other and continue to have effects within the continuities of both companies' universes.

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Peter Coogan

SUPERMAN. Superman is the name of a fictional comic book character created in 1934 by writer **Jerry Siegel** and artist **Joe Shuster**, first published by the company that would become **DC Comics** in ***Action Comics*** #1, 1938. Superman was the first published superhero; sporting blue tights, a red cape, and an "S" emblematically placed on his chest, Superman routinely fights for truth, justice, and the American way as the longest running continuously published character in history.

Canonically, Superman is an alien visitor from the planet Krypton, rocketed to Earth while an infant by his father Jor-El as a precaution against the destruction of his native planet. Raised into adulthood by a kindly couple, the Kents, Superman champions the citizens of the fictional city of Metropolis, fighting crime in his dual identity as Superman and mild-mannered reporter Clark Kent by displaying an impressive array of powers inherited from his alien physiology including flight, super strength, invulnerability, super hearing, and both heat and x-ray vision. Over 70 years of publication, however, the remaining details of his origin have been significantly altered. His origin was first told in a one-page piece of exposition in *Action Comics* #1, which was expanded to fill two pages for the publication of *Superman* #1 in 1939. It took up nine pages in the 1948 "Origin of Superman" in *Superman* #53, 13 pages for *Superman* #146 "The Story of Superman's Life" in 1961, 15 in 1973 for *The Amazing World of Superman*'s "The Origin of Superman!," 143 pages in the 1986 miniseries ***The Man of Steel***, and over 280 for the 2005 maxi-series ***Superman: Birthright***. The character of Superman has thus constantly been in flux since his debut and has existed in subtly different forms throughout his publication. He has also been the source of several spin-off characters and comics, as in the detailing of his boyhood adventures as Superboy or in the creation of his female counterpart, Supergirl.

Superman's powers were actually far fewer and far less impressive in the first few years of his publication; for example, he did not gain the ability to fly until 1943.



Superman, issue #1, published Summer, 1939. DC Comics/ Photofest

The initial stories featuring Superman reflected this decreased power-level, pitting Superman against mostly mobsters and thugs as he fought against unsafe mining conditions, racketeering, and spousal abuse. During this period Superman displayed a tougher, grittier persona as Siegel and Shuster had modeled him after the hard-hitting pulp heroes popular to comics at the time.

The more charming, light-hearted version of Superman would not develop until Mort Weisinger's run as editor in the 1950s and 1960s. Hiring Otto Binder, the writer responsible for the wild popularity of the more comical and child-friendly series featuring **Captain Marvel**, *Whiz Comics*, Weisinger set about capturing the audience of the aforementioned publication by running highly imaginative—if not sometimes weirdly strange—stories with a heavier focus on **science fiction**. DC had recently won a lawsuit against Fawcett Publications, publisher of *Whiz Comics*, causing them to cease publication of **Captain Marvel** in 1953 due to his similarity to Superman, and with the institution of the **Comics Code** Authority in 1954 severely limiting the content printable in comics, light-hearted seemed the way to go. It is in this era that Superman's mythos was expanded to include the bottle city of Kandor, the Fortress of Solitude, Supergirl, and Krypto the Superdog.

During his tenure as editor of the Superman comics from 1971 to 1985, Julius Schwartz had already significantly modernized the character. The 1986 **retcon** of Superman by **John Byrne** in his miniseries, *The Man of Steel*, then started another new era for Superman comics by bringing a new focus to the interpersonal relationships in Superman's life In *The Man of Steel*, Byrne integrated Superman's Clark Kent persona into his fundamental identity since, in Byrne's origin story, his powers did not manifest until puberty, meaning that Clark Kent was no longer merely a guise for Superman to interact with the world. Because of this change, Byrne also kept Martha and Jonathan Kent alive into Superman's adulthood to help give him moral direction,

whereas they had earlier died when he was still young. Clark started a relationship with Lois since he was no longer the one-dimensional weakling from previous portrayals, and in 1996 Lois Lane and Clark Kent married after nearly 60 years of courtship.

Lois Lane, introduced in *Action Comics* #1; Perry White, introduced in *Superman* #7 (1940); and Jimmy Olsen, introduced in Superman #13 (1941) comprise the core supporting cast in most Superman stories, and Lex Luthor, Superman's most recognizable arch-nemesis has been a thorn in Superman's side since *Action Comics* #23 (1940). The newspaper for which Superman works as Clark Kent, however, was first called *The Daily Star* in *Action Comics* #1 and only changed to *The Daily Planet* in *Superman* #4 (1940). Likewise the names of Superman's adoptive parents underwent frequent changes from John and Mary, to Silas and Mary, to finally settle on Jonathan and Martha in the early 1950s.

Predecessors to Superman can be found in the early **science fiction** stories and pulp comics Siegel and Shuster worked on before successfully pitching the Man of Steel to M.C. Gaines in 1937. The name "Superman" was first attributed to the villain of a short story Siegel published in 1933 titled "Reign of the Superman" about an out of work derelict who gains enormous mental powers after being subjected to a science experiment and uses his newfound abilities to conquer the world. Superman's appearance and attitude were prefaced by Siegel and Shuster's character "Slam Bradley" who first appeared in ***Detective Comics*** #1 (1937) as a hard-boiled pulp detective, but ultimately Siegel cites the myths of such heroes as Samson and Hercules as a major source for their own strong man with powers beyond those of a mere mortal, giving The Man of Tomorrow roots that stretch far back into our cultural past.

Five major motion pictures have been made about Superman, starting with Richard Donner's 1979 *Superman: The Movie* and ending with Bryan Singer's 2006 *Superman Returns*. The franchise enjoyed a movie serial in 1948 and 1950, a radio program running from 1940 to 1951, several cartoon shows, a Broadway musical in 1966, and four live-action television shows: *The Adventures of Superman* (1952–58), *Superboy* (1988–92), *Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* (1993–97), and *Smallville* (2001–). Beyond these representations have been thousands of product endorsements, toys, games, and merchandise saturating almost every aspect of American culture. Superman is one of the most widely recognized icons in the world, inspiring the entire superhero genre. The character's mark can be felt on our very language when someone refers to something that disturbs or frightens them as their "kryptonite." With any form he has taken, from parody to homage, Superman has become an indelible part of the cultural landscape into the 21st century.

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Jackson Jennings

SUPERMAN: BIRTHRIGHT. *Superman: Birthright was* a 12-issue limited series published by **DC Comics** from 2003 to 2004, written by **Mark Waid** and penciled by Leinil Francis Yu, which updated Superman's origin story, giving it a more modern context.

The series begins traditionally on Krypton where Jor-El, Superman's father, sends his son to Earth to escape the cataclysmic explosion that obliterates his birth planet, before immediately switching scenes to an African village where a 25-year-old Clark Kent, now a reporter, is investigating a story about a young a political leader fighting for representation for his tribe in their nation's parliament. The story of Clark's life on Earth only unfolds gradually through dialogue and flashbacks, as the issues explore the connection between heroism, identity, and belonging. It is not until issue #4 that Superman appears in full costume, his dual identity undertaken in order to both achieve his full potential as a superhuman being and belong to society in a way that he never felt he could, having been perceived solely as a savior. The main plot of the story, revealed in issue #7, involves Lex Luthor planning to discredit the **Man of Steel** as an alien spy by staging a Kryptonian invasion using advanced holographic technology and a small army of thugs dressed as Superman's long dead kinsmen. Waid sets up Luthor as a foil to Superman in this and the subsequent issue, showing flashbacks of their childhood friendship in their hometown of Smallville, and revealing that Lex, due to his staggering intellect, also felt like an outcast, who, unlike Superman, decided to reject society and instead work merely for individual gain. The climax of the story reaffirms Superman's heroic status to the public after he and Lois expose the invasion, smashing Luthor's machinery and foiling his forces.

Superman: Birthright is not the first comic detailing Superman's origin, nor is it even the first comic to **retcon** his origin: **John Byrne**'s 1986 miniseries ***The Man of Steel*** is *Birthright*'s predecessor in that respect. Waid's retcon diverges greatly from Byrne's, however, and is the longest Superman origin story ever produced as a Superman comic. The most notable change is in the character of Superman, who is now deeply concerned with his place in society. Instead of gradually gaining his powers throughout puberty, Waid shows Superman as having grown up with them, forcing much of his life to be spent hiding his true nature from the rest of the world. Consequently, Clark Kent returns to the timid bumbler familiar from the **Silver Age** of comics. Jonathan and Martha Kent appear to be younger than their previous incarnation and have a more active role in helping Superman both come to grips with his origin, and guard his secret. Lex Luthor is also modified, growing up alongside Clark and returning to his roots as more of a mad scientist than Byrne's previous conception of Lex Luthor as the industrialist fat-cat. Leinil Yu's designs also restore Krypton to its more colorful pre-Byrne aesthetic (albeit, with its projection screens and sleeker corners, a more technologically modern one), featuring the classic Superman "S" as Superman's family crest.

Waid's approach to the story is also different than most of his predecessors; there is a lot more time devoted to showing Superman as a young adult and what he was like before adopting his costume. The story also focuses on Metropolis's reaction to Superman, making his acceptance by the public centrally important to the narrative, though traditionally a non-issue in his origin. Lex Luthor's and Superman's relationship is more personal, too, giving their inevitable clashes a more emotional context. While the core aspects of Superman's origin remain—he came from technologically advanced Krypton, was raised by a kindly couple on a farm, keeps all the amazing powers expected from Superman, and fights for truth and justice in Metropolis—the story itself spends much of its time embellishing the inner struggles of its cast, and projecting those inner struggles onto the conflicts associated with superhero comics.

This new emphasis on internal motivations, however, is not new to the Superman mythos as a whole. The genesis of Waid's creation can be found in the television adaptation of Superman's adolescence, *Smallville*. *Smallville*, beginning in 2001, introduced a new style of pathos into the Superman mythos by focusing heavily on the interpersonal relationships around Superman. Like many of the other hits on the WB (the network which originally aired *Smallville*), such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Dawson's Creek*, or even *The Gilmore Girls*, the show's creators designed their new Superman show around the drama created between its characters. The Kents' younger appearance, Lex Luthor's residence in Smallville, and even Clark Kent's longing to be accepted by the people around him were all popularized by the show, which has been the longest running Superman television series in history. Waid himself even acknowledges the similarity in the afterword to the graphic novelization of *Superman: Birthright*: "The entirety of *Superman: Birthright* is built around the same thing *Smallville* is built around, the same thing that ALL teenage lives are built around, the one bonding element we can count on our audience to find in common with this alien being who can fly: the search for identity" (301).

While *Superman: Birthright* heavily influenced the design of Kryptonians for works such as **Brian Azzerello**'s and **Jim Lee**'s *Superman: For Tomorrow* (*Superman* #204–15) and Michael Turner, Joe Kelly, and Talent Caldwell's *Superman: Godfall* (*Action Comics* #812–13, *Adventures of Superman* #625–66, and *Superman* #202–3), it did not remain the predominant version of Superman's origin for long. After DC's maxi-series *Infinite Crisis* changed the company's continuity, and with the collaboration of Richard Donner on *Superman: Last Son* (*Action Comics* #844–46, 851 and *Action Comics Annual* #11), the design for Krypton changed more to resemble Bryan Singer's 2006 movie, *Superman Returns*, which itself relied heavily on Richard Donner's *Superman: The Movie* in 1979, making *Superman: Birthright* no longer canonical.

Selected Bibliography: Waid, Mark. "Reimagining the Man of Tomorrow." *Superman: Birthright*. New York: DC, 2004, 292–302.

Jackson Jennings

SUPERMAN: RED SON (2003) is a three-issue ***Elseworlds*** miniseries written by **Mark Millar** and penciled by Dave Johnson and Kilian Plunkett. The story, narrated by

Superman himself, imagines the outcome of Superman's capsule landing in the Ukraine (rather than Kansas) in the 1930s. The first part of the story begins in America in the mid-1950s, as President Eisenhower announces the existence of the Superman. Reaction to his existence gives way to paranoia, and Eisenhower calls on Lex Luthor to devise ways to stop Superman. Several attempts are tried: Luthor attempts to crash a Sputnik into Metropolis, then uses DNA Superman left on the satellite to create a clone (Bizarro). Both are defeated handily by Superman. At home, Superman clashes with Stalin's illegitimate son Pyoter Roslov (Pete Ross), although the two seem to put differences aside in the wake of Stalin's death. Initially hesitant to elevate himself above his fellow communists, Superman eventually agrees to lead the Soviet Union by becoming its president.

In the second part of the story, the action fast-forwards to 1978, and shows Superman's attempts to build a global utopia, in which he is aided by **Wonder Woman**. The Soviet Union controls most of the world, and while most of the world is grateful for Superman's protection, he still faces challenges from both without and within. Luthor continues to send CIA-funded, superpowered agents, including most of Superman's traditional adversaries, to Russia with little success. Superman also faces dissent from a Russian version of **Batman**, who is funded by Roslov's KGB. Superman eventually defeats the combined efforts of these villains, and completes his totalitarian state. By the end, only the United States, reduced to 38 member states, remains outside his control.

The story's conclusion picks up in the year 2001. Superman's paradise is orderly, regulated, and finally free of dissent; all enemies, even Brainiac, have their proper place in the Soviet Union. Lex Luthor becomes president of the 35 remaining United States, and within a year has restored its prosperity to pre-Superman levels. Having achieved this, Luthor sets out to defeat Superman using a modified **Green Lantern** Corps, a contingent of Amazons led by a now-embittered Wonder Woman, and Luthor's own superior intelligence. Luthor is quickly captured by Brainiac, who convinces Superman that he must launch an attack on the United States in order to complete his utopia. Luthor ultimately defeats Superman with a letter comparing him to Brainiac: "Why don't you just put the whole *world* in a *bottle*, Superman?" Brainiac reveals that he has been using Superman all along; Luthor disables Brainiac only to cause his ship to self-destruct, and Superman, in a "last" act of heroism, tows the ship out of the solar system. Luthor picks up the pieces and establishes a truly utopian state, guided by "Luthorism," that expands the limits of human potential. In the last pages, readers discover that the future Earth is actually Superman's original home, and before its destruction by the red sun, Jor-L sends his son into the past to "fix" humanity.

While it does not speak clearly to any contemporary issues, other than the continued existence of totalitarianism in human society, *Red Son* does address a number of themes. The origin of Superman's values is one of these themes. Despite his growing up in the Ukraine, Superman continues to care for the welfare of humanity, implying that his defense of truth and justice is not a product of his American origins, but is an inherent part of his identity. While this fact is common to many of the *Elseworlds* tales

featuring Superman, it is even more interesting given the truth about Superman's terrestrial origins. Human or Kryptonian, being Superman seems to require caring about one's neighbors.

Another theme woven through *Red Son* is that of competing utopian models. These include the idealized Communist model under which Superman grew up, and in which he persists in believing; Stalinism and its less brutal expression under Superman; American idealism; and the progressive and less totalitarian model provided by "Luthorism." Indeed, *Red Son* is one of the few Superman stories to depict Lex Luthor's victory as a good thing for humanity, as the centuries after Superman's defeat are ones of peace, prosperity, social growth, and universal good health and education. While these also seem to be features of Superman's 20th-century communist state, the advantage of Luthor's utopia is that it is a synthesis of Soviet and American philosophy, in which Luthor "combined his own ideas with notes from the archives, creating a brand-new style of government unlike anything we'd ever seen." Luthor thus creates a government that is beyond both capitalism and communism, freeing humanity "to become the most advanced species in the *known universe*."

Working along with these utopian issues, *Red Son* focuses on the notion that a few central actors can change the course of world events. Despite his occasional claims to believe in equality, Superman's effect on world historical forces is clear and direct; his presence shapes, and in some cases distorts, world events. The same is true for Lex Luthor, who reshapes the world despite Superman's realization that "leaving them [humanity] alone means they can make their own mistakes again." Yet Millar hints that the presence of both characters is the key to humanity's success, as Superman notes: "Perhaps [Luthor] existed to keep me in *check*, or, as someone once hypothesized, perhaps it was the other way *around*." Without the presence of the other, either Luthor or Superman would have affected the world negatively; together, they bring a better future about.

Jacob Lewis

SWAMP THING. One of the most popular and enduring **horror comics** characters of the past half century, Swamp Thing was launched in an eight-page story by Len Wein in 1971. Les Daniels wrote that "a gigantic mass of moss unexpectedly emerged as one of **DC**'s most beloved heroes, and one of the few comic book characters recognized by people who don't read comics" (160). Swamp Thing's saga has always produced human, adult, disturbing, horror/**fantasy** stories with ecological and folkloric themes.

Sensing in 1971 that superhero dominance was ebbing, Wein and Artist Berni Wrightson were part of a 1970s rebirth of the popular horror comics that dominated the early 1950s. The original story cast Swamp Thing as Doctor Alex Olsen, and the characters all wore ruffled shirts and longish hair suggesting a faintly Romantic era with a Mary Shelley-Frankenstein atmosphere. The plot involved a Damien Ridge, Olsen's assistant who loves Olsen's wife, Linda, and plots to kill her husband. Olsen is bathed in a bio-restorative formula when Ridge detonates the lab; the doctor is subsequently transformed into the Swamp Thing. The paranoid Ridge begins to think Linda



Adrienne Barbeau as Alice Cable and Dick Durock as Swamp Thing, in the 1982 film *Swamp Thing*, directed by Wes Craven. MGM/Photofest

suspects him, and he plots to kill her. Swamp Thing bursts into the room, killing the murderer. Sadly, he finds himself unable to communicate with his wife, because his vocal cords have atrophied. He returns to the swamp realizing his human life is gone.

The character was given his own series in November, 1972. Wein and Wrightson revamped the origin tale, changing the scientist's name to Alec Holland, and introducing an **espionage** subplot. A criminal cartel, the Conclave, seek Holland's bio-restorative formula, leading to a fiery explosion in which Holland is saved only by the formula. His wife Linda is killed. In the second issue, Swamp Thing meets the mad Dr. Anton Arcane and his Un-men. Arcane offers to restore Holland to his human body in exchange for Swamp Thing's near immortal body. Using an incantation in front of a mysterious *soul jar* Holland is restored; realizing that Arcane is insane, he smashes the jar, and reverts back to Swamp Thing. Wrightson's art—placing Swamp Thing in murky castles, dismal swamps, and dark foreboding alleys—is a triumph. In issue #3, Wein performs a nice spin on the Frankenstein myth by introducing Arcane's brother, The Patchwork Man, Gregori Arcane, father to Abigal Arcane. In the story, a blown-up Gregori is pieced back together by Anton. As he says, "there wasn't much left of you, you realize—I had to improvise my repairs from the material at hand."

Swamp Thing, despite a great creative team, only lasted for 24 issues. Following a film in 1982, by horror auteur Wes Craven (an early fan of the comic book) the character re-emerged in a new comics series in the 1980s. Initially the new edition was only modestly popular. On the verge of cancellation it was revitalized by British comic auteur **Alan Moore**, who re-imagined Swamp Thing not as an undead muck monster, but as a vegetative elemental. Under Moore's guidance, Swamp Thing's chronology

and mythology were completely rewritten. Now the Sunderland Corporation seeks the secrets of Alec Holland's research, assassinating Swamp Thing in a barrage of bullets (issue #20). The creepy Dr. Jason Woodrue is hired by Sunderland to autopsy the dead Swamp Thing in issue #21's pivotal story, "The Anatomy Lesson." He discovers that the creature is simply plants and roots, all vegetation with only vestigial forms of human organs. Swamp Thing is really a plant that *thinks* it is human, a consciousness of Earth known as *the Parliament of Trees* or simply, *the Green*. Abigal Arcane is re-introduced and quickly becomes the Swamp thing's lover and muse. At first, she is married to Mathew Cable, an FBI man investigating the murder of Holland and his wife. He thinks the Swamp Thing is the killer. For a time, Cable is possessed by the spirit of Anton Arcane and briefly has an incestuous affair with niece Abby. This story line created a serious challenge to the **Comics Code**, which prohibited stories of sexual perversion, including incest. DC stood behind Moore's work, running the tale without the Comics Code Seal and with a mature content advisory with future issues. The result was profitable sales and an ability to produce more **adult** fantasy, something that comics had lost following the fearful censorship episode of the 1950s.

Moore takes Swamp Thing on ever more exotic and fantastic crusades. Cable goes into a coma and Swamp Thing must rescue Abby, who has descended into Hell. There, Abby and Swamp Thing encounter many of DC's supernatural characters, laying the groundwork for DC's Vertigo line in the 1990s. By issue #34, the pair recognize their mutual love and after taking a hallucinogenic tuber (the Swamp Thing's seed?) they are able to consummate their affair. Swamp Thing became a pop culture phenomenon, appearing in a film sequel (1989), a cartoon series (1990) (with new lyrics to "Wild Thing": "swamp thing, you are amazing,") and also a popular USA Network television series (1990–92).

In the *American Gothic* story line, Moore's Swamp Thing meets modern incarnations of various horror characters including **vampires** and **zombies**. Moore also includes an affectionate tribute to Walt Kelly's *Pogo* gang of characters. Notably, Swamp Thing often crosses paths with **Batman**. The Dark Knight, with his own troubled childhood, seems a natural soul mate for the mournful Swamp Thing.

In later adventures, Swamp Thing meets the Parliament of Trees, becoming an Earth elemental, a demi-diety; he impregnates Abby by possessing the body of fellow supernatural hero, John Constantine of the ***Hellblazer*** comics. At one point (in a story by **Grant Morrison**), Swamp Thing is briefly split into two characters, a mindless Swamp Thing and a human, Alex Holland; he also battles the influence of post-Hurricane Katrina land developers in the Bayou.

Stuart Lenig

SWAN, CURT (1920–96). Curt Swan, born Douglas Curtis Swan, was the son of a railroad worker and a hospital employee. After being drafted into the U.S. Army in 1940, Swan was staff artist for *Stars & Stripes* newspaper. After his discharge, Swan met Eddie Herron, a former **DC Comics** writer. At Herron's suggestion, Swan applied

at DC. Swan's first assignments were *Boy Commandos* and *Newsboy Legion* stories, assigned in 1945 and published in 1946.

Following these assignments, Swan largely abandoned inking, preferring penciling. This increased his output to three pages per day. Following the advice of Steve Brody, Swan began using illustrative shortcuts, such as minimal backgrounds for selected panels. Demonstrating an affinity for space opera, he was assigned a new strip in ***Action Comics***, *Tommy Tomorrow*, in 1948. His success on this strip led to his work on *Superboy*, beginning in 1949. The sense of Americana that Swan bought to the title came in part from his upbringing in rural Minnesota and resonated with many of the feature's readers. In 1953, he began working on his signature character, **Superman**.

His portrayal of Superman was defined by attention to detail, imagination and realistic anatomy. Swan was one of a cadre of artists who redefined the character in the 1950s and 1960s, along with Al Plastino, Wayne Boring, **Jim Mooney**, and Murphy Anderson. Swan also penciled the cover of the issue of ***Adventure Comics*** that introduced *Supergirl*.

Also drawing the *Superman* newspaper strip from 1958 to 1961, Swan's style became the signature look for the character. Andy Warhol's *Superman* screenprint is based on an iconic Swan drawing of Superman in flight. Swan's *Superman* remains the default image of the character to this day.

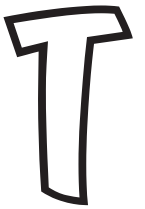
Swan drew literally thousands of pages for DC over his 50-year career, spanning most of DC's line. His work on ***World's Finest Comics*** helped define that title in the 1960s. Aside from Superman, he was best known for his work on the *Legion of Super-Heroes*. Though the series' writers include **Jerry Seigel** and Otto Binder, many hold that the title was at its creative zenith when Swan was drawing Jim Shooter's scripts.

Swan worked for DC almost exclusively. He did a smattering of work for independent publishers in the 1990s, and worked for **Marvel** only once. He retired from Superman in 1986, but returned to the character and other DC projects for financial reasons. Though not his last work on the character, Swan's 1986 illustration of **Alan Moore's** two-part story ***Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow?*** is regarded as canon for both defining and closing the **Silver Age** of comics. Here Swan's elegant pencils raised the emotional level of Superman's struggle with chaos to Wagnerian heights. One of Swan's last DC jobs was an issue of ***Swamp Thing***, which he described as "rather strange, but these days, what isn't?"

Swan won the 1984 Inkpot Award and was inducted into the **Will Eisner** Hall of Fame in 1997. His unfulfilled desire was to be taken seriously as a professional illustrator. It is appropriate and a bit ironic that he is often called "the Norman Rockwell of comics."

Selected Bibliography: Zeno, Eddie, et al. *Curt Swan: A Life in Comics*. Lakewood, NJ: Vanguard Press, 2002.

Diana Green



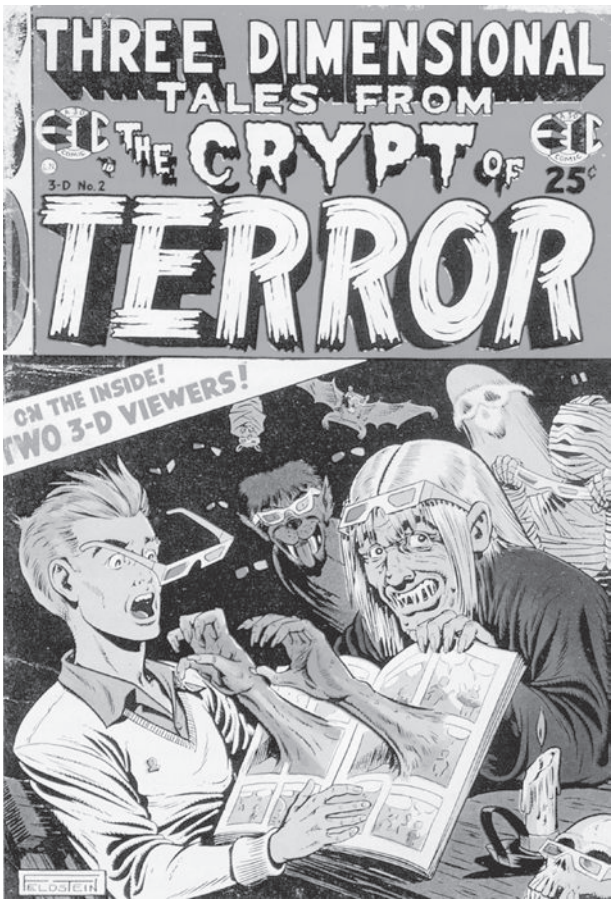
TALES FROM THE CRYPT. *Tales from the Crypt* was **EC Comics**' flagship **horror comics** anthology title; it has become culturally synonymous with gory, twist-in-the-tale horror and has been adapted into a number of media. *Tales from the Crypt* was launched with the April/May 1950 issue (the same year as other notable bi-monthly EC Comics titles *The Haunt of Fear*, and *The Vault of Horror*); it ran for 46 issues until the February/March 1955 issue. All three titles were reluctantly axed by EC's publisher **William Gaines** in the face increasingly stringent restrictions by the **Comics Code** after a campaign against horror and **crime comics** in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Although **Fredric Wertham**'s notorious expose of comic violence and its effects on young readers, *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954), constantly cites **crime** and horror comics, the book's *raison d'être* is not comics scholarship or genre studies. Wertham classifies **Western comics** as crime comics because they involve criminal schemes, like cattle rustling, and takes the descriptions of comics from his subjects, often young people in care, at face value without looking at the comic book sources in context. Thus, **Blue Beetle** "turns into" **Superman**, according to one child. *Tales from the Crypt* is cited by name only once in the text by one of the interviewees, from a small group of 11 children (9 boys and 2 girls between 9 and 13 years old) and none of the scurrilous illustrations chosen for Wertham's centerpiece are from *Tales from the Crypt*. The famous baseball game played with entrails is from *Haunt of Fear* 19, and a stark cover of a hanged man above the unconvincing description "Cover of a children's comic book" is from EC's *Crime Suspense Stories* issue #20. What Wertham overlooked was the rising age of comic readership, and the mostly adult audience of EC comics in the World War II and the postwar period, where horror and crime comics gained a new adult readership. In the Congressional

subcommittee held in April and June 1954, Gaines said (in the 1988 documentary film *Comic Book Confidential*) of his comics output and its most famous detractor:

> Some may not like them. That is a matter of personal taste. It would be just as difficult to explain the harmless thrill of a horror story to a Dr. Wertham as it would be to explain the sublimity of love to a frigid old maid. . . . What are we afraid of? Are we afraid of our own children? Do we forget that they are citizens, too, and entitled to select what to read or do? We think our children are so evil, simple minded, that it takes a story of murder to set them to murder, a story of robbery to set them to robbery?

It would be unfortunate, however, if the moral panic of the 1950s would overshadow how visually and stylistically progressive *Tales from the Crypt* was. Described by artist and writer **Al Feldstein** (EC Comics 1948–53, *Mad* Magazine 1956–84) as "new icing on old cakes," the comic was inspired by such popular culture staples of the 1950s as horror and **science fiction** B-movies, and such writers Edgar Allan Poe, H. P. Lovecraft, and Ray Bradbury, some of whose stories were adapted directly by the comic. Gaines and Feldstein had a shared love of such stories, and Gaines would come up with one-line plots or "springboards" that Feldstein and others would flesh out into twist-in-the-tale stories with often gruesome moral retribution for adulterers and murders. American literature from Ambrose Bierce to O. Henry to Damon Runyon has long had a love of quirky short stories with twist endings. In Ron Mann's 1988 documentary, *Comic Book Confidential*, Feldstein comments that what he and Gaines did was much like what television series such as *The Twilight Zone* and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* did subsequently. The graphic design and dynamic cover art of *Tales from the Crypt* have also become iconic. The cover to issue #28 featured a cutaway of a character being buried alive while the



A three-dimensional issue of *Tales from the Crypt of Terror* (1953). Photofest

gravedigger walked away on the surface, and the startling cover of issue #41 shows a knife-thrower's assistant pinned to a wooden wheel while an ax is depicted inexorably approaching her horrified face yet never making contact in a dynamic and unsettling piece of comic art.

The visceral and straightforward storytelling of EC Comics as a whole, and *Tales from the Crypt* in particular, inspired the subsequent generation of horror writers and directors including Stephen King, George A. Romero, and John Carpenter, where supernatural horror tropes often happen against a mundane or modern rather than gothic background. Bands such as the American punk rock group The Cramps, used the distinct cover font for their band logo and got Feldstein to provide cover art for album *Songs The Lord Taught Us* (1980). *Tales from the Crypt* has been adapted into various films, television series and cartoons. Veteran director Freddie Francis's film *Tales from the Crypt* (1972), from Amicus Productions cast Ralph Richardson as the Crypt Keeper and such actors as Joan Collins and Peter Cushing. However, only the stories "Reflection of Death" (issue #23) and "Blind Alleys" (issue #46, February-March, 1955) by Feldstein and Gaines are actually from *Tales from the Crypt*, while the remaining three are from *The Vault of Terror* or the *Haunt of Fear*. HBO's television series *Tales from the Crypt* (1989–96) featured an animatronic Crypt Keeper, voiced by John Kassir, who introduced each episode with stories taken from EC's *Tales from the Crypt*, *Haunt of Fear*, *Vault of Fear*, *Crime SuspenStories*, and *Shock SuspenStories*. The popularity of the series, which (due to the subscription cable nature of the cable station) could show more gore and sexual situations, led to two more theatrically released films: *Tales from the Crypt Presents: Demon Knight* (1995) and *Tales from the Crypt Presents: Bordello of Blood* (1996). A third film, *Ritual*, was released straight to DVD in non-U.S. markets in 2001 and was not released in America until May 2, 2005, with specially filmed Crypt-Keeper segments with Kassir returning to the role. In the surprising trend of cartoons aimed at younger viewers based on such adult movies as *The Toxic Avenger* (1984) and *Robocop* (1987), the cartoon *Tales from the Cryptkeeper* lasted for two series from 1993 to 1994, returning as new *Tales from the Cryptkeeper* in 1997. Gemstone Publishing, producers of *The Official Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* currently holds the rights to reprint *Tales from the Crypt*.

Lorcan McGrane

TARZAN. Tarzan, the Lord of the Jungle, was created by Edgar Rice Burroughs (1875–1950) and first appeared in *All-Story Magazine* in 1912. Burroughs created his feral hero only after having failed at numerous professions. He began his career as a pulp fiction writer in 1911 and his first serialized adventure, *Under the Moons of Mars*, was published the following year in *All-Story Magazine*. That tale introduced John Carter, a Civil War veteran who is transported to Mars. Burroughs achieved even greater success in 1912 with the publication of *Tarzan of the Apes*, a serialized adventure that also debuted in *All-Story Magazine*. Tarzan soon became one of the most enduring heroes of 20th-century popular culture as his exploits were seen in a variety of mass media, including novels, pulp magazines, comic strips, comic books, radio, film, and television.

In any medium, Tarzan's adventures are filled with untamed beasts, savage natives, lost cities, beautiful damsels, and thrilling action.

Burroughs's creation of the jungle hero was influenced by his reading the works of authors like Rudyard Kipling and H. Rider Haggard. Tarzan's origin, which was first published as a novel in 1914's *Tarzan of the Apes: A Romance of the Jungle*, has become one of the most famous tales in all of popular literature. Tarzan was born John Clayton, the future Lord Greystoke, in a hut after his aristocratic British parents had been marooned by their mutinous crew as they sailed along the African coast. Within a year the infant is orphaned as his mother dies and his father is killed by an attacking band of great apes. Miraculously, the baby is adopted by a female ape named Kala who is grief-stricken at the death of her own offspring. The boy is raised by the simians and called "Tarzan," which means "white skin" in the ape language. Burroughs described Tarzan as growing into a tall, handsome, and extremely athletic man with grey eyes and black hair. He is fully integrated into the ape society as he speaks their language and lives in the trees. Eventually, he discovers the hut where he was born and teaches himself to read with his family's books. He also takes to wearing a leopard skin loincloth. After years in the jungle, he encounters an American woman named Jane Porter who is lost in the wild along with her father. Tarzan becomes her protector and ultimately chooses



Bruce Bennett as Tarzan in the 1935 serial, *The New Adventures of Tarzan*. Burroughs-Tarzan Enterprises Inc. /Photofest

to follow her back to civilization where he can reclaim his noble birthright. Burroughs immediately followed this story with two more novels, *The Return of Tarzan* (1915) and *The Beasts of Tarzan* (1915); ultimately there would be dozens of Tarzan novels, many of which were serialized in the pulp magazines.

Unlike many of the film and television interpretations of the ape-man, Burroughs's hero was an articulate gentleman who is stronger and more courageous than other men because he has not been softened by the comforts of civilization. The famed line of movie dialogue "Me Tarzan, you Jane" never appeared in a Burroughs story. Tarzan was always presented as intelligent, loyal, and ethical; he rarely displayed any character flaws. His jungle upbringing gave him superior strength and unparalleled athletic ability. The stories are filled with many descriptions of his great speed, agility, reflexes, balance, as well as his swimming, leaping, and climbing skills. Burroughs also showed Tarzan as having enhanced senses of hearing and smell. Furthermore, he is capable of communicating with nearly every animal species in the jungle.

Tarzan came to comics in January 1929 when *Tarzan of the Apes* was adapted into a newspaper strip illustrated by Hal Foster. A Sunday page came in 1931. Foster's artwork revolutionized the comics page with his masterful use of cinematic techniques like angle shots and depth of field. His African scenery was stunning and Tarzan himself appeared to practically leap from the newspaper page. Foster left the strip in 1937 and went on to create *Prince Valiant*. Artist **Burne Hogarth** subsequently took over the feature for several years. Many other artists and writers worked on the comic strip during the next several decades. One of the most notable is Russ Manning, who took over the strip in 1968 after having drawn Tarzan's comic book adventures for years. Celebrated comic book writer and artist Mike Grell handled the Tarzan strip for several years in the 1980s. Tarzan still appears in a few newspapers, but the strip merely reprints older material.

Tarzan has had an extensive comic book career. The hero has appeared in comics published by a variety of publishers, such as Western Publishing, **Charlton Comics**, **DC Comics**, **Marvel Comics**, and **Dark Horse Comics**. Most of the Burroughs novels have been adapted over the years. Tarzan was featured in text stories in Dell's *Crackerjack Comics* from 1939 to 1942. In 1947, Tarzan was seen in two issues of Dell's *Four Color Comics*. A regular Tarzan series was launched the following year. Artist Jesse Marsh remained on the book for the next 18 years, while Gaylord DuBois wrote the stories for 25 years. DC Comics took over Tarzan in 1972. Legendary artist Joe Kubert drew many of the best stories during this period. He also wrote and edited the *Tarzan of the Apes* book for several years. From 1964 to 1972 Gold Key Comics published *Korak: Son of Tarzan*. DC Comics continued the series until 1976 where it ran under the title *Tarzan Family*. In 1977, the ape-man moved to Marvel Comics and starred in *Tarzan, Lord of the Jungle*. Dark Horse Comics published several Tarzan books beginning in 1996. Dark Horse and DC Comics joined forces to have the jungle hero team-up with two of the most popular superheroes. ***Batman/****Tarzan: Claws of the Cat-Woman* (1999) is set in the 1930s, while ***Superman/****Tarzan: Sons of the Jungle* (2002) is set in an alternate reality where Lord Greystoke grows up in England, while the infant Superman is

raised by the apes. In 1996, *Tarzan vs. Predator at the Earth's Core* has the hero battle the aliens from the popular film franchise.

In 1967, Burne Hogarth captured the essence of Tarzan when he wrote of the jungle hero: "He is energy, grace, and virtue. He symbolizes the inevitable life source, the earth, the speed, the rain, the harvest, achievement, the triumph over adversity and death" (Richardson and Duin 433).

Selected Bibliography: Richardson, Mike, and Steve Duin. *Comics, Between the Panels*. Milwaukie, OR: Dark Horse Comics, 1998.

Charles Coletta

TEEN TITANS. A team of teenage **superheroes**, the Teen Titans elevated adolescent characters from their traditional role as sidekicks to become the protagonists of their own adventures. Teenage sidekicks were a popular element in comic books of the 1940s beginning with the debut of Robin as **Batman**'s apprentice in ***Detective Comics*** #38 (1940). Writers often employed these characters to provide their protagonists with allies with whom they could confide and advance plotlines. The teens further gave the young comics-reading audience characters with whom they could identify. The inclusion of Robin into the Batman franchise caused sales to nearly double. Robin's popularity was so strong in the **Golden Age** of comics that most superheroes of the era were nearly obligated to form a partnership with a hero-in-training. In 1964, **DC Comics** introduced the Teen Titans, a superhero team which placed the kid sidekicks at the forefront of the action.

During the **Silver Age** of comics, DC Comics introduced ***Justice League of America***, a powerhouse title that combined the company's top superheroes. Its success spurred editor George Kashdan to approach writer Bob Haney with the notion of creating a "junior Justice League." The team, which included Robin, Aqualad, and Kid Flash, made its debut in *The Brave and the Bold* #54 (1964) as the teens joined forces to battle the villainous Mr. Twister. The heroes returned for another adventure and were formally called the "Teen Titans" for the first time in *The Brave and the Bold* #60 (1965). They were joined by Wonder Girl, whose earlier comics appearances had presented her merely in stories depicting the exploits of **Wonder Woman** as a youth. The quartet's popularity led to an appearance in *Showcase* #59 before they were ultimately rewarded with their own title, *Teen Titans* #1, in 1966. By issue #4 Speedy, sidekick to the **Green Arrow**, joined the roster. Numerous other teen superheroes, such as Beast Boy, Aquagirl, feuding brothers Hawk and Dove, psychic go-go dancer Lilith, and Mal Duncan—the first black Titan—made guest visits to the title.

The most notable feature of the 1960s Teen Titans stories is the unbearable dialogue with which the middle-aged writers strained to be "hip" for a younger readership growing up in the counterculture era. The writers did mildly explore current events as stories dealt with issues surrounding racial tensions in the inner cities and Vietnam War protesters. The Titans also faced a notoriously weak rogue's gallery that included villains

like The Mad Mod, Captain Rumble, and Ding-Dong Daddy Dowd. While the writing may have been somewhat pedestrian, the artwork provided by Nick Cardy was lush. By issue #16 (1968), a new and more serious approach to the stories was implemented. One of the most important tales of this period involved a revised origin for Wonder Girl. *Teen Titans* #25 (1969) revealed her to be Donna Troy, an orphan rescued by Wonder Woman and given the power of the Amazons while being raised on Paradise Island. The Teen Titans' initial run was cancelled with issue #43 in 1973. However, the team was revived in 1976 with several new heroes, including Bat-Girl, Golden Eagle, Bumblebee, and Harlequin who claimed to be the daughter of various supervillains. Eventually, the team fractured as some of the heroes left to form a new group called "Titans West." This incarnation of the team was short-lived as it was canceled following issue #53 (1978).

In the early 1980s, when DC Comics decided to re-launch the Teen Titans once again, few within the industry believed the title would be successful. However, these concerns were quashed as this new version of the team, which debuted in *DC Comics Presents* #26 (1980), proved to be an immediate hit. *The New Teen Titans*, written by **Marv Wolfman** and drawn by **George Pérez**, climbed to the top of the sales charts in six months and remained DC's most popular title for most of the decade. Wolfman had worked on the title in the late 1960s before spending most of the 1970s at **Marvel Comics**, where he eventually rose to the position of editor-in-chief. Upon returning to DC he reinvigorated the Titans with many of the stylistic techniques that had made Marvel's titles popular with modern readers. In many respects, the new Teen Titans were DC's answer to Marvel's ***X-Men*** franchise as both series presented a diverse cast of young heroes combating villains and their own growing pains and doubts. Wolfman employed a large cast that included both established and new, intriguing characters. Robin, Kid Flash, and Wonder Girl from the old team were joined by Raven (a half-demon empath), Starfire (an alien warrior princess), Cyborg, and Beast Boy, now renamed Changeling. Wolfman's stories were action-packed but readers seemed to especially appreciate the quieter moments in the Titans' lives when they took off the masks. He presented the heroes as having an emotional depth previously absent from DC Comics' other creations. His goal was to show respect for the characters and not depict them as stereotypical teens. Pérez's contribution to the title was invaluable. He possessed a keen ability to draw books with large casts and was equally adept at depicting epic battles and subtle facial expressions. Pérez eventually joined Wolfman as the series' co-editor. After Wolfman and Pérez left the series for other projects, the Teen Titans lost much of their luster. Numerous writers and artists have attempted to re-launch the series since in 1980s heyday with varying success. The cast has also changed with each new creative team.

The Teen Titans' appearances have not been limited only to the comics pages. The team featuring Speedy, Kid Flash Wonder Girl, and Aqualad made their first animated appearance in segments within *The* ***Superman/Aquaman*** *Hour of Adventure* (1967). The character Cyborg joined the *Super Friends* Saturday morning cartoon show in the

1980s. In 2003, a Teen Titans animated series premiered that was aimed largely at a younger audience with its anime style. Older fans appreciated that many of the storylines were based upon plots from the Wolfman–Pérez comics era. The series was cancelled after five seasons. The Teen Titans remain one of DC's most prominent superhero groups as their adventures continue to resonate with fans.

Charles Coletta

TERMINAL CITY. *Terminal City* is a nine-issue miniseries published in 1996 by the Vertigo imprint of **DC Comics**. A sequel, the five-issue *Terminal City: Aerial Graffiti*, was published in 1997. Both titles were written by **Dean Motter** and penciled by Michael Lark.

The primary focus of both series is the rehabilitation of protagonist Cosmo Quinn, once a famous daredevil performing as "The Human Fly," but in the present time of the story a common window-washer in the architecturally sumptuous Terminal City, a city of deco glamour that has also fallen on hard times. Quinn hires enterprising young B. B. as an apprentice window-washer and general sidekick when she learns that the promise of construction work that lured her to town will never be fulfilled. *Terminal City* commences with the appearance of an amnesiac man with a briefcase bolted to his wrist. Speculation over the identity of the man, and the contents of the briefcase, pulls together much of the rest of the cast, including policeman Captain Sahib and underworld figure Big Lil. The amnesiac disappears shortly after the briefcase is somehow removed from his wrist, and the briefcase itself is barely mentioned again until the epilogue at the end of the series when it is found in the trash and taken away by a maniacal figure, never to be seen again.

The amnesiac and his briefcase provide Motter and Lark with a pretense to introduce Cosmo Quinn's disgraced or absent friends from 1984, the year of the Brave New World's Fair. Among those making return appearances is big game hunter Monty Vickers, who arranges for the comeback of another of the 1984 group, boxer Kid Gloves. Gloves boxes "Evolution" in a series of matches against the Piltdown Man, a Great Ape, and what Vickers claims is the missing link, a simian from Tibet. Later in the first series, Gloves boxes "Science" in the form of a robot. Though he defeats the robot, Gloves dies in the attempt. Another leftover from 1984, Eno Orez, the Man of 1,000 faces, succeeds in killing the current mayor of Terminal City after several failed attempts, though Orez's motivations for undertaking the assassination remain unclear.

Terminal City: Aerial Graffiti also features a man falling from the sky, but in this instance the man's identity is known from the start: he is Jose Hoffman, a bit player in a criminal scheme that involves the opening of the Transatlantic Tunnel connecting Paris and Terminal City. *Aerial Graffiti* also introduces readers to more figures from the 1984 Brave New World's Fair. This time, readers meet skywriter Raymond Alexander, who writes obscene messages in the air over Terminal City that embarrasses the acting mayor in front of business interests who might invest in the city's revival. Also present

from the 1984 group is former fire eater and current arsonist Torch Johnson who, like Orez in the earlier series, works for underworld interests. Concerns over urban redevelopment motivate most of the actors in *Aerial Graffiti*, a wry contemporary comment on the state of urban cores in the mid-1990s when these stories were published. Despite all plotlines seeming to converge at the Transatlantic race from Paris to Terminal City featuring a magnetic train, a Zeppelin, and an experimental gravity-defying airship, the race itself is not part of this series. In an epilogue, Quinn promises that the race is "another story," one that remains untold since the second Terminal City story was the last to be published at this writing.

The two *Terminal City* stories read as much like one continuous serial as two separate stories. Motter's narration in both incorporates archival newsreel footage and contemporary television reports to develop characters' backgrounds and introduce plot elements, and alternating issues feature voice-overs from two characters: Cosmo Quinn from his memoir, "On the Wall," and mystery woman Monique Rome, the Lady in Red, who fights crime in an unofficial capacity and whose voice-over (in the form of a journal) presents the city as a jungle environment with shifting zones of safety and danger. The architectural designs are as interesting as readers might expect from a Dean Motter series, and Lark's crowd scenes are filled with visual jokes, like the recognizable figures from **science fiction** films in the background of a scene at a used robot lot.

Instead of the dystopian paranoia that characterizes much of Motter's other work, the *Terminal City* stories feature a low-key nostalgia and some silly humor. There is something comfortable and quietly impressive about the deco designs of the city, which shares design elements with *Mister X*'s Radiant City but which is much less oppressive. Despite protagonist Quinn's proclamation that "We were really competing against the NEW AGE itself. We were fighting against our own obsolescence," that fight is over before the first issue. Over the course of the two series, Quinn will move past fear and regret over his own past to integrate his past Human Fly experiences into his present, where he still works as a window washer but also has regular if unspectacular engagements as a daredevil. Meanwhile, the series is populated with characters whose wacky names refuse attempts at treating them seriously. These include low-level thug brothers Micasa and Sucasa, Quinn's ex-girlfriend Charity Ball and her sisters Faith and Hope, and Mayors Orwell and Huxley. Past Motter collaborators Ken Steacy and Paul Rivoche have buildings named after them, and sky-writer Raymond Alexander is clearly an homage to *Buck Rogers* creator Alex Raymond. There is an element of vaudeville, a dancing-as-fast-as-we-can spirit of joy that leavens the series.

Lark's pencils are impressive, especially in the second series, where the colors and fine pencil lines begin to show the polish and snap that characterize his later work in *Gotham Central* and ***Daredevil.*** Here readers can see the development of his distinctive down-to-earth style as he captures clearly human poses of characters, like Human Fly Cosmo Quinn, engaged in almost superhuman behaviors.

Selected Bibliography: Motter, Dean and Michael Lark. *Terminal City*. New York: DC Comics. 1996; Motter, Dean and Michael Lark. *Terminal City: Aerial Graffiti*. New York: DC Comics. 1997.

Matthew Dube

TEZUKA, OSAMU (1928–89). Widely known as the "Father of **Manga**," or even the "God of Manga," Osamu Tezuka was a medical doctor, an illustrator, and a filmmaker; more importantly, this prolific artist was the greatest comics author that Japan has ever known. At a very young age, Tezuka acquired a love for stories from his mother, while his father allowed him the rare privilege of going to the movies regularly. It was Walt Disney and the Fleischer brothers who inspired little Tezuka to draw his first manga by copying Mickey Mouse and Popeye during his primary years, where his talent was recognized and encouraged by a Samaritan schoolmaster. At the outbreak of World War II, Tezuka continued to produce manga for his entourage in junior high in spite of a general manga-bashing mentality. After the war, Tezuka registered in the school of medicine and set his mind to earn his degree but his heart was already turning towards manga creation.

Drawing continuously for more than 50 years (about 150,000 plates in 700 works), creating manga was Tezuka's way of shielding himself against various persecutions throughout life. For his primary school classmates ridiculed his small size, the wartime militaries loathed manga, the Tokyo publishers made fun of the provincial young artist from Osaka, and the general readership of the 1950s considered manga pernicious, just as comic books were coming under fire in the United States as a bad influence on young people.

A self-taught artist, Tezuka broke away from the common farcical stories four to five pages long of the pre-war period, and molded the modern manga landscape with "story manga," which feature a strong and fluid narrative. He also invented the "star system," which recasts the same recognizable key characters in different manga, thus giving readers a sense of familiarity. His work influenced the generation of the postwar years immensely, not only because his *Jungle Taitei* (1950–54) defined *shonen manga*, and his *Princess Knight* (1954–68) gave birth to *shôjo manga*, but also because of his avant-garde use of dynamic techniques. Color plates, use of boldface in dialogues, and onomatopoeia spreading beyond the edge of the frame were frowned upon at first but well accepted a decade later. His humorous and deceptively simple drawings lent weight to the themes that he wanted to convey and explore—ecology and human dignity, guilt and redemption, evil and moral decay—all adroitly blended in a variety of genres: **science fiction**, social fiction, medical thriller, biography, **history**, and the sublime.

Although his very first manga was a science fiction story (*The Ghost Man*), the best-known one was *New Treasure Island* (1947), which pioneered cinematic movements ranging from panoramic shots to close-ups. Other popular works for young readers include *Lost World* (1948), *Astro Boy* (1951–68), and *Black Jack* (1973–84). Starting in the mid-1960s, Tezuka entered his mature period with high-caliber, multi-volume

works such as *Ode to Kirihito* (1970–71), *Ayako* (1972–73), ***Buddha*** (1974–84), *MW* (1976–78), *Adolf* (1983–85). However, several series were regretfully left unfinished at his death, including *Phoenix* (1956–), *Dororo* (1967–), and *Ludwig B.* (1987–).

Nhu-Hoa Nguyen

THOR. Based on the Norse mythological character of the same name and originally adapted into comics by the **Marvel Comics** creative team of **Stan Lee**, Larry Lieber, and **Jack Kirby**, Thor made his debut in the pages of ***Journey into Mystery*** #83 in 1962. The son of Odin, ruler of Asgard (realm of the Gods) and Gaea, protector of Midgard (realm of Earth), Thor was banished to Earth and forced to inhabit the mortal body of Donald Blake, a physically impaired medical doctor, without any memory of his true identity. After discovering his past on a vacation to Norway, Blake is able to transform into Thor, and back again, at will with the help of Mjolnir, Thor's mystical war hammer given to him by his father. As the God of Thunder, Thor has the power to create and control weather phenomena, including rain, wind, and lighting. After centuries of practice he is also highly skilled in hand-to-hand combat and, with the help of Mjolnir, can fly as well as open inter-dimensional portals, among other abilities. Since his introduction, Thor has continuously proven to be one of the most powerful characters in the Marvel universe, drawing on the magical Odinforce in battles against mortal, superhuman, mythological, and cosmic villains. Thor is also a founding member of The **Avengers** and regularly appears in major Marvel universe crossover events.

Writers and artists have been able to utilize the richly complex stories within Norse mythology to propel Marvel's version of the character. The primary conflicts within the *Thor* narrative explore the tension between Thor's allegiance to Asgard and his innate desire to protect Earth from harm. Often compounding this strain is Thor's step-brother Loki, a shapeshifting master of dark magic who desires to rule Asgard as his own. Other Asgardian characters, such as Balder, Thor's lifelong friend; Heimdall, guardian sentry of Asgard; Tyr, Asgardian God of War; and Sif, Thor's sometimes love interest, offer the narrative ample amounts of depth and breadth in storytelling options. Perhaps desirous of even more storytelling freedom, Lee and Kirby made several additions to Asgardian lore throughout their tenure on the book; notably absent in the original mythology, The Warriors Three—consisting of Fandral, Hogun, and Volstagg—were introduced in *Journey into Mystery* #119 in 1965 and have since played a popular supporting role within broader story arcs.

Like Thor's family, friends, and allies, many of his enemies are drawn from mythology as well. Fire demon Surtur, frost giant Ymir, and the Midgard Serpent all make appearances as the most powerful enemies of Asgard, with new Lee and Kirby creations the Mangog (*Thor* [Vol. 1] #154) and the Enchanters Three (*Thor* [Vol. 1] #143) also testing Thor's might. Besides these mythological creatures, however, Thor has developed several other foes on Earth, including Radioactive Man (*Journey into Mystery* #93) and the Wrecking Crew (*Thor* [Vol. 1] #304). Thor's most dire threats have come from villains empowered by the trickster Loki. These include the Absorbing Man (*Journey*



Thor. Marvel Comics/Photofest

into Mystery #114), the Destroyer (*Journey into Mystery* #118), and the Wrecker (*Thor* #148).

Despite his immense power, Thor has, at several different times, taken leaves of absence from his superheroic duties, opening the door for other characters to wield Mjolnir and channel the Thunder God's strength. Because only worthy souls can even lift Thor's hammer from the ground, however, the list of substitutes was very short until the 1980s, when Beta Ray Bill (*Thor* [Vol. 1] #337), Tyr (*Thor* [Vol. 1] #355), **Captain America** (*Thor* [Vol. 1] #390), and Eric Masterson (*Thor* [Vol. 1] #433) all took control of Mjolnir for short periods of time. Beta Ray Bill, an alien warrior originally created by writer-artist **Walt Simonson** in 1983, proved so worthy that Odin eventually gave Bill his own mystical war hammer named Stormbreaker, a weapon equal in power to Mjolnir.

Jack Kirby's vision of Thor was tangibly different than his work on other Marvel strips. The grandiosity of Asgard was a challenge to Kirby; unlike outer space environments, he had to craft not only power and immensity but an environment of elegance and profundity. Kirby's eclectic take on medieval Norse God garb was a colorful patchwork of latex and leather, with characters so multi-colored their costumes seemed more Asian than Germanic. He found the perfect complement in the work of inker Vince Colletta, whose clean, light line lifted Kirby's work from gruff superhero pounding to beautiful, atmospheric poetry. Where the **Hulk** smashed, Thor grasped in an elegant set of moves that were lovingly conveyed.

In addition to the long formative run by writer Lee and artist Kirby, *Thor* has had the privilege of being crafted by some of the comic book industry's most venerable creators. Writers Gerry Conway, Len Wein, Tom DeFalco, Dan Jurgens, and Michael Avon Oeming—among others—have all made contributions to the title, with artists John Buscema, **Neal Adams**, Keith Pollard, and Ron Frenz having given visual shape to the Thunder God throughout his publication history. One of the most notable runs in the series, however, was Simonson's critically acclaimed tenure on the book as writer and artist from *Thor* (Vol. 1) #337–67. He stayed on the title as a writer—and sometimes artist—until issue #382.

Though Simonson's groundbreaking run on *Thor* is considered to be the definitive take on the character after the Lee/Kirby run, several other story arcs have made lasting impressions on fans. "The Eternals Saga," an epic tale spanning 28 issues (*Thor Annual* #7 and *Thor* [Vol. 1] #284–300) follows Thor as he learns about the Eternals and Deviants, genetically engineered superhuman races, and their cosmic creators the Celestials. "The Dark Gods" takes place after the major Marvel crossover event "Heroes Reborn" and chronicles Thor's search for his fellow Asgardians, who have mysteriously gone missing (*Thor* [Vol. 2] #1–13). The "Ragnarok" story arc sees the mythological end of Asgard come to bear, with Thor and his allies locked in a fateful battle they know they will lose (*Thor* [Vol. 2] #80–85).

Marking Thor's return to the Marvel universe, the most recent run in the series (*Thor* Vol. 3) has been written by **J. Michael Straczynski** with pencils from Olivier Coipel. It brings with it a dramatic re-imagining of the Thor mythos, as Thor must rebuild Asgard after the decimation caused by Ragnarok. With Odin gone, the return of Donald Blake, Asgard transported to rural Oklahoma, and Loki taking a female form, the current run is staking ground as a significant extension and modification of *Thor*'s narrative history.

Joshua Plencner

300. **Frank Miller**'s retelling of the Spartan battle of Thermopylae in 480 B.C., *300* was first published in 1998 as a limited edition comic book series from **Dark Horse Comics**, and later released as a trade paperback. Here, Miller, as artist and writer, and Lynn Varley, as colorist, undertake a major challenge of recounting the past: the ability to interweave historical fact with a narrative that is compelling enough for readers to accept the tale as reality.

In the opening salvo of *300*, "Chapter One: Honor," readers are introduced to the Spartana: resilient, harsh, skilled, and loyal combatants. Spartan warriors are the ultimate warriors. As a band of Spartans settle in for the night, they tell tales of battles long past and the heroic adventures of their king, Leonidas, and then drift off to sleep. As they rest, King Leonidas reminisces about the events of the past year, beginning with the sudden arrival of a messenger from King Xerxes of Persia. The messenger sought out the King of Sparta, asking him to capitulate to the Persian Empire. The answer, predictably, is not good for the messenger and his fate is sealed in the depths of a bottomless pit.

"Chapter Two: Duty" finds Leonidas thinking back upon his visit to the Ephors, the priests to the "Old Gods." From these seers he seeks wisdom and guidance. Upon his return, Leonidas consults the Spartan council and is warned against going to war with Persia. In the end, he defies the council and travels to the Hot Gates (Thermopylae) only to see the Persian fleet's boats wrecked upon the seaside rocks. Leonidas's army is jubilant but he is not, thinking to himself, "The fools. The dear young fools. They actually think we have a chance." In this statement is more than a precursor; it is commentary on the experience of a trained soldier who sees the reality of the real battle still to come. King Leonidas is more than just a leader; in this statement he becomes a seer of sorts, seeing the only true path of what will happen.

Any epic tale needs a diversion. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* had Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Miller's *300* has Ephialtes, a deformed Spartan whose only desire is to become a Spartan soldier. Interspersed among "Chapter Three: Glory," Miller gives readers a glimpse at Ephialtes's own quest to become a warrior. His resolve, travels, and kills are tame next to the graphic portrayal of Xerxes's scourge of Spartan scouts.

Ephialtes finally arrives at Leonidas's camp and begs him to join the battle, only to be turned down because he is unable to raise his shield high enough to engage in phalanx, a military move that allows Spartans to form a single rectangular unit in order to fight and protect one another with weaponry. Denied, Ephialtes flings himself over the nearby cliff to his death; however, readers learn (later in the chapter) that he survived his fall. Feeling betrayed by the Gods, he forsakes the Spartan life and seeks out Xerxes.

"Chapter Four: Combat" covers the first day of the final battle. Through graphically detailed imagery, readers see the warrior Spartans holding off the Persian army. During a break in the battle, Leonidas goes to meet his enemy. In this meeting, Xerxes offers Leonidas the chance to surrender in exchange for wealth and power. Sarcasm abounds as Leonidas refuses, saying, "But this kneeling business—I'm afraid killing all those slaves of yours has left me with a nasty cramp in my leg. I think I'll walk it off," which he does, leaving Xerxes camp.



A panel from Frank Miller's graphic novel *300*, next to the corresponding scene from the 2007 film by the same name, directed by Zack Snyder. Warner Bros./Photofest

"Chapter Five: Victory" begins on day two of the great battle. The forces engage one another and the death toll rises, all the while the Spartans are holding their own against the Persians. That night, Leonidas realizes this is the end and prepares his army for the finale. Also, Ephilates finds Xerxes and declares loyalty to him.

At the end, surrounded by Persian soldiers, Xerxes offers Leonidas one last chance to capitulate. Hesitant, he falls to his knees but then suddenly lunges his spear at Xerxes, a call to arms for his troops to attack. The Persian king is wounded, but not killed. However, all of the other Spartans are killed on the spot. The last scene in the book is set a year later and Captain Dilios recounts the story of brave Leonidas going into battle, much the same as was done in Chapter One.

The unique shape of the hardback book is wider than it is tall, forcing the reader to engage the artwork in a different way than traditional comics or graphic novels. This double-page spread format also allows Miller and Varley to detail profile shots or illustrate the sweeping battles from varying perspectives, all the while giving the reader an experience akin to that of watching an epic movie on the silver screen. The detailed drawings creep across some spreads, bleeding into various panels. It is, by many standards, a momentous undertaking, not just for the historical nature of the story but also in constructing a believable story around what little is really known.

In 1999, *300* won **Eisner Awards** for "Best Limited Series," "Best Writer/Artist," and "Best Colorist," and also won **Harvey Awards** for "Best Continuing or Limited Series" and "Best Colorist." In 2007, Warner Brothers released *300* to moviegoers worldwide. The film version was applauded for its visually stunning CGI graphics; however it was also criticized for being historically inaccurate and insensitive in its "Orientalist" depiction of Persians.

Between fact and fiction lays the real story of Thermopylae; but that is not the point with Miller and Varley's *300*. Rather, their rendition engages readers on a different, more emotional level not seen in previous works. In this way it brings history alive for readers to experience, right alongside Leonidas and the Spartan army.

Alec R. Hosterman

TIMELY COMICS. *See* ***Marvel Comics***

TINTIN. The young investigative reporter Tintin, celebrated for his bravery, quick thinking and positive moral outlook, is perhaps the most recognizable European comic-book hero and was **Hergé**'s most successful creation.

On January 10, 1929 in the pages of *Le Petit Vingtième*, the children's supplement of the Belgian Catholic newspaper *Le Vingtième Siècle*, Tintin began his first adventure accompanied by his white fox terrier Snowy. Over the next five decades, the pair was joined by a large cast of supporting characters, including the bungling detectives Thomson and Thompson, the opera singer Bianca Castafiore, Tintin's fellow adventurer Captain Haddock, and the hard of hearing scientist Professor Calculus—in addition to ruthless villains such as Dr. Müller and Rastapopoulos.

The modern Tintin canon comprises 24 books, from the black-and-white *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets* (1930) to the posthumously issued drafts for *Tintin and Alph-Art* (1978–82). A complex publication history means, however, that this tally of 24 books should be very nearly doubled, as the majority of the stories exist in at least two distinct authorial versions. There were also a number of false starts and abandoned projects for which rough sketches have been preserved. All of the *Tintin* narratives were initially published as serials and later converted into book form (in black-and-white until 1942, and then in color). Graphic conventions and narrative content were significantly influenced by the prerequisites of the serial form.

First, drawings had to be easy to reproduce in print. Hence the contained dynamism of Hergé's "clear line" pen strokes and the simple yet highly effective system of graphic notation—speed lines, sweat droplets, stars, spirals, arabesques—used to depict movement and emotional reactions.



The Adventures of Tintin: Cigars of the Pharaoh showing Tintin with his dog, Snowy. Little, Brown & Company/Photofest

Second, each installment had to capture the attention of the reader with a mixture of suspense and entertainment. Hero and reader were driven forward in the face of hostile forces by a certain "will to know," giving heed to both short-range enigmas (revealed from week to week) and the promise of a long-range uncovering of secret information (deferred until the very end). At the same time, compelling depictions of foreign lands provided a note of exoticism while unsettling themes were everywhere held in balance with knockabout routines reminiscent of the *commedia dell'arte*.

As the stories gained in artistic complexity during the 1940s and the 1950s, Hergé increasingly drew inspiration from a personal archive of magazine articles, newspaper cuttings, and a variety of reference books. Borrowings can also be identified from a wide range of classical literature, popular novels, theater, silent cinema and travel writing (some via suggestions from Hergé's friends and collaborators).

Critics occasionally take Hergé to task for his treatment of **race**, gender, and politics, but the books are overwhelmingly positive and little seems to undermine their continued relevance. Indeed, there is something almost universal about Tintin. He is frequently described as a hero without qualities, his ageless neutrality facilitating reader identification, regardless of gender or nationality. While there is certainly some validity to this argument, his more distinctive attributes should not be overlooked.

Above all, Tintin is the personification of a dynamic principle—neatly symbolized by his raised forelock—and expressed through a capacity for purposeful action. Any task, quest, or duty he undertakes is carried through to completion and readers are compelled, at least in imagination, to raise themselves to his level of skill. This goes some way toward explaining the broad and lasting appeal of the series, which has been translated into over 60 languages, and which traces out a fascinating developmental arc.

The early books, from *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets* to *King Ottokar's Sceptre* (1939), serve almost as a play-space within which readers vicariously experience the hero's passage through trials and dangers. Younger readers are thus provided with an opportunity to achieve mastery over common fears and anxieties while safely living out an impulse for adventure.

The intermediate books, from *The Crab with the Golden Claws* (1941) to *Tintin in Tibet* (1960), remain concerned with problem-solving and journeys of discovery—including a mission to the Moon—but are more intricately composed and place a new emphasis on the emerging group of secondary characters. Captain Haddock in particular, raising laughter with his immoderate love of whisky and a unique repertory of extravagant curses, takes on a very prominent role.

The later books, from *The Castafiore Emerald* (1963) to *Tintin and the Picaros* (1976), present a more ironic postmodern *Tintin*, less liked and frequently misunderstood, yet deserving of equal attention. They engage in sophisticated games with the constituent elements of the *Tintin* universe, almost in the manner of experimental fiction, yet at all times within a medium designed to reach a mass audience. The final unfinished adventure, *Tintin and Alph-Art*, would have combined Hergé's two artistic passions: the contemporary art scene and the comic strip world of his fictional hero.

Although Tintin's appearance and behavior undergo changes over the years, he remains at all times a seeker after truth. Hergé, in much the same fashion, continuously aimed at artistic perfection. The original inked sheets bear witness to his refinement and attention to detail, while extensive prepublication materials allow us to reconstruct his working procedures. Large-format preparatory pencil drawings for the last seven books, for example, provide much evidence of the developing work, from the elaboration of alternatives and the working out of compositional problems to last-minute changes of mind (and it is often particularly interesting to discover what Hergé chose not to do).

Notwithstanding the impressive body of secondary literature devoted to *Tintin*, many documents have yet to be studied in detail, most notably Hergé's working papers and a voluminous correspondence (including letters exchanged between Hergé and his publisher). Around 90 percent of Hergé's original artwork is held by the "Studios Hergé." A wide-ranging selection is on display at the Musée Hergé in Belgium, opened in 2009.

Selected Bibliography: Farr, Michael. *Tintin: The Complete Companion*. London: John Murray, 2001; Goddin, Philippe. *Hergé: Chronologie d'une œuvre*. 6 vols. Brussels: Moulinsart, 2000–9.

Raphaël Taylor

TOMB OF DRACULA. The most successful product of **Marvel**'s **horror** revival of the early 1970s, *Tomb of Dracula* was a landmark in the evolution of long-form comic book narratives and is also remembered for introducing the character Blade. From its inception, the **Comics Code** prohibited **vampire** stories, but the controversy over the publication of *Amazing* ***Spider-Man*** #96–98 (1971) without the code seal led to a liberalization of the code, one of the results of which was to permit the portrayal of vampires. Marvel was quick to get into this newly available genre: a vampire villain, Morbius, was introduced in *Amazing Spider-Man* #101 (1971), and in 1972 Marvel added an ongoing series, *Tomb of Dracula*, starring literature's most famous vampire. The art assignment for the series was offered to Bill Everett, but **Gene Colan**, a lifelong Dracula fan, convinced **Stan Lee** to give him the job. The series got off to an inauspicious start: by issue #7 it was on its fourth writer, **Marv Wolfman**, and seemed doomed to cancellation. Wolfman thus felt he had a certain degree of creative freedom and chose to write the series in a personal and experimental vein. Unexpectedly, the series became a high seller and lasted 70 issues, ending only when Colan quit due to alleged creative interference by new editor-in-chief Jim Shooter. Following *Tomb of Dracula*'s cancellation, it was briefly restarted as a black-and-white magazine, and Wolfman and Colan revived *Tomb of Dracula* in 1991 as a four-issue miniseries.

Wolfman's only knowledge of Dracula came from Bram Stoker's novel; he was not a fan of horror movies, and his *Tomb of Dracula* bears little resemblance to conventional works in that genre. It is closer to a **superhero** comic in that it focuses on a cast of heroes with unique abilities who struggle against a supervillain. The villain, of course, is Dracula,

and the principal heroes include Frank Drake, a descendant of Dracula; Rachel van Helsing, a descendant of Dracula's nemesis Abraham van Helsing; Quincy Harker, the elderly son of another of Dracula's foes, Jonathan Harker; and Blade, one of Marvel's most prominent African American characters, a vigilante whose mother was killed by the vampire Deacon Frost while giving birth to him. However, whereas most superhero comics of the time featured episodic narratives whose premises rarely changed, *Tomb of Dracula* had an overarching and evolving storyline that had been planned out years in advance. The series begins by chronicling the struggle between Dracula and the heroes, but eventually Dracula is killed by the mad scientist Doctor Sun, who seeks to turn the entire human race into vampires, and the heroes are forced to revive Dracula and ally with him against Sun. In the second half of the series, Dracula becomes the head of a Satanic cult, claiming to be the devil, but he gains a new enemy: his newborn son, Janus, who magically ages and is revealed as an agent of Heaven. (Unusually for a Marvel comic, *ToD* dealt explicitly with **religion** and did so in a notably sensitive way.) Furthermore, its characters underwent significant change over the course of the series—it lacked the "illusion of growth" typical of contemporary Marvel comics. Dracula (based visually on Jack Palance) is a disgusting monster; his lack of thought balloons discourages the reader from identifying with him, whereas Wolfman makes each of Dracula's victims more sympathetic by giving them names and brief biographies. Yet Dracula also has his noble side. As early as issue #22 he saves a woman from her undead abusive husband; his love for Janus and his wife Domini is genuine, and his struggle with Janus convinces him of the superiority of good to evil, to the point where, in #69, he uses a crucifix to defend children from other vampires. Yet Dracula ultimately proves to be beyond redemption, and the monthly series ends with his death. By contrast, the heroes are changed for the worse by their encounters with Dracula. Whereas the heroes in Stoker's novel have mostly altruistic motivations, the chronically depressed Frank fights Dracula only because he has nothing else to do, while Rachel, Quincy, and Blade are motivated by their desire for revenge on the vampires who killed their loved ones. Eventually Quincy sacrifices his life to kill Dracula. Frank and Rachel are thus left with no purpose in life, and their romance proves unsustainable. The series illustrates Nietzsche's aphorism that whoever fights monsters risks becoming a monster. Because *Tomb of Dracula*'s only title character is the villain, the roster of the heroes is subject to change without notice. Other recurring heroes include Quincy's daughter Edith, the mute Indian Taj Nital, the Dracula groupie Aurora Rabinowitz, the vampiric detective Hannibal King, and the hack writer Harold H. Harold, who provides much-needed comic relief.

Wolfman and Colan collaborated on every issue of the series from #7 onward, and Tom Palmer inked every issue starting with #12. Such longevity for a creative team was almost unheard of at the time and perhaps explains why the series is often praised for its consistency. Colan's painterly pencil work is effectively complemented by Palmer's tight inking.

The characters in *Tomb of Dracula* appeared in many later Marvel titles, including ***X-Men*** *Annual* #6, in which Rachel is turned into a vampire and killed by Wolverine,

and the 1992–94 series *Nightstalkers*, which stars Frank, Blade, and King. A 1980 animated movie based on the series was released in Japan but has never received widespread distribution in the United States. A major motion picture based on Blade, starring Wesley Snipes, was released in 1998, becoming a box office success and spawning two sequels (2002, 2004). The film version of Blade bears only a superficial resemblance to the character from the comics, and the film version of Deacon Frost has nothing in common with the comics version but his name. Wolfman sued Marvel in 1998 for ownership of Blade and Frost, but the court found in favor of Marvel, ruling that Marvel's uses of the character were different enough from the original characters that Wolfman could not claim ownership. This decision was viewed by many as a setback for creators' rights.

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Aaron Kashtan

TOM STRONG. Published between 1999 and 2006, *Tom Strong* is a monthly comic book series created by writer **Alan Moore** and artist Chris Sprouse. The series was one of the initial four monthly titles from the America's Best Comics (ABC) imprint of Wildstorm Comics. Alan Moore—the writer and co-creator of all of the initial ABC comics—was the principal creative force behind the small line of comics. Shortly after Moore, who was given substantial creative freedom, made the deal with **Jim Lee**'s company Wildstorm to publish his books, the publisher was purchased by **DC Comics**, inadvertently making Moore renege on a pledge never to work again with DC. Moore and Sprouse were responsible for most of *Tom Strong's* 36 issues, but several artists and a few writers—including **Ed Brubaker** and **Brian K. Vaughn**—also contributed stories. The series also inspired a 12-issue spin-off, the anthology series *Tom Strong's Terrific Tales*. In 2003, ABC published *The Many Worlds of Tesla Strong*, starring Tom's daughter, Tesla. That year also saw the six-issue miniseries, *Terra Obscura*, which fleshed out the story of a parallel Earth introduced in *Tom Strong*; a second *Terra Obscura* miniseries came the following year. Like the rest of Moore's work with ABC, *Tom Strong* is a genre-bending adventure series that, in this case, merges elements of **superhero** comics with those of comic books' predecessors, pulp fiction, and the adventure novel.

Tom Strong's origin is explained in the first issue, in a story entitled, "How Tom Strong Got Started." His parents are American scientists who, in 1899, locate a supposedly mythical island known as Attabar Teru in the West Indies. Upon arrival, Sinclair Strong assembles "Pneuman," a robotic manservant with prototypical artificial intelligence. Susan is soon impregnated and the couple meets Attabar Teru's other inhabitants, the native Ozu tribe, when some members assist with the delivery of Tom Strong, born in the first year of the 20th century. The Ozu share their customs with the Strongs, including the chewing of the indigenous "goloka root," which promotes vitality and substantially retards the aging process.

The Ozu also allow the Strongs to freely conduct their experiment, which, according to Sinclair Strong, is "to produce a child raised by pure reason, away from society's influence." Young Tom is kept within a pressurized chamber, and administered "progressive schooling" and a vegetarian diet. The experiment is cut short in 1908 when an earthquake devastates the Strongs' laboratory (housed within a dormant volcano), and Tom is orphaned at the age of eight. Removed from his chamber for the first time, Tom Strong spends his formative years under the guidance of the Ozu chief. In 1921, as a brawny and highly scientific young man, Tom decides to finally visit "the world beyond the rainbow mists," with Pneuman as his only companion. Tom travels to his parents' hometown, the fictional American metropolis Millennium City, where he instantly becomes a celebrity as a savior from the city's colorful criminals. Of these flamboyant "science villains," the most notable—and persistent—is the evil Paul Saveen, an enemy cast in both the "mad scientist" and "gentleman crook" molds. Tom eventually returns to Attabar Teru in order to marry the Ozu tribe's princess, Dhalua, making them one of the relatively few interracial couples in mainstream comics, and they produce a daughter, Tesla.

Tom's adventures in Millennium City continue over the course of the century. The family frequently returns to Attabar Teru, but lives primarily in "The Stronghold," a massive skyscraper in Millennium City that functions as residence, laboratory, and fortress; as philanthropists and heroes, the Strongs become the city's biggest celebrities. The regenerative effects of the goloka root keep the Strong family youthful and vital, even on the verge of Tom's centennial birthday. In addition to the Strong family and Pneuman, the regular cast of *Tom Strong* also includes the "educated ape," King Solomon, an intelligent, articulate gorilla with the manners and accent of an Edwardian England gentleman; Tesla's boyfriend Val, the exiled prince of a subterranean society; as well as Timmy Turbo and a handful of pre-pubescent members of Tom's fan club, the Strongmen of America. Frequent flashback scenes, and references to past adventures that go largely unexplained, give the impression of a fully realized world with a rich history.

Moore has said that the premise behind *Tom Strong* was to imagine contemporary comic books if the popularity of **Superman** had not instigated the superhero genre; therefore, *Tom Strong's* cultural ancestors are pulp fiction and popular adventure novels from the early 20th century. However, although Tom Strong's "scientist-adventurer" persona suggests **Doc Savage** and his origin seems undoubtedly influenced by **Tarzan**, *Tom Strong* is still steeped in the tropes and history of superhero comics. In many ways, the foundational model for *Tom Strong* is the pulp adventure, upon which Moore then grafts superhero elements. The superhero genre provides inspiration for stories that involve Strong's analogue Tom Strange, versions of the Strong family from parallel dimensions, and alternate timelines. Additionally, Moore uses frequent flashbacks to evoke not only the character's long life, but also *Tom Strong*'s nonexistent publication history, and the types of adventures Tom has at various points in his 100-year biography roughly correspond to the trends in superhero comics at that particular historical

moment. In fact, many *Tom Strong* covers are parodies of those of famous superhero comics throughout the decades. Yet, Moore also manipulates superhero conventions. For example, although the Strongs have physical encounters with their enemies, the ultimate resolutions are generally peaceful and brought about by compromise.

Strong characterization and clever storytelling makes *Tom Strong* notable, but the potency of the series is in its playful demonstration of the power of fiction. While still maintaining consistent—as well as relatively mature and sophisticated—characterization, Moore uses *Tom Strong* as a vehicle for a wide range of stories, including lighthearted adventures, tense action-thrillers, melodrama, quirky **science fiction**, and **satire**. Many fans who expected a straightforward adventure series bristled at the drastic fluctuations of tone, but, in doing so, Moore highlights fiction's flexibility and adaptability, qualities that are particularly potent in comics. Without disrupting the basic integrity of either, Tom Strong the character, and *Tom Strong* the series, can exist and operate in a nearly infinite variety of ways—depending on context, subject matter, authorial intention, and reader's response—and Moore seems determined to demonstrate that Tom Strong can succeed, in different ways and for varying purposes, in every milieu and genre. Representative of all fiction, *Tom Strong* (and Tom Strong) is a vehicle for the expression of ideas: stable enough to maintain coherence, yet malleable enough to serve any number of possible artistic purposes and styles.

Jackson Ayres

TOTH, ALEX (1928–2006). Alexander "Alex" Toth was an American writer, penciller, inker, colorist, letterer, and cover artist. Although remembered more for his time as a character and art designer for the Hanna-Barbera Animation Studios (designing characters like Space Ghost, Birdman, and Jonny Quest), Toth was an acclaimed comic book artist who is also remembered for his introduction of adult design while drawing the comic book based on Disney's *Zorro* television series, and for redesigning **DC**'s stable of **superhero** characters for the extremely popular *Super Friends* television series. While not a household name, Toth was, in the words of *Comics Journal* editor Gary Groth, "among the greatest comic book artists ever . . . an artist's artist, just because of his mastery of the form. And though not particularly popular among general comic book readers, every cartoonist who cared deeply about [. . .] craft learned something by looking at [Toth's] work" (Hevesi 2006).

Toth was born in Manhattan to a father who worked as a printer. He graduated from the High School of Industrial Arts and was taken under the wing of Milton Caniff, the creator of the comic strip *Terry and the Pirates*. Because of his apprenticeship with Caniff, Sheldon Mayer, an editor at DC Comics, hired Toth in 1947 to work on ***Green Lantern***, ***The Flash***, *The Atom*, and *Dr. Mid-Nite*. Over the next two decades, he developed a sparse style, employing sharp contrasts through working for DC and as the "ghost" illustrator of Warren Tufts's *Casey Ruggles*, a realistic strip set during the California Gold Rush of 1849. Not being allowed to create and design his own characters, Toth left DC and moved to California in 1952 to start a career with Standard Comics.

Toth was drafted into the military in 1954 and served in Tokyo, where he wrote and drew a weekly adventure strip, *Jon Fury*, for a military base paper. After returning to the United States in 1956, he got a job with Dell Comics and was selected to work on the comic book series based on the Walt Disney Company's television series, *Zorro*.

In 1960, Toth left Dell to work as an art director in animation because he was beginning to see the comic book industry as too interested in producing violent products. 1961 was his breakout year in television animation, as he was offered a job with the Hanna-Barbera Company. At Hanna-Barbera, he was able to create his own line of superheroes, as well as re-design the **Fantastic Four** for their first television series in 1967.

During the 1970s, Toth returned to DC Comics with the short-lived series *Hot Wheels*. He created the character Jesse Bravo, a daredevil pilot, for the comic book *Bravo for Adventure*. In 1973, Toth became art director on Hanna-Barbera's *Super Friends*, an effort to bring the DC characters to the children of the 1970s,

Toth died on May 27, 2006, at his home in Burbank, California at the age of 77. According to his son, Eric, he died of heart failure while at his drawing board.

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Jason Gallagher

TRANSMETROPOLITAN. A 60-issue series published initially by the Helix imprint and later by the Vertigo imprint of **DC Comics** and written by **Warren Ellis** with art by Darick Robertson, *Transmetropolitan* is the story of gonzo journalist Spider Jerusalem in an unnamed postmodern city of the future. The series began publication in 1997 and ended with the publication of *Transmetropolitan* #60 in 2002. Besides the series proper, two stand-alone, one-shot stories have also been published: *Transmetropolitan: I Hate It Here* (2000) and *Transmetropolitan: Filth of the City* (2001). These contain excerpted columns by Spider Jerusalem as illustrated by a number of comics artists. Also, two short stories were published in the anthologies *Vertigo: Winter's Edge II* ("Edgy Winter") and *Vertigo: Winter's Edge III* ("Next Winters"). *Transmetropolitan* has also been released in a series of collections as well.

Transmetropolitan chronicles the return of Jerusalem to a future megalopolis simply known as the City. His return from the mountain retreat that has been his home for the preceding five years only occurs under the threat of lawsuit from his former publisher. The first year of the series follows Spider as he irritates the local government and reacquaints himself with the City in the company of his "filthy assistants," Channon Yarrow and Yelana Rossini. The second year sees Spider, whose original fame and fortune were due to his coverage of the previous presidential election, forced to cover politics

as another presidential election campaign grinds on. His rare and genuine affection for Dr. Vita Severn, Political Director for Senator Gary Callahan, leads to a backhanded endorsement from Spider of Callahan, whom he refers to as the Smiler. Spider later exposes Callahan's running mate, though, as having been grown in a "bastard farm" within the last two years by an extreme fascist wing of Callahan's party. While Callahan's ratings plummet, the approval rating of Severn remain extremely high, and as she is about to address the press to answer Spider's charges, she is assassinated on the orders of Callahan. The sympathy vote for Callahan wins him not only his party's nomination, but ultimately the presidency. Over the course of the next few years, Spider, with the help of his "filthy assistants," finally amasses enough evidence to expose Callahan as a murderer and bring down his presidency.

Transmetropolitan contains many postmodern elements. Commodification, loss of historical sense, waning of affect, and fragmentation are all readily illustrated by the City. Ellis quickly establishes the City as a postmodern consumer heaven/hell where anything and everything is for sale. Denizens of the city can buy virtually anything, including Ebola Cola, bowel disruptors, dolphin steaks, trained attack cancers that grow on faces, packets of fresh baby seal eyes, powdered children, both temporary and permanent body modification, and air Jesus sports shoes that enable the wearer to walk on water, to name only a small sample. Everything is a commodity, and everything is for sale. Spider also notes that City dwellers seem to live more in the present "because it's difficult to refer back to the past." This loss of historicity is another symptom of the postmodern condition. Humanity has also become a relative term, with some deciding to become half alien, others becoming cyborgs, and some even becoming "foglets," which are billions of tiny machines that float in the air. Yet Ellis keeps them all recognizably human in their behavior. Oddly enough, though, even with all this technological progress, the City is still saturated with religion, although in a highly fragmented way: it has "one new religion invested every hour" (*Transmetropolitan* #6).

Ellis utilizes *Transmetropolitan* as a vehicle to satirize media, politics, **religion**, marketing, and consumer capitalism, among many other subjects. The dark humor injected into the series, however, only serves to balance the stories of very real suffering that happen every day in the City. Spider may be a loathsome person, but he does believe in the truth, and it is this unwavering belief that drives him to confront President Callahan.

Will Allred

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UNDERGROUND AND ADULT COMICS. Commonly referred to as "**comix**," underground comics are a form of outsider comics art characterized by one or more of the following: counter-culture ideology, irreverence, and depictions of drug use, graphic sex, and other subject matters usually taboo in comic books. Because they are usually self-published or published by a small press, these comics manifest an artistic freedom and personal vision seldom found in mainstream comic books.

Across the United States, creative and unconventional young people who had grown up reading the genre fantasies mass produced by the East Coast comic book industry began to make their own comics with an aesthetic derived from sources as diverse as **Harvey Kurtzman's EC Comics**, Rick Griffin's surfer magazine cartoons, Robert Williams's dragster illustrations, and even the t-shirt designs of Big Daddy Roth. The content and even the style of the artwork were a conscious rebellion against **Comics Code** Authority restrictions, editorial policies, and genre formulas of traditional comic books. They did not compete with traditional comic books on the newsstands, but developed a distribution system of alternative bookstores, record stores, and head shops. These convention-defying, politically charged, and independently produced comic books eventually became widely known as *underground comix*.

The underground comix movement is strongly associated with San Francisco, but it has roots in Texas, Cleveland, Wisconsin, New York, and possibly Tijuana. There is no proof that any of the crude little sex comics that began appearing in the 1930s and became know as Eight-Pagers or Tijuana Bibles were actually produced in Tijuana. The creators of these wallet-sized sex romps had to be much more underground than the comix artists of the 1960s and 70s, because the eight-pagers were illegal due to both obscenity violations and copyright infringement. The Tijuana Bibles depicted, in

graphic detail, celebrities, political figures, or fictional characters using obscene language and enjoying a wide variety of sex acts, most of which were illegal at the time. By far the favorite subjects were characters from the newspaper comic strips. By the 1950s, the eight-pagers were rare artifacts and most of the underground comix creators were probably only vaguely aware of them as anti-authoritarian ancestors. More direct influences were the early *Mad* and even the outrageously gruesome and occasionally politically subversive **horror** and **science fiction** comics of the 1950s, done by creators who were more likely to have been exposed to the Tijuana Bibles.

Some of those influential creators might have also been exposed to the so-called kinky comics that developed in the subculture of sexual fetishism. One of the pioneers of these comics was John Alexander Scott Coutts, who changed his name to John Willie when he moved to New York in the mid-1940s and began publishing the bondage and fetish magazine *Bizarre*. Willie's bondage comic "Sweet Gwendoline" was serialized in *Bizarre* during the late 1940s, reprinted by Irving Klaw in the 1950s, and collected in a graphic novel in 1958. Fetish entrepreneur Irving Klaw also serialized the bondage comics of Gene Bilbrew (Eneg), Eric Stanton, and others in his *Movie Star News* magazine during the 1950s and published some of their collected stories in book form through his Nutrix imprint. These kinky comics were not widely available and more people knew them by reputation than ever saw one. However, they did establish a tradition of drawing taboo sexual practices that a number of underground cartoonists gleefully continued.

The tap root of the undergrounds goes back to **William Gaines**'s infamous EC line that included *Vault of Horror*, *Crime SuspenStories*, and *Mad*. For approximately five years the EC writers and artists crafted tightly plotted, but lurid, short stories that delighted their adolescent fans (including virtually all of the future underground cartoonists) and shocked polite society. The gore, violence, sensuality, and occasional political commentary of these works strained against and often violated the boundaries of what was considered good taste until EC became the primary target of the of the wrath of censors in the form of the Comics Code Authority (CCA). When most of Gaines's titles were denied code approval and distributors refused to carry them, EC stayed afloat on the back of one title—*Mad*, which shifted to a magazine format and thus moved outside the purview of the code.

Most of the pioneer underground cartoonists cite the Kurtzman-edited *Mad* magazine as a major influence on their consciousness and their style. Kurtzman left EC in 1956 due to a dispute with Gaines over control of *Mad*. After two failed attempts to start his own humor magazine (*Trump* and *Humbug*, both in 1957), Kurtzman had a remarkable five-year run editing and doing much of the writing for *Help!*, a magazine with even more aggressive and risqué humor than he had employed in *Mad*. Kurtzman not only foreshadowed the content of the soon to emerge underground comix, but he provided encouragement and a taste of publication to future comix superstars **Robert Crumb**, Jay Lynch, Gilbert Shelton, and Skip Williamson in the amateur section of *Help!*.

It is difficult to identify when and where the first underground comic book was "published," but a strong case can be made for Austin, Texas, as the birthplace of underground comix. In the fall of 1962, Gilbert Shelton took over as editor of *Texas Ranger* humor magazine at the University of Texas in Austin. The adventures of Shelton's superhero parody, Wonder Wart-Hog, appeared in all but one of the issues Shelton edited and became the first underground comix "hit." Just weeks before his *Texas Ranger* debut, the "hog of steel" was presented to a national audience in the pages of *Help!*, and via a profile in *Mademoiselle* magazine. Shelton, Jack Jackson, and Tony Bell began publishing *The Austin Iconoclastic Newsletter* (known simply as *THE*) in 1964. Six of the seven issues contained a one-page Frank Stack comic, "The Adventures of J" (the name Jesus was spelled out in the seventh installment). Shelton collected about a dozen of the Jesus strips in a photocopied 14-page comic book that he distributed to friends in Austin. The fifth issue of *THE* advertised *God Nose Adult Comix* by Jack Jackson, but signed **Jaxon**. Jackson's friends in the state capital print shop ran off 1,000 copies of the 42-page *God Nose* comic book. In 1968, the underground newspaper *The Austin Rag* published the first of Shelton's comics about The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers, who would eventually become the best known and most widely marketed characters from the underground comix.

Underground newspapers such as the *East Village Other* and the *Berkeley Barb* began appearing in the mid-1960s. Robert Crumb turned to the underground newspapers as a promising venue for his LSD-inspired creations of 1967 (including Mr. Natural, Eggs Ackley, and Angelfood McSpade). The Philadelphia-based underground newspaper *Yarrowstalks* published a couple of Crumb's strips in its first two issues during the summer of 1967. It was underground newspaper publisher Don Donahue who paid for printing 5,000 copies of Crumb's ***Zap*** *Comix* #1. Donahue sold the majority of the print run to Third World Distribution from where the books went to head shops and record stores across the nation.

With issue #2, *Zap* became an anthology and provided an outlet for the talents of Manuel "Spain" Rodriguez, Victor Moscoso, Rick Griffin, and **S. Clay Wilson.** *Zap* inspired Jay Lynch and Skip Williamson to convert their humor magazine, *The Chicago Mirror*, to *Bijou Funnies*, a comix anthology that published some of the early work of **Art Spiegelman**.

A very stoned Ron Turner encountered a copy of *Zap* and was inspired to create a benefit comic book, *Slow Death Funnies*, for an ecology center in Berkeley. The ecology center did not care for the comic, but with the help of Gary Arlington, proprietor of the San Francisco Comic Book Company, Turner sold enough copies that he began running Last Gasp Eco-Funnies out of his garage. **Trina Robbins** convinced Turner to publish *It Ain't Me, Babe*, the first all-women produced comic book. Robbins helped form the wimmen's comix collective, which, beginning in 1972, produced seven issues of *Wimmen's Comix* for Last Gasp. Another significant title from Last Gasp was Justin Green's ***Binky Brown Meets the Virgin Mary***, the inspiration for many of the autobiographical **alternative** comics of the following decades. Turner also began to distribute other publishers' books,

such as the 1971 *Air Pirate Funnies* with a parody of Disney characters that embroiled Dan O'Neill and his fellow Air Pirates in a decade-long legal battle.

As a comix scene developed in the wake of *Zap*, it was only natural that it gravitated toward the counter-culture center, San Francisco. In the summer of 1968, Shelton packed up his old Plymouth, headed west and joined Jackson, Dave Moriaty, Fred Todd, Janis Joplin, and other transplanted Texas who were becoming known around San Francisco as the "Texas Mafia." When the Texas Mafia bought a used printing press in hopes of printing rock posters for fellow University of Texas dropout Chet Helms's Family Dog Production, it was the beginning of Rip Off Press, which quickly became a major publisher of underground comix, publishing such titles as *Hydrogen Bomb Funnies* and *Freak Brothers*.

Before Rip Off Press, The Print Mint was the dominant publisher of underground comix. Their large print runs and practice of paying royalties to the artists for every edition made it possible for some cartoonists to make a living from their comix. However, as more cartoonists questioned the aesthetic judgment and accounting practices of The Print Mint, other publishers entered the underground scene. When Wisconsin-based cartoonist Denis Kitchen became disgruntled with The Print Mint he started **Kitchen Sink** Enterprises in conjunction with Krupp Comic Works in 1970.

At the peak of the underground phenomenon in 1973, there were over 300 comix titles in print; a Comix Convention was held in Berkeley, and it was not unusual for a book to sell 40,000 copies, and the most popular titles achieved six-figure circulation. Yet, by the mid-1970s, the death rattle of underground comix was unmistakable. With the end of the conflict in Vietnam, youth subculture was no longer galvanized by the anti-war movement, and by the mid-1970s many former flower children had started families, taken jobs, and were paying mortgages. They were less receptive to the counter-culture messages of the underground comix. The informal distribution system was also under siege. The 1973 Supreme Court ruling in Miller vs. California reaffirmed that obscenity was not protected by the First Amendment and made it more dangerous to sell the more explicit underground material. As more states attempted to make it against the law to sell drug paraphernalia, many of the head shops that sold underground comix were forced out of business.

Even the creators themselves were changing. The informal cartoonists' cooperatives of the late 1960s had become publishing companies, and the subculture had become an industry, with less distance from and less revulsion for mainstream comics. Hoping to tap into the underground market, **Marvel** publisher **Stan Lee** convinced Denis Kitchen to edit the 1974 *Comix Book* for Marvel. *Comix Book* featured work from top underground talents, but because the stories were too tame for the underground audience and too bizarre for the mainstream fans, Marvel only published three issues before Kitchen Sink took over publication for the final two issues.

Both the revolutionary and risqué aspects of underground comix were continued, at least to some degree, by former underground cartoonists taking subgenres of the underground comix to new audiences, by comics in a magazine format that allowed

more freedom, and by a new distribution model that circumvented the Comics Code and encouraged independent publishers. Most recently, the Internet has become an important vehicle for the on-line distribution of these successors to the underground comix.

Tijuana Bibles sometimes featured gay or lesbian orgies, but the GLBT comic book genre began with underground comix such as *Come Out Comix* (1972), *Dynamite Damsels* (1976), and *Gay Heart Throbs* (1976). In 1980 Howard Cruse edited the *Gay Comix* anthology for Kitchen Sink. The anthology not only featured the work of pioneering underground cartoonists such as Mary Wings, Roberta Gregory, and Trina Robbins, but also provided an outlet for the work of up-and-coming cartoonists such as Donna Barr and Sam Kieth. Cruse only edited the first four issues, but the anthology continued for 25 issues and helped insure that transgressive comic book work survived beyond the demise of the underground. For example, in 1991 Roberta Gregory introduced Midge or Bitchy Bitch in *Naughty Bits* and Diane DiMassa began combining outrageous violence and dry wit in *The Hothead Paison*.

Comic books by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender creators have matured in content and have found an audience far beyond the GLBT community. Some of the most critically acclaimed graphic novels have been produced by GLBT cartoonists. Howard Cruse spent years crafting the semi-autobiographical graphic novel ***Stuck Rubber Baby*** that was eventually published by **DC**'s Paradox Press imprint in 1995. Alison Bechdel's ***Fun Home*** was a finalist for the 2006 National Book Critics Circle Award and *The Guardian* included *Fun Home* in its list of 1,000 novels everyone must read.

There were a handful of underground comix, for instance the earliest offerings of Turner's Last Gasp Eco-Funnies, that were intended to educate about and advocate for social issues. Some of these works were no doubt an inspiration to Leonard Rifas when he put together *All Atomic Comics* in 1976. Rifas established EduComics and also pursued other projects, such as *Corporate Crime Comics* and *Tobacco Comics* that went beyond the visceral anti-establishment attitude of underground comix to make reasoned attacks on hegemonic institutions. In 1980, Seth Toboman and Peter Kuper channeled the ideological spirit of the underground comix when they created the activist anthology *World War 3 Illustrated*.

Except as an object of parody, undergrounds generally eschewed genre fiction, but even as the underground comix movement was getting underway there were comics in magazine format that combined mainstream genres with the more prurient aspects of the undergrounds. The **horror**, **science fiction**, and **fantasy** magazines published by **Warren Publications**, Skywald, and others contained little of the social commentary of the underground comix, but because magazines were not subject to the restrictions of the Comics Code Authority, they provided plenty of nudity and gore. Warren's first magazine comics anthology, *Creepy*, appeared in 1964, followed two years later by *Eerie*; the erotic *Vampirella* debuted in 1969. At the end of 1970, Skywald entered the magazine comic book market with *Nightmare*. Also in the 1970s, Marvel launched an array

of fantasy and horror comics, such as *Savage Tales* and *Tales of the Zombie*, containing material that could not have received code approval.

In 1977 *National Lampoon Presents French Comics (the Kind Men Like)* introduced **European comics** erotica to an American audience. It also tested the waters for their launch of ***Heavy Metal***, an American version of the French magazine *Métal Hurlant*, later that year. Inspired by the best of the American underground comix, *Metal Hurlant*, which debuted in 1974, offered wildly imaginative science fiction and fantasy in comics form. Early issues of *Heavy Metal* relied heavily on reprints of material from the European magazine, but soon had home-grown content, including the lushly rendered sex and violence of Richard Corben.

Comic book writer and entrepreneur George Caragonne, along with Mark McClellan, sold *Penthouse* publisher Bob Guccione on the idea of *Penthouse Comix*. The title was launched in 1994 and ran for 33 issues. Guccione's subsequent adult comix titles, *Men's Adventure Comix*, *Omni Comix*, and *Penthouse Max*, only lasted a matter of months. Penthouse paid top rates and attracted talent such as Richard Corben, Gray Morrow, Adam Hughes, and Arthur Suydam.

The advent of the direct market distribution of comic books in the 1970s allowed independents, alternatives, and even a few of the residual undergrounds to be sold side-by-side with mainstream comics in comic book specialty stores. Comic books distributed through the direct market did not have to carry the Comics Code seal that was required on newsstand comics, and the comics specialty shops attracted an adult clientele. These conditions encouraged the emergence of independent publishers who provided edgier content. One of the earliest and most significant of these independent publications was Mike Friedrich's *Star*Reach* anthology that debuted in 1974. It was considered a ground level comic, a blending of the mainstream and the underground. *Star*Reach* allowed mainstream creators such as **Walt Simonson**, Jim Starlin and **Howard Chaykin** to produce work that mainstream publishers would have found unacceptable, but the result was generally no more radical that what was appearing in Marvel's black and white magazines—genre adventures with a few topless women.

However, Chaykin, perhaps stimulated by this taste of freedom, went on to create comics more reminiscent of the underground comix. He shocked mainstream audiences with his suggestive ***American Flagg!*** comic, but his 1988 erotic noir miniseries *Black Kiss*, with its dark comedy and explicit sex, became one of the most controversial comic books of the decade. The 1980s and 1990s were decades in which sex comics proliferated. In 1984, Larry Welz began *Cherry Poptart* (later simply *Cherry*), a sex-filled and **satire** laced series drawn in the style of **Archie** comics. The title was first published by Last Gasp, later by Tundra and Kitchen Sink, and eventually self-published by Welz. Former exotic dancer Sylvie Rancourt and artist Jacques Boivin teamed to create *Melody: The True Story of a Nude Dancer*, which was published by Kitchen Sink beginning in 1988. When **Fantagraphics** was in financial trouble in 1990, Groth funded his literary comics with an Eros line of comics that offered every aspect of erotica, from virtually plotless sex romps, to hardcore bondage and discipline, to parody. Also in the early 1990s, rocker Glenn

Danzig's Verotik line of comics offered characters ranging from demonesses to zombie hookers in a heady mix of horror and sex.

The first publisher specializing in graphic novels, the New York based NBM, began publishing European albums in English in 1976. The Eurotica imprint brought the erotic work of Milo Manara, Georges Pichard, and other Europeans to American audiences. The Amerotica imprint has had limited offerings, but did publish Michael Manning's S&M hit *The Spider Garden*. NBM also issued trade paperback collections of works such as Reed Waller and Kate Worley's ***"Omaha," the Cat Dancer***, a soap opera with anthropomorphic characters engaged in abundant and graphically depicted sex. Omaha first appeared in a strip in the 1978 anthology *Vootie*, became a series issued sporadically by a variety of publishers, and the finale of the story was serialized in NBM's erotic anthology *Sizzle* beginning in 2006.

Japanese comics (**manga**) with a sexual aspect had been around for decades, but comic books referred to as *ecchi*, for the milder form, and *hentai*, for the more perverse works, became something of a phenomenon in Japan during the 1970s. For some time only the most dedicated manga fans outside Japan knew about these comics, but as scans became available online erotic manga gained a following worldwide. The Internet has allowed for a proliferation of readily available sex comics. Content ranges from those sites like Dirty Comics that offer single character titles, such as *Chicas*, created by a single cartoonist, to online "publishers" like Adult Comics that offer half a dozen different titles by a variety of creators to Comixxx Archive with hundreds of comics, some original and some scanned from print comics. On the darker side there are the extreme S&M comics offered on sites like DOComics, which began as a marketing tool for the printed fetish comics of Gary Roberts, Tempelton, and others, but like many online comics sites, has begun selling only electronic PDF versions of the comics.

Even mainstream creators began to push the boundaries and find varying degrees of freedom from the constraints of the Comics Code. Following the popularity of Marvel's ***Conan the Barbarian***, which debuted in 1970, fantasy comics emerged as a popular genre. Fantasy comics always contained an erotic element that ranged from chain mail bikinis in traditional format publications, to full frontal nudity, in magazine format. Marvel's *Red Sonja* was mildly titillating, but artist Frank Thorne left the Red Sonja book to create his own warrior woman, Ghita, who was prone to lose her chainmail bikini and fight topless or nude. During the 1980s he did a *Li'l Abner* parody, *Moonshine McJuggs*, for *Playboy* and created a couple of hardcore erotic series, *The Iron Devil* and *The Devil's Angel*.

Mature content in the mainstream has been most evident at DC Comics. When DC began the Vertigo imprint the titles were crafted not merely for adult readers, but for sophisticated readers. Sex and violence were plentiful in some of the titles, but it never seemed gratuitous. The protagonists in ***Preacher*** have hearty sexual appetites and the villains engage in a wide range of sexual deviance. *The Extremist* presents an adventure set in a highly fictionalized version of San Francisco's fetish scene. However, it was the moral dilemmas, fascinating characters, and clever storytelling that attracted readers to these and

other Vertigo titles. The books under the Marvel Max imprint and the occasional adult title from **Image Comics**, such as the tongue-in-cheek adventures of a super-powered prostitute in *The Pro*, often seemed sophomoric compared to the Vertigo books. As DC and Marvel tested the boundaries of what was allowable during the 1970s and 1980s, the code was repeatedly relaxed. Eventually, it became irrelevant. Marvel opted out in 2001, and DC only submits selected titles intended for young readers.

Kitchen Sink, Last Gasp and Rip Off Press survived beyond the 1970s by diversifying their offerings, including reprinting classic comics material and publishing the emerging alternative comics. The underground comix tradition has been most directly sustained by the alternative comics that began to appear in the mid-1970s as underground comix were fading away. Alternative comics are self-published or small-press works that resist the clichés of mainstream genre fiction in order to present a personal vision, but (unlike underground comix) they are aimed at the general culture rather than a particular subculture.

In 1976, **Harvey Pekar**, a file clerk in Cleveland veterans hospital, decided to chronicle his daily frustrations and occasional triumphs in an ironically titled comic book, ***American Splendor***. Pekar used old jazz records to entice acquaintance Robert Crumb to draw his script. *American Splendor* is one of the earliest examples of the type of comic book that has come to be referred to as alternative comic.

Arcade magazine was created by editors Art Spiegelman and Bill Griffith to compete in a mainstream magazine market, but the magazine never got distribution beyond the dwindling underground outlets. *Arcade*'s cancellation in 1976, after only seven issues, is sometimes pointed to as the end of the underground movement. Yet *Arcade* can also be viewed as a transition from an underground vibe to an alternative aesthetic that was more evident in the experimental ***RAW***. Spiegelman and future wife Françoise Mouly published the first issue of this comics anthology in 1981. In *RAW* #2 Spiegelman began serializing ***Maus*** as a mini-comic insert. The 11 issues of *RAW* contained work by both underground stalwarts and emerging alternative cartoonists, such as Gary Panter and Charles Burns. About the time *RAW* was being conceived Robert Crumb created the anthology ***Weirdo*** to fill the void left by the collapse of the underground comix industry and the cancellation of *Arcade*. Crumb featured work by a number of his underground contemporaries, but he also sought out undiscovered talent. When Crumb passed the editorship of *Weirdo* to **Peter Bagge** the book took on more of a punk sensibility and became an important venue for the work of new wave cartoonists.

Arcade, *RAW*, and *Wierdo* were rooted in the underground comix, but they created an alternative to both the underground and the mainstream. Former superhero fan Gary Groth was converted to this new aesthetic; he not only championed alternative comics as publisher and editor of *The Comics Journal*, but in 1982 his company, Fantagraphics, began publishing innovative comics aimed at an adult audience. The first offering was ***Love and Rockets***, in which the **Hernandez Brothers** told character-driven tales with a Latino perspective that was unique in American comics. With an attitude that was often considered elitist, self-aggrandizing and antagonistic toward the mainstream, Fantagraphics made

enemies, but they also did more than most publishers to force the comic book medium to mature in the 1980s.

In 1989, Chris Oliveros began the Canadian Drawn and Quarterly to publish an anthology of art and literary comics in the experimental tradition of *RAW*. Soon the company expanded to publish ongoing comic book series and graphic novels by such notable creators as Adrian Tomine, **Chester Brown**, and Julie Doucet. Drawn and Quarterly publishes works that might have occasional sex scenes, but are adult by virtue of the intelligence with which they examine the human condition.

Top Shelf Productions, which began in 1997, has published work by **Eddie Campbell**, Craig Thompson, Nate Powell and other critically acclaimed cartoonists. Founders Chris Staros and Brett Warnock feel part of their mission as a publisher is to change the perception of comic books by getting works of merit into the marketplace. ***Lost Girls***, **Alan Moore** and Melinda Gebbie's work of erotica featuring the children's literature icons Dorothy, Wendy and Alice began in Stephen R. Bissette's *Taboo* anthology in 1991 and was eventually collected in three volumes by Top Shelf Productions. The work brings together the traditions and evolving ambitions of comic books as an outsider art form. Featuring popular culture characters reminiscent of the Tijuana Bibles, it blends explicit sex with social commentary reminiscent of the undergrounds, and aspires to make pornography, the term Moore prefers for the work, an aesthetic and intellectual experience that can be enriching rather than soulless or merely escapist.

Underground creators and publishers had a fierce commitment to freedom of expression that could produce offensive work, but also stimulated creativity and experimentation. As the creators matured there developed an impressive variety of work in the underground comix. This work inspired the next generation of cartoonists to create alternative comic books and graphic novels that, due to their sophistication of theme and form, are beginning to find acceptance in mainstream culture.

See also: Satire

Randy Duncan

V

VAMPIRES AND ZOMBIES. While vampires and zombies have been common stock for films and books for much of the 20th century, their presence in comic books has not been consistent due to censorship practices in the mid-1950s. In the early comic industry of the 1920s and 1930s, comics steered clear of tales involving vampires, zombies and most **horror** motifs. Horror comics arose in the 1940s and with them also came an abundance of stories presenting vampires and zombies.

Vampires and zombies have been used in many ways throughout history to represent fears and anxieties about death; particularly the disruption of a peaceful transition into some sort of afterlife. However, these undead creatures are also used to reveal human fear of fates worse than death. Common elements include returning from the dead, biting or bodily fluid exchange as a means of infecting, and significant violence to permanently kill the creature (stake through the hearts for vampires and blunt trauma to the head or decapitation for zombies). Vampires are known to have a range of supernatural powers including flight, body transformation, telepathy, and super-strength; while zombies rarely have any powers, they typically have a maniacal appetite for human flesh. Both are typically depicted as gaunt and pale figures with vampires weakened or killed by sunlight but often appearing relatively normal with the exception of protruding fangs.

Zombies are often reanimated in a posthumous state, rotting flesh, disheveled appearance and all. Most early zombies narratives (though few contemporary ones) are connected with typically non-Western spiritual beliefs, particularly from African and Caribbean cultures in the form of Voodoo. Zombies can also be singularly reanimated corpses seeking revenge for personal injustices or cursed begotten creatures. However in the last few decades, zombies have largely represented a plague of

human mindlessness triggered by any number of reasons including disease, spiritual invocation, alien infestation, or scientific experimentation.

Vampires often come from non-Western sources (for instance Dracula comes from the periphery of Europe and the Ottoman Empire), but their mythology is deeply rooted in Christian theology; vampires are generally vulnerable to crosses, holy water, and other Christian relics. While the vampire also invokes anxieties about safe transition into the afterlife, their more conscious nature and more calculated approach to survival means their narratives are predatory by nature. The vampire is seductive, scheming, and often subtle in its actions, while the zombies tend to be mindless, ceaseless, and simplistic. Because of its consciousness and overall alluring nature, vampires also carry more over erotic (heterosexual and homosexual) undertones. Over the years, vampires more than zombies have become sympathetic antagonists and even in some narratives actual protagonists.

Several external sources have influenced comic depictions of vampires and zombies in the 1940s and 1950s. Bram Stoker's classic book, *Dracula* (1897), its predecessor novella, *Carmilla* (1872) by Joseph Sheridan LeFanu, and several cinematic adaptations—including F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1923) and Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931)—helped to shape the early manifestations of vampires in comics, while Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, many short stories of H. P. Lovecraft (in particular, "Herbert West: The Reanimator"), and films such as Victor Halperin's *White Zombie* (1932), Jean Yarbrough's *King of the Zombies* (1941), Jacques Tourneur's *I Walked With Zombies* (1943) created the backbone of the popular understanding of the zombie during this time. These sources helped shape the visual depiction, the mythological background, and the narrative range of vampire and zombie comics for much of their early history.

There is some fluidity in these definitions and portrayals of "vampire" and "zombie" since traits like genre conventions can fluctuate or be manipulated in order to keep stories fresh and interesting. Therefore, in some stories, vampirism might be identified as a blood-born virus; in others vampires might have an aversion to sunlight but have no need to return to the tomb during the day. Also, one's status as a zombie can sway back and forth depending on the depiction. Characters inspired by Shelley's *Frankenstein* are the best example. In narratives that stick closely to the original story, Frankenstein's monster is less often seen as a zombie since the creature is eloquent, quick-witted, and ultimately, left to his own devices in the Arctic at story's end, wanting nothing to do with humanity. However, Frankenstein stories inspired by the James Whale film, *Frankenstein* (1931), are more likely to be read as a zombie since the Boris Karloff version of the monster is lumbering, monosyllabic, and, constructed in large part from a freshly buried body, much more clearly than the original novel suggests. Mummies and ghouls, too, have a way of fitting or being excluded from the category of zombie depending on the circumstance of their creation, their means of destruction, and intentions as such beings. While vampire stories were easily identifiable, the same could not be said for zombie stories. Many horror stories of the 1940s and 1950s featured people who came back from the dead but for different reasons and with different capabilities. Many

returned to avenge their death, others came because they were just overwhelmingly evil, and still more were beckoned from the grave or revived by the living. These were the major tropes for zombie stories in the late 1940s and 1950s.

Few stories containing horror were published in the 1930s and usually the horrific elements were mere extensions of the some other genre story. Typically, ***Classics Illustrated's* adaptation** of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in 1943 is identified as the first horror comic. *Eerie Comics* #1 (1947) is often credited as the first ongoing horror series, though there is some debate since Dick Briefer's *Frankenstein* series (1945) was inspired by horror but often the early issues were more humor than horror. Regardless, by the end of the 1940s, vampires and zombies were being featured prominently in many horror comics.

Often, early vampire stories were formulaic in that they followed in the tradition of both the film and book versions of *Dracula*. For instance, in a story published in *Adventures into the Unknown* #3 (1948), "The Vampire Prowls" features many things that invoke the film, *Dracula*, more so than the book. The story contains a well-dressed vampire akin to Béla Lugosi's film version of Dracula who lusts after a woman he meets at the theater though she is married to another. The doctor of the story wields an herb (juniper sprig) to repulse the vampire and later stakes the vampire through the heart in its coffin. This is more aligned with the film since in the book, there is no theater scene and it is the husband who helps slay Dracula.

Regardless, vampires and zombies continued as reliable characters in the increasingly gory and violent comics of the 1950s. The visual and moral debauchery exhibited in **crime** and horror comics led to the publication of *Seduction of the Innocent* by Dr. **Fredric Wertham** and to meetings of the U.S. Senate's sub-committee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency with a focus on comics. October, 1954 saw the creation of the **Comics Code** of the Comics Magazine Association of America, Inc, in which comic stories involving vampires and zombies would be all but eliminated in comic books for about 17 years. Under General Standards Part B, the Comics Code stipulated several clauses that would significantly hinder these narratives, including the second clause which prohibited "all scenes of horror" and the third clause which banned "all lurid, unsavory, gruesome illustrations." But vampires and zombies were officially sent back to their coffins en masse with the fifth clause which clearly stated, "Scenes dealing with, or instruments associated with walking dead, torture, vampires and vampirism, ghouls, cannibalism and werewolfism are prohibited." For most publishers, this kept them from publishing such stories until 1971.

The revised Comics Code in 1971 amended and opened up some room by rewording the fifth clause as such: "Scenes dealing with, or instruments associated with walking dead, or torture, shall not be used. Vampires, ghouls and werewolves shall be permitted to be used when handled in the classic tradition such as Frankenstein, Dracula, and other high caliber literary works written by Edgar Allan Poe, Saki, Conan Doyle and other respected authors whose works are read in schools around the world." With horror reemerging as a popular film genre in the wake of creation of the Motion Picture

Movie Association of America's new rating system in 1968, comics also looked to cash in on the macabre. Films such as George R. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) helped shape the minds and visual expectations for the next decade as they have continued to do to the present.

Therefore, while the Comics Code clearly indicated that stories with zombies were off limits and vampires would be limited; this did not prevent these tales from publication in horror comics during this time. By the late 1960s, publishers were bypassing the Comics Code altogether by publishing their "comics" as black and white magazines, thereby not needing the Comics Code's Seal of Approval. The tradition was started by **EC Comics** in the 1950s with their publication of *Mad* as a magazine but others followed this tradition including **Warren Publishing** with *Creepie* (1964), *Eerie* (1966), and Forrest J. Ackerman's *Vampirella* (1969). The initial run of *Vampirella* presented the title character as hostess and even character in a few stories in each issue. In comics, Vampirella is the first sympathetic recurring vampire to appear, and her pleasing, voluptuous appearance led to legions of fans.

Seeing the success of bypassing the code, **Marvel Comics** moved forward with its imprint, Curtis Magazines (also known as Marvel Monster Group), to publish some of its most famous monster stories including *Dracula Lives* (1973), *Tales of the Zombie* (1973), and *Vampire Tales* (1973). *Tales of the Zombie* portrayed a revamped character from a short piece previously published in *Menace* #5 (1953), Simon Garth. Brought back from death by voodoo magic, Garth is enlisted repeatedly to do harm and occasional good. He is the earliest sympathetic recurring zombie to appear in comics. Within the actual comic books, the word "zombie" was prohibited, so publishers used other replacements including Marvel Comics use of the term, "zuvembies."



Bela Lugosi as Count Dracula in the 1931 film *Dracula*, directed by Tod Browning. Universal Pictures/Photofest

Marvel Comics also responded to the relaxed code with the creation of the character Morbius. This "Living Vampire" first appeared in *Amazing* ***Spider-Man*** #101 in October, 1971, then continued in the horror anthology series, *Adventures into Fear* starting with #20 and finally, into the *Vampire Tales* comic

magazine. This human with vampire powers was a foray into the new territory. Once the character was approved by the code and accepted by readers, Marvel Comics followed up with the series, ***Tomb of Dracula*** in 1972. The other famous human-vampire hybrid character, Blade, made his first appearance in *Tomb of Dracula* #10.

DC Comics too was publishing zombie and vampire stories in horror or speculative anthologies series such as *Ghosts* (1971), *Secrets of Haunted House* (1975), *Secrets of Sinister House* (1972), *The Unexpected* (1968), *Weird Mystery Tales* (1972), and *Weird War Tales* (1971). However during the 1970s, Marvel Comics dominated horror with ongoing series that featured recurring zombies (Simon Garth) or vampires (primarily Blade, Morbius, and Dracula), as well as many anthologies series, including *Crypts of Shadows* (1973), *Dead of Night* (1973), *Monsters Unleashed* (1973), *Giant-Size Chillers* (1974), *Haunt of Horror* (1974), *Supernatural Thrillers* (1972), *Tomb of Darkness* (1974), *Uncanny Tales* (1973), *Vault of Evil* (1973), and others.

Marv Wolfman both wrote and edited many of these series for Marvel Comics including extended stints on both *Tales of the Zombie* and *The Tomb of Dracula*. Both series portrayed and developed these monsters beyond their typical cinematic representation of unambiguously evil. For most of their history, comics featuring zombies and vampires took their lead from books and film, but with Wolfman and others, comics developed distinct trends within the overall vampire and zombie mythology.

Since the change in the Comics Code, vampires have been featured regularly within Marvel Comics' continuum. Blade and Morbius made it into mainstream continuum of Marvel Comics on a regular basis, while Dracula and vampires in general make occasional appearances. Dracula fought the Defenders in *The Defenders* #95 (1981), the **X-Men** in *Uncanny X-Men Annual* #6 (1982) and also encountered Apocalypse (*X-Men: Apocalypse vs. Dracula*, 2006), and Captain Britain (*Captain Britain and MI13*, 2009). In the 1990s, Marvel Comics launched the crossover series, *Rise of the Midnight Sons*, which featured many of the supernaturally-based superheroes including Morbius, Blade, and characters related to, or inspired by, Abraham van Helsing and Dracula. Plots focused on the occult, thus vampires and zombie characters were reoccurring villains.

DC Comics pitted both **Superman** and **Batman** at different times against Dracula and other vampires, though not always in their main continuum (*Batman & Dracula: Red Rain*, 1991; *Batman: Bloodstorm*, 1994; *Batman: Crimson Mist*, 1999; *Superman* #180, 2002; *Superman and Batman vs. Vampires and Werewolves*, 2008). There are occasional vampire and zombie villains, but DC Comics has few recurring vampires or zombies. Andrew Bennet was a "good vampire" attempting to fight against evil ones. He appeared as a regular character in *House of Mystery* starting with issue #290 for 30 issues and then appeared sporadically in different series throughout the 1990s and 2000s. DC Comics also created Solomon Grundy, a recurring zombie supervillain who first appeared in ***All-American Comics*** #61 (1944) and has repeatedly battled Batman, Superman, **Green Lantern**, Starman and others over the years.

In the 1980s and 1990s, there were several short-lived zombie series among the various independent publishers but one series, was repeatedly revived, *Deadworld* (1987). First published by Arrow Comics and created by Stuart Kerr and Ralph Griffith, the series was praised for its gore factor, compelling black and white art and complicated plot. When Arrow Comics folded, Caliber Comics gained control of the title and finished the initial series, released a series of one-shot issues and miniseries before relaunching the series again in 1993. While the first series lasted 26 issues, the second series lasted only 15. However, *Deadworld* received another reprieve in 2005 when it was relicensed and published as an ongoing series by **Image Comics**. The series revolved around a set of characters trying to survive in a **post-apocalyptic** setting where the world is dominated by both brain-dead and intelligent zombies, including King Zombie who seeks to open a portal to another dimension.

Vampires also grew in popularity in the 1980s and 1990s, owing much to Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* books and an inundation of vampire films. Taking a lead from this trend, independent publishers also launched new series and revamped old ones. Gary Reed of Caliber Comics published a miniseries on Reinfeld, the servant of Dracula, and the *Vampirella* series, now under Harris Comics, was relaunched as well as featured in dozens of one-shot editions and cross-over series. Cassidy, an Irish vampire featured prominently as a side-kick to Jesse Custer, the main character in the **Eisner Award**-winning series, ***Preacher*** (1995).

An explosion of zombie stories occurred in the first decade of the 2000s. Comics featuring or centering on vampires had been continually increasing since the 1980s. However, zombie narratives became very popular, very quickly, at this time. Of over 100 titles in which zombies feature prominently in the comic series published in the last 50 years, over 70 were published in the 2000s. Many factors played a role, including the disintegration of the Comics Code and the cultural legitimacy comics were now receiving. The boost also stemmed from highly successful zombie films in the theaters including the release of *Resident Evil* (2002), *28 Days Later* (2002), and the remake of George R. Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (2004), all of which hit record box-office receipts that had not been seen for zombie films since the original *Dawn of the Dead* (1978).

Added to this, comics were experiencing a general horror renaissance that balanced on several factors. IDW Publishing was hitting its stride publishing both original horror content including the vampire series, *30 Days of Night* (2002), as well as licensed titles based on television, movies, and video games such as *Angel* (2005), *Underworld* (2003), and *Silent Hill* (2004). Steve Niles and Ben Templesmith (*30 Days of Night*) quickly became very popular and were involved in numerous horror projects throughout the 2000s. Niles' miniseries *Remains* (2004) revolved around survivors of a zombie apocalypse in the middle of a show-down of fast-moving zombies (represented in movies such as *28 Days Later* and the 2004 *Dawn of the Dead*) and slow-shambling zombies (also known as the classic Romero zombie). This marked the first acknowledgement and use of this shift in zombie abilities.

This reciprocal relationship of genre film and television with comics is best exemplified by **Joss Whedon**'s *Buffy the Vampire* series. While a comic series ran concurrently with the television series, Whedon went on to craft a comic book continuation of the television series after its termination called *Buffy the Vampire Slayer Season Eight* (2007). This comic series was distinct from previous *Buffy* series, which did not advance the ongoing plot of the TV show. Niles performed a similar feat as writer of *28 Days Later: The Aftermath*, published in April, 2007, a month after the launch of the first issue of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer Season Eight*. This graphic novel filled the gap between the film *28 Days Later* and its sequel *28 Weeks Later* (2007).

30 Days of Night was the most influential vampire narrative in the comics of the 2000s. Meanwhile, Image Comic's ***Walking Dead*** (2003) was the most powerful and impressive zombie series to come out, surpassing *Deadworld* as the most popular ongoing zombie series. Written by **Robert Kirkman**, the story revolves around former police officer, Rick Grimes and his family as they try to live in a world where zombies have destroyed civilization.

In 2005, Marvel Comics launched its *Marvel Zombies* series, which was well received by fans and critics alike. The premise originated in *Ultimate* ***Fantastic Four*** in which Reed Richards taps into a parallel universe where a virus has turned all of Marvel's **superheroes** into zombies who feast on the entire world (and eventually universe). The zombies appeared in two short runs on *Ultimate Fantastic Four* and by year's end, Marvel Comics had hired Kirkman to write what would be the first of several Marvel Zombies series.

By the end of the decade, zombies continued to thrive with the vast majority of narratives still focused on the zombie as villain. Very few narratives were particularly sympathetic towards these undead, though there were a few exceptions, such as *Zombie Cop* (2009), in which one "good" fights against the other zombies. However, vampires had developed much more complex narratives in large part thanks to the Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*, Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* series, Charlaine Harris's *Southern Vampire Mysteries*, and Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series. Certainly, narratives still focus on vampires as villains such as the *Blade* series and *30 Days of Night*, but the shift to vampires as complex, sometimes tragic figures rather than clear villain continues to influence comic narratives and sales.

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Lance Eaton

VAUGHAN, BRIAN K. (1976–). Writer of award-winning graphic novels and creator-owned comic books, Vaughan was born in Cleveland, Ohio. While studying film at New York University, he participated in a **Marvel Comics** writers' workshop for

new talent and was subsequently given small writing jobs. His first major work was **DC**-Vertigo's ***Swamp Thing*** but it was not well-received and resulted in the book's cancellation after 20 issues. In 2006, his graphic novel ***Pride of Baghdad***, illustrated by Niko Henrichon, was inspired by the true story of four lions who escaped the Baghdad Zoo during Operation Iraqi Freedom. A parable about the ongoing Iraqi conflict, the work was acclaimed by mainstream critics and fans alike.

Vaughan has written single and multiple issues for various DC and Marvel titles, however, it is his work on his own creations (or co-creations) where his unique voice stands out. Such works include ***Runaways*** (for Marvel), ***Y: The Last Man*** (for Vertigo), and ***Ex Machina*** (for DC-Wildstorm). *Runaways* is an all-ages comic book where a group of children discover that their parents are super-villains. *Y* concerns a young man named Yorick Brown who quickly realizes he is the last man standing while the rest of his gender has been killed by some unknown plague. As he travels around the world he is befriended by those women who wish to protect him and find a cure, and threatened by those women who want him dead. Vaughan planned the entire 60-issue run from the start and rarely diverged from his original storyline. Co-creator Pia Guerra's interiors were essential to maintain the sense of continuity over the five years of the series. *Y* treats what could have been a bad B-movie storyline with intelligent (and often humorously, if naughtily phrased) observations regarding growing up, the nature of gender, and extremism.

While living in Brooklyn, Vaughan witnessed the collapse of the World Trade Center Towers and he has suggested that this experience has shaped much of what he has written. *Ex Machina*, another one of Vaughan's long but finite series, concerns a **superhero** who becomes Mayor of New York City after September 11, 2001. The work is a commentary on the failures of political leadership and ponders whether there can be real heroes. Much of his work has been optioned for films, and Vaughan himself has contributed to the popular television series *Lost* starting in 2007. Vaughan's work features his gift for clever yet natural dialogue, his ear for pop culture references, interesting twists on mainstream storylines, and his ability to create exciting cliff-hangers.

Jeff McLaughlin

V FOR VENDETTA. A dystopian tale of a near-future fascist Britain terrorized by a mysterious freedom fighter known only as V, this brooding story, written by **Alan Moore** and drawn by David Lloyd, initially appeared in the short-lived but hugely influential British comic *Warrior* (1982–85), created by Dez Skinn, a former editor at **Marvel** UK. Published by Quality Communications, *V for Vendetta* appeared alongside Moore's *Marvelman* (known as *Miracleman* in the United States), and was originally in black and white. *V for Vendetta* was incomplete at the time when *Warrior* ceased publication, but Moore's rising stardom in American comics, especially with his acclaimed ***Watchmen***, ensured that *V for Vendetta* was reprinted by **DC Comics**, allowing Moore and Lloyd to complete the story. The American comic was colored by Lloyd and was collected as a book in the wake of the graphic novel boom of the mid-1980s.



Hugo Weaving as V in the 2005 film *V for Vendetta*, directed by James McTeigue. Warner Bros./ Photofest

V for Vendetta emerged from a number of sources. In his early 20s, Moore had submitted a proposal for a character called The Doll to DC Thomson, the Scottish publishers of long-running comics *The Beano* and *The Dandy*. The idea was rejected, and Moore later admitted that expecting DC Thomson to publish a story about a transsexual terrorist was perhaps unrealistic. When *Warrior* launched, editor Dez Skinn paired Moore with Lloyd and asked for a dark, mysterious strip, capturing the edgy tone that *Warrior* was striving for. Lloyd had previously worked on *Night Raven* for Marvel UK, a dark thriller set in the 1930s. Asked to do another 1930s mystery Lloyd resisted, wanting a chance to do something more contemporary. Moore turned back to his idea for *The Doll*, and things slowly came together. From initial character designs that were quite conventionally superheroic emerged the idea to blend a range of influences that would make this a uniquely British series. In his companion piece "Behind the Painted Smile," which appears in the graphic novel, Moore recounts a long and eclectic list of influences on *V for Vendetta* (270). It was apparently Lloyd who suggested that the central character be modeled on Guy Fawkes; Moore seized on the idea and V was born. Fawkes was Catholic soldier who was executed for his part in the Gunpowder Plot of November 5, 1605, when a small group planned to blow up the English Houses of Parliament in order to destroy Protestant rule. Every year, on November 5, the plot is remembered by British school children who burn Guy Fawkes effigies, singing "Remember, remember the fifth of November, The gunpowder treason and plot, I know of no reason why the gunpowder treason should ever be forgot." By turning the

protagonist into a modern Guy Fawkes, Moore and Lloyd tapped into something that was emblazoned in the memories of British readers from childhood, turning a bogeyman into a hero of sorts. Lloyd also contributed greatly to the style of the story with his idea that it should dispense with sound-effects or thought-balloons, making the pacing and atmosphere much more somber and restrained. Moore's innovations included an episode presented as a song, complete with musical notes.

V for Vendetta was a platform for Moore's political views, showing a society on the verge of collapse and divided by the inequalities that were associated with the government of conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Moore's vision of this world was very much influenced by George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1948), but also drew on post-war British comics. The main character, V, is an anarchist, reflecting Moore's politics. He is never clearly identified, although it is clear that he has been a victim of the fascist government's repressive policies towards dissidents, minorities, and homosexuals. Escaping from a concentration camp where cruel experiments have been performed, V disguises himself in a Guy Fawkes costume, clearly identifying himself as a terrorist, rebel, and martyr. The story opens with V rescuing a young woman, Evey Hammond, from the police, who intend to assault her following her arrest for prostitution. V takes Evey to a rooftop and blows up the Houses of Parliament. She is taken to his hideout, the Shadow Gallery, and becomes his accomplice in his war against those who have tortured him. A police detective, Eric Finch, investigates V, but has little luck in discovering his identity, as V is systematically murdering everyone who might identify him. Eventually Evey becomes disenchanted with V's methods and after an argument he abandons her. Some time later he kidnaps her, subjects her to an ordeal modeled on his own torture, and shows her how she can free herself from fear, and from oppression. V continues his war on the government, as Finch slowly closes in. Upon finding V's hideout Finch shoots and mortally wounds V. As V dies he passes on his legacy to Evey, who adopts his costume, sending his body in an underground train full of explosives to destroy Downing Street. Evey announces that with the government gone people must now choose what comes next. In the aftermath of this revolution Finch stumbles out into the now chaotic streets, leaving London behind. With the once repressive mechanisms of state control now destroyed, the future is left unclear.

As indicated by the list of influences given above it is clear that *V for Vendetta* can be read in many ways, as a response to many different sources. One interesting point to note in the context of British comics of the time is that it can be read as a critique of the politics celebrated by some readers of Judge Dredd, a popular character created by Pat Mills, John Wagner, and Carlos Ezquerra in *2000 AD*. Dredd was originally a fascist, and the stories were a **satire** on his inflexibility and the cruelty of the world he inhabits. Some readers actually approved of Dredd's politics, missing the point entirely. Moore's response is an anarchist hero, clearly set against the horrors of a fascist society. There is little room to empathies with the fascist characters here.

In 2005, a film adaptation was released, directed by James McTeigue, produced by Joel Silver and the Wachowski brothers (who wrote the screenplay), and starring Hugo

Weaving as V, Natalie Portman as Evey, Stephen Rea as Finch, and John Hurt as Adam Sutler, the leader of the fascist government. In keeping with his view that such adaptations are not representative of his original work, Moore demanded that his name be removed from the credits. The film was controversial from the outset. Its release was reportedly delayed by the London bombings of July 7 and June 21, 2005, although this was denied by the filmmakers, though it is clear that there was some unease about a story that celebrated a terrorist radicalizing a young woman and justifying mass revolts against the police and government. This was also at the time of ongoing protests against the war in Iraq. However, some (including Moore) felt that the film missed the point of Moore's politics entirely; it does, in some ways, seem to comment more on the contemporary Bush administration in the United States while keeping the British setting.

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Chris Murray



WAID, MARK (1962–). Born in Hueytown, Alabama, Waid's first connection to the comic book industry was freelance reporting for comics trade publications *Comics Buyer's Guide* and *Amazing Heroes*. This led to a brief stint as editor of *Amazing Heroes* in 1986. In 1985 and 1986, Waid began the transition from writing about comic books to writing comics books themselves, with two backup stories about his favorite character, **Superman**, in **DC's *Action Comics***. In 1987, DC hired Waid to edit *Legion of Super-Heroes*, *Secret Origins*, *Doom Patrol* and a number of one-shot titles. He also worked closely with writer Brain Augustyn and artist **Mike Mignola** to create the first of DC's ***Elseworlds*** tales, ***Batman: Gotham by Gaslight***.

In 1989, Waid left the editorial position to pursue a freelance writing career. He wrote two titles, *The Comet* (co-written with artist Tom Lyle for half the run) and *Legend of the Shield* (co-written with Grant Miehm), in DC's Impact imprint. Waid's rise to prominence began in 1992 with ***Flash***, a revamp of the title in which former Kid Flash, Wally West, assumed the mantle of the Flash. Waid felt an emotional connection with the Wally West character and his eight-year run on *Flash* resonated with fans. Along with Mike Wieringo, Waid gave the fans a new character, Impulse, in the pages of *Flash* and then wrote most of the first 27 issues of the *Impulse* comic. His status as fan favorite writer was cemented in 1996 when he worked with **Alex Ross** on the ***Kingdom Come*** limited series, an entertaining polemic about the true heroism of DC's icons contrasted with the type of troubled and violent heroes prevalent in **Image** and **Marvel** books. Waid was voted Best Writer by *Comics Buyer's Guide* readers in 1997.

Waid used his new fame to pursue opportunities outside DC. At **Marvel** he had two brief, but well received, runs on ***Captain America***, and, a few years later, redefined the **Fantastic Four** as a family of adventurers ("imaginauts") during a nearly three-year

stint. In 2000, a number of high profile creators, including Waid, developed the Gorilla Comics imprint for creator-owned titles that were published through Image Comics. Only a handful of issues ever saw print, and Waid and Barry Kitson completed their *Empire* project through DC a few years later. In 2001, Waid began a one year exclusive contract at CrossGen Comics. He contributed to a number of titles, but his most fondly remembered CrossGen work was on the first 10 issues of the Sherlock Holmes pastiche *Ruse*.

In 2005, Waid signed an exclusive contract with DC, and immediately began playing a major role in redefining the DC universe. His 2003, 12-part limited series ***Superman: Birthright*** presented an up-dated telling of Clark Kent's decision to become Superman, and was, for a time, the official Superman origin story. Beginning in 2005, he wrote the first 30 issues of a rebooted and re-imagined *Legion of Super-Heroes*, renamed *Supergirl and the Legion of Super-Heroes* halfway through his run. Waid was one of four prominent writers given an editorial role in guiding the events of the DC universe in the wake of *Infinite Crisis*. From mid-2006 to mid-2007, the four also co-wrote the weekly limited series *52*.

In the summer of 2007 Waid assumed the position of editor-in-chief at Boom! Studios. In addition to guiding the company's development and mentoring young writers, Waid continues to write, not only titles such as *Irredeemable*, *The Unknown*, and *The Incredibles* for Boom! Studios, but also *Amazing* ***Spider-Man*** for Marvel.

Randy Duncan

WALKING DEAD, THE. Debuting in October, 2003, this ongoing series revolves around a cast of ever-changing characters living in a world infested by **zombies**, where only pockets of humanity still exist. Written by **Robert Kirkman** (*Invincible*, *The Astounding Wolf-man*), the series came at a time when the zombie-themed films were gaining momentum with films like *Resident Evil* (2002) and *28 Days Later* (2003) participating in a renewed interest in zombie narratives. However, unlike these films and the later remake of George R. Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (2004), *Walking Dead* contained the cinematic slow-shambling rotting corpses made famous by Romero in his zombie films since the original *Night of the Living Dead* in 1968. Additionally, like many other zombie narratives that focus solely on the outbreak phase of the zombie attacks, *Walking Dead* bypasses the outbreak altogether and follows a group of survivors as they change, adapt, and accept a new world order. The power of the story lies in the richly developed characters and plot complications that occur over dozens of issues.

The story revolves around the main character, Rick Grimes, and his family. At the onset of the story, Rick is a policeman who has awakened in an abandoned hospital where he had been recovering from a gunshot. He manages to find his wife Lori and son Carl with a group of survivors, including his former partner, Shane. Strain occurs between Shane and Rick as Rick assumes leadership and directs the group to make an effort to get to Atlanta, Georgia. This escalates until the two are pitched to fight, only to have Carl kill Shane to protect his father. From this point forward, Rick leads

the hodgepodge group of people who vary considerably in size, shape, intelligence, orientation, philosophy, and so on, which fuels tension, problems, and feuds within the group; this internal threat often seems as serious as the external threat of the zombies.

As leader, Rick finds himself arming Carl and other children, teaching them to shoot to kill, and providing a new moral code that is nothing like any he himself has experienced or readers of the comic series are likely to experience. Rick's arc as a leader is a challenging one, filled with hard decisions that have irrevocable consequences that sometimes include losing loved ones or people that he has fought alongside and gained a deep respect for.

After a period of wandering, attempting to find the last vestiges of civilization, Rick and his group settle down in an abandoned but intact prison, believing that it will provide protection from the zombies. In the backdrop of this, they have lost and gained people; characters have formed conventional and unconventional relationships; and some, including Lori, are having children. Settling into the prison entails regulating living quarters and delegating day-to-day responsibilities such as farming. Much as in Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), zombies become only one of the legitimate threats to the group. During this period of stability, the group encounters another camp of survivors in a nearby town named Woodbury; but, unlike the egalitarian nature of Rick's group, this second group is ruled by a tyrannical governor, a sadistic and deviant being. Rick and two others are captured by the Woodbury camp that plan to use them as entertainment in their gladiator arena where humans face off against zombies. In the ensuing altercation, the Governor chops off Rick's right hand, but, Rick escapes and returns back to the prison camp.

The camp prepares for the inevitable battle with the other group, and characters clash over whether to stay and fight it out or to run and get free of the Woodbury camp. The crux of the battle occurs over issues #43–48 in which the prison defenses are irreparably destroyed and those who survive the battle with the Woodbury camp flee in different directions. Lori, their new baby, and Rick's close friend Tyrese lie among the dead. Now more than ever, Rick's ability to lead is held suspect—more by himself than anyone else. In the aftermath, Rick becomes quite ill from the wounds sustained by the battle, and Carl is left to take care of his ailing father alone while also dealing with the zombies. Though Rick physically recovers, it becomes clear that his sanity is barely intact and that he cannot allow himself to lead the group any further.

The series became instantly popular and continues to gain much accolades for Kirkman's masterful storytelling, often pushing the story in irreversible directions and not hesitating to set an entirely new and unexpected course as was best exemplified in the gruesome deaths of Rick's wife and newborn daughter. The compelling and diverse characters with their own agendas often take precedence over the zombie-fighting, which (according to Kirkman) is the point. In several interviews, he has emphasized that the zombies are the back story and that the main story involves the attempts of the characters truly to rethink some very fundamental and philosophical beliefs.

Statements such as "We are the walking dead," in issue #24, provide moments of pause within the narrative for characters and readers alike to think about the gravity of a real-life apocalyptic world.

The successful launch and reception of *The Walking Dead* gave rise to several more zombie series including the reprised *Deadworld* in 2005 by **Image Comics**. Additionally, **Marvel Comics** hired Kirkman to write a miniseries about the end of the Marvel Universe through its own zombie apocalypse, which won many accolades and spawned several sequels and spin-offs.

The first six issues of *The Walking Dead* were drawn by Tony Moore, who would continue on as cover artist for the first 24 issues. Moore received an **Eisner Award** nomination in 2005 for Best Cover Artist, while the series itself was nominated for an Eisner Award for Best New Series in 2004. Charlie Adlard has served as story artist and eventually cover artist up through 2009. The entire series is drawn in grayscale black and white, nostalgically evoking Romero's original black-and-white *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), while also helping to create an eerie atmosphere that is appropriate to the subject matter of the series.

See also: Vampires and Zombies

Lance Eaton

WAR COMICS. Comics have long been deeply implicated in presenting military themes, and in times of war, providing commentary, either in support of the state, or in opposition to it. This association between war and comics should come as no surprise, given the close historical association of comics with politics and propaganda. After all, comics excel at presenting caricatures and at celebrating mythological heroes and exaggerated villains, which makes them an ideal medium for propaganda.

The first example of an editorial cartoon in an American newspaper was Benjamin Franklin's 1754 illustration of a snake with a severed head, representative of the various colonies, with the slogan "Join, or Die." This appeal to form a union that would eventually become the United States was intended as a call to arms, and is therefore the first American propaganda cartoon. Editorial cartoons with clearly political purposes later appeared in cartoon magazines like *Puck* and have remained an important form ever since. Meanwhile, comic strips in newspapers, know as the Funnies, began to appear. Primarily designed to entertain, these strips often featured adventure strips alongside humor, and these adventure strips frequently featured military and war themes. In the 1930s, newspaper strips transformed into comic books. The adventure strips once again proved extremely popular, and **superheroes** dominated the market from the late 1930s onwards, with a peak in their popularity during World War II. With the onset of the war the superhero comics, and indeed, all genres, dealt with military and war themes explicitly. Since then comics have responded in one way or another to all the major world conflicts, often simplifying these complex political circumstances to straightforward battles between good and evil. From their origins to the present day, comics

have been used for political purposes, and have been particularly useful in presenting images of war that are at once emotive and entertaining. This is their power, but it can also be quite dangerous if used to manipulate and misinform, as all kinds of propaganda invariably are at some point.

War comics first emerged as a distinct genre in 1940, with the publication of *War Comics* by Dell, a company known primarily for **funny animal** comics. However, the comic was not an initial success, probably because America was not yet at war in 1940, and the official stance of the United States was still neutral and non-interventionist. Such overt militarism may have been too much for readers, despite the fact that around the same time superhero comics were preparing Americans for war with interventionist messages. It would seem that readers needed the gloss of fantasy that the superheroes provided. Regardless, by 1943 the genre of war comics started to disentangle itself from superheroes, with titles that seemed to be directly targeted at the armed forces, such as *The United States Marines* and *Camp Comics*, which featured pin-up girls and was aimed at troops buying comics at the PX on military bases (Goulart 2000, 159–71). The obvious change in circumstances was that American was now at war, and with the conscription of millions of American men there was a large market for such stories. Many of the covers of these comics looked exactly like propaganda posters, and communicated similar messages, sometimes about practical issues related to health, such as how to avoid sexually transmitted diseases.

An important factor when considering war comics is that some were created by writers with direct experience of war or military life, which, combined with the fact that they were written and drawn with troops in mind, meant that they were often very accurate in how they presented military hardware. This was especially important for cover artists, who were often chosen because they could render realistic aircraft, tanks, and the like. In contrast, such realism was rarely an aspect of the writing, with many of the stories being jingoistic, extremely patriotic, sexist, and occasionally racist, especially against the Japanese. Of course, a good proportion of the readership was civilian, and quite young, so these aspects were sometimes restrained, though war comics of the time could be quite lurid as well. Extremes of violence happened out of frame, or were rendered in euphemistic terms, when the violence was directed against American troops, although enemy troops were dealt with in much harsher terms, with some of these comics being quite lurid in their depiction of the killing of the enemy. The appeal to morale was the recurring excuse for such excess. Whereas the artwork could be quite striking and inventive, the stories were usually quite predictable, with outnumbered and outgunned good guys versus the enemy, who were presented as cruel, dishonorable, and monstrous. The enemy would resort to "dirty tricks" like ambushing the Americans, and after scenes of disbelief, horror, then anger, the American troops would get their revenge. It was a story seen over and over again in Hollywood films, such as *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943), and replicated in endless comics. It was also a microcosm of the popular perception of the American experience of the war.

The character types were similarly predictable, a range of characters drawn from different backgrounds to represent the melting pot of America, although African American characters were rarely present. There were also recognizable types, such as the rookie, the experienced sergeant, the crazy lieutenant, or indeed, the cowardly officer, but the backbone of the squad was almost always a heroic everyman character who could be roused to near superhuman acts of violence to defend his buddies and kill the enemy. The counterpoint to all this was the battle-weary "Willie and Joe," Bill Mauldin's famous creations who preferred a dry manhole and clean socks to acts of heroism. These characters, much beloved of the troops, represented the reality of military life much more than anything offered by comics or films of the time.

As World War II drew to a close in 1945 the popularity of war comics waned, but in the early 1950s the Korean War (1950–53) provided war comics with a new audience. The result was a spate of publications such as *War Comics*, *Battlefield*, *Battle Front*, *Battle Action*, *Marines in Battle*, *Fightin' Marines*, and *G.I. Joe*, most of which presented the war as a grand adventure and portrayed soldiers as heroic supermen. This was very much the tried and tested strategy from the earlier conflict, but this time things did not ring true. The Korean war was a bitter battle of attrition, and the news from the front was rarely worth celebrating. National (later to become **DC Comics**) published *Our Army at War*, *Our Fighting Forces*, and *Star-Spangled War Stories*, which were of better quality than most war comics of the time (Wright), however, the most innovative war comics were those produced by **EC** Comics, who published intelligent antiwar comics such as such as *Two-Fisted Tales* and *Frontline Combat*, written and drawn by **Harvey Kurtzman**. The subversive stance of these publications (and their success) would contribute to EC's downfall, as they were effectively put out of business as a comics publisher following the introduction of the **Comics Code** in 1955.

In the 1960s, war comics declined in popularity, most likely due to the fact that superheroes were on the rise once more, and because the Vietnam conflict was a much more ambiguous and morally complicated war, and one that sparked protests and riots in the United States and worldwide. It was, like the Korean war, not a war where victories were particularly numerous. There was little to celebrate, and comics retreated into **fantasy** instead. Notable exceptions were National's *Our Army at War* (1959), which introduced Sgt. Rock, and **Marvel**'s ***Sgt Fury and His Howling Commandos*** (1963), which combined war stories with the dynamic excess of superhero comics. DC had notable success with *Enemy Ace* (1965), which told the story of a German fighter pilot, loosely modeled on the Red Baron, who fought in World War I and II. DC's *The Unknown Soldier* first appeared in 1966, then sporadically through the 1970s to the present. The character is a World War II soldier whose brother is killed at Pearl Harbor. With his face destroyed by an explosion he vows to make a difference in the war to avenge his brother, becoming a covert operative with no identity. From 1965 to 1966, **Warren Publishing** published *Blazing Combat*, a war comic in a similar format to their successful horror comic *Creepy*. Written and edited by Archie Goodwin, *Blazing Combat* featured art by some of the best artists of the day; it promoted realism

over hyperbolic adventures and attempted to recapture both the antiwar stance and the quality of Kurtzman's work for EC. The result was a series of excellent stories, so with a grim inevitability the title was short-lived, largely due to the controversy surrounding the story "Landscape," which appeared in the second issue. This story, told from the point of view of an old Vietnamese peasant, makes the American intervention in Vietnam seem particularly unheroic. Mainstream popular opinion was still divided on the war at this point, and there was not yet the widespread condemnation of the war that would emerge by the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s. The military objected to the story and military bases refused to stock the offending issue, as did a campaign against the title by the American Legion, ultimately contributing in its cancellation.

In 1974, as the Vietnam war was ending, the most violent and cynical character in **Marvel Comics** at the time made his appearance, **The Punisher**. A former U.S. Marine turned vigilante, the Punisher became hugely popular. Unlike most superheroes, the Punisher used extensive weaponry and tended to kill his enemies. He eventually gained his own series in 1986, the same year that Marvel published *The 'Nam* by Doug Murray, who was himself a Vietnam veteran. Based on real events, and told in "real time," with each issue advancing the characters lives by one month, *The 'Nam* aimed to capture the view of the war from a rookie's point of view in the same way as Oliver Stone's film *Platoon* (also 1986). The success of *The 'Nam*, though modest, was greater than expected, prompting Marvel to release *Semper Fi': Tales of the Marine Corps* in 1988. *The 'Nam* lasted until the early 1990s and the final issues co-starred the Punisher in order to boost sales. Throughout this time, Marvel was also publishing G.I. Joe comics based on the popular toy, which was quite different in tone from any of its other war related comics.

In 2001, British writer **Garth Ennis** started his revival of war comics with *War Stories*, his homage to, or attack on, British war comics such as *Commando*, published by DC Thomson since 1961. These were brutal and violent stories that punctured the rather restrained nature of many war comics, especially *Commando* comics, showing in graphic detail the carnage and bloodshed that war comics often elide. Ennis also wrote an Enemy Ace miniseries, *War in Heaven*, in 2001.

Several examples of military and war themes in comics move the action to a **science fiction** setting, creating a sub-genre of "future war" stories. Examples include *Rogue Trooper*, from the British weekly *2000 AD*, and the 1988 adaptation of Joe Haldeman's novel *The Forever War* (1974) by Mark van Oppen (also known as Marvano).

Since the events of September 11, 2001, military themes have become increasingly prevalent in comics, with advertisements for the Marine Corps in many mainstream comics, and the comics themselves acting as a kind of propaganda mechanism for the War on Terror. **Mark Millar**'s *The Ultimates*, which began in 2002, is very much ***The Avengers*** for the post-9/11 world, which is to say, The Ultimates are a much more violent, ruthless paramilitary organization than The Avengers have ever been. However, following the unpopular and costly occupation of Iraq, the military themes evident in some comics turned to an anti-war sentiment, or are at least moved beyond the

propaganda imagery that appeared immediately in the wake of 9/11. One **Captain America** miniseries, *The Chosen* (2007) was written by David Morrell, author of *First Blood* (1972) and creator of Rambo. It is set in Afghanistan and follows a U.S. Marine who seems to be hallucinating that he can see Captain America at times of stress.

In recent years there have been an increasing number of comics that have tackled the subject of war and have taken an anti-war stance from the perspective of non-American characters, notably ***Maus*** (1972–91) by **Art Spiegelman**, ***Barefoot Gen*** (1973–85) by Keiji Nakazawa, and ***Palestine*** (1993) by **Joe Sacco**. These comics have told the story of traumatic events in war from a civilian point of view, something that war comics too often ignore.

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Chris Murray

WARE, CHRIS (1967–). Among the most celebrated contemporary American comics artists, Chris Ware has been crucial to the widespread recognition of comics as works of literary and artistic merit. Ware's cutting-edge work derives from his immersion in the early history of American comics (and commercial graphic design), resulting in some of the most elaborately crafted and formally complex comics in the history of the medium. Ware is best known for his ongoing series of intricately designed publications *The Acme Novelty Library* (1994–present, with #1–15 published by **Fantagraphics** before Ware began self-publishing subsequent issues) and his award-winning, semi-autobiographical graphic novel ***Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth*** (Pantheon, 2000). He has also worked as an illustrator, designer, and editor, helping to shape the appreciation of both historical and contemporary comics as an art form.

Ware was born in Omaha, Nebraska, and began publishing comics in the student newspaper while he was enrolled at the University of Texas, including the mock **science fiction** strip *Floyd Farland: Citizen of the Future*, published in 1988 by the **Marvel** offshoot Eclipse as a prestige format comic. (The notoriously self-critical Ware is dismissive of the strip and has not allowed it, or much other early work, to be reprinted since.) In the same period, he also drew a number of increasingly complex strips (often wordless, or foregrounding language as a visual element) featuring the characters Quimby the Mouse and Sparky the Cat (in fact only a cat head). These early strips (collected in *Quimby the Mouse* from Fantagraphics in 2003) announce many of Ware's later, ongoing concerns, employing nostalgic influences (the **funny animals** that populate early comic strips and animated cartoons) in the service of grim irony and highly inventive formal play. The direction of his future work was also signaled when Ware was invited to contribute to the final issues of the prestigious anthology ***RAW***, edited by **Art Spiegelman**

and Françoise Mouly: Ware's ingenious strips combined autobiographical anecdotes with the clichéd devices of **superhero** comics, functioning as a meta-commentary on the grammar of the comics form.

After Ware moved to Chicago to briefly attend the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, he began contributing strips to local arts newspapers *New City* and *The Chicago Reader*, slowly building the story of Jimmy Corrigan, which would also unfold (with many alterations along the way) in his *Acme Novelty Library*. In both *Jimmy Corrigan* and subsequent work Ware often draws upon iconographic forms such as architectural blueprints, flowcharts, and medical illustrations in addition to earlier comics. His page layouts veer from single-page panels to pages of incredible density, with transitions exploiting a vast range of temporal and spatial possibilities: few other comics push so often towards the limits of the form, especially to tell stories devoted to exploring tender and painful human emotions.

Ware's published sketchbooks, *The Acme Novelty Date Book Volume One, 1986–1995* (Drawn & Quarterly, 2003) and *The Acme Novelty Date Book Volume Two, 1995–2002* (Drawn & Quarterly, 2007) reveal a much looser style than the extreme precision of his published work. Ware has also edited a volume of *McSweeney's* (#13, 2004) devoted to comics and featuring a typically elaborate Ware-designed dust jacket, and *The Best American Comics 2007* (Houghton Mifflin). He has also played a key role in reprints of the classic comic strips *Krazy Kat* by George Herrimann and *Gasoline Alley* by Frank King, both of which have strongly influenced his own work. Ware has received frequent recognition for his comics, including multiple **Eisner** and **Harvey Awards**, and his work has been featured in several museum exhibitions. He has also created toys and sculptures as offshoots of his comics work, and published *The Rag-Time Ephemeralist*, devoted to the early American musical style that Ware claims informs his understanding of the structure of comics and the emotions both forms generate in their audiences.

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Corey K. Creekmur

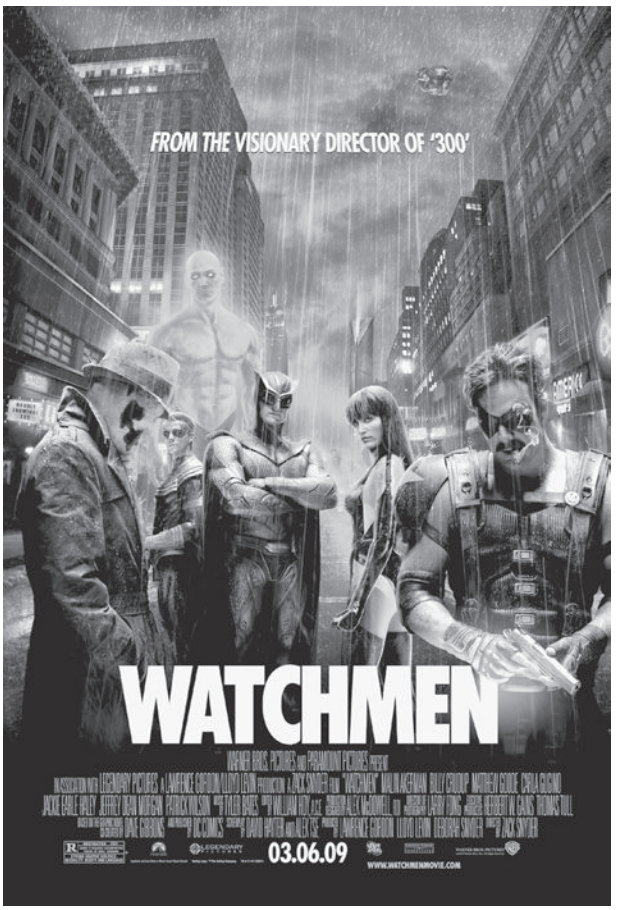
WARREN PUBLISHING. Founded by James Warren in 1969, Warren Publishing published **horror**, dark **fantasy**, and **science fiction** comics with an adult twist that bypassed the **Comics Code** by virtue of the magazine format until 1983. Their most well-known publications were *Creepy*, *Eerie*, *Vampirella*, and *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. *Creepy*, *Eerie*, and *Vampirella* were all characterized by lush painted covers, an inner front cover with a color drawing of the flagship character often by Bernie Wrightson in *Creepy* and *Eerie*, and Jose Gonzales in *Vampirella* (112 issues from September 1969 to March 1983) introducing usually six stories. Warren's *Eerie* was not connected

with the January, 1947 one-shot horror comic of the same name published by Avon Publications, which ran for 17 issues from May/June 1951. Similar to EC comics hosts The Crypt Keeper or the Vault Keeper, "Uncle Creepy," a wizened old man, and "Cousin Eerie," a rotund grotesque figure in pilgrim style attire, warned of the gruesomeness of each tale in the Warren publications. Titles like *Creepy* occasionally had issues on a different theme, thus science fiction stories such as *Purge* (which prefigures Judge Dredd with a similar tale of a fascist cop on a motorbike enforcing over-strict rules, in this case owning copies of Warren titles) and *Executor One* (a robotic executioner with the consciousness of a man) feature in issue #73 of *Creepy*, where six science fiction stories are presented as fairytales told by an old man to deformed children in a **post-apocalyptic** city. *Edgar Allan Poe's Creepy Stories* issue #69, February 1975, and issue #70, March 1975, featured comic strip adaptations of such Poe stories as "The Pit and Pendulum," "The House of Usher," and "The Oval Portrait." There were also articles on how comics were created with a section called "Everything You Always Wanted to Know . . . about the Comics!" This feature added to an active fan culture, and the letter pages of most Warren publications had critical and incisive letters on story and quality. This sense of fandom and community was one of the hallmarks of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. Along with the hosted titles that included in-joke puns and humor, the readers pages of the magazine featured photos of readers and fostered a community spirit of early fandom. Vampirella was created by Forrest J. Ackerman and first appeared as a horror story host in *Vampirella* issue #1, September 1969, but was recreated as an ongoing character in her own right in storylines that combined horror and science fiction. Vampirella was an updated vampire story, which although superficially supernatural and gothic, has a science fiction basis. Vampirella is an alien from the planet Draculon, where the inhabitants lived on blood that flowed in the planet's rivers. After an Earth spaceship crashes on the planet, Vampirella is sent to investigate and ends up piloting the ship back to Earth. Her red, one-piece leather thong and black boots have almost iconic status in certain circles. When Warren became bankrupt in 1983, Vampirella was a notable character that was sold in auction to Harris Comics, which has made intermittent attempts to resurrect the character. Hollywood exploitation veteran Jim Wynorski helmed a direct-to-DVD film version of *Vampirella* (1996) starring Puerto Rican Talisa Soto in the title role, and The Who's Roger Daltrey as villain Vlad. In comparison to the much-discussed gore of EC horror comics tales, Warren's output was characterized more by its atmospheric black and white art and more adult, sexual themes, which was influenced by the influx of Spanish artists.

Lorcan McGrane

WATCHMEN. One of the defining comics of the 1980s, and one of the benchmarks against which intelligent and literate storytelling in comics have been judged ever since. Written by **Alan Moore**, drawn by **Dave Gibbons**, with color by John Higgins, *Watchmen* is an insightful homage to the **superhero** genre, as well as a deconstruction of its clichés, forms, and influences. Originally published as a 12-issue series beginning in

September 1986, *Watchmen* was collected as a book in 1987, finding enormous success alongside other **adult comics** of the 1980s, **Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*** and **Art Spiegelman's *Maus***, the collected versions of which contributed to the rise of the graphic novel format. The origin of *Watchmen* was **DC Comics**' purchase of the rights for characters previously published by the defunct **Charlton Comics**. Moore, a British writer who had been head-hunted by DC and was enjoying success with his re-vamp of the ailing ***Swamp Thing*** title, wrote a treatment outlining how he would perform the same alchemy with the Charlton characters. However, as the proposal was a radical departure from the established characters, Moore was given the go-ahead to create new characters based on the Charlton heroes. The result was a degree of creative freedom that Moore and Gibbons thrived under. The story was ambitious, with a complex narrative structure and a disciplined adherence to a nine-panel grid format, only broken occasionally for dramatic effect. Moore's scripts were unusually dense for a comic script, full of extraneous detail and description, as is his habit, but he was not prescriptive about the artwork, allowing Gibbons more-or-less free reign. The format of the comics was equally bold, with distinctive covers, and no letters page, instead Moore used the extra pages to present supplementary material such as text stories that related to the main narrative, as well as song lyrics and quotations from famous thinkers. Moore also consciously decided not to use an external narrative voice in captions, or to use thought-balloons, forcing himself and Gibbons to tell the story primarily through dialogue and images, leaving characters' motivations and thoughts ambiguous, something that was also done in Moore's ***V for Vendetta***. The result was a comic that seemed, in terms of both story and artwork, to be much more sophisticated than most superhero comics of the time, and indeed, somewhat more akin to American **underground** comics such as ***RAW***, where stylish layouts and narrative innovation were reshaping conceptions of what the medium was capable of.



A poster for the 2009 film *Watchmen*, directed by Zack Snyder. Warner Bros./Photofest

In terms of the story, Moore broke with the conventions of the superhero story from the outset, displacing the action/adventure genre for a murder mystery structure, slowly unveiling clues to the identity of the villain, if such a thing could be said to exist in the morally complex and compromised world that Moore presents. Beginning with the murder of Edward Blake, a masked vigilante and government operative also known as The Comedian, the story follows the unhinged vigilante Rorschach (aka Walter Kovacs) as he investigates his hunch that there is a "mask killer" targeting superheroes. This investigation brings him into contact with his retired former team-mates, Dan Dreiberg (Nite Owl), Laurie Juspeczyk (Silk Spectre), Jon Osterman (Dr. Manhattan), and Adrian Veidt (Ozymandias). Through flashback and supplementary material it is revealed that in this alternate world costumed heroes (without genuine super powers) known as The Minutemen appeared during World War II but disbanded following the war. A genuine super-being is created in an accident in a nuclear research facility in the 1950s, later taking the name Dr. Manhattan. In the 1960s an attempt to resurrect The Minutemen falters and soon after superheroes are outlawed. Dr. Manhattan becomes a tool of U.S. government policy, and is used as a weapon in Vietnam, leading to a U.S. victory and to the re-election of President Richard Nixon for multiple terms running into the 1980s, while other superheroes either retire or become vigilantes or outcasts. As Rorschach's investigation begins to cast light on a larger conspiracy, tensions between the Soviet Union and America escalate, moving towards an apocalyptic showdown between the superpowers. Will the superheroes avert disaster, and who is behind a mysterious plan to save the world from itself?

The extensive flashback structure and the interpolation of a pirate comic as a commentary on the story adds to the complexity of the narrative, which gains power through its literary treatment of time and memory, its recurrent symbolism and the ingenuity with which Moore weaves together all the disparate elements with exacting precision, which is matched by Gibbons's artwork. All of these elements invoke the image of the universe, and the fictional universe created by Moore, as a mechanism, a watch being disassembled and reassembled by a watch-maker. Themes of determinism, fate and free will move from the cosmic scale down to the sub-atomic, through the intermediate stage of everyday human affairs. Dr. Manhattan adopts a relativist view, seeing no difference between past, present, and future, or between life and death. While Moore and Gibbons can at times seem preoccupied by the formal experimentation of the text, at its heart the story is a morality tale disguised as a superhero story, disguised as a murder mystery. Ultimately the story reveals that the smallest moments matter, and that events reverberate through time and memory with devastating consequences.

The story is also interesting as a meta-textual commentary on the superhero genre itself. The alternative history mapped out by Moore corresponds very closely to the history of American comics, from wartime popularity to a post-war lull where other genres, especially **horror**, **crime** and **science fiction** prospered, to the resurgence in the popularity of superheroes in the 1960s, and the darker comics of the 1970s and 1980s, typified by **Neal Adams**'s version of **Batman** and **Marvel Comics' The Punisher**.

Moore's treatment of superheroes is a **satire** of the genre, as it undermines the clichés and generic codes, allowing Moore to explore a question that he had already addressed in his British comics *Captain Britain*, and especially *Marvelman* (known as *Miracleman* in the U.S.): what if superheroes existed in the real world? However, *Watchmen* moves far beyond this conceit, becoming something rarely glimpsed in superhero comics, a meditation not only on the genre, its political implications and fetishistic nature, but also the psychology of the characters, and the nature of the comics medium itself, the structure, vocabulary, and grammar of which is fully exploited by Moore and Gibbons.

Hailed as a masterpiece by many critics at the time of its release, a *Watchmen* film seemed inevitable. Terry Gilliam was one name attached to the project in the early years, but after years in development and several scripts, the film version seemed like it would never emerge. However, in 2009, after complex litigation, Warner Bros. eventually released a film based on *Watchmen* directed by Zack Snyder, which, despite mixed reviews from critics, was something of a commercial success and attempted to remain true to its source. However, Moore had long claimed that Watchmen was deliberately intended to be unfilmable, designed to showcase resources that were unique to the medium of comics. After having been frustrated by adaptations of his work in the past, and having previously resolved never to work for DC Comics following the dispute over merchandising royalties from the original comic series, Moore insisted that his name be removed from the credits for the film. Despite such controversy, Watchmen remains a byword for well-crafted and intelligent story-telling in comics, as well as a striking deconstruction of the superhero genre.

Chris Murray

WEIRDO. A black and white comics anthology, *Weirdo* was published in magazine format by **underground comics** stalwart Last Gasp for 28 issues (1981–93). Edited by **Robert Crumb** for 10 issues, followed by **Peter Bagge** (issues #11–17, and #25) and Aline Kominsky-Crumb (issues #18–24, and #26–28), the legendary Crumb's presence always loomed over the magazine, and his regular contributions, including striking color covers, remained the primary draw despite the impressive range of contributors over the full run. *Weirdo* followed *Arcade* (7 issues, 1975–76), edited by **Art Spiegelman** and Bill Griffith, as a venue carrying still active underground artists towards a more independent or alternative status while also introducing the work of rising artists, including Bagge. Since their runs were almost simultaneous, *Weirdo*'s emphatically lowbrow aesthetic implicitly set it against the artistically ambitious and slickly produced ***RAW*** (1980–91), edited by Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly. As with most anthologies, the quality of *Weirdo* was erratic, but it provided a regular space of resistance against mainstream **superhero** comics when there were few such alternatives available to its unconventional artists. In retrospect, *Weirdo* filled the gap between the waning underground in which Crumb had been the dominant figure, and the growing but more diffuse world of **adult comics** and **alternative comics** that would soon be transformed by many of its younger contributors.

Weirdo began as Crumb's attempt to emulate comics magazines that had influenced him, especially the early *Mad* and **Harvey Kurtzman**'s *Help!* (1960–65): many of *Weirdo*'s covers, packing small figures into elaborate borders, were in homage to Crumb's models. Designed more like a magazine than a typical comic book, *Weirdo* included advice columns (by Terry Zwigoff and **Harvey Pekar**), notably cranky letters pages, and ads promoting like-minded publications, including the first wave of hand-made mini-comics. Under Crumb's editorship, a series of *fumetti*, or photo-funnies, were also featured: depicting the large women that obsessed him acting out silly scenarios (often with Crumb participating); they were a regular source of complaints from readers. (Somewhat peevishly, Crumb has since refused to reprint them in collections of his work.) In addition to Crumb, who contributed significantly to every issue, key underground figures such as Spain Rodriguez, **S. Clay Wilson**, Robert Williams, Bill Griffith, Justin Green, Robert Armstrong, Frank Stack, and Kim Dietch were frequently represented, although not always with their most memorable work. *Weirdo* may have been more beneficial for the space it offered to younger artists who had missed the earlier underground as a publishing option; in addition to Bagge, the magazine included early work by eventually notable artists Kaz, **Daniel Clowes**, Drew Friedman, Raymond Pettibon, David Collier, **Joe Sacco**, Doug Allen, and Gilbert **Hernandez**.

Even before Kominsky-Crumb established a tongue in cheek policy promoting (as the cover of #18 stated) "the grueling, gritty world of young women cartoonists," *Weirdo* had also welcomed female artists, in marked contrast to all-male precursors like ***Zap*.** Along with Kominsky-Crumb's regular strips, *Weirdo* eventually showcased **Phoebe Gloeckner**, Terri Boyce, Diane Noomin, Mary Fleener, Carol Tyler, Carol Lay, Julie Doucet, and Debbie Dreschler. Early on, the editors had discovered Dori Seda, who remained a regular (and rapidly improving) contributor until her death in 1988, with #22 presented as a "Dori Memorial Issue." *Weirdo* also reprinted historical material that suggested a lineage for its creators: the first issue has a Brueghel engraving as a center-spread, and later issues gather Gene Deitch's 1940s jazz cartoons, obscure strips from 1950s African American magazines, and Ed "Big Daddy" Roth's hot-rod cartoons. Finally, *Weirdo* also included technically crude work by outsider artists such as Bruce N. Duncan, Norman F. Pettingill, prison cartoonist Macedonio Garcia, and Crumb's own troubled brother Max. Issue #12 included work by (and a memorial to) the notoriously unstable underground legend Rory Hayes, who died in 1983.

Crumb's contributions to *Weirdo* included many important autobiographical strips, including "I Remember the Sixties" (#4), "Uncle Bob's Mid-Life Crisis" (#7), "Footsy" (#20), "Memories Are Made of This" (#22), and "I'm Grateful! I'm Grateful!" (#25). He also provided parodies, including a rather strained series of strips centered on the ultra-fashionable Mode O'Day (ultimately an easy target), and a wicked imitation of the independent erotic comic ***"Omaha," the Cat Dancer*** (#24). Yet the magazine was also Crumb's chosen venue for a number of remarkable historical comics, including an illustrated section of James Boswell's 18th-century *London Journal* (#3), case studies from Krafft-Ebing's 19th-century *Psychopathia Sexualis* (#13), and a biography of the

science fiction writer Philip K. Dick (#17), each produced in what had become Crumb's increasingly distinctive "late" style, marked by intensified cross-hatching and realistic detail. Crumb also illustrated popular songs and fairytales (including in #11 a contemporary "Goldilocks and the Three Bears") in similar, jarringly realistic style. However, for the final issue Crumb provided one of his most shocking strips in an often shocking career, the two part "When the Niggers Take Over America!" and "When the Goddamn Jews Take Over America!" Apparently created following a return trip to America once he had moved to France, the willfully offensive strip blurs the thin line between outrageous **satire** and genuine racist paranoia. Most (but not all) of Crumb's *Weirdo* work has been collected and reprinted, but it is worth seeking out issues of the magazine to appreciate them in their original, often messy context, rubbing shoulders with the more elusive comics and creators collected by the magazine.

While *Weirdo* appears less unified in its origins and function than either the underground comics or humor magazines it derives from, it is no less a product of its own time, staging a milder but still persistent protest against the return to conservatism marked by the Reagan administration in the United States, which it almost exactly paralleled. Redeploying a schoolyard taunt for its title, *Weirdo* offered an rare space for strange and even disturbing comics when the mainstream, once home to a range of genres, had narrowed to a near-exclusive focus on superhero titles and just before independent comics and the rise of the graphic novel would expand to offer unconventional artists additional venues for their uncompromising work.

Corey K. Creekmur

WERTHAM, FREDRIC (1895–1981). Born in Nuremberg, Fredric Wertham received his MD from the University of Wurtzburg in 1921; he trained under Emile Kraepelin, the founder of contemporary psychiatry, in Munich, then left Germany in 1922 to join the Phipps Psychiatric Clinic at Johns Hopkins University. In Baltimore, Wertham established a friendship with journalist H. L. Mencken and worked with famed attorney Clarence Darrow, becoming one of the first psychiatrists willing to testify on behalf of indigent black defendants. During this time Wertham married Florence Hesketh, a distinguished artist and sculptor, published studies on the effects of mescaline, developed a mosaic test to evaluate a patient's mental state, wrote *The Brain as an Organ: Its Postmortem Study and Interpretation* (1934), and received the first psychiatric grant made by the National Research Council.

During the 1930s Wertham moved to New York City where his expertise as a forensic psychiatrist became well known. With the encouragement of prominent African American writers Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright, Wertham enlisted a multiracial, volunteer staff to establish in 1946 a clinic in Harlem dedicated to alleviating the "free-floating hostility" afflicting many in that community and to understanding the realities of black life in America. Named in memory of Karl Marx's son-in-law, Dr. Paul LeFargue, the LeFargue Clinic became one of the most noteworthy institutions to serve poor Americans and to promote the cause of civil rights. As a result of his work at the

Clinic, NAACP Legal Defense Fund lawyers Jack Greenberg and Thurgood Marshall asked Wertham to research the effects of segregation on children. This research later became part of the groundbreaking anti-segregation case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954). During this period, Wertham treated the sons of the executed spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, was appointed by Senator Estes Kefauver as sole psychiatric consultant for the Senate Subcommittee on Organized Crime (1950), and became lead witness for the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency (1953–56).

In addition to bringing psychotherapy to a neglected community, Wertham's work at the Lefargue Clinic provided the foundation for his ideas on the contribution **horror** and **crime comics** made for a climate of juvenile violence. In 1948, Wertham organized the first symposium on media violence at the New York Academy of Medicine. Wertham identified media-induced violence as a public health issue; his arguments about the harmful effects of media-induced violence and its connection to the rise of juvenile delinquency are summarized in his book *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954). Here, he argued that the brutal and sadistic activity in many comics promoted a climate of violence and a coarsening of society. He was also concerned with sexual images in comics, especially with what he saw as the promulgation of images of homosexuality. Wertham concluded that access to violent comics for children younger than 14 must be controlled. Although Wertham, as a progressive, vigorously denied that he was advocating censorship, his work stimulated the comic book industry to adopt a tactic of self-censorship via The Code of the Comics Magazine Association of America (1954), generally known as the **Comics Code**.

Wertham continued to probe not only how comic books, but also mass news publications, television, and the movies influenced behavior and distorted perceptions of teenagers and different ethnic groups. *The Circle of Guilt* (1956) analyzes the paradigm of fear, racism, and prejudice in New York and exposes both the failure and hypocrisy of the legal system in complicity with the social service establishment.

In 1966, Wertham published *A Sign for Cain: An Exploration of Human Violence*, a sociological history of violence in Western culture. This book focuses on the effects of mass media exposure on the virulence of political tyrannies in the 20th century, on the emergence of the legal and medical legitimization of violence, and on the willing acceptance of the value of violence.

His interest in youth and how communication shapes culture led Wertham to publish his last book, *The World of Fanzines: A Special Form of Communication* (1973). He sees fanzines not as a product of our society but a reaction to it. The culture of fanzines expresses a genuine voice wanting to be heard, defying the overpowering roar of the mass media.

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James E. Reibman

WESTERNS (COMICS). Comics and the American West have always shared a strong affinity, as Maurice Horn observes: "Just as the Western pioneers were conscious of opening a new geographical frontier, the pioneers of the comics were quick to realize that they were exploring a new artistic frontier" (10). Another medium can be added to this relation: film. The history of Western comic books is strongly connected with Western movies. Hundreds of heroes from television and movie Westerns have been adapted into comic book series and vice versa. The medium of film learned a lot from the hyperbolic atmosphere of comics and comic strips, especially derived syntactic techniques from film editing. The iconography of the American West is already situated in the pictures of Frederic Remington (1861–1909) and Charles Russell (1864–1926), which constitute a model for the whole visual and graphic tradition. The adventures of Western comics derive from two different traditions. The fantastic one, addressed to juvenile readers, found its roots in the dime novels of the 19th century (and in the 20th century in Western pulp magazines, e.g. by Zane Grey), in Wild West shows like those of Buffalo Bill and in the "horse operas" of silent films. The second tradition, the realistic illustration of the West, was targeted at adult readers; newspapers, diaries, photographs, and chronicles are the sources of its pictures.

Three major elements define the genre: setting (what became the Western United States, extending also to Alaska, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, and even Australia), period (the later half of the 19th century), and the characters who lived in this time and place. Furthermore, the depiction of violence plays a central role in the genre. The history of the genre enlarged this close definition and added new themes and interpretations to the traditional stories. These concepts will be illustrated using examples from some of the most significant Western comic books.

Setting

The most recognizable feature of any Western is its setting, an idealized "Garden of the West" with a wide geographical palette. Film director John Ford established the unmistakable Monument Valley (Utah) as the Western landscape par excellence. Depending on the knowledge or skills of the authors and artists, the deserts, plains, rivers, and mountains of the West are elaborated in a more or less authentic way. The vegetation, like the ever-present cactus, is not only used for decorative reasons, but can even become an allegorical motif as in the comic strip *Krazy Kat*. Landscape can also reflect the feelings of the figures or the atmosphere of the situation. The conflict between man and nature often develops into real battles against blizzards, dust storms, and the

merciless sun. The latter is often used as an instrument for torture, examples of which can be seen in ***Blueberry***. Comics of the American West portray the development of the land in every form of human settlement; from primitive huts to already flourishing towns with their obligatory main streets, saloons, and railroad stations. Military forts and Indian villages are hot spots for conflicts.

Period

The genre is structured by archetypes of American mythology developed through history. Indeed, while typically pretending to historical accuracy, the Western (in comics and otherwise) has often contributed to the growth of legend and myth. Western comic book authors frequently base their plots on historical events, especially those of the 19th century, when the American West still presented the challenge of a frontier to be tamed. Western comics have drawn extensively upon events associated with the conquest of the West, including the American Indian Wars, the American Civil War (1861–65), the construction of the railroads or the settlement of the western frontier with its most visible symbol, the wagon train. Key events include the activity of Pony Express (which in fact only lasted for 18 months), the running of stagecoach lines, or the Gold Rush of 1849. The search for gold is a leitmotif of Western comic book series. Many writers use avarice as one of the primal human motivations for violent conflicts. The figure of the gold seeker joins the Native American and the adventurous Westerner as key images in these comics.

The legendary bloody encounter at the O.K. Corral (October 26, 1881) in Tombstone Territory between Wyatt Earp with his marshals and a group of cowboys established the gunfight and the showdown as a favorite focal point for Western comics such as *Hopalong Cassidy*, *Tom Mix*, or *Tex Willer*. Meanwhile, such events helped to make the gunfighter a central figure in the Western genre in any medium, including comics.

One of the few long-lasting Western comics set in the atypical period of the 18th century was *Tomahawk* (published 1950–73), created by Joe Samachson and Edmund Good, with **Frank Frazetta** as one of the artists. Here, Tomahawk and his group of rangers fight behind the British lines for General George Washington in the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783).

Characters

Both historical figures and fictional characters have contributed to the image of the Western hero. Western legends are based on true accounts of historical figures such as Kit Carson, Billy the Kid, the Apache Geronimo or—the most often mythologized Western figure—Buffalo Bill Cody. Like most of the comic book heroes from other genres, the Western hero, apart from a few exceptions such as Blueberry, does not age, making him available for continuing adventures over long periods of time. Generally speaking, there are five types of Western heroes: the cowboy, the lone rider/reformed outlaw, the lawman, the (ex-)military man and the Indian.

The archetype of the Western hero is the cowboy, still virtually a national symbol in the present-day United States. Classic examples of the idealized hero who represents the social values of the "good guy" include heroes like Tom Mix and Roy Rogers (stars of American film and television Westerns) and Jim Boum (from the French comics by Marijac). The cowboy's obligatory sidekick is his horse, mostly a stallion, which adds traits like loyalty, compassion and stamina to the powers of the hero.

Fred Harman's (1902–82) red-haired *Bronc Peeler* (created in 1933, known as *Red Ryder* from 1938 on) was an unconventional comic-strip cowboy character. Sometimes guided by his sense of justice, sometimes simply by more pragmatic motives, he always remains impenitent. Over time, he undergoes a metamorphosis from traditional cowboy to car-driving and plane-flying undercover agent. With his companions, Coyote Pete and Little Beaver, a little Navaho Indian boy, Red Ryder soon moved beyond the original comic strip to appear in a vast number of comic books from 1940 to 1957. Originally based on reprinted newspaper strips, these books soon moved into original territory, using the same cast of characters, but adjusting their adventures to juvenile readers. The pencils on the first original comic book material belonged to **Jack Kirby**, with *Lightnin' and the Lone Rider* in 1937. The details of costumes (e.g. Red's Stetson) and accessories (e.g. the Mexican saddle) and the setting (southwestern Colorado) are depicted with an almost archaeological authenticity. Characterized by its attention to detail, a touch of pathos and its wry humor, the series is a Western of the old school, despite its later setting, which allows for the presence of cars and airplanes.

The archetypal cattle driver is also represented in **European comics**. Marijac's (Jacques Dumas, 1908–94) *Jim Boum* (1934–50) fights cattle rustlers, train robbers, outlaw gangs and also natural forces like blizzards and wavy rivers. He later transforms into an enemy of the Nazis in Africa and of the Japanese in the Pacific, until he eventually even becomes a space-cowboy.

The vast number of "Kid" characters in Western comics are often masked like **superhero**es and capable of fighting with super-human stunts and methods. These more entertaining and juvenile cowboy figures include such characters as Kid Colt, hero of a series that started as *Kid Colt, Hero of the West* in 1948 scripted inter alia by **Stan Lee** and drawn by masters such as **Jack Kirby**, **Reed Crandall**, Joe Maneely, and others, who where engaged at the same time with **Marvel Comics**' *Two-Gun Kid*. The huge number of *Kid*-titles in Western comic books was enlarged in 1954 by three other young-looking justice-fighters: *The Ringo Kid* (mainly by Joe Maneely and Joe Sinnott), *The Outlaw Kid* (with Doug Wildey's photographic art style) and *The Western Kid*—all of them dropped in 1957 and reprinted in 1970. The foundation of the **Comics Code** Authority also came about in 1954, which sought, among other things to diminish the violence in comic books. Ironically, the rise of the code had little effect on the Western, which was relatively immune to the strictures of the code because its violence was so traditional and ritualized. Thus, Stan Lee's Rawhide Kid, a ruthless gunslinger using gun and bullwhip with brutal effectiveness, was born in 1955 (with art by Kirby), the year after the establishment of the Comics Code.

The "Kid-characters" diminished the idealized image of the ethically conscious cowboy. One alternative is the figure of the "lone rider," who knows no moral code other than his own. In particular, Zane Grey's *Tex Thorne* (1936) gave an example of the unconventional hero who is driven by an inner conviction or by personal motivations. The ambiguity of this anti-heroic and pessimistic figure did not suit the habits of the American comics readership, but was enthusiastically absorbed by authors from abroad such as the Belgian Jijé (Joseph Gillain, 1914–80) with his *Jerry Spring* (1954–90). Unlike the lone rider, the so-called "reformed outlaw" only seems to be an anti-hero; his failures and incomprehensible reactions (overstepping his authority, brutally killing, abusing women) are forced by external circumstances. A model for such a reformed outlaw is Jean Valjean, the protagonist in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*.

Partly deriving from the *Zorro* novels and films, partly because of the more popular concept of the superhero, the masked hero also fights in Western comic books. Fran Striker introduced the character of the costumed Western hero with *The Lone Ranger* (in comic book form mainly published by Dell from 1948–62). The ranger and his white horse Silver were born in 1933 in a radio broadcast from station WXYZ of Detroit, and were then adapted for a comic strip, first drawn by Ed Kressy, who was replaced early on by and Charles Flanders, in 1938. With its stagecoach robberies, bank holdups, cattle rustlings, heroic rescues of defrauded widows, victimized orphans (mostly young girls) and illegal land take-overs, the series builds a classical Western repertoire of narrative patterns and can be considered the most representative of all American Western comic strips, with regard to the strong presence and variety of Western myths. Because of Flanders's limited drawing skills, the reprints for a comic book series beginning in 1947 lasted only for 37 issues; the franchise then passed on to Paul Newman (no relation to the actor) and Tom Gill, who created new material for Dell until 1962 (followed by reprints and original material by Gold Key 1964–77). In Newman's plots, the Lone Ranger became a kind of master sleuth and unofficial guardian of the peace on the frontier; Gill's drawings gave spirit, especially to horse riding and shooting scenes, two of the main iconographic actions of the Western genre. Though perhaps now best known as the protagonist of a television series (1949–57), the masked rider's career in the comics continues up to present day (Dynamite Entertainment, 2006–), scripted by Brett Matthews and drawn by Sergio Cariello in a new, very cinematic manner with soft, brownish colors (by Dean White). The figure of the Lone Ranger includes the aspects of the lone rider and of the lawman, another typical figure in Western comics. Meanwhile, his Indian sidekick Tonto has become an icon in his own right, though in many ways a problematic one.

The Lone Ranger is a lawman, a member of the Texas Rangers. In Western towns, the lawman is embodied in the marshal or sheriff, archetypes that clearly emerged from Western history and folklore. The lawman's aura of righteousness and invincibility derives from such spectacular historical gunfights as the one at the O.K. Corral and was enshrined by film figures such as Gary Cooper in *High Noon* (1952). The paradoxical fact of the small number of sheriff or marshal titles in comic book series can be

explained by the open-ended structure of the comics. Lawmen in long-lasting series like Tex often bend their official duties into wild adventures without strong rules.

Dell's *Maverick* (1959–62) shows another lawman-type who fights more with his cleverness than with his gun. Dan Spiegle's camera-like compositions present Bret and Bart Maverick, two brothers of the post-Civil War days. The tendency toward detective fiction and soft-hearted heroes who impress more with their brains than with their physical strength was continued in 1968 with *Bat Lash* by Sergio Aragones and Nick Cardy.

Westerns with the Civil War as historical background either portray the military man as a patriotic figure or criticize him. The heroic portrayal of the soldiers of the U.S. Cavalry was one of the favorite motifs for American Western comics. With army deserter *Sgt. Kirk* (1953–59), Italian creator Hugo Pratt (1927–95) gave a very European and critical view on the theme. The American perspective changed with Michael Fleischer's *Jonah Hex*, which first appeared in 1972 and has appeared sporadically ever since. An ex-officer of the Confederacy, his face partly blown away by gunfire, Hex stands out in the crowd of good-looking John Wayne copies. His ambiguous stance between good and evil is symbolized in a Jekyll-and-Hyde-theme; but unlike the **Batman** character Two-Face, Hex never loses his heroic power. The artists of *Jonah Hex* all came from abroad: the Filipinos Tony de Zuñiga and Noly Panaligan, and the Latin Americans George Moliterni, and José Luis García-López. In January 2006, writer Jimmy Palmiotti, together with new artists, revived Hex for DC by making the character more mystical and adding elements of **horror** to the series.

In Western comics, Native Americans have mostly been treated as the antagonists of the Cavalry or to symbolize the wildness of the frontier. However, individual Indians, acting as sidekicks of the white heroes, quickly became a basic feature of the genre. Tonto (with the Lone Ranger) and Little Beaver (with Red Ryder) show bravery and pure heroism, joining a legacy of Indian companions that dates back to the novels of James Fenimore Cooper.

As a reaction to the trauma of the Vietnam War and the oppositional political movements of the 1960s, one can observe a change in Westerns from pure action and violence to a new examination of the problems of the displacement of Native Americans, which began to reflect also present situation of ethnic minority groups. The Swiss francophone cartoonist Derib (Claude de Ribeaupierre, 1944–) marked with his *Buddy Longway* (1974–87; 2002–6) a movement toward "political correctness," telling a sentimental family saga of the interracial relationship between the white trapper and his Sioux Indian wife, Chinook. Buddy´s vulnerable character and the deep psychological conflicts between different cultures are set in an allegorical rough wilderness, which Derib created with the highest feeling for atmosphere.

Together with Swiss francophone scriptwriter Job (André Jobin, 1927–) Derib created another "ethnophile" Western series, aimed with its cartoonish style at a younger audience: *Yakari* (1973–2008 and still running). Here, the small Sioux Indian protagonist and his predominately animal friends (he is able to speak animal languages), live

adventures without any "White Men," as the stories take place long before the European colonization. In addition, the concluded series *Les Peaux-Rouges* (1974–82) by Dutch artist Hans Kresse, focused on the world of the American tribes and tried to show their culture in an objective manner, free of mystifications and epic narration, and set apart from modern culture.

Because of its central emphasis on good guy/bad guy oppositions, the Western comic requires a strong antagonist to the Western hero. The antagonist, as the incarnation of evil, serves to enhance the image and powers of the hero. Among other things, the villain gives the hero a reason to fight, thus initiating the plot; meanwhile, violent and even criminal acts by the hero are often legitimated by the necessity of defeating the evil villain.

While the Indians were long depicted as evil, crazed savages, the most vilified ethnic group in the Western comics of the 1930s may be Mexicans, characterized by their Spanish surnames and stereotypical Latin American mannerisms (mustached, in tight pants and wide sombreros). Only a few Western comics, such as *The Cisco Kid* or *Jerry Spring*, used a Mexican as the hero's sidekick, but then the Cisco Kid is himself a Mexican *caballero*.

Women characters were also often important to the genre, especially as a motivating factor for masculine action. Such characters generally served either as the reason for vengeance and the hero's helping hand, or the object of desire, as represented by the Indian princess, the saloon girl, or the schoolmarm. Historical figures like Calamity Jane even got their own comic books. Annie Oakley became a popular female hero in comics, while a vogue for **romance** Westerns in the late 1940s and early 1950s offered opportunity to feature women as key characters.

The History of the Western Comic Book

The Western genre of comics is as old as the medium itself. The first Western comic book stories were reprints of newspaper strips. As early as in 1889 the French series *La Famille Fenouillard* by Georges Colomb confronted their characters with Native Americans and cowboys. A growth-spurt in the development of the genre started in the 1930s with Harry O'Neill's *Broncho Bill* (1930–52); the "adventurous decade" increased the interest of the part of syndicates for Western stories.

The 1940s signified the peak of the Western newspaper strip, as World War II helped to develop **superhero** and **war comics**, but the overall success of the Western film (epitomized by the movies of John Ford) prompted comics artists to change to the genre. Among them, **Burne Hogarth**, known for his work with ***Tarzan***, shifted to the Western with the Tarzan-like Drago (1945–46), a bare-breasted hero who rides virtuously through Hogarth's landscapes and fights postwar **Nazis** in Argentina. The years 1948–52 are often considered the **Golden Age** of the Western, when American Western comics reached the pinnacle of their popularity.

American Western comics maintained a reasonable success through the 1950s, but many Western titles were discontinued in the 1960s and 1970s, as the popularity

of the genre declined. The same period, however, saw a rise of the Western in Europe, where American Westerns remained popular even as European-produced Westerns rose to the fore, especially in France and Italy. Indeed, the Western strip flourished in all parts of the world (mainly Spain, Argentina and Japan) while it was slowly dying in the United States. Maurice Horn partly accounts for this fact with the European and Latin American view of "the Western as a modern allegory of the eternal struggle between good and evil" (174). The lone cowboy symbolizes the rightful heir to the knight of medieval epics of chivalry. Built by Western movies and Western comics, the mythology of the American West shares many of the classical elements of Homer's *Iliad* or *Odyssey*.

Jijé's previously mentioned *Jerry Spring* can be considered the founding text of the Franco-Belgian Western comic tradition. Pressure from the publisher (Dupuis) forced Jijé to employ assistants for his successful series from 1960 on, among them **Jean "Moebius" Giraud**. In 1963, Moebius created the famous Western series *Lieutenant **Blueberry*** with Jean-Michel Charlier. His style would imitate Jijé's at least until 1965. Very impressed by his first sojourn in Mexico (1955), Moebius's fascination with the Mexican landscape spilled over into his panels, and his "hallucinatory, desert-like landscapes" became one of his trademarks. "American Western comics remained overshadowed by the movies, but Gir[aud] used devices peculiar to comics to produce effects that are impossible on screen" (Screech 2005, 100). Nevertheless, Giraud was influenced by both American and Italian cinema, as *Blueberry* adapted the styles of Sergio Leone's Italian Spaghetti Westerns and of the American director Sam Packinpah. On the other hand, Hermann (Hermann Huppen) and Greg's (Michel Régnier) *Comanche* (1969–80) shows more conventional styles and influences. Set on a ranch, it tells the story of a young and pretty heroine, Comanche, and her taciturn but strong foreman Red Dust.

Spaghetti Westerns still influence the European Western comic, as well as the very few new American series of recent years such as *Loveless* (2005–8) by **Brian Azzarello**. With *Bouncer* (2001–8), Chilean writer Alejandro Jodorowsky (1929–) and French artist François Boucq (1955–) presented the Wild West after the American Civil War. The grotesque poetical style of Jodorowsky and the surreal super-naturalistic drawings of Boucq unmasked all the myths of the West. In a near glorification of violence, the borders of good and evil are erased in *Bouncer* and the reader is confronted with bare brutality and mystic, bloody action.

Subgenres

In addition to comics that can directly be identified as examples of the Western genre, a number of comics have participated in a more marginal way. Numerous comics, for example, have combined aspects of the Western with those of other genres, such as **science fiction** or **horror**. For example, DC and **Marvel** especially pushed the "Weird Western" as a subgenre, as Kid Colt and the Rawhide Kid fight against monsters, aliens, and other characters from horror comics. Meanwhile, the mix of genres was joined by a

mix of media; several Western television series were adapted to comics, which became a form of merchandising for the TV series.

The most important subgenre of the Western is the parody of the Western proper, which dates back at least to Ferd Johnson's *Texas Slim* (started in the Chicago *Tribune* in 1925). Outside the United States, a satirical view of the American West was brought forth by Italian Benito Jacovitti in *Cocco Bill* (1957–98) with his chamomile-drinking cowboy and his cigarette-smoking horse. The most popular and successful parodic Western comic book is the French series *Lucky Luke*. In 1946, the cartoonist Morris (Maurice de Bevère, 1923–2001) created this affectionate parody of the Western mythos and was joined in 1955 by scriptwriter René Goscinny (1926–77), creator of *Astérix*. Lucky Luke and his talking white horse Jolly Jumper confront the whole world of the "real West," always with a passion for authenticity: Lucky Luke tries to put the parodied version of the Dalton brothers behind bars, he teaches Calamity Jane how to be a real lady, and runs across Billy the Kid, Jesse James, and a bounty hunter that looks strikingly like Lee van Cleef, an actor in many Spaghetti-Westerns. To this day (with the help of many ghost-writers and artists) Lucky Luke always rides away into the sunset in the last panel of every album, humming his famous: "I'm a poor lonesome cowboy and a long way from home . . ."

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Martha Zan

WHAT IF? The *What If?* series explores the motif of the alternative history within the world of **Marvel** comics, as much as **DC Comics** had explored this motif in their "imaginary stories," out of continuity tales (often about **Superman**), that explored various possibilities in the character's life. This would later lead to their extensive ***Elseworlds*** line of stories, such as those that place **Batman** in the Victorian era or in a modern world in which the country is run by a theocracy, or putting Superman in the U.S. Civil War or in Camelot. Yet when it comes to alternative comics history on a regular basis, no one did it like Marvel and *What If?*

The original *What If?* series were 47 double-sized titles that ran, often bi-monthly, from 1977 to 1984. Series creator and writer Roy Thomas summed up the origins of the series:

> I was looking for a new series to write that would keep me out of the Marvel mainstream (so that, now that I was no longer editor-in-chief, I wouldn't have to

> keep up with continuity of the main characters) . . . just as ***Conan***, *The Invaders*, et al., were doing. Still, I liked the idea of writing an occasional story about the **Fantastic Four**, **Hulk**, Spidey, or whoever. And Stan was in the habit of saying that the way he thought up some of the story directions was to ask himself, "What if" this happened or that happened . . . how would it affect a hero's life going forward? So I proposed a comic called *What If* which would feature a different hero every month, starting with one of the strongest possibilities—what if **Spider-Man** had actually joined the F. F. as he had tried to do in *Amazing Spider-Man* #1?

A one-time *What If?* special appeared in 1988, and the following year a new monthly series began that lasted for 114 issues (plus an issue numbered -1) until 1998. The "host" of these stories is Uatu, The Watcher, an immortal alien who lives on the moon and whose race watches but does not interfere. He was able to look into alternative universes and tell of what happened in those worlds. Due to events in other comics the Watcher stopped appearing after issue #76 of the second series and with issue #87 the book's format changed, with the major difference not being spelled out on the cover (it simply became "*What If? Starring . . .*" The most notable of these was issue #105, which was set in the near future and introduced Spider-Girl, the daughter of Spider-Man. This character soon got her own book and this led to a number of titles (known as MC2) that were set in that time period. While none of the others lasted for more than a year, Spider-Girl lasted for 100 issues in one title, and 30 issues in another. Some stories from this era were also listed as part of the Marvel "Alterniverse," which includes a few other "alternate world" tales.

For the next seven years, Marvel's only visits to various alternative worlds was through the *X-Men* spin-off *Exiles*, but beginning in 2005, Marvel began to publish a series of "one-shot" *What If?* stories. Usually with five to six issues (all numbered #1) the comics that were published around the same period often had a common thread or theme. The first of these had various "hosts," including **Brian Michael Bendis** acting as the narrator in his own stories. The next batch of stories all took place on the same alternative world, with the "host" being a man from the Marvel world who was able to read about these historical figures (such as a Civil War-era **Captain America** or a feudal Japan version of **Daredevil**) on his computer. This group also had an additional comic, a humor title called *Wha . . . Huh?!* The next three groups of one-shots had no host, and often dealt with divergences on major storylines from recent years such as *Civil War* and *World War Hulk*. The fourth group is notable for a **Fantastic Four**-themed story that was to be drawn by Mike Wieringo, but was unfinished at the time of his death. Other artists helped to complete it, and the volume was sold as a special with proceeds going to the charity, The Hero Initiative. In addition, the fifth collection had a back-up story that ran throughout all five issues.

Many issues of the original series have been collected in a series of books called *What If? Classic* and random issues from the first two series have been collected in various books. The one-shots have been collected as *What If: Why Not?*, *What If: Mirror Mirror*,

What If: Event Horizon, *What If: Civil War*, and *What If: **Secret Wars***. While most of the stories in the two ongoing titles were done-in-one types, there was the occasional multi-part story or sequel and some stories have been re-imagined in later volumes. Some issues contained more than one story and the first series also contained a few back-up stories that were in continuity, such as the history of The Eternals or a story set in the 1940s that adjusted the history of Captain America. As expected the more popular characters appeared in the most issues including Spider-Man (28), The Fantastic Four (26), and The **X-Men** (50—both as a team and solo members such as Wolverine).

Some points of divergence were revisited multiple times (sometimes even in the same issue). For example, in the regular continuity a burglar whom the newly created Spider-Man failed to stop ended up killing Peter Parker's Uncle Ben, leading Spider-Man to become a crimefighter. *What If?* explored such possibilities as what if he had stopped the burglar or what if his aunt had been killed instead. Alternatives to the Fantastic Four gaining powers by going into space ranged from them having different powers, to all of them having exactly the same power, to their not going at all. There was even a story (Vol. 1 #11) in which **Stan Lee**, **Jack Kirby**, and two others at Marvel became the Fantastic Four.

Some *What If?* stories involve a large number of characters while some only a handful or less. Yet even the latter could have an effect of the greater Marvel universe. For example, a Fantastic Four story in Vol. 1 #31, in which the Thing goes on a rampage, shows how his actions prevented the origins of Spider-Man, **Thor**, and The Hulk. Some issues have happy endings while others end in tragedy, sometimes with the death of the hero, sometimes with the entire world being destroyed. While there may not be another ongoing series in the near future, one way or the other, Marvel will continue to ask "What If?"

David S. Serchay

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE MAN OF TOMORROW? First published in two parts in ***Superman*** #423 and ***Action Comics*** #583 (both September 1986) "Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow?" was, conceptually if not literally, the last **Superman** story. Written by **Alan Moore** (who, by legend, threatened **DC** editor Julius Schwartz to get the assignment), a "final" Superman story was made possible because of the planned re-launch of Superman by artist and writer **John Byrne** in the 1986 miniseries ***The Man of Steel***, following the extensive streamlining of the entire DC "universe" in ***Crisis on Infinite Earths*** in 1985. The "new" Superman, along with most DC titles, would proceed as if many of the details of the character's past had never happened, so Moore's story would be the last to draw freely upon story elements about to be officially erased from DC continuity. However, the popularity and success of Moore's story in wrapping up 50 years of previous Superman stories had the curious effect of quietly undermining much of what came later, even suggesting that the legendary character might have been best left alone after this elegant conclusion.

Moore's story followed "For the Man Who Has Everything," his notable contribution (drawn by **Dave Gibbons**) to *Superman Annual* 11 (1985), which revealed Superman's

"heart's desire" to live a normal life on his native planet Krypton, married with children. Moore's only other Superman story, "The Jungle Line," appeared in *DC Comics Presents* 85 (1985), and featured **Swamp Thing**, the character who elevated the British Moore to fame as a writer in the United States. (Otherwise, Moore has explored the Superman mythos extensively through surrogates, including Miracleman, Supreme, and **Tom Strong**, all stand-ins for the Man of Steel.) Although Moore would soon be most famous for his "deconstruction" of the superhero in ***Watchmen*** (1986–87), his Superman stories are affectionate tributes, even as they end an era in the character's fictional life. It is therefore especially appropriate that **Curt Swan** (with inking by **George Pérez** in *Superman* and Kurt Schaffenberger in *Action*), the character's definitive **Silver Age** artist, penciled this "swan song" for Superman. (The cover of *Action* #583, depicting Superman leaving the characters in the series behind on the roof of the Daily Planet building, also includes cameo drawings of Swan, as well as editors Julius Schwartz and DC President Jenette Kahn.) In Swan's seasoned hands this last story looks like a classic DC comic, in contrast to the more experimental visual styles then accompanying other revamps of **superheroes**; the easy collaboration of Moore and Swan thus avoids the generational conflict one might have expected in the meeting of a young Turk and old pro.

Set in the future year of 1997, former reporter Lois Lane (now Lois Elliot, married with a baby boy) is interviewed for a "Superman Memorial Edition" of the Daily Planet, her old employer: she recounts a series of traumatic events, beginning with the logically illogical "genocide, homicide, and finally suicide" performed by Bizarro, Superman's "perfect imperfect duplicate." This is soon followed by Superman's "unmasking," the long delayed revelation to the world that Superman's secret identity has been mild mannered reporter Clark Kent. As the story continues, piece after piece of the accumulated Superman mythology is brought to a conclusion with a finality that the ongoing, serial production of Superman stories had persistently withheld. The longstanding rivalry between Lois Lane and Lana Lang, the repetitive cycle that allowed Superman's villains to be endlessly captured and to escape or be released, and even the often vague status of Superman's pet dog Krypto are all resolved without the open-endedness readers had learned to expect from decades of previous comics. In the story's most delicate moment, the arrival of Supergirl from the future upsets Superman, who had recently mourned her dramatic death in *Crisis on Infinite Earths* and *Superman* #414: in Moore's story, at least, Superman respects DC's enforced continuity (misleading Supergirl as to her fate), even as Moore tugs at one of its many loopholes. Rather than just an aside for DC fans, the scene hinges on the free-wheeling devices of time-travel and multiple dimensions that DC now sought to control, turning the narrative puzzles raised by DC's recalibration of its stories into an ethical dilemma, one of the remarkable ways in which Moore breathes new life into established conventions.

In effect, the entire story is both a tribute to and work of mourning for the often silly but fun Superman legacy then being rejected for greater realism and seriousness.

So, before they are banished, Moore makes grand use of the "Superman family" that had included not only spin-off comics featuring "girlfriend" Lois Lane and "pal" Jimmy Olsen, but futuristic cohorts the Legion of Superheroes, the Legion of Superpets, and super-villains such as Lex Luthor, Brainiac, and Mr. Mxyzptlk, all at long last killed in this tale, the last by Superman himself in violation of his personal code, which requires the end of his career. Revealed as the source of all the trouble in the story, Lois notes that Mr. Mxyzptlk, the cartoonish imp from the Fifth Dimension (introduced in *Superman* #30 in 1944) "looked different somehow. He didn't look funny anymore," one of the story's wry acknowledgments of the revisions underway in superhero comics. The story thus blends elements of the trend towards grim "revisionism" that would be most dramatically marked by Moore's *Watchmen* and **Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*** (as well as Moore's **Batman** one-shot ***The Killing Joke***) with a much more sentimental quality, which would characterize later DC stories, such as **Mark Waid** and **Alex Ross's *Kingdom Come*** (1996), which also envisions a future, happily married Superman. The clever line that concludes Moore's expository introduction to the story ("This is an Imaginary Story . . . aren't they all?") has often been cited as a gentle riposte to attempts to distinguish "real" events in the continuity of the DC universe from what it had explicitly identified as "Imaginary Stories" or (beginning in 1989) as ***Elseworlds*** tales. Like many of the fanciful Silver Age Superman stories it simultaneously emulates and puts to rest, Moore's story ends with a wink to the reader, letting us in on the secret of Superman's disappearance and presumed death, and providing the seed for future stories even as a long run is being officially shut down. Eventually Moore's battles with DC would make his work on the central figures in DC's pantheon unthinkable, but his rare take on the company's central icon remains a highlight from a half-century of stories.

DC repackaged the two comic book issues as a single square-bound volume in 1996, and the story has since been reprinted in *DC Universe: The Stories of Alan Moore* (2006). *The Deluxe Edition* of the story (joined by Moore's two other Superman stories) appeared in 2009.

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Corey K. Creekmur

WHEDON, JOSS (1964–). Joseph Hill Whedon was born in New York City to television writer Tom Whedon and high school teacher and writer, Lee Stearns. His parents divorced when he was nine years old and he subsequently divided time between them. His teenage years were spent at a private boys' school in England and he went on to study feminism and film at Wesleyan University. Whedon lists his film studies professor Jeanine Basinger, his mother, and his wife Kai Cole as the three most important and influential women in his life and his work.

Whedon began his career in Hollywood writing for the sitcom *Roseanne*—a job that made him a third generation television writer (his father wrote for *The Electric Company* and *The Golden Girls* and his grandfather, John Whedon, wrote for *The Donna Reed Show*). Whedon also co-wrote several movies including, *Toy Story* and *Alien Resurrection*, and worked as a script doctor on *Speed* and ***X-Men***—the latter of which kept only two of his original lines.

Whedon has noted he was a fan of comic books growing up, and more specifically, of *girls* in comic books. Therefore he was disappointed with the lack of female characters in the medium, especially when it came to **superheroes**. He was particularly drawn to Kitty Pryde of the X-Men—a character he calls a figure of both affection and identification. Whedon's early frustration with this scarcity of interesting women characters in comics later carried over to film and television. It was one of several factors that inspired him to create a female superhero in Buffy Summers, who first appeared in the 1992 film *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and then in the critically acclaimed television series of the same name from 1997 to 2003.

While he acknowledges that film and comics are different media, Whedon frequently utilizes storytelling techniques he learned from reading comic books in his film and television work. These include plotting devices and rhythm as well as superhero tropes. Additionally, the impact of **Chris Claremont**'s early run on the X-Men can be seen in Whedon's narrative focus on friendship and the created family in his television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel*, and *Firefly*. Whedon's series challenge the conventions of commercial television work, partly because he draws so heavily upon alternative traditions, especially the comics, though the comics have come to influence numerous other television series as well, including *Alias*, *Battlestar Galactica*, and *Lost*—not to mention more obvious cases, such as *Heroes* and *Smallville*.

Whedon's interest in comics came full-circle when he began to write comics himself. First he contributed to comic books based on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* that were published by **Dark Horse Comics** from 1998 to 2004. He also wrote a limited series about a future Slayer for **Dark Horse** called *Fray*. It was drawn by Karl Moline and appeared between the years 2001 and 2003. Whedon scripted issues #1 through #24 for **Marvel**'s *Astonishing X-Men* title with art by John Cassaday. He was involved in writing a ***Wonder Woman*** film script for Warner Bros. but the project dissolved over creative differences.

In 2007, five years after the series finale of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Whedon began producing an Eighth Season of the series—but in an innovative twist he did so in comic books rather than on television. Published by Dark Horse, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer Season Eight* has expanded the Slayer mythology in a canonical fashion and has featured scripts by Whedon, as well as by guest writers such as **Jeph Loeb** and **Brian K. Vaughan**. The success of this transition from medium to medium led to a continuation of *Angel* in comic book form as well, published by IDW Publishing. Whedon also wrote an arc for **Marvel's *Runaways*** after Vaughan left the title.

Selected Bibliography: Kaveney, Roz. *Superheroes! Capes and Crusaders in Comics and Films*. New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008; Stuller, Jennifer K. *Ink-stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology*. New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010; Whedon, Joss. "Introduction." In *Fray*. Oregon: Dark Horse Books, 2003.

Jennifer K. Stuller

WILLIAMSON, AL (1931–). Artist Al Williamson's clean and articulate drawing provided a touch of elegance to the sometimes crude and overwrought expressionist style delivered by the **EC** (Entertaining Comics) brand of grotesque **horror** in the 1950s. Williamson was the youngest of EC's stable of regular artists, and his work was inspired by the romantic draftsmanship of Alex Raymond (*Flash Gordon*) and Hal Foster (***Tarzan*** and *Prince Valiant*). Williamson, of Colombian descent, worked in the New York commercial art world, studied with anatomy and sequential art master, **Burne Hogarth**, and performed his first comic book art in *Heroic Comics* in 1948 at the age of 17. Later, he took over the *Flash Gordon* strip from Raymond. Collector Ray Cuthbert relates that Williamson wished to emulate Raymond's style precisely, so he used a lightbox to trace Raymond's delicate figurative work, even though his own hand was beautiful and clear.

Despite the typically crude and shocking appearance of ghouls, **vampires**, and other monsters in EC comics, Williamson's brand of horror was more restrained, dignified, and elevated. His work served the story and eschewed showboating. A former publisher at **Marvel**, Shirrel Rhoades, writes that, "it would take more than half a century for Hollywood's special effects to catch up with the dazzling visuals drawn by **Wallace Wood** and Al Williamson for the EC Comics' celebrated sci-fi titles" (50). After the extinction of EC, Williamson was employed by a host of companies in the 1950s including Harvey, Atlas, and AGC.

Williamson distinguished himself as the artist of *Flash Gordon* in the 1960s, working on the daily comic strip and creating memorable *Flash Gordon* comic books for King Features. Williamson's world featured floating cities, sleek spacecraft, grotesque monsters wedded to classical proportions and a strong sense of balance. Heroes, like Flash Gordon, were always supple, erect, and placid, representing an ideal of Greek and Renaissance humanism.

By the 1980s, **Marvel Comics** and George Lucas tapped Williamson to do the Marvel Comics **adaptation** of *The Empire Strikes Back* from the *Star Wars* film series. Williamson augmented the fairytale wonder of *Star Wars* with a grit and realism that provided gravity to the storyline and underscored its classicism.

Much of Williamson's prowess in recent years has been in exceeding expectations with ephemeral material. In the 1980s, he created a new ***New Mutants*** series with Brett Blevins, collaborated with Jim Shooter and **John Romita Jr.** on *Star Brand*, and inked a wide array of Marvel graphic novel covers including *Cloak and Dagger*, *The Inhumans*, and the *Squadron Supreme*. In his work on ***Spider-Man*** *2099*, artists Rick Leonardi and Williamson provided a delicate sensibility that prevented the dark-age futuristic

Spider-Man (Miguel O'Hara) character from being an overstated heavy metal basher. In the 1990s, he created a new comic adaptation of Lucas's *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* and collaborated with Romita Jr. on the *Spider-Man* series.

Selected Bibliography: Cuthbert, Ray. "The Search for Al Williamson's *Flash Gordon* Number 1" (2002), http://www.comicartville.com/flashgordon.htm; Rhoades, Shirrel. *A Complete History of American Comics*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008.

Stuart Lenig

WILSON, S. CLAY (1941–). Among the original contributors to ***Zap*** Comix, S. Clay Wilson is infamous for his violent and hyper-sexual drawings, often containing a recurring character, the Checkered Demon. An influential figure in the **underground comics** scene, he shattered conventionality with his densely detailed strips crammed with deviancy, carnage, and confusion.

Born in Lincoln, Nebraska, Wilson later attended the University of Nebraska and earned a bachelor of fine arts degree in 1964. Wilson has described his academic experience there as tumultuous. In spite of his distaste for the mandatory ROTC training at the University of Nebraska, Wilson was a sharp student of anthropology and art history, which underscored his horrific images with subtle moral tales and astute reflections of contemporary society and civilization.

After graduating from UNL, Wilson fled Lincoln for a short stay in New York. He then moved to Lawrence, Kansas, and began doing a series of full-page drawings for *Grist*, a literary magazine published and edited by John Fowler. On a trip to San Francisco to visit Charles Plymell, in 1968, Wilson met **Robert Crumb**, who was in the midst of printing the first issue of *Zap* Comix. Wilson showed Crumb his artwork, which Crumb described as "something like I'd never seen before, anywhere, the level of mayhem, violence, dismemberment, naked women, loose body parts, huge, obscene sex organs, a nightmare vision of hell-on-Earth never so graphically illustrated in the history of art!" Crumb expanded *Zap* to include Wilson, with his premiere of the Checkered Demon in *Zap* Comix #2.

In addition to his contribution to the *Zap* collective that also included Spain Rodriguez, Robert Williams, and Rick Griffin, Wilson published his own titles such as *Pork*, *Snatch*, and *Feltch*. He also played in a blues band called Yukon Pete and the Muff Divers. Wilson's art continued to contain lurid degeneracy, tempered with dark humor. Wilson's signature style is to pack every inch of space packed with action and crazy details. His artwork is said to have even offended **Harvey Kurtzman**, who was nonetheless drawn to it. Though certainly controversial, Wilson has avoided some of the criticisms directed towards many of his contemporaries for their portrayal of women, as many consider him to be an equal opportunity sadist.

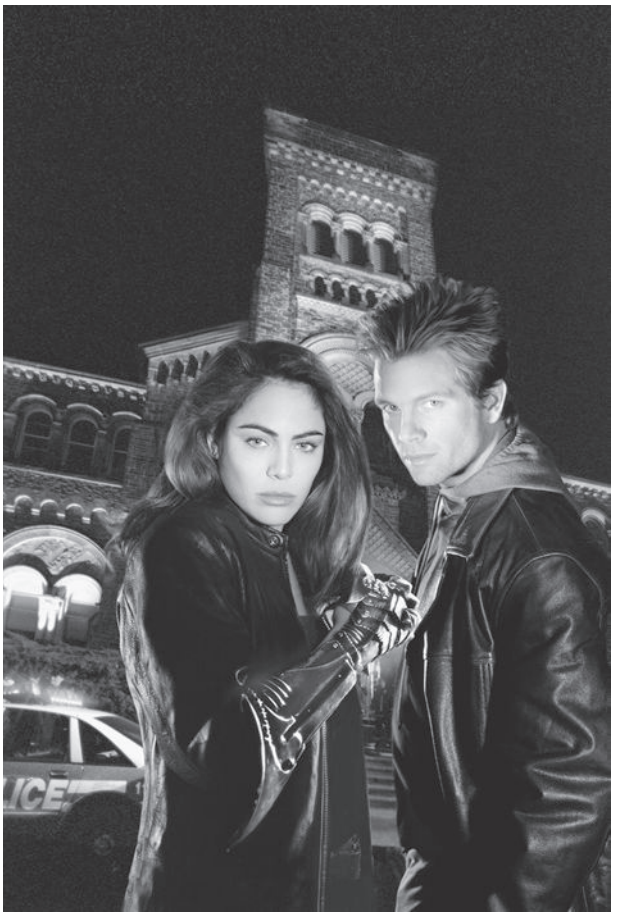
Wilson has illustrated the books of William S. Burroughs, and created a volume of children's fairy tales, *Wilson's Grimm*. He continued to produce comics, watercolors, and book illustrations until he suffered a severe brain injury in 2008. After attending a

publishing event in San Francisco, Wilson left the house of a friend and was later found unconscious, with injuries that included a fractured neck. After a week in intensive care, Wilson was put on an accelerated therapy program and has shown signs of improvement. A controversial figure, at times he reflected the excess found in his comics.

Selected Bibliography: Rosenkrantz, Patrick. *Rebel Visions, The Underground Comix Revolution 1963–1975*. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2002; Wilson, S. Clay. *The Art of S. Clay Wilson*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 2006.

Richard L. Graham

WITCHBLADE. *Witchblade* is an ongoing monthly comic from independent U.S. publishers Top Cow Productions, an imprint of **Image Comics**, primarily featuring tough independent female New York Police Department homicide detective Sara Pezzini. Created by Mark Silvestri, David Wohl, Brian Haberlin, and Michael Turner, *Witchblade* concerns Penzini's discovery and use of the Witchblade, a supernatural ancient weapon that envelops the body and imbues the user with superhuman powers. The title has maintained popularity and is an interesting take on female **superheroes**. Pezzini first appeared in *Cyblade/Shi* #1: *The Battle For Independents* (1995), where she was mortally wounded during an undercover case, the Witchblade made its choice to include her in the long line of women that has shared its power and healed her wounds, allowing her to survive the resulting confrontation with villain Kenneth Irons. She then passes a Periculum test, after which the Witchblade bonds with her at a cellular level and slows the aging process. Similar to **Green Lantern**, "Witchblade" refers both to the power-giving device and colloquially to the character who possesses it any given time.



Yancy Butler and David Chokachi in the TNT television series *Witchblade*. TNT/Photofest

Although the comics fetishistically represent Pezzini in full Witchblade armor and little else, the moderately successful television

series, *Witchblade*, which debuted on August 27, 2000 on TNT as a pilot film, directed by Ralph Hemeker and written by Silvestri and John David Zeik, and starring Yancy Butler in the title role, was less titillating in its representation of women. It ran for two series: from June 12, 2001 to August 26, 2002. In 2009, talks occurred about the possibility of a major motion picture, directed by Michael Rymer and produced by Platinum Studies, IDG Films, and Relatively Media. In the wake of the unsuccessful films *Elektra* (2005) and ***Catwoman*** (2005), and the problems in getting **Wonder Woman** to the screen, this may be difficult, however. As a television show, *Witchblade* could be seen as part of a robust female action hero genre on television with the likes of *Birds of Prey* (2002–3) and the more well-known *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003), and X*ena Warrior Princess* (1995–2001). The idea of handing down a mythical power from warrior woman to warrior women was as rather clumsily inserted into **DC Comics**' Catwoman franchise with the roundly panned *Catwoman* film. Witchblade has had many crossovers with both other Top Cow characters, and characters from **DC Comics**, **Marvel**, and **Dark Horse Comics** that strain any sense of continuity. These have included *Witchblade/Wolverine* (2004) and *Witchblade/The Magdalena/Vampirella* (2005). These constant crossovers are reminiscent of the crossovers of such film licensed properties as *Robocop*, *Terminator*, and *Aliens* in the Dark Horse comics of the 1980s and 1990s. In 2004, Japanese animation Studio GONZO started to produce an anime version of the character set in the far future, which ran for 24 episodes from April 2006 onwards. A **manga** incarnation *Witchblade: Taker*, created by Yasuko Kobayashi started a serial run in March 2006.

Lorcan McGrane

WOLFMAN, MARV (1946–). Marv Wolfman began working for **DC Comics** in 1968 as a freelance writer on their mystery titles and ***Blackhawk***, soon contributing to **superhero** books like ***Teen Titans***, *Supergirl*, and ***Batman***. By the early 1970s, after a brief period as story editor at **Warren Publications**, he had moved over to **Marvel**, where he created Skull the Slayer, Nova, Bullseye, and the Black Cat, but he is probably best known for his monumental 70-issue run on ***Tomb of Dracula*** with **Gene Colan**, which included the first appearance of the **vampire** hunter, Blade. Wolfman also edited Marvel's black-and-white magazine line, before he was promoted to editor-in-chief, but he stepped down after less than a year to devote more time to writing, including extensive runs on ***Fantastic Four***, ***Daredevil***, and *The Amazing* ***Spider-Man***. In 1980, toward the end of his run on *Dracula*, he had a falling out with then editor-in-chief Jim Shooter over Wolfman's editing duties on the title, and Wolfman then moved back to DC Comics as a writer/editor.

Upon his return to DC, Wolfman embarked on the most prolific and significant period in his career. Along with artist **George Pérez**, he created *The New Teen Titans*, which quickly became DC's bestselling title. *The New Teen Titans* combined original Titans Robin, Wonder Girl, Kid Flash, and Beast Boy (renamed as Changeling) with brand new characters: Raven, Cyborg, and Starfire. Wolfman and Pérez also transformed

Robin from Batman's sidekick to the independent hero, Nightwing. Wolfman also reunited with his *Tomb of Dracula* collaborator Gene Colan on another supernatural title, the short-lived *Night Force*. In 1985, Wolfman and Pérez created ***Crisis on Infinite Earths***, a year-long crossover that combined DC's multiple universes into a single one with a single continuity. During the *Crisis*, several long-running characters died, including **The Flash** and Supergirl. Following the series, most DC heroes underwent a revamp; Wolfman joined writer/artist **John Byrne** in the revamp of **Superman**, and Wolfman in particular revised the villain Lex Luthor from an evil scientist to a ruthless corporate executive. While continuing to write *New Teen Titans* for more than 10 years, Wolfman also wrote *Batman*, where he introduced the character Tim Drake as the new Robin after the death of Robin II, Jason Todd.

Wolfman's writing on *New Teen Titans* combined soap-opera-style continuity and detailed characterization with superhero action, wherein some subplots would last for a year or more. For example, the storyline that involved new team member Terra betraying the Titans to the villain Deathstroke, the Terminator, ran for more than 18 issues. This kind of long-range plotting became a hallmark of Wolfman's style. In addition, after the success of *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, he became known for his ability to write large-scale "event" comics that involved many characters and plotlines.

With the end of his writing on *The New Teen Titans* in 1995, Wolfman's comic work decreased significantly while he pursued a career in television and animation. In 1998, he sued Marvel Comics over the ownership of the Blade and Deacon Frost characters, which had recently been featured in a successful film from New Line Cinema, but a judge issued a ruling in favor of Marvel in 2000. He returned to comics again in 2006, writing *Nightwing* and a revival of *Vigilante* (a version of which he created in *New Teen Titans*) for DC.

Andrew J. Kunka

WOLVERTON, BASIL (1909–78). Basil Wolverton is most widely known as an illustrator for the early issues of **EC Comics**' *MAD*, covers for **DC Comics**' **horror**-humor anthology title *PLOP!*, and his character for **Timely** (later **Marvel**) Comics, *Powerhouse Pepper*. Among Wolverton's most popular images were his bizarre, distorted caricatures of the human figure, although his total body of work included **science fiction**, horror, and humor.

Wolverton illustrated the *Powerhouse Pepper* series for Timely comics from 1942 to 1947, as a popular backup feature in various titles from Timely, including *Joker*, *Gay*, and *Tessie the Typist*. The character also briefly had his own title, spanning five issues in 1948. The series was acclaimed for its humorous similarities to E. C. Segar's Popeye the Sailor. *Powerhouse Pepper* was eventually compiled and reprinted in a single volume from **Fantagraphics** Books in 1997. Wolverton's numerous other humor, **science fiction** and horror stories appeared from a number of publishers from 1938 to 1954, spanning, as some have estimated, over 1,300 pages. Some of these stories have been reprinted in *Basil Wolverton in Space* (**Dark Horse Comics**, 1997), *Basil Wolverton's Gateway to*

Horror (**Dark Horse Comics**, 1988), and *The Basil Wolverton Reader*, volumes one and two (2003 and 2004, Pure Imagination Publishing).

After 1954, Wolverton began his association with EC Comics, primarily as an illustrator for *Mad*, and to a lesser degree their other humor title, *Panic*. Wolverton had previously developed an unusual style of cartooning he described as the "spaghetti and meatballs" style, so named for its distinctive tendency to distort the human form into drooping, veined, protuberant, and stringy shapes. Perhaps the best examples of this style are found in "MAD Reader" (*Mad* #11, 1954) and "Meet Miss Potgold" (*Mad* #17, 1954). These images created by Wolverton were beyond basic gross-out humor: Wolverton crafted imagery that was psychologically affecting and reflected an almost Freudian sexual symbolism. Wolverton revisited this style for the covers for *PLOP!*, which was reminiscent of early *MAD*, crafting covers for the series' first 19 issues in the early 1970s.

In his personal life, Wolverton was a conservative, religious, and private person. He crafted a series of cartoons describing the events of the Bible, largely covering the Old Testament. These stories were published for Herbert Armstrong's Radio Church of God, which would later be known as the Worldwide Church of God. These stories have since been compiled and published by Fantagraphics Books in 2008. Wolverton also illustrated scenes from the Christian Apocalypse in his 1959 title *1975 in Prophecy*. Unquestionably some of Wolverton's finest work, these illustrations are meticulously detailed and utilize Wolverton's sense of horror and the grotesque to emotionally impact the viewer.

Wolverton died in 1978, four years after a debilitating stroke. His son, Monte Wolverton, continues to maintain his father's legacy, through books and articles about his father's life and work. Thanks to such efforts, Wolverton's work is being rediscovered by new generations of artists and readers.

Robert O'Nale

WONDER WOMAN. Created by William Moulton Marston (a well-known psychologist and the inventor of the systolic blood pressure test, a forerunner of the polygraph) Wonder Woman debuted in ***All Star Comics*** #8 (December 1941). Writing under the pseudonym Charles Moulton, Marston died in 1947, but stories he had written continued to appear for two years after his death. The early Wonder Woman stories were drawn by Harry G. Peter in a distinctive, blocky style until his death in 1958. Since then, she has gone through numerous writers and artists (mostly male) and has become the most important female **superhero** in comics history. Long thought of as a sort of female counterpart to **Superman**, she has regularly appeared in a variety of **DC Comics** titles since her debut, giving her the longest continuous run of any superhero in comics other than Superman and **Batman**. She is also a particularly interesting and complex example of the superhero. Marston infused Wonder Woman with proto-feminist characteristics and themes such as independence, self-worth, and sisterhood. Over the years, and with the death of her creator, she was subjected to the whims of writers and the

mores of various eras—many of which deprived the Amazon of her authority in favor of a more normative femininity. Her appearance on the cover of the first issue of *Ms.* magazine (1972) reinforced her status as a symbol of female empowerment and assured she would always be recognized as an icon of feminist ideals.

Because of the length of her run in DC's complex and changing universe, Wonder Woman has gone through a number of transformations in her look and other characteristics over the years. Her origin story has undergone changes as well, though the best-known version has her as an Amazon princess living on isolated Paradise Island when American intelligence agent Steve Trevor crashes his plane there. Helping to nurse Trevor back to health, she then wins a tournament designed to choose a champion to return with him to the United States to help fight the **Nazis**. She then remains in "Man's World," living as her alter ego Diana Prince while using her powers to fight against Nazis and other villains. Trevor, meanwhile, remains her love interest, but importantly remains in a secondary role relative to Wonder Woman herself, playing Lois Lane to her Superman.

Conceived by Marston as a role model for the "new woman," Wonder Woman was originally envisioned as a tall, beautiful Amazon with superhuman speed, strength, and agility. The possessor of special Amazonian hand-to-hand combat skills, she also bore a variety of weapons, including a golden Lasso of Truth with which she could force the obedience and truthfulness of anyone she encountered; she also owned an invisible airplane that she could control by telepathy. As her origins evolved to include important Hellenic roots, she acquired forearm bracelets (forged from the shield of Zeus) that could ward off bullets and other attacks, while also producing a powerful concussive force of their own when slammed together.



Lynda Carter, as Diana Prince, a.k.a. Wonder Woman, in the CBS television series by the same name, which ran from 1976–79 and brought the character to a new level of celebrity in American culture. ABC/Photofest

Early on, she joined the **Justice Society of America**, becoming its first female member, though (in a reflection of the expectations of the early 1940s and in contrast to Marston's vision) she served as the group's secretary. In 1960, she joined the **Justice League of America**. Her long and varied

career has included appearances in her own long-running self-titled comic; indeed, along with Superman and Batman, she was one of only three superheroes to appear continuously in their own titles through the 1950s with the demise of superhero comics in that decade. She was, however, considerably toned down in response to charges by critics such as **Fredric Wertham** that comics were dangerous influences on children and that her stories, in particular, had a lesbian subtext. Critics of that time also complained of the unusual amount of bondage in comics featuring Wonder Woman, often involving her golden lasso, though bondage was in fact a common image in the comics of the day.

In the 1960s, Wonder Woman's Hellenic roots were emphasized in a revamping of the character. By 1969, however, in what can be interpreted as one of a number of attempts on the part of male writers to tame the Amazon Princess (sometimes by hypersexualizing her), she lost her super powers when she gave them up in order to remain on Earth after the other Amazons decided to move to another dimension. Now as Diana Prince, without a superhero identity, she became the owner of a mod boutique. Even without super powers, however, she trained under her Chinese mentor I Ching to become enough of an expert at martial arts and weapons to continue her fight against evil even as a mortal human. Wonder Woman was brought to new prominence in American culture with the success of the popular *Wonder Woman* television series that aired from 1975 to 1979, with Lynda Carter in the title role.

The popularity of this series (in which Wonder Woman has super powers) caused the character to return to her superhero roots. After the 1985 ***Crisis on Infinite Earths*** series she was re-launched by **George Pérez** and Greg Potter with a completely reworked origin story. Now an emissary to our world from the fictional island nation of Themyscira (formerly Paradise Island), her body is revealed to be composed of the mystical clay surrounding the island, given super abilities by a group of Olympian gods. Since then the character has made a number of important appearances and gone through a variety of transformations, playing a key role in the main DC continuity as well as in the ***Elseworlds*** miniseries ***Kingdom Come*** (1996), in which she becomes pregnant with Superman's daughter, or in Darwyn Cooke's ***The New Frontier*** (2004), in which she challenges Superman over U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The 1986 miniseries *Legend of Wonder Woman* is an affectionate tribute to her legacy by writer **Kurt Busiek** with art in homage to Peter by **Trina Robbins**; the 2002 graphic novel *The Hiketeia*, by **Greg Rucka** and J. G. Jones, stages a notable confrontation between Wonder Woman and Batman. In 2007, **Gail Simone** became the first woman to regularly write Wonder Woman stories. Meanwhile, Wonder Woman's origin story was clarified in a self-titled direct-to-DVD animated movie released in 2009.

Whatever her importance within the DC universe, Wonder Woman is probably most important as an icon of feminine strength and capability within the popular culture of the real world. She is an iconic figure often referred to in other works of popular culture and has exerted a central influence on the evolution of female heroes in the comics. Her influence extends to other media as well, and she is often cited as one of the inspirations

behind the recent rise of action-oriented female heroes in television and film, such as the protagonists of the television series *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995–2001) and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1996–2003). Moreover, as an ongoing image of feminine courage and strength beginning in a time when there were few such images available in American popular culture, she has exercised an incalculable influence on generations of young women in need of such powerful and positive role models.

Selected Bibliography: Beatty, Scott. *Wonder Woman: The Ultimate Guide to the Amazon Princess*. New York: DK, 2003; Daniels, Les. *Wonder Woman: The Complete History*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004; Robbins, Trina. *The Great American Superheroines*. Palace Press International, 2010; Stuller, Jennifer. *Ink-Stained Amazons and Cinematic Warriors: Superwomen in Modern Mythology*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2010.

M. Keith Booker

WOOD, WALLACE (WALLY) (1927–81). Born in Minnesota, Wood was one of the greatest artists in the comics field. Best known for his artwork for **EC Comics** and *Mad* Magazine, Wood also illustrated book covers, **science fiction** digests, men's magazines, posters, record albums and even the roughs for the Topp's *Mars Attacks!* cards.

After Wood graduated from high school in 1944, he joined the Merchant Marines and then enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1946. He was hired by **Will Eisner** to do lettering on ***The Spirit*** and then became an assistant to George Wunder on the newspaper strip *Terry and the Pirates*. His first professional comic book job was as a letterer for Fox Publications in 1948. He then branched out drawing various **romance** titles in 1949.

"The Werewolf Legend," in *Vault Of Horror* #2, was Wood's first story for EC Comics. Wood penciled and inked approximately 150 EC stories in various genres, many now considered true classics. After the collapse of EC, the company's most popular title, *Mad*, was continued as a magazine for which Wood was a major contributor through 1964.

In 1958, Wood inked the pencils of **Jack Kirby** on the syndicated strip *Sky Masters of the Space Force* and also worked with Kirby on *Challengers of the Unknown*.

Wood did stories and artwork for **Warren Publishing's horror** magazines, as well as for **Charlton comics**, Fox, Harvey, Atlas, and others. Wood also established **Daredevil's** distinctive red costume for **Marvel Comics** during the **Silver Age**.

Wood's dedication to his field often resulted in expressions of resentment concerning what he saw as exploitation of the artists (e.g., low pay, no benefits). So, in 1965 Wood enjoyed the opportunity afforded by Tower Comics to create, write, and draw his own **superheroes**. The result was T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents (The Higher United Nations Defense Enforcements Reserves). He would hire many of his colleagues to assist him in this enterprise. While the work is now highly prized, it would only last for two years. In 1966, Wood launched the independent magazine *witzend* based on a concept by Dan Adkins. The magazine's philosophy was based upon Wood's view that artists should retain copyright to their own work. In a keynote address at the 1966

NYC comic convention, artist **Gil Kane** spoke of how *witzend* represented the future of comic book art.

During the early 1970s Wood worked sporadically for Marvel and **DC Comics**. In 1972 Wood began writing and drawing the sexy strips *Cannon* and *Sally Forth* for a servicemen's magazine. He also contributed x-rated stories and illustrations to pornographic magazines. When it seemed his future was past, in 1978 he produced the *Wizard King* with artwork as fine as any of his career.

Suffering from a number of debilitating ailments including the loss of vision in one eye due to numerous strokes, Wood took his own life in 1981 at the age of 53. The prodigious amount of his published work is staggering.

Selected Bibliography: Starger, Steve, and J. David Spurlock. *Wally's World: The Brilliant Life and Tragic Death of Wally Wood, the World's 2nd Best Comic Book Artist*. Lakewood, NJ: Vanguard Productions, 2006.

Jeff McLaughlin

WORLD'S FINEST COMICS. A series published by National/**DC Comics** from 1941 to #323 (January 1986) featuring **Superman** and **Batman** stories and team-ups. The title "World's Finest" was originally derived from *World's Fair* comics published by National/DC during the 1939–40 New York World's fair. The series itself (initially titled *World's Best Comics* with issue #1) began as *World's Finest* with #2 in the summer of 1941. Like many anthology series of the day, each 96-page magazine featured a variety of **superhero** stories. Superman and Batman appeared in separate adventures in its **Golden Age** run. The series also anthologized the adventures of numerous other characters, including **Sandman**, Johnny Thunder, Hop Harrigan, TNT, Crimson Avenger, Star Spangled Kid, **Aquaman**, and **Green Arrow**. In the Golden Age, the series almost exclusively featured characters who had first appeared in other anthologies.

The series survived the post-war downturn of the superhero genre by featuring Superman and Batman together rather than in separate adventures. These team-ups began in July–August 1954 with issue #71 and would continue to highlight the two most popular characters in the DC Comics line throughout the **Silver Age** (argued to begin with issue #84). These Superman/Batman adventures (also featuring Robin) would also see the team up of various villains, such as the first Lex Luthor and Joker paring in issue #88.

Even with the emphasis of the series as a Superman/Batman vehicle, *World's Finest* would, on occasion, get back to its roots as an anthology series at times featuring Green Arrow, Tommy Tomorrow (issues #102–24, 1959–60), and **Aquaman** (beginning with issue #125) along with the standard Superman/Batman adventures (usually written by Dick Sprang until issue #135).

Some Silver Age *World's Finest* stories would also cross over with Legion of Super-Heroes characters (at that point featured in ***Adventure Comics***). The Composite Superman, an android villain with the powers of the Legion with a half-Superman,

half-Batman appearance was introduced in issue #142, while the Adult Legion would make an appearance in issue #172. These Superman/Batman adventures would help define the characters for an innocent Silver Age audience.

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw attempts to reposition characters to be more aligned with the socio-cultural changes of the times. At the same time, however, the superhero genre was influenced by the pop culture camp style of the Adam West *Batman* television series. *World's Finest* reflects this conflict by on one hand spotlighting covers by **Neal Adams** (issues #199 and #200) and on the other hand, featuring a Metamorpho run from issues #217–20.

In the mid 1970s up until its cancellation in 1986 Batman/Superman team-ups would continue for the majority of the run. Like many other series during this time, 100-page specials and 80-page anthologies would be featured in *World's Finest* as it picked up the load from the "Canceled Comic Cavalcade" implosion of the late 1970s. Anthologized adventures in these 80-page editions featured Green Arrow, Hawkman, Shazam (the Marvel Family), Zatanna, Challengers of the Unknown, Black Lightning, Creeper, Vigilante, and Deadman.

By 1983, the series settled into the standard 24-page Superman/Batman adventures until its cancellation at the dawn of the post-***Crisis on Infinite Earths*** era.

D. R. Hammontree

WORLD'S GREATEST SUPERHEROES, THE. *The World's Greatest Superheroes* is a hardcover graphic novel published by **DC** in 2005 collecting a series of works created by **Alex Ross** and Paul Dini from 1998 to 2003 about various DC **superheroes**. Ross conceived of the project while working on ***Kingdom Come***, and the six oversized works that comprise *The World's Greatest Super-Heroes*—***Superman:*** *Peace on Earth*, ***Batman***: *War on Crime*, *Shazam!*: *Power of Hope*, ***Wonder Woman***: *Spirit of Truth*, ***JLA***: *Secret Origins*, and *JLA: Liberty and Justice*—all feature the Ross's characteristic paintings with dialogue and narrative supplied by Dini.

The first selection in the collection is *Superman*: *Peace on Earth*, originally published in 1998 and featuring a story about Superman combating world hunger. Superman decides throughout the course of the story that with his incredible powers and the resources of the United States, he could ensure that the entire population of Earth would be fed for one day. His mission, however, ends in failure as he encounters distrust from other countries who see him as a spokesperson for an American agenda, or who feel his benevolence is a threat to their power structure. Ultimately, Superman learns that his greatest power is to inspire the people around him to do good for their communities, and that the only viable solution to the world's problems is through education and cooperation.

The humanistic theme established in *Superman: Peace on Earth* is echoed throughout the other five works collected in *The World's Greatest Superheroes*, and more often than not the heroes in these stories fail in their overt missions, requiring them to change their approach to ultimately succeed. Thus, *Batman: War on Crime*, published in 1999, forces

Batman to confront poverty as he attempts to keep a juvenile whose parents were killed in a violent crime from succumbing to the cycle of violence that plagues the inner city. Batman's realization is that he bears a double responsibility to his community: not only is he obliged to help as the Batman, but his alter-ego, Bruce Wayne, must also actively strive to revitalize the urban landscape using the vast resources of his multinational company. This realization leads Batman to reject the industrialist Randall Winters as a business partner since Winters is more concerned with lining his pockets than with urban renewal.

Shazam!: The Power of Hope, published in 2000, involves **Captain Marvel**'s interactions with sick children at a local hospital. There he meets an adolescent who has been abused by his father. Unable to connect to the boy as Captain Marvel, and disquieted by this failure, he decides to return as Billy Batson, his alter-ego, since Billy himself is merely a child. Captain Marvel finds that he is able to approach the boy freely without the imposing trappings of an adult superhero and he befriends him. The experience teaches Captain Marvel that it is hope itself that is essential to the role of a superhero, and that the smallest gestures can sometimes make the biggest difference in the lives that he touches.

Wonder Woman: Spirit of Truth, published in 2001, addresses **Wonder Woman**'s role as an ambassador of peace to the nations of Earth. Near the beginning of the book she fails time and time again in her overtures of cooperation with foreign nations because of their perception of her as an outsider to both the countries' affairs and to life as a normal human. In a pivotal scene she discusses her frustrations with Superman, who encourages her to be less flamboyant in her approach so that she can gain a new perspective on the situation. She then dons a series of disguises in order to walk among people without drawing attention to herself, and in so doing gains a more intimate knowledge of the cultures with which she wishes to connect in order to better operate as a superhero.

The last two works are companion pieces, *JLA: Secret Origins*, published in 2002, acting as a preceding volume and preview to *JLA: Liberty and Justice*, published in 2003, by containing a series of two-page origin stories for its main characters. *JLA: Liberty and Justice* itself is about the **Justice League of America** combating an alien disease that paralyzes its victims. The overt threat to the public that emerges from the confusion as the Justice League attempts to isolate and cure the disease, however, is from the people themselves as widespread riots begin to break out from fear of the global pandemic. The Justice League pacifies the riots, but in doing so takes a hit to their reputation as news organizations and public leaders speak out against even their mild use of force on the general public. Rampant fear grips much of the populace and the alien plague is even blamed on the Justice League, the league itself having several members of extra-terrestrial origin. Told mostly from the perspective of the Martian **Manhunter**, the story comes to a conclusion when he speaks about the Justice League's intentions in front of the United Nations, asking for the people of the world to realize that the Justice League has always honored the trust the public has given them and that the members of the League ultimately wish to be perceived as part of the global population, not as outsiders to be feared.

The works comprising *The World's Greatest Superheroes* are meant to ground superheroes in the real world, diverging greatly from the epic battles seen in many superhero comics by giving the heroes real-world problems to face, such as hunger or street crime. Each work takes particular care to stress the humanity of its heroes, showing that each hero's greatest asset is the ability to connect to the people around them in meaningful ways. Consequently, the stories are narrated from the heroes' perspectives in their own voices. This technique is bolstered by Ross and Dini's decision to place the text uncharacteristically outside of speech and thought balloons in most of the works, relying on speech balloons only in *JLA: Liberty and Justice* to facilitate the interactions of a larger cast.

The genesis of the work owes itself somewhat to Ross's style of illustration; he wanted to bring the same realism that he portrays with his art to the story that he told. The oversized format of the stories hearkens back to the tabloid size one-shots that Ross remembered from his youth, and like these, Ross wanted *The World's Greatest Superheroes* to be appealing to a larger audience who might not find the heroes as familiar as long-time fans. This rationale also prompted the two-page origins that begin each story, as each one is a simplified version meant to allow easy-access to the characters by the largest audience possible.

While the publication, being placed outside of DC's regular continuity, did not heavily influence further comics, *Superman: Peace on Earth* did win the **Eisner Award** for best graphic album in 1999, also netting Ross an Eisner Award for best interior painter/ multimedia artist in that same year. The original drawings for *Superman: Peace on Earth*, *Batman: War on Crime*, *Shazam!: Power of Hope*, and *Wonder Woman: Spirit of Truth* were all auctioned off for charity, netting UNICEF $81,000 from *Peace on Earth*, The Reisenbach Charter School in Harlem $157,400 from *War on Crime*, The Make-A-Wish foundation $110,000 from *Power of Hope*, and the Twin Towers Fund $50,000 from *Spirit of Truth*.

Jackson Jennings



X-MEN. The X-Men superhero team was created by **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby**; they first appeared in September 1963 and have since become the basis for one of **Marvel**'s most enduring projects, spawning countless spin-offs, video games, cartoons, action figures, and feature films. The *X-Men* comics would eventually include contributions from some of the leading writers and artists in the industry, including **John Byrne**, **Jim Lee**, **Grant Morrison**, and **Chris Claremont**. Though perhaps uninspired in its inception, *X-Men* grew into one of the most popular comics of its time; its characters and stories have touched on some of the most intense social and political questions of our time, cultivating a rich thematic history unusual in a mainstream series.

The X-Men phenomenon began with the creation of the original X-Men team of **mutants** by Professor Xavier, himself a powerful telepath, in the hopes that his team will be able to protect humanity from those mutants who would seek to use their powers for evil. In the first issue they face the man who would become their greatest foe: Magneto. A mutant who could create and control magnetic fields (and who was later revealed to be a survivor of the Jewish Holocaust), Magneto would go on to become the most important oppositional force the X-Men would face—not only because of his enormous power but also because, in insisting that humanity will never accept mutants and that they must struggle against humans in order to protect and preserve their own existence, he presents the most compelling ideological challenge to Xavier's dream of peaceful human/mutant coexistence.

Indeed, while arch-nemeses Xavier and Magneto are enemies, they are also old friends who often treat one another with mercy and mutual respect—in some cases they even work together against more traditionally evil characters like the time-traveling agent of social-Darwinist destruction, Apocalypse. Thus, in a sense, Xavier is Martin

Luther King to Magneto's Malcolm X; joined by the recognition that they are victims of human violence and exclusion, but divided by the manner in which they seek to respond. Further complicating the moral compass of the series are characters like the immensely popular Wolverine who, despite ultimately accepting Xavier's liberal humanism, takes very different and sometimes questionable paths to the same ends.

Xavier's original X-Men team went through a number of lineup changes and, in the process, spawned a variety of closely related titles. The primary team was documented in *Uncanny X-Men* and later in *X-Men*, while younger mutants who trained and fought with the X-Men joined teams like the government sponsored X-Factor, the British Excalibur, and the rebel group X-Force, each of which had their own titles for many years. Continuity was maintained across all of the X-books and major events were increasingly marked in the 1990s and 2000s by crossovers implicating mutants across the various titles.

Among the most important of these crossovers was the "X-Cutioner's Song" which was published across four months in 1992. In this story, a character named Stryfe returns from a dystopic future seeking vengeance against those whose failures led to his nightmarish existence. As part of his plan, he attempts to assassinate Professor Xavier by infecting him with a techno-organic virus. The professor survives, but so does the virus; in fact, Stryfe's Legacy Virus became an ever-present factor in the lives of mutants for long after; it was a terminal disease, thought at first to only strike mutants but later infecting non-mutants too.



The Uncanny X-men, issue #135, published July 1980. Marvel Comics Group/Photofest

The virus was, naturally, meant to parallel the rise of HIV and this was one of many instances where mutants seemed to explicitly represent victimized minorities in American society. In particular, the treatment of mutants often served as a venue for the exploration of attitudes towards homophobia and racism. Xavier is the consummate liberal, inspiring his students to follow and fight for his dream of peaceful coexistence in the face of intolerance, hatred and violence

from a public unable and unwilling to understand that mutants deserved the same rights as humans. Yet Xavier's liberalism contains an implicit contradiction: mutants can, in fact, by their nature pose significant threats to public safety. Unlike racialized minorities or homosexuals, the danger posed by mutants is not a social construction; it is real and palpable. Liberal reasoning can easily refute homophobic claims that gay people pose a danger to society; but charges that mutants are dangerous are wholly legitimate (if incomplete), given the extraordinary powers they possess, and are often borne out in the stories themselves through powerful characters like Onslaught. In that context, when anti-mutant crusaders like Senator Robert Kelly propose Draconian measures to register, control or cure all mutants, it is not altogether impossible to sympathize with their position, even if the execution of their plans sometimes makes readers recoil.

Indeed, despite attempts by writers to show the dark and dehumanizing nature of these measures, depicting scenes that can evoke the most horrifying images of the Jewish Holocaust, the Soviet police state or Apartheid in Israel, there remains the consistent problem that mutants' powers give them uniquely destructive powers that German Jews, Soviet dissidents, or Palestinians under occupation do not. As a result, the books might be seen to partly legitimate the very discrimination they seek to critique; after all, if registration or genetic re-configuration is a legitimate response to "the mutant problem," what is to say that sterilization is not a legitimate response to "the gay problem?"

Naturally, this is not the intention of the writers, but rather it is a logical flaw inherent in the use of potentially dangerous mutants to dramatize the liberal ideology to which the books try to adhere. It is notable, too, that while Xavier and his brood preach tolerance and respect, their writers are reluctant to embrace that same spirit; gendered behavior norms are regularly reinforced and there have been very few gay or lesbian characters in the X-books. Some characters, like Northstar, Destiny and Mystique, were given "gay characteristics" but Marvel Comics refused to allow any explicitly gay characters until Northstar, then a member of the **Alpha Flight** team, outed himself in 1992. In the mid-1990s, a homoerotic attraction began to develop between two members of X-Force, Rictor and Shatterstar, but before it could blossom into an explicit relationship, new writers took over the title and the storyline was abruptly dropped. The two characters have since shared an on-panel kiss in the *X-Factor* series. Indeed, by the early 21st century, gay and lesbian characters were more widely accepted by American culture as a whole, and Northstar officially became a temporary member of the X-Men in 2001 and a regular member in 2002. The dynamic of the X-books was significantly altered in 2005 in the "Decimation" crossover. During that event, a deranged and hysterical Scarlet Witch inadvertently caused the un-mutation, and in some cases the death, of all but 200 of the world's mutant population. This posed newer, tougher questions for the remaining mutants: are mutants a separate and now-endangered species that should seek to rebuild its genetic stock, or were they always simply the human products of genetic 'accidents' who should greet the end of these mutations as an invitation to re-enter the human society from which they came?

Tyler Shipley



YOSSEL. In this historical graphic novel, first published in 2003, writer and artist **Joe Kubert** combines an account of the Holocaust in Poland with a "**What if?**" story from his family's personal history. Kubert's family emigrated to the United States from Poland in 1928, and in *Yossel* he explores what might have happened if he and his family had been in Poland when the **Nazis** invaded in the early days of World War II in 1939.

The story centers on a Jewish family living in Poland as the war starts. The young son, Yossel (like Kubert) shows aptitude with pencil and paper, and draws everything he possibly can. As the war comes closer to his village, the drawings occasionally reflect the imagery around him, but more often serve as a form of escapism, as real comics were. When the family is relocated to the Ghetto of Warsaw, his skills come in handy to keep him alive, as he is often brought into the German military headquarters to draw pictures for the entertainment of the soldiers. Interestingly, Yossel even drew **Superman**, but with Nazi symbols and look rather than his traditional one. His talents served as a way to gain food, and later information.

An interesting sub-plot to the main story of Yossel's struggles involves a man who escapes the concentration camp at Auschwitz. He had been imprisoned and served as a *sondernkommando*, who were Jews chosen to do special jobs in the camp. As the man tells of the horrors he has seen, he notes how cruel the Germans are, and how God has seemingly abandoned the Jews. When the old man first appears before Yossel, he calls Yossel by name. In time, the reader finds out that the old man is in fact the rabbi for Yossel's family, and that the family has died in the showers of Auschwitz.

Yossel then takes on the role of a partisan. The leader Mordechai is only in his early 20s, but the necessity of staying alive has driven all remaining youths into hiding.

As the full story of the horrors visited on Jews becomes clear, so too does the need to fight back, and make the Germans pay for their acts. From this point on, Yossel uses his gift of art to spy on the Germans, and eventually plants a bomb in their headquarters.

The comic ties in well with many of the other Holocaust themed books in recent years, including **Art Spiegelman**'s ***Maus*** (1973–91), which set the standard for such works. As with *Maus*, *Yossel* relates the Holocaust via a personal family history, though this time an imagined one. Kubert notes in the preface that the story is based on correspondence with relatives in the area as well as on later recollections of those who survived. Other recent graphic novels about the Holocaust include Miriam Katin's *We Are on Our Own* (2006), Pascal Croci's *Auschwitz* (2004, first published in French in 2002), and **Will Eisner**'s *The Plot: The Secret Story of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (2005).

The black and white artwork of *Yossel* is significant as it relays a type of documentary-style storytelling, while reinforcing the notion that, in some cases, moral oppositions are not complex and ambiguous but can be as simple and stark as the opposition between black and white. One can see a similar black-and-white form of storytelling in works such as ***Persepolis*** (1999–2003), by Marjane Satrapi, and ***Palestine*** (2001), by **Joe Sacco**.

Cord Scott

YOUTH CULTURE IN COMICS. The connection between the comic book world and youth is strong and undeniable. Although children and teenagers are not the only component of the comic book audience, they constitute a majority that has represented the modern comic book audience par excellence. This link between comics and youth has two sides that are closely interrelated: the evolution of comic books as a form of youth entertainment and the many representations of youth in the comic medium.

Since youth has been the most important audience, comic book publishers and creators have often looked for stories that appeal to this age group, transforming comics into a channel to express and represent the interests and concerns of different generations of (especially American) youth. The rise of comics as a cultural phenomenon came at a moment of history when children and adolescents were increasingly becoming a distinctive target market for the entertainment industry. Comics were one of the only forms of entertainment that bypassed the control of parents and other cultural authorities. Accessibility was and has been a main issue in the past and present of comic books; two factors were decisive during the infancy of the medium: the low price that permitted the independent purchase by youth; and the easy access through newsstands.

The content of the comic books published at the birth of the industry is easily encapsulated in two titles: ***Superman*** (1938) and ***Archie*** (1941). Both titles are still in print and represent two leading genres at the time: the **superhero** narrative and the teen humor narrative. Superheroes dominated the industry from the late 1930s until the end of the World War II. By then, the market was saturated with superhero stories and

started a slow decay; at the same time, works like *Archie* or Dell's **funny animals** titles had been showing steady sales and at this point started their dominance of the publishing market. Funny animal titles were aimed primarily at younger children, *Archie* and other similar titles, such as *Penny* (1943) and *Bobby Sox* (1944) were meant for adolescents. These titles helped to define the concept of adolescence in society.

Culturally, movie studios, radio stations and music producers were starting to recognize teenagers as a distinctive and economically interesting age group. In the world of comics, it was probably in 1919 when a teenager was first made the protagonist of a comic strip. Carl Ed created *Harold Teen*, a comic strip for the *Chicago Tribune*. Harold was, in many ways, very similar to Archie: he talked, dressed, and hung out in the same places that the average American teenager would do in the 1920s. However, it is interesting to note that in that period the concept of adolescence was still emerging, and that a comic like *Harold Teen* was probably helping to reinforce the differences in behavior and interests between children and teenagers.

During the 1940s and 1950s many titles with children, teens and young adults as main characters were published, including *Little Lulu* (1935), ***Dennis the Menace*** (1951), *Millie the Model* (1945), *Leave it to Binky* (1948), and ***Richie Rich*** (1953). However, none of them can be compared in success and lasting history to *Archie*, featuring America's favorite teenager. The comics about the redheaded and freckle-faced Archie Andrews helped to build and capitalized on the newborn teenage culture. Following the success of Mickey Rooney's movies and similar themed radio shows, John Goldwater at MLJ Publishing decided that the market was ready for something different from superheroes, something closer to the everyday life of the average reader. Archie's first appearance was as a backup story for *The Shield* in *Pep Comics* #22. Archie is an idealized and sanitized version of the American teenager of the 1940s. He lives in a peaceful suburban area, Riverdale, and his friends correspond with character types often found in any



Betty and Veronica from the Archie Comics. Photofest

high school narrative. Jughead is the faithful and funny friend who is more interested in food than girls, and girls are Archie's greatest problem. Betty is the typical sweetheart, romantic but also pragmatic, excellent in class and sports, and always ready to help Archie. On the other hand, Veronica is the spoiled girl, daughter of the richest man in Riverdale, Hiram Lodge. In contrast to Betty, Veronica is sophisticated, in many cases manipulative and less reliable than Betty. Finally, Archie could not succeed without a rival, and that is Reggie Mantle. Reggie is the jock who shares class upbringing with Veronica. His personality is egocentric and vain, which combines with his witty sense of humor to make him the perfect opposite for the easy-going Archie. The content is rather formulaic, following everyday life situations and incidents in the life of this group of characters, always avoiding the controversy that issues like sexuality or identity would bring. These teenagers speak properly, obey their parents, and do not smoke, drink or get into serious fights.

Bob Montana and Dan DeCarlo are responsible for giving Archie its characteristic drawing and narrative style. Montana joined the company in 1947 and was a major influence in the narrative style of the comic. De Carlo became part of the team in the late 1950s and he developed the clear and clean drawing style that is now a trademark of Archie's comics.

The popularity of *Archie* was such that most of the characters in the comic book got their own titles, while MLJ Publishing changed its name to Archie Comics in 1946. In the 1960s, Archie Comics created two other relatively successful teen titles: *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch* and *Josie and the Pussycats*. These three works expanded their success beyond the print world and were adapted to other media. Archie and Josie had their own television cartoon shows and later on the three comic books became live-action movies.

Archie's contemporary titles still portray an idealized and clean view of adolescence, although they keep themselves culturally relevant with the introduction of technology, popular culture references, and a cast that include more ethnically diverse characters. Clearly Archie's formula works since, along with **superhero** comics, it is the only surviving title from the **Golden Age**. Society's interest in Archie is proven by the press coverage that the recent engagement between Archie and Veronica has attracted. Archie is also one of the few comics that continues to be easily accessible in newsstands and supermarkets, the same as in the 1940s.

In addition, Archie's influence can still be seen in such contemporary works as *Zits* (1997–) whose protagonist, Jeremy Duncan, is essentially a modernized version of Archie Andrews. In this comic, Jerry Scott and Jim Borgman have created a realistic portrait of the contemporary teenager from a humorous and ironic perspective. It focuses in Jeremy's daily life: the everyday misunderstandings between him and his parents, his love for music, his unpredictable relationship with Sara, and his friendship with Hector and Pierce. The depiction of teenage life is full of popular culture commentary and use of technology (from headphones to cell phones) and, although Jeremy can be described as a more rebellious character than Archie, his stories are still rather harmless.

During the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s comic books were ever-present in the lives of many children and teenagers; this circumstance attracted the attention of many adults: parents, teachers, librarians, and other culture gatekeepers. Comic books became a new instance of the struggle between popular and highbrow art, especially when serving the cultural needs and tastes of youngsters. Like pulp magazines before them, comic books were accused of being mere entertainment, having no educational purpose, lowering the literacy skills of youth, and even damaging their eyes with bright colours and low quality printing. Before the infamous attack of **Fredric Wertham** in his book *The Seduction of the Innocent* (1954) and the trials that led to the establishment of the **Comics Code**, Sterling North declared comic books a "national disgrace" and listed the many format and content weaknesses of the medium. However, in order to strengthen his argument, North also recognized the ubiquity of the medium in society, noting that virtually every child read these "color 'comic' magazines." Wertham increased the virulence of the attack on comics, highlighting two ideas: comic books were a product of a decadent capitalistic industry lacking any cultural value and they also affected the innocent minds of children and teenagers, transforming them into criminals.

Although every comic book was considered a menace, the ones published by **EC** were judged as especially dangerous. **William Gaines** inherited this publishing company from his father and decided to shift the content from funny animal stories to titles like *Weird Science* or *The Vault of Horror*. EC represented a counter-cultural effort during the conservative 1950s, the attraction of youth for these company's titles is more than understandable. In a historical moment characterized by a conservative and conformist society, EC published comic books that had children and teenagers as protagonists and challenged every idealized institution: parenthood, marriage, education, legal authorities, and so forth. EC paid a high price for their rebellious line of publication, since it almost disappeared after the Senate trials and the rise of the **Comics Code**.

The magazine *Mad* was one of their only regular publications after these events. Originally *Mad* was published as a comic book, but soon it changed its format to magazine to move outside the purview of the code. Created almost solely by **Harvey Kurtzman** in 1952, its satiric take on popular culture would make it a cultural icon for teenagers and young adults in the 1960s and 1970s. As well, many underground writers who succeeded in the late 1960s and 1970s, among them **Robert Crumb** and **Art Spiegelman**, have acknowledged the influence of *Mad* in the birth and development of **underground comics**.

After the establishment of the Comics Code, the only publisher that strengthened its position was Dell due to its publishing line focused on innocuous and children-oriented titles. The code eliminated the possibility of publishing edgy, violent, challenging, and counter-establishment stories, and it also helped to reinforce two ideas about comics in the mainstream society: comic books were something just for children and, from that moment on, nothing more than cheap and clean entertainment. However, something changed in the content of comic books in the 1960s. Parallel to the development of underground comics, superhero comics also found the need to response to cultural and

social changes. The youth of the time was a complex and confused one but the storylines inherited from the 1950s did not reflect any of those feelings. **Stan Lee** realized that **Marvel** could capitalize on the feelings of modern youth and recover the teenage audience for the comic book medium. Working with **Steve Ditko** and **Jack Kirby**, Lee developed a new kind of superhero in such figures as the **Fantastic Four** (1961), **The Hulk** (1962), **Spider-Man** (1962), and the **X-Men** (1963). The nature of these superheroes set them apart from the ones published by the rival company **DC**, though DC itself soon countered with the **Teen Titans**, a youthful superhero team who began to appear in 1964. The superheroes created by Marvel showed a complexity never seen before in the superhero realm: they struggled with their secret identities and their superpowers; their relationship with authorities and the public was ambivalent, with moments of admiration but also persecution. Spider-Man and The Human Torch were young adults whose behavior and issues did not differ much from the typical teenager, from love matters to money problems. Many members of the X-Men were teenagers as well. The Thing and The Hulk were superheroes alienated from society because of their superpowers. As well, most of The Hulk's stories were often focused on his struggles with the Army and other forces of authority that tried to capture him because of the perceived threat posed by his power.

Nonetheless, Lee was seeking a connection with the teenage reader beyond storylines. He devised several strategies to establish and strengthen a connection between readers and creators, such as bulletins and the Bullpen that accompanied every comic book and helped to create a vibrant fan culture and sense of community among fans. Some examples of fan behavior can be found as early as the 1930s in connection with science fiction literature. During the 1950s, EC readers managed to organize themselves. However, the first instances of modern fandom are located in the early 1960s mainly caused by two circumstances: the phenomenon of Marvel Mania and the inclusion of readers' addresses in the letter pages of the comics published by DC. Fanzines and comic book conventions soon became part of the comic book culture and readers and creators had the opportunity to establish a dialogue. Since then, fandom culture has become highly relevant for the world of comics in many ways: it supports the publishers' efforts to keep their titles relevant to teen readers; it has sustained the careers of many readers that dream of becoming comic book creators; and finally, fandom has become an important and recognizable part of youth culture.

At the same time that Marvel was tapping into the interests of the teenage audience, the development of underground comics (**comix**) was attracting an older audience of college readers with edgy, sexually charged, and anti-authoritarian storylines and characters. Around the figure of **Robert Crumb** and other authors, the comics medium initiated an alternative route away from mainstream publishers, the Comics Code, and **superhero** storylines. Comix became part of a youth subculture concentrated around head shops and the hippie movement. As soon as this culture weakened, comix started a slow decay. However, their relative success proved the possibility of creating something alternative to mainstream comics. Comix publishers were defenders of freedom of expression and pushers of creative boundaries. This movement nurtured and opened doors to **alternative**

and independent artists that flourished in the 1980s and 1990s. It also allowed authors to experiment with drawing and narrative styles as well as storylines. An example of the influence of this movement in the storylines of following decades is the work ***Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary*** by Justin Green (1972). Through this work, Green explores with great honesty how he suffered from an incipient obsessive-compulsive disorder during his childhood and teenage years in an environment dominated by Catholicism. This comic is one of the first examples of autobiographical work or **memoir** in the comics medium. Interestingly, it focuses the narrative on the author's youth, something that has become common in contemporary works, such as Craig Thompson's ***Blankets*** (2003), **Phoebe Gloeckner**'s *A Child's Life* (2000), and **Chester Brown's *The Playboy*** (1992). The biographical content of these titles demands very distinctive styles, voices, and storylines, each of them representing three different ways of looking back on one's past.

In short, *Blankets* looks at the conflict between the religious family and environment Thompson grew up in and his first romantic and sexual relationship. The semi-autobiographical *A Child's Life* shows a different story about childhood and adolescence; it focuses on the life of Minnie, an abused teenager who early in her life had extreme experiences with sex and drugs. Even the rather humorous *The Playboy* discusses sexuality and the obsession with pornography in terms that were probably inconceivable without the edgy and experimental years of underground comics.

The example of underground comics and the changes in distribution brought by the direct market supported the birth of independent publishers and the self-publishing phenomenon. Two authors who emerged under these circumstances are John Porcellino and Ariel Schrag. Both cartoonists bring a distinctive perspective to the analysis of adolescence in the comics medium. Porcellino is a well-known author mainly through his minicomic *King-Cat*. His piece *Perfect Example* (2000) collects several stories about Porcellino's adolescence previously published in this minicomic. In these stories, Porcellino presents himself as a quiet teenager who is dealing with an incipient case of depression. With a style that can be described as simple but not simplistic, Porcellino transmits his emotional state and how it affected his social life and first romantic relationships. The slow and controlled pace of Porcellino's work markedly contrasts with Ariel Schrag's lively and noisy style. She first self-published her stories to later release them under the label of Slave Labor Graphics. One of the main peculiarities of Schrag's work is that it is not an adult reflection on her past teenager years; her comics are contemporary to the experiences, therefore, the reader gets a more visceral and raw account of Schrag's life: her growing doubts about her sexuality; her experimentations with drugs and alcohol; her parents' divorce; and especially her ever shifting obsessions with different bands. Shrag's autobiographical work brings a richness of detail and energy seldom found in other titles. She managed to keep a similar tone in the volume she edited entitled *Stuck in the Middle*, in which authors such **Joe Matt**, **Daniel Clowes**, and Gabrielle Bell dig into their own memories about what it was like to survive middle school.

These titles mentioned are extremely difficult to categorize under any other label than that the general one of memoirs. The drawing styles, the character's voices and

the main themes of the stories are a product of a personal process of introspection and sharing that makes each unique, but extremely enriching for any reader, adolescent or adult.

The view brought by the autobiographical works is complemented by other comics that succeed at describing not just the experiences but also the cultural and social moment. *Archie* and titles like it were for a long time the only example of a realistic, although idealized, voice about what it meant to be a teenager in America. The works published during the 1960s and 1970s opened the door for a less juvenile and more introspective take on youth culture and experiences. An excellent example is *Locas*, a sub-narrative of ***Love & Rockets*** (1982), a **Hernandez Brothers'** creation. This comic follows the lives of Maggie Chascarrillo and Hopey Glass, two young adult Latinas in Los Angeles during the 1980s. Part of the novelty in this title was the realistic description of the punk culture in the city at that moment, as Jaime Hernandez managed to successfully portray the expectations, dreams, and the reality of an entire generation. Another peculiarity of this title is that the characters have aged over time and nowadays readers can follow the life of Maggie as an adult.

In a completely different style and tone, Daniel Clowes follows the life of another pair of girls, Enid and Beck, as part of the grunge generation. ***Ghost World*** (1997) is populated by typical teenage sentiments like angst, boredom, irony and cynicism; everything works perfectly to construct this search for one's place in society. The same way that Hernandez used Los Angeles as the setting for Maggie and Hopey, Clowes creates an unnamed city populated by fast-food restaurants and shopping malls that resembles any North American city. Both settings work extremely well to represent the society and culture that surrounds the main characters and how they navigate it or react against it. Also linked to the Generation X is the character of Buddy Bradley. A creation of **Peter Bagge**, Buddy is the personification of the grunge young adult in the 1990s who dreams of abandoning the family home to live in the grunge Mecca: Seattle. Bagge's characteristic drawing style is perfect to describe Buddy's chaotic and improvised life where peculiar roommates, angry girlfriends, and meaningless jobs are common ingredients. Compared with the introspective and rather serious tone of some of the works aforementioned works, this comic book presents a humorous, sharp and ironic view of the youth culture and the society of the time.

Ross Campbell and Charles Burns use **horror** to examine different aspects of a teenage life. Through the metaphor of a "teen plague" that physically affects to teenagers that have had sex, Burns's ***Black Hole*** (1995) explores issues of sex, emotional relationships, and what it means to be "normal" in a rather aseptic society. On the other hand, Campbell's *The Abandoned* (2006) and the series *Wet Moon* (2004) are populated by characters that are already far from being the typical teenager. They are outcasts, mainly Goths and Punks, who are basically trying to navigate life in the South of United States. In *The Abandoned*, Campbell makes everybody over 23 a **zombie** that feeds on these 23 and under, who remain human. Both comic books take on typical teenage issues, such as relationships with friends and family, love and

sexuality, identity and maturing, but the peculiarities of most protagonists and the setting make these works a stimulating and different view of adolescent culture.

Another relevant characteristic of Campbell's work is the influence of **manga**. The popularity of manga with contemporary youth audience has not only increased exponentially the number of translations from original titles and series but has also influenced enormously the drawing and narrative style of new authors. A perfect example of this phenomenon is the work of Bryan Lee O'Malley in *Scott Pilgrim*, beginning in 2004. The story follows the adventures of the title character, a 23-year-old Canadian slacker who does not have a job, shares an apartment with a gay friend, and plays in a rock band. The main plot focuses on the love story between Scott and Ramona, and her seven evil ex-boyfriends whom Scott must defeat to be able to date Ramona. This comic book combines humor, some **fantasy**, and many manga-influenced fights to explore the difficulties one confronts when is in love. Beyond some of the fantastic elements of the story, *Scott Pilgrim* portrays youth culture in a realistic manner, seamlessly including the use of cell phones, video games, as well as references to skateboarding culture, and other trivial elements like eating and dressing habits that are relevant in contemporary youth.

The other major change that manga has brought to North American comics is the acknowledgment of the female audience in the comics world. A predominantly male industry, both on the creative and reading ends, the explosion of manga titles has helped to make more visible and strengthen an already existing female audience. A consequence of this has been the attempt of one of the major publishers, **DC**, to capitalize on the teen female market with the development of the imprint Minx. This imprint was created to develop stories that spoke directly to a teen female audience. Although of short duration, from 2007 to 2008, Minx published 12 titles that had in common their teen and young adult female protagonists, an everyday life focus and a positive critic reception. The reasons for the imprint's cancellation are still unclear and it has received a rather unusual attention from the mainstream press, reflecting the opinions of readers, creators, and critics. Some consider that the female audience in comic books is not as large and strong as expected; others criticized the lack of time given to the project in order to establish a name and audience.

In the world of superheroes, the need to connect with a new generation of teen readers has also forced some changes. After years of their respective superhero universes, the two main comic book publishers realized that most of their titles had become almost unmanageable to follow for non-expert readers. Marvel, for instance, decided to revisit the birth and first steps of some of their best-known superheroes. The Ultimate Marvel series focuses on updating the style and narrative of these stories, especially for a younger audience, eliminating some of the many intricacies that make the storylines too obscure for new readers. One of the most successful works is *Ultimate Spider-Man*, from the hands of **Brian Michael Bendis** and Mark Bagle. ***Runaways*** is another title that has clearly attracted the attention of preteen and teenagers. Created by **Brian K. Vaughan** and published in two imprints targeting

younger readers, Tsunami and Marvel Next, this title represents a different take on the superhero theme. The Runaways are a group of teenagers who discover that their parents are evil villains. Trying to stop them, the teens realize that they have powers of their own and become a rather dysfunctional and atypical superheroes group. One of the most salient characteristics of this title is the constant presence of teen culture. These teenagers are not superheroes that happen to be teens, but teens that happen to have superpowers, therefore their interests, feelings, concerns, language and relationships are kept in a realistic realm.

The connection between comic books and youth is complicated but it remains strong. Even though recent developments, such as the graphic novel phenomenon, have increased the importance of the adult and non-fan audience, comic books still tend to both reflect and influence youth culture.

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Y: THE LAST MAN. This series begins with one horrifying moment in which every single male mammal, human, and animal, on the face of Earth dies—except for one man and one monkey. One survivor is a would-be escape artist in his early 20s named Yorick Brown and the other is a Capuchin helper monkey named Ampersand that Yorick is training. This is the premise of *Y: The Last Man*, the award-winning series published by **DC Comics** as part of their Vertigo line from 2002 to 2007 (last issue cover date January 2008). **Brian K. Vaughan** and Pia Guerra created the series, all of which was written by Vaughan and most of which was penciled by Guerra and inked by Jose Marzan Jr., Goran Sudzuka, and Paul Chadwick contributed additional artwork, with J. G. Jones and Massimo Carnevale providing the covers. The series was written for **adult** readers and contains mature language and both male and female nudity. The 60 issues have been collected into 10 collections as well as a series of oversized hardcover editions. The collections are subtitled: *Unmanned* (#1–5), *Cycles* (#6–10), *One Small Step* (#11–17), *Safeword* (#18–23), *Ring of Truth* (#24–31), *Girl on Girl* (#32–36), *Paper Dolls* (#37–42), *Kimono Dragons* (#43–48), *Motherland* (#49–54), and *Whys and Wherefores* (#55–60). The hardcovers are simply numbered by volume and contain at least 10 issues each.

While a number of characters appear regularly in the series, there are three primary characters—Yorick, Agent 355, and Dr. Allison Mann. At the time of the "gendercide," Yorick is in his early 20s and about to propose on the phone to his girlfriend Beth, who is in Australia. When he realizes he was the only human male still alive he takes

to concealing himself with a cloak, hood and gas mask and using a slight falsetto when talking to the women that he encounters (explaining fear of whatever caused the males to die as a reason to keep wearing the mask). Ampersand often perches on his shoulder. Yorick makes his way to Washington D.C. in search of his mother, a member of Congress who is working with the new president (the highest surviving woman in the order of succession) and who, with the president, ends up sending Yorick out to discover the truth regarding what had happened. Yorick accepts the mission, but all he really wants is to find Beth. Over the next five years, his mission and his quest will take him across the country and the world.

Assigned to protect Yorick is Agent 355, a member of the Culper Ring, a mysterious organization that dates back to the Revolutionary War. At the time of the "gendercide," she was removing a supposedly cursed artifact from Jordan, crossing the border just as it happened. Her skills help Yorick to survive on many occasions over the years and their relationship grows, moving to close friendship and then close to something more. Their first task is to go to Boston to the lab of geneticist Dr. Allison Mann (born Ayuko Matsumori), who at the time of the "gendercide" was (unsuccessfully) giving birth to a cloned baby. Yorick and 355 find her, but after her lab is destroyed the trio is forced to head to the West Coast in search of her back-up notes, which provide the key to keeping the human species alive. It is her work that often dictates where the group must go. There are a number of additional supporting characters who have both positive and negative effects on the three main characters.

The effects of the "gendercide" upon the world are shown in various ways throughout the series. At first there is the destruction caused by multitudes of car and plane crashes, the reorganization of government (including a group of widows who want their husband's old positions to restore the Democrat-Republican balance), and changes in society, such as how a former supermodel now must make a living disposing of dead bodies. Among the antagonists in the series are the "Daughters of the Amazon," an ultra-radical feminist group seeking to destroy the remnants of the "patriarchy" that "Mother Earth" saw fit to dispose of. Yorick's sister, Hero, becomes a member of the group and, for a time, is a threat to her brother's life. At one point, a traveling group of performers offering a show to a small town find that many of the women there would like the troupe to create new versions of their favorite soap operas.

Other allies and threats to the trio come from the new role of women in the world's militaries. Due to the number of women in its armed forces, Israel's place in the Middle East is stronger and since it allows women to serve on submarines, it is now Australia that rules the waves. Religion in this new world is touched upon with a group of women from the Vatican that are following rumors of a new born male whom they wish to make into the new Pope.

While there are those who wish to capture Yorick for political reasons (such as an Israeli soldier who wants him as a way to strengthen her country or at least weaken others) or personal gain (a journalist who wants a great story). What is generally not seen in the series is the stereotypical "last man" scenario in which all women just want

to have sex with him. While on his travels, Yorick wants to stay faithful to Beth, and the one encounter he does have causes feelings of guilt. The series also discusses the sex lives of the surviving women, including those in same-sex relationships (though some were lesbians beforehand), prostitutes who specialize in dressing and acting like men, and those who use mechanical means (including a "robotic" substitute used in Japan).

The series gives some possible reasons for the sudden death of all males on earth, ranging from the scientific to the supernatural, but no definitive answer is provided. In fact, many questions remain unanswered, but Vaughan has insisted that the series is complete and will not be revisited.

David S. Serchay

Z

ZAP was the best-known and most influential **underground comic** book, featuring taboo-breaking work by the movement's key figures. Upon its initial appearance in San Francisco in 1968 with a cover price of 25 cents, and the "fair warning" that it was "for adult intellectuals only," *Zap Comix* (the spelling itself virtually a declaration of independence) linked comic books directly to the counterculture, otherwise being expressed through popular music, fashion, drugs, and lifestyle. Soon thereafter underground comics (now routinely known as "**comix**") would be sold in "head shops," since regular distribution was unavailable to them.

The first issue of *Zap* was printed by Beat writer and publisher Charles Plymell and Don Donahue of Apex Novelties. Apex would publish six more issues (including #0, 1967–74); The Print Mint published issues #7–9 (1974–78), and Last Gasp published issues #10–15 (1982–2004). The first two issues (#1 followed by #0, recreated from photocopies of the stolen art for the issue intended to appear first) were entirely the work of **Robert Crumb**, who quickly became the most famous and influential underground cartoonist despite his own ambivalence toward the hippie movement; thereafter the comic functioned as an anthology of disconnected pieces featuring what soon became a stable group consisting of **S. Clay Wilson**, Robert Williams, "Spain" Rodriguez, Gilbert Shelton, Rick Griffin, and Victor Moscoso, the latter two often working in entirely non-narrative modes associated with psychedelic drugs and rock concert posters. Much later, for the last two issues, Paul Mavrides came aboard.

The initial all-Crumb issues announced many of the themes that would dominate Crumb's career, and featured one of his most important characters, the irreverent bearded sage Mr. Natural (introduced in *Yarrowstalks* in 1967), along with his hapless disciple Flakey Foont. The strip "Whiteman" indicated Crumb's skill at social **satire**, although



Title panel of "Whiteman," issue #1 of Zap Comix. Sony Pictures Classics/Photofest

its reliance on "comic Negroes," as well as a genuinely shocking fake ad for canned "nigger hearts" in the first issue also indicated Crumb's willingness to employ outrageous racial stereotypes, derived from earlier cartoons and animated films, leading to decades of debate over their subversive or irredeemably racist meanings. If Mr. Natural was a brilliant condensation of the era's fascination with (and perhaps hoodwinking by) alternative lifestyles and modes of consciousness, the naïve, dialect-speaking African Amazon Angelfood McSpade (her name alone a provocation) has seemed to some critics less a wicked commentary on the period's volatile racial and gender politics than Crumb's indulgence in racist and sexist fantasy.

With issue #2, the semi-abstract work of Griffin and Moscoso (often daring to distort classic Disney characters) was added, along with the outrageously violent, sex-drenched drawings of Wilson, whose uninhibited Checkered Demon was one of the underground's many embodiments of an entirely unrepressed id. Whereas Crumb's unsettling impact in part derived from his presenting taboo content in the nostalgic style of earlier cartoons, and while Griffin and Moscoso's drawings were built out of curving lines and mandala-like symmetries, Wilson's incredibly dense panels, ignoring the illusion of depth that might provide breathing space for his pirate and biker characters, fully embraced the grotesque as an aesthetic style. Issue #3 added Gilbert Shelton, whose Wonder Wart-Hog (a parody of **superheroes**) adventures seemed more willing to entertain readers than others. The issue also included the first "jam," a non-narrative strip that included contributions from all of the issue's artists, a group effort that soon became an underground tradition. The issue was also a cleverly designed "Special 69 Issue," which could be read from either front or back, with a Moscoso mirror-image spinning the reader around at the comic's center. Issue #4 added Robert Williams, whose talent for precise design distinguished his work from Wilson's, despite their shared affinity for densely packed panels and odd creatures (such as Williams' Coochy Cooty). The "outlaw" status of underground comics was also fully affirmed by the appearance of

Zap #4, which contained Crumb's "Joe Blow," a simultaneously cute and explicit depiction of an incestuous all-American family: the issue was the focus of a number of obscenity trials in various communities, and was for a time prohibited in New York.

By issue #6 Spain Rodriguez joined the group, which remained stable for the next seven issues. The roster only changed with issue #13, which was dedicated to Griffin, who had died after a motorcycle accident. Paul Mavrides joined for issue #14 (1998), which in part chronicled divisions within the group in response to Crumb's desire to put the comic to an end. (With wicked wit, Crumb is killed in a visual homage to his own killing of his most lucrative character, **Fritz the Cat**.) Issue #15 appeared after a gap of five years, and though not identified as a final bow, seemed to be a quiet but redundant return to business as usual, with Mavrides still on board with the core group of Crumb, Shelton, Wilson, Williams, Moscoso, and Rodriguez.

Always constructed as an anthology (even when Crumb was the sole contributor), *Zap* also maintained a degree of continuity due to recurrent characters (noted above, as well as Spain's macho Trashman, and even some of Moscoso's semi-abstract figures) as well as the consistent style and obsessive themes of its artists. For all of its initial innovations and boldness, there was little experimentation once the formula for the comic was established, with a few notable exceptions: Crumb, who had moved increasingly toward autobiographical stories (a genre no other *Zap* artist embraced) offered a serious biography of the blues singer Charlie Patton in #11, rendered in a richly detailed, semi-realist mode unlike his earlier contributions. In the same issue Spain provides a strip with detailed renderings of airplanes that suggest he might have had a career drawing **war comics** for the mainstream, and in #18 even Shelton contributes a story on a Paris cemetery with unusually realistic drawings. Otherwise, the radical cartoonists tended to stick with what was ironically familiar as the series continued.

Despite its own tendency toward repetition and familiarity, *Zap* would remain the model for other underground and independent anthology comics, such as *Bijou Funnies* (8 issues, 1968–73), *Snarf* (15 issues, 1972–90), and the digest-sized *Snatch* (3 issues, 1968–69), as well as the later magazines *Arcade* (7 issues, 1975–76) edited by Bill Griffith and **Art Spiegelman**, and Crumb's own ***Weirdo*** (28 issues, 1981–1993). The entirely male, frequently misogynist, and generally heterosexual (if not polymorphously perverse) perspective of *Zap* also presumably motivated the creation of the feminist and gay underground anthologies *Wimmen's Comix* (17 issues, 1972–92) and *Gay Comix* (25 issues, 1983–98).

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ZOMBIES. *See* ***Vampires and Zombies***

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